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The moderating role of perceived supervisor support**

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## Abstract

Perceived job autonomy has been recognized as a central tenet of work design, leading to a range of positive outcomes. Still, scholars have rightfully questioned its predictive role for several outcomes, including turnover intention as the two have been found to be virtually unrelated. In line with calls for more complex research on the predictive role of perceived job autonomy on employee outcomes, the purpose of this study was to investigate whether the relationship between perceived job autonomy and turnover intention may be prone to contextual influences. Two cross-sectional surveys among 680 Norwegian employees from different public service organizations showed that the relationship between perceived job autonomy and turnover intention was moderated by perceived supervisor support. In support of our hypothesis, the form of the moderations revealed that perceived job autonomy was negatively related to turnover intention only for employees reporting high levels of perceived supervisor support. Implications for practice and directions for future research are discussed.

**Keywords:** Perceived job autonomy, perceived supervisor support, turnover intention

Job autonomy, or the extent to which a job allows freedom, independence, and discretion to schedule work, make decisions, and choose the methods used to perform tasks (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006) is deemed an essential tenet in contemporary work design theories (Humphrey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007). Substantial meta-analytic evidence suggests that perceived job autonomy is positively related to a range of beneficial outcomes such as work performance and organizational commitment, and negatively related to more detrimental outcomes such as stress and exhaustion (Humphrey et al., 2007). Despite these encouraging findings, however, the same meta-analysis unveiled a null relationship between perceived job autonomy and turnover intention. This suggests that job autonomy is less influential in directly reducing employee turnover intention, and in turn, actual turnover (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000).

Turnover represents a major concern for managers and organizations (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006). Replacing employees may exert additional organizational resources for recruiting and training employees in order to ensure satisfactory levels of performance (Collins & Smith, 2006). High turnover rates may also impede the quality, consistency and stability of services that the organization provide to its clients and customers (Trevor & Nyberg, 2008). Given such potential negative consequences, it is hardly surprising that scholars have devoted a great deal of attention to unveil antecedents of both turnover intention and actual turnover (e.g. Griffeth et al., 2000). Among the findings available, substantial meta-analytical evidence suggests that the quality of the employee–organizational relationship (EOR) (e.g. affective commitment and perceived organizational support) represents salient predictors of both turnover intention and actual turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Thus, when employees feel cared for by their organization, they respond by demonstrating a range of beneficial outcomes, including decreased turnover intention and actual turnover.

Such observations may also be relevant for the design of work. In their meta-analysis of motivational, social, and contextual work design features, Humphrey and colleagues (2007) argued that work design theories have limited their attention to a specific set of motivational work features such as perceived job autonomy, but that the social characteristics of work have received less attention. They contributed to the work design literature by showing the incremental validity of social characteristics (i.e. task interdependence, feedback from others, social support and interaction outside the organization) in explaining variance in employee turnover intention beyond motivational job characteristics (including perceived job autonomy). This set of social characteristics explained 24 per cent of the variance in turnover intention, whereas the set of motivational characteristics explained a mere two per cent of the variance. Humphrey and colleagues (2007) concluded that ‘social characteristics provide a unique perspective on work design beyond motivational characteristics’ (p. 1347).

An alternative to the additive role played by social characteristics is that the latter interacts with job design features. Stated differently, we propose that the relationship between perceived job autonomy and turnover intention is *contingent* on the social context of work, that is, the interpersonal interactions and relationships that are embedded in and influenced by the jobs, roles and tasks that employees perform and enact (Grant & Parker, 2009). While perceived job autonomy is widely recognized to as a positive tenet of work design, there is a lack of research on conditions that may influence the impact of perceived job autonomy on employee outcomes (Johns, 2010). When studying boundary conditions of perceived job autonomy’s positive role, personality factors such as growth need strength, global self-esteem, locus of control, and negative affectivity have typically been included (Wang, Luksyte, Ratnasingham, King, & Spitzmüller, 2011) rather than the social context of work. Focusing on interactions between perceived job autonomy and the social context of work may contribute to better understand conditions under which facets of work design may predict

employee outcomes beyond direct relationships, and consequently improve work design initiatives. In the present study, we focus on a facet of the social context of work in the form of perceived supervisor support, or employees' views concerning the degree to which their immediate line manager values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988). Previous studies suggest that supervisor-related perceptions are important for reducing employee turnover intention (e.g. Houkes, Janssen, de Jonge, & Nijhuis, 2001; Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010) and hold unique explained variance beyond the more generic component of perceived organizational support (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002; Maertz, Griffeth, Campbell, & Allen, 2007). Still, despite the increasing responsibilities of individual line managers to implement organizational policies including that of work design, research on the role of interpersonal relationships in organizations with respect to the implementation of work design remains scarce (Grant & Parker, 2009). The purpose of this study is therefore to increase our understanding of how perceived job autonomy relates to employee turnover intention by investigating the potential interplay between perceived job autonomy, perceived supervisor support, and employee turnover intention. The intended contribution of our study is increase our knowledge into boundary conditions for work design in influencing employee outcomes (Johns, 2010) by investigating whether a social characteristic not only relates directly to turnover intention, but whether it also influences the relationship between a traditional job characteristic and turnover intention. Finally, since gender stereotypes prescribe that women are less independent and more submissive than men, seeking and receiving emotional support may be more acceptable for women than for men (Verdonk, Seesing, & de Rijk, 2010). We therefore set out to investigate whether gender differences exist with respect to the potential moderating role of perceived supervisor support in our second study sample.

## Theory and hypothesis

Work design theories are concerned with how jobs, tasks, and roles are structured, enacted, and modified, as well as the impact of such structures, enactments, and modifications on individual, group, and organizational outcomes (Grant & Parker, 2009). From originally being majorly concerned with job simplification (e.g. Taylor, 1911), work design theory gradually developed a set of differing theories, including those focusing on the motivating features of work. Among these, the Job Characteristics Model (JCM) (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) has made an important contribution to our understanding of how employees' perceptions of their work setting lead to outcomes favourable for themselves, their colleagues, and the organization as a whole (Parker & Wall, 2001). The JCM proposes that five core job characteristics, including perceived job autonomy, precede a range of positive employee states and attitudes, such as internal motivation and job satisfaction. However, while perceived job autonomy has been found to be positively related to a range of beneficial individual outcomes (i.e. internal work motivation and job satisfaction) and negatively related to more detrimental outcomes (i.e. role ambiguity and stress), perceived job autonomy is virtually unrelated to employee turnover intention (Humphrey et al., 2007). While some studies have found a negative association between perceived job autonomy and turnover intention (e.g. Albrecht, 2006; Rooney, Gottlieb, & Newby-Clark, 2009), overwhelming meta-analytical evidence suggests that perceived job autonomy in itself represents an insufficient component of work design with respect to reducing employee turnover intention (Humphrey et al., 2007).

An alternative to assuming that perceived job autonomy directly influences employee turnover is that the relationship between perceived job autonomy and turnover intention is moderated by perceived supervisor support. Work design researchers have begun to acknowledge the importance of the social characteristics of work that are nonredundant with

motivational characteristics (Grant, 2007; Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006), including those of relational origin. For instance, Humphrey et al. (2007) found that social support, or the extent to which a job provides opportunities for getting assistance or advice from either supervisors or coworkers (Karasek, 1979) was strongly negatively related to turnover intention. This observation aligns well with research on organizational support theory (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986), which suggest that employees who perceive favourable treatment from their organization will feel an obligation to repay the organization through positive attitudes and appropriate behaviours, including that of lower turnover intentions and actual turnover (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Beyond the more general perception of support from the organization, employees develop specific views concerning the degree to which their immediate manager values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988). Such attention and appreciation from managers should lead to a number of beneficial outcomes, including lower turnover intention. In support of this, previous research has found negative associations between perceived supervisor support and both turnover intention (e.g. Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010) and actual turnover (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). In what follows, we propose that the interplay between perceived job autonomy and perceived supervisor support should predict varying levels of turnover intention.

Within the realm of work design implementation, the immediate line manager serves as the deliverer or implementer of such practices (including perceived job autonomy) that bring these policies to life. While perceived job autonomy should initiate more proximal beneficial outcomes (e.g. higher responsibility and internal motivation, and less role ambiguity and stress), turnover intentions should be subject to more relational antecedents (Grant, 2007; Humphrey et al., 2007), such as the maintenance of personal relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), and perceiving support when facing stress and strain beyond the tasks assigned



(Karasek, 1979). Such perceptions should evoke positive affect among employees and make them less prone to want to leave the organization. These propositions were largely supported in the study by Humphrey and colleagues (2007), which showed consistent positive relationships between social support and interdependence, and consistent negative relationships between social support and both stress and turnover intentions.

With respect to the relationship between perceived job autonomy and turnover intention in particular, the mere perception of job autonomy may be insufficient in itself to reduce employee turnover intention. In order for perceived job autonomy to reduce turnover intention then, employees should benefit more from line managers that value their contributions when at work, and who cares for their well-being. Perceived supervisor support may provide work knowledge (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Ahearne, & Bommer, 1995) and help overcome job demands (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) in a highly independent position, that is higher levels of perceived job autonomy. Such employees should both feel empowered to contribute actively when at work (i.e. when perceiving higher levels of job autonomy), and at the same time experience that their contributions are valued, paid attention to, and appreciated by their line manager (i.e. when perceiving higher levels of supervisor support).

In line with social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), even though employees work highly independently under the condition of perceived job autonomy, they should be more likely to reciprocate towards to organization and hold less turnover intention when they perceive high support from their supervisor. When the relationship between the supervisor and employee is characterized by trust, diffused obligations, socio-emotional resources, and a long-term orientation, the employees should perceive the exchange relationship as social. In support of this, Song, Tsui, and Law (2009) found leadership style to predict perceptions of social exchange perceptions among their followers. Given that social exchange is posited to produce a felt obligation to reciprocate through positive attitudes and appropriate behaviours (Coyle-

Shapiro & Conway, 2004; Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990), we therefore expect a negative relationship with turnover intention.

In contrast, for employees experiencing lower levels of perceived supervisor support, perceived job autonomy should be less predictive of their turnover intention. Such employees lack a high-quality relationship with their immediate line manager and may as a result be less psychologically attached to the organization (Pierce, Jussila, & Cummings, 2009). Still, we do not expect perceived job autonomy to be positively related to turnover intention among employees with low levels of perceived supervisor support. Perceiving higher levels of job autonomy, in terms of being allowed freedom, independence, and discretion to schedule work, make decisions, and choose the methods used to perform tasks, may hardly be said to represent a negative aspect of the work environment. We therefore hypothesize:

*Hypothesis:* Perceived supervisor support moderates the relationship between perceived job autonomy and turnover intention. There will be a negative relationship only for employees perceiving higher levels of supervisor support.

## Methodology

For the present research, we tested the hypothesised relationship in two consecutive, but different, samples, in line with calls by Kline (2004) for an increase in replication studies in organizational behaviour research. The details for each study are presented below.

### *Study 1*

#### *Sample and procedure*

Respondents were drawn from different departments in a large Norwegian public health industry organization. A questionnaire was distributed to 464 randomly selected employees

using a Web-based tool (Confirmat). When responding to the survey, the participants were informed that their responses would be treated confidentially, in order to reduce the presence of response distortion (Chan, 2009; Conway & Lance, 2010; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). A reminder was sent to those who had failed to respond to the survey after three weeks. These operations resulted in 222 responses corresponding to a response rate of 48 per cent. Owing to company restrictions, we were not allowed to collect demographic data beyond age and educational level. The average age of the respondents was between 30 and 39 years, and the average education level was between four and six years of higher education at college or university.

### *Measures*

All items were measured on a five-point Likert response scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree) and had been used in prior studies in the Norwegian context. The items used are reported in the Appendix.

Perceived job autonomy was assessed by nine items developed by Morgeson and Humphrey (2006) and used in Norwegian settings by Kuvaas (2009). Turnover intention was assessed by five items used in Norwegian settings by Dysvik and Kuvaas (2010). Perceived supervisor support was assessed by four items adapted from Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, and Sowa (1986) and previously used in Norwegian settings by Kuvaas and Dysvik (2010).

Since both age and education level has been found to predict turnover intention (Griffeth et al., 2000), these were included as control variables. We asked the respondents to report their age on a five-item scale, where one represented 'Between 20 and 29 years' and five represented 'Between 60 and 69 years'. Finally, we asked the respondents to report their level of education on a five-item scale, where one represented 'Primary and lower secondary school' and five 'Graduate studies'.

### *Analyses*

The data were analysed in several phases. First, factor analysis (principal component analysis with promax rotation) was performed on all the multiple-scale items to determine item retention (e.g. Coyle-Shapiro, Kessler, & Purcell, 2004). In order to avoid confounded measures of the closely related constructs, relatively stringent rules of thumb were applied, i.e. retaining only items with a strong loading of .50 or higher (Nunnally & Bernstein, 2007), a cross-loading of .35 or less (Kiffin-Petersen & Cordery, 2003), and a differential of .20 or higher between factors (Van Dyne, Graham, & Dienesch, 1994).

To test the hypothesis, we used hierarchical moderated regression (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). Interaction terms often create multicollinearity problems because of their correlations with main effects. We thus computed the interaction terms by centring the variables before multiplying them with each other. In the first and second step, the control variables and perceived job autonomy were regressed on turnover intention, followed by perceived supervisor support and, finally, the interaction term between perceived job autonomy and perceived supervisor support.

### *Results*

The principal component analysis revealed that all of the items met our inclusion criteria (see Appendix A for details). The items were combined to form their respective variables through summarizing the mean value for each item. These operations resulted in a nine-item perceived job autonomy scale ( $\alpha = .94$ ), a five-item turnover intention scale ( $\alpha = .89$ ), and a four-item perceived supervisor support scale ( $\alpha = .92$ ).

‘Take in Table 1’

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations for all the variables are reported in Table 1. Pairwise and multiple variable collinearity were inspected by collinearity diagnostics in SPSS prior to the analyses. The lowest tolerance value was .75, which is far above the common cut-off threshold value of .10 (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998).

‘Take in Table 2’

The significant interaction term in the regression analysis revealed that perceived supervisor support moderated the relationship between perceived job autonomy and turnover intention (see Table 2). To probe the form of the statistically significant interaction, we followed the procedure recommended by Cohen et al. (2003) and plotted low versus high scores of perceived job autonomy and perceived supervisor support (one standard deviation below and above the means using unstandardized scores).

‘Take in Figure 1’

The slopes in Figure 1 suggest that the relationship between perceived job autonomy and turnover intention is negative only for employees high in perceived supervisor support. A *t*-test revealed that the two slopes were significantly different from each other ( $t = -2.30, p < .05$ ). Thus, our hypothesis was supported.

### *Study 2*

Respondents were drawn from different departments in the Norwegian law enforcement agency in the public sector. A questionnaire was distributed to approximately 1000 respondents using a Web-based tool (It’s Learning). When responding to the survey, the

participants were informed that their responses would be treated confidentially, in order to reduce the presence of response distortion. A reminder was sent to those who had not responded to the survey after 14 days. These operations resulted in 458 responses and a response rate of approximately 46 per cent. Of the respondents, 38 per cent were women and 62 per cent men. Their average age was approximately 42 years.

### *Measures*

The measures of perceived job autonomy, perceived supervisor support, and turnover intention were the same as those in the first study.

To investigate whether gender differences could influence the proposed relationships (Messing et al., 2003), the respondents were asked to report their gender by way of a dichotomous variable where one represented 'Women' and two represented 'Men'. Age was reported in actual years. Since the respondents held similar college degrees, we did not include educational level as a control variable.

### *Analyses*

The same analytical procedures were employed as in the first study.

### *Results*

As in the first study sample, the principal component analysis revealed that all of the items met our inclusion criteria. The items were then combined to form their respective variables through summarizing the mean value for each item. These operations resulted in a nine-item perceived job autonomy scale ( $\alpha = .94$ ), a five-item turnover intention scale ( $\alpha = .87$ ), and a four-item perceived supervisor support scale ( $\alpha = .91$ ). Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations for all the variables are reported in Table 3.

'Take in Table 3'

Pairwise and multiple variable collinearity were inspected by collinearity diagnostics in SPSS prior to analyses. The lowest tolerance value was .74, which is far above the common cut-off threshold value of .10 (Hair et al., 1998).

‘Take in Table 4’

The significant interaction term in the regression analysis reported in Table 4 revealed that perceived supervisor support moderated the relationship between perceived job autonomy and turnover intention. We then used the same procedures to plot the interaction as in the first study (see Figure 2).

‘Take in Figure 2’

As in the first study sample, the slopes in Figure 2 suggest that the relationship between perceived job autonomy and turnover intention is negative only for employees high in perceived supervisor support. A t-test revealed that the two slopes were significantly different from each other ( $t = -3.07, p < .01$ ). Thus, our hypothesis was once more supported.

Finally, since women reported higher levels of perceived job autonomy ( $r = -.18, p < .01$ ), and perceived supervisor support ( $r = -.10, p < .05$ ), while men reported higher levels of turnover intention ( $r = .15, p < .01$ ), we followed recommendations by gender scholars (Messing et al., 2003) and ran supplementary analyses. In these analyses, we split the data based on gender and compared whether the results differed from those derived from the combined sample. The results showed that the interaction term for women was more negatively related to turnover intention ( $\beta = -.21, p < .01$ ) than for men ( $\beta = -.11, p = .08$ ).

This means that for women with high supervisory support, more autonomy leads to even lower levels of turnover intention than for men (with high supervisory support).

### General discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether the relationship between perceived job autonomy and turnover intention may be prone to contextual influences in the form of perceived supervisor support. In line with our hypothesis, the results from both our samples unveiled a negative relationship only for employees experiencing higher levels of perceived supervisor support. Hence, more autonomy leads to a lower level of turnover intention, only for employees with high supervisor support. Also, and in line with our predictions, a non-significant relationship was observed for employees with low levels of supervisor support. Our study contributes to research on perceived job autonomy by demonstrating a condition under which perceived job autonomy actually can predict turnover intention. More specifically, social characteristics (represented by perceived supervisor support in our study) seem to represent a condition for perceived job autonomy to effectively reduce turnover intention. High levels of perceived job autonomy represent specific uncertainties with respect to how employees perform in their jobs and their value and importance for the organization. Our results suggest that perceived supervisor support may provide affective care, recognition and consideration that aid resolving these ambiguities. Accordingly, our findings suggest that there may be more to social characteristics than merely additive explanatory power on turnover intention (Humphrey et al., 2007). This observation adds to recent theorizing (Grant, 2007; Grant & Parker, 2009) pointing to the need for incorporating social characteristics into theories of work design in order to understand their combined impact on employee outcomes more fully.



While some studies have found perceived job autonomy to directly influence employee turnover intention (e.g. Albrecht, 2006), our findings suggest this direct relationship may be less practically relevant since perceived job autonomy is only negatively related to turnover intention when perceived supervisor support is high. In addition, while research has previously found perceived supervisor support to directly relate to employee turnover (e.g. Eisenberger et al., 2002), our study extends these findings by investigating the moderating role of perceived supervisor support on a central tenet of work design; perceived job autonomy. This implies that perceived supervisor support may provide a more in-depth explanation of under which conditions perceived job autonomy relates to more distal and affective outcomes such as employee turnover intention. In addition, our findings suggest that perceived supervisor support is not only important for the implementation of HR-practices (e.g. Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010), but also for gaining additional benefits from perceived job autonomy.

In addition, it is interesting to note the high mean values for perceived job autonomy and perceived supervisor support in both study samples. The working conditions in Norway are regulated by the Working Environment Act issued by the Ministry of Labor in 1977 (Gustavsen, 1977) where employers are required to provide workers with a reasonable degree of freedom, opportunities for learning and career development, variation and meaningful content, recognition and social support, and to relate their work to the wider societal equation. These regulations are valid for both private and public companies in Norway. According to the European Working Conditions Survey (Parent-Thirion, Fernández Macías, Hurley, & Vermeulen, 2007) Norwegian employees experience among the highest levels of satisfaction with their working conditions among European countries. These conditions include aspects of work conditions perceived by employees such as job security, having good friends as colleagues at work, feeling “at home” in their employment organization, being provided with

opportunities for personal development, getting well paid for doing their job, and having good opportunities for career advancement.

A final observation derived from our study is that the interaction term between perceived job autonomy and perceived supervisor support was stronger for women than for men in the second study sample. This may imply that for women, perceived supervisor support is even more important for perceived job autonomy to negatively influence turnover intention. In line with Messing et al. (2003) this observation indicates that even within the same jobs - men and women have different experiences of the same jobsite (for instance, the level of supervisor support), and men and women differ in their responses to occupational exposure. Furthermore, gender differences may exist with respect to seeking social support<sup>i</sup>. Since gender stereotypes prescribe that women are less independent and more submissive than men, seeking and receiving emotional support may be more acceptable for women than for men. In contrast, a feature of the male gender role is competitiveness which inhibits disclosing vulnerabilities and admitting weakness (Verdonk et al., 2010). Furthermore, men are more often encouraged than women to solve problems, including their own. Giving or receiving instrumental or informational support seems therefore be more in line with masculinity than giving or receiving emotional support in times of stress.

Still, compelling meta-analytic evidence suggests marginal gender differences with respect to turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000). Also, meta-analyses on leadership styles of women and men find no significant differences between women and men with respect to individual consideration (which share many similarities with perceived supervisor support) (Eagly, Johannessen-Schmidt, & Van Engen, 2003). Finally, the relatively small number of women and men in our second study sample suggests that this finding should be interpreted with caution. Future studies are therefore warranted before more firm conclusions may be drawn.

### *Limitations and directions for future research*

The results derived in our study should be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, as the data for both studies were gathered at one point in time, it is impossible to draw inferences of causality or rule out the possibility of reverse causality. Consequently, longitudinal or experimental studies are needed in order to approach causality inferences more closely on the relationships examined in the present study. Beyond conducting similar studies with longitudinal designs, an interesting avenue for future research would be to investigate alternative moderators on the relationship between perceived job autonomy and turnover intention. For instance, organizational commitment and justice perceptions have been found to moderate the relationship between perceptions of supportive HR-practices and employee outcomes (Kuvaas, 2008). This may suggest that similar influences could be unveiled on the relationships between perceived job autonomy and employee outcomes than that of perceived supervisor support. Furthermore, future studies could include a broader array of the job characteristics model than merely focusing on perceived job autonomy in order to investigate whether other core job characteristics are prone to similar influences by perceived supervisor support. In addition, future research could investigate the same relationships as in our study in highly autonomous work settings such as within virtual teams (Cascio, 1998), where perceived supervisor support or co-worker support may be even more crucial for maintaining turnover intention at low levels. Also, given the nature of the labour laws imposed in Norway, future studies should be conducted in other cultural settings in order to see whether our results may be generalized.

The sole reliance on self-report data may limit the validity of our findings. In attempting to alleviate problems associated with the use of self-report data we undertook several procedural remedies such as separating the scale items for the predictors and the criterion variable (Podsakoff et al., 2003), and by ensuring the anonymity of the respondents (Chan, 2009). In

addition, since employee turnover intention represented the dependent variable in this study it seems less likely that data from other sources should be able to provide accurate descriptions of this variable (Conway & Lance, 2010). Furthermore, it is unlikely for common method bias to produce statistically significant interactions (e.g. Siemsen, Roth, & Oliveira, 2010). Finally, a potential limitation of our study is the lack of information with respect to actual turnover among the respondents given the cross-sectional design. Nevertheless, Griffeth et al. (2000) found turnover intention to be among the strongest predictors of actual turnover, which suggests that turnover intention represent an acceptable proxy for actual turnover in our study.

#### *Implications for practice*

If the associations between perceived job autonomy, perceived supervisor support, and turnover intention represent causal relationships, our results may have important implications for managers when concerned with the implementation of work design strategies.

On the more challenging side for organizations, despite the numerous beneficial outcomes organizations may obtain from perceived job autonomy among their employees, it seems perceived supervisor support represents a necessity for perceived job autonomy to effectively reduce employees' turnover intention. On the more positive side, perceived supervisor support may contribute to an additional benefit from perceived job autonomy for employees in making them less prone to think about leaving the organization. Since the associations between perceived supervisor support (PSS) and turnover intention were consistently negative in both study samples, this suggests PSS is negatively associated with turnover intention (i.e. the higher PSS, the lower turnover intention). To foster employees' experience of supervisor support, providing employees with a say in problems and concerns is vital. This can be facilitated by way of practices such as suggestion systems, formal grievance procedures, and frequent interactions between supervisors and employees in order to foster trust, fairness,

consistency, respect, and openness. In addition, open communication by providing regular feedback and be clear with respect to expectations is crucial to promote PSS. Finally, providing recognition and praise is essential for employees to feel useful, having a purpose at work, and being recognized for their work (Gentry, Kuhnert, Mondore, & Page, 2007). In sum, our study emphasise the importance of line managers that are perceived by employees to value their contributions and care about their well-being for broadening the impact of job autonomy on employee outcomes. We therefore add to prior recommendations in that organizations would benefit from being highly selective when promoting or recruiting to line manager positions and advise them to select candidates with a genuine interest in people, rather than solely with technical expertise in order to get the most out of their employees (e.g. Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010; O'Reilly III & Pfeffer, 2000; Purcell, Kinnie, Swart, Rayton, & Hutchinson, 2009).

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Scale Reliabilities for Study 1*

	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
1.	Age <sup>a</sup>	2.83	1.11	-				
2.	Education <sup>b</sup>	4.14	0.79	.15*	-			
3.	Perceived job autonomy	3.90	0.76	.07	.08	(.94)		
4.	Perceived supervisor support	3.86	1.01	-.02	-.01	.41**	(.92)	
5.	Turnover intention	2.55	1.13	-.25**	.02	-.23**	-.40**	(.89)

Note. Coefficient alphas are displayed on the diagonal. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

<sup>a</sup> Age: 1 = 'Between 20 and 29 years'; 5 = 'Between 60 and 69 years'

<sup>b</sup> Education: 1 = 'Primary and lower secondary school'; 5 = 'Graduate studies'

Table 2

*Results of Regression Analyses for Study 1*

	<b>Turnover intention</b>			
	<b>Step 1</b>	<b>Step 2</b>	<b>Step 3</b>	<b>Step 4</b>
Age <sup>a</sup>	-.26***	-.24***	-.26***	-.25***
Education <sup>b</sup>	.05	.07	.06	.09
Perceived job autonomy		-.22**	-.06	-.10
Perceived supervisor support			-.38***	-.41***
Perceived job autonomy × Perceived supervisor support				-.15*
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.056	.098	.216	.230
ΔR <sup>2</sup>		.046	.120	.017
F	7.542**	9.010***	16.204***	14.176***
ΔF		11.242**	33.726***	4.899*

Standardized regression coefficients are shown; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup> Age: 1 = 'Between 20 and 29 years'; 5 = 'Between 60 and 69 years'

<sup>b</sup> Education: 1 = 'Primary and lower secondary school'; 5 = 'Graduate studies'

Table 3

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Scale Reliabilities for Study 2</i>							
1. Gender <sup>a</sup>	1.62	-	-				
2. Age	41.65	8.55	.05	-			
3. Perceived job autonomy	3.84	0.79	-.18**	.12*	(.94)		
4. Perceived supervisor support	3.68	0.63	-.10*	.04	.43**	(.91)	
5. Turnover intention	2.37	1.07	.15**	-.12*	-.32**	-.40**	(.87)

*Note.* Coefficient alphas are displayed on the diagonal; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .  $N$  varies between 393 and 458 due to missing values.

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<sup>a</sup> Gender: 1 = 'Female'; 2 = 'Male'.



Table 4

*Results of Regression Analyses for Study 2*

	<b>Turnover intention</b>			
	<b>Step 1</b>	<b>Step 2</b>	<b>Step 3</b>	<b>Step 4</b>
Gender <sup>a</sup>	.11*	.06	.06	.06
Age	-.13*	-.09	-.09*	-.10*
Perceived job autonomy		-.30***	-.15**	-.17**
Perceived supervisor support			-.33**	-.35***
Perceived job autonomy × Perceived supervisor support				-.14*
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.022	.103	.188	.202
ΔR <sup>2</sup>		.083	.086	.016
F	5.390**	16.050***	23.687***	20.899***
ΔF		36.391***	41.576***	8.028**

*Note.* Standardized regression coefficients are shown; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .  $N = 393$  due to listwise deletion of missing values.

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<sup>a</sup> Gender: 1 = 'Female'; 2 = 'Male'.

## Appendix

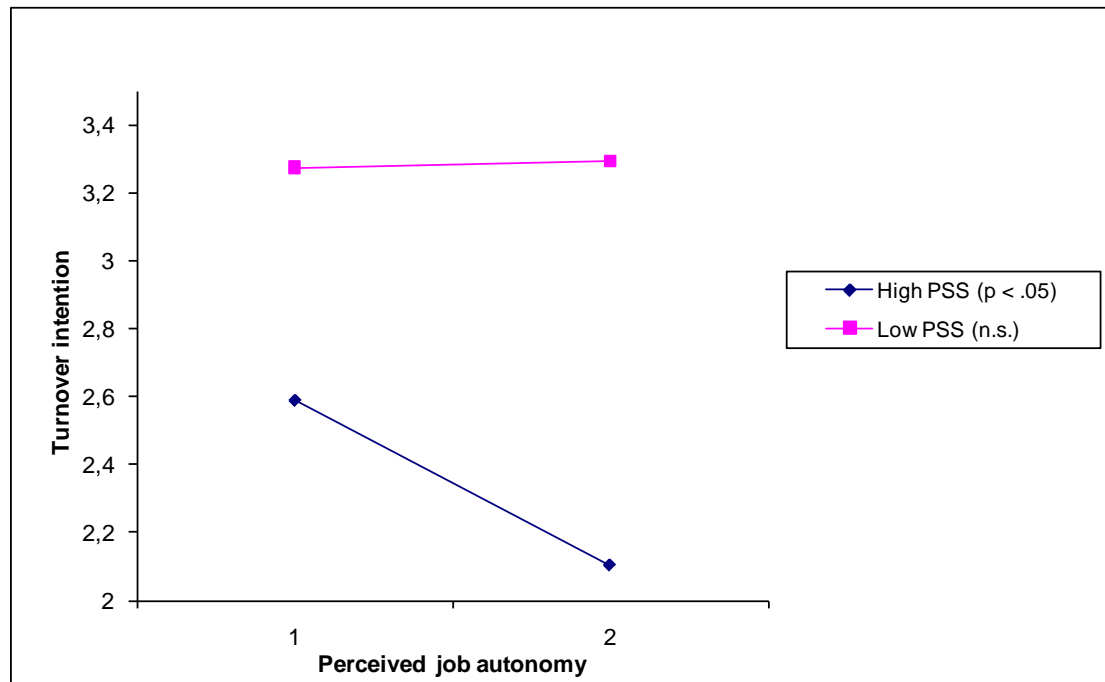
*Principal Component Analysis with Promax Rotation for Study 1*

Items	AUT	TI	PSS
AUT6: The job provides me with significant autonomy in making decisions	<b><u>.88</u></b>		
AUT9: The job allows me to decide on my own how to go about doing my work	<b><u>.87</u></b>		
AUT7: The job allows me to make decisions about what methods I use to complete my work	<b><u>.85</u></b>		
AUT3: The job allows me to plan how I do my work	<b><u>.85</u></b>		
AUT8: The job gives me considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do the work	<b><u>.84</u></b>		
AUT2: The job allows me to decide on the order in which things are done on the job	<b><u>.83</u></b>		
AUT1: The job allows me to make my own decisions about how to schedule my work	<b><u>.81</u></b>		
AUT5: The job allows me to make a lot of decisions on my own	<b><u>.79</u></b>		
AUT4: The job gives me a chance to use my personal initiative or judgement in carrying out the work	<b><u>.72</u></b>		
TI3: I will probably look for a new job in the next year		<b><u>.93</u></b>	
TI5: I will likely actively look for a new job within the next three years		<b><u>.91</u></b>	
TI1: I often think about quitting my present job		<b><u>.82</u></b>	
TI2: I may quit my present job during the next twelve months		<b><u>.76</u></b>	
TI4: I do not see many prospects for the future in this organization		<b><u>.72</u></b>	
PSS2: My work supervisor really cares about my well-being			<b><u>.98</u></b>
PSS3: My supervisor strongly considers my goals and values			<b><u>.91</u></b>
PSS1: My supervisor cares about my opinions			<b><u>.87</u></b>
PSS4: My supervisor shows very little concern for me (reverse scored)			<b><u>-.81</u></b>
Eigenvalues	7.71	3.46	1.99
% of variance	42.82	19.23	11.08

Factor loadings less than .30 are not shown; **bold and underlined loadings included in the final scales**; AUT = perceived job autonomy; TI = turnover intention; PSS = perceived supervisor support.

Figure 1

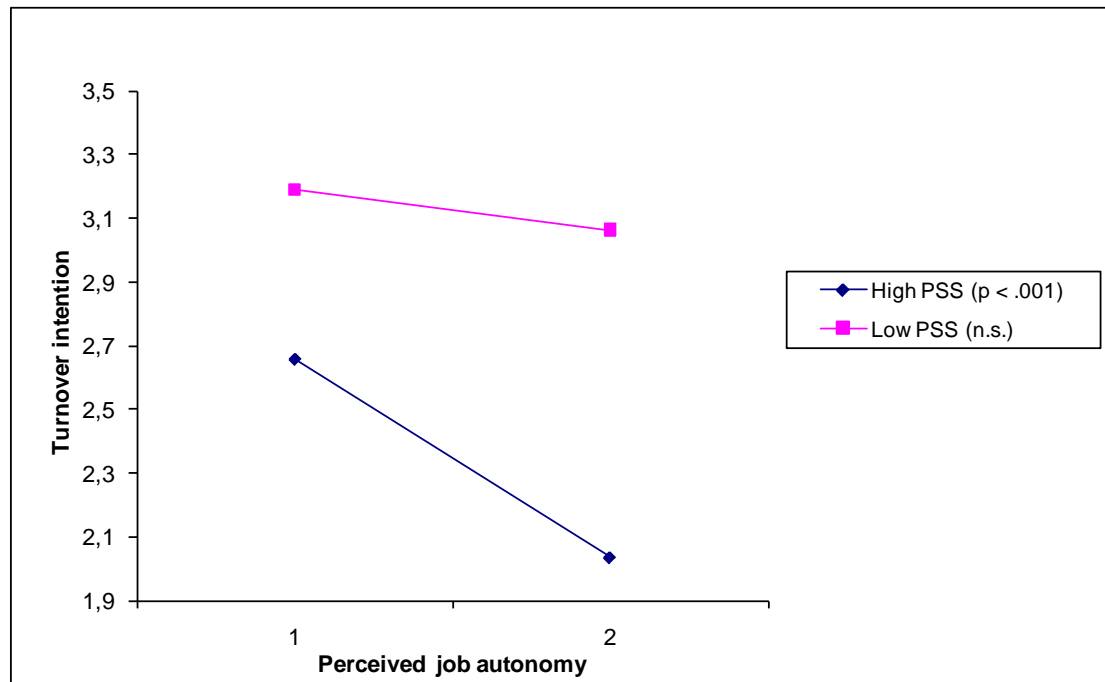
*The Moderating Role of Perceived Supervisor Support on the Relationship between Perceived Job Autonomy<sup>1</sup> and Turnover Intention in Study 1*



<sup>1</sup> Perceived Job Autonomy: One standard deviation below the mean = '1'; One standard deviation above the mean = '2'.

Figure 2

*The Moderating Role of Perceived Supervisor Support on the Relationship between Perceived Job Autonomy<sup>1</sup> and Turnover Intention in Study 2*



<sup>1</sup> Perceived Job Autonomy: One standard deviation below the mean = '1'; One standard deviation above the mean = '2'.

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## Footnotes

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