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Factors that contributes the willingness to stay in organisations

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Abstract: The competitive context of globalisation is arising some complex issues for companies. One of the main problems is high turnover rates, which are negatively affecting organisations' results. The willingness to stay in a company can be affected by numerous variables and, understanding these variables can be crucial for the sustainability of any business. This research aims to address and measure willingness to stay within a company, understand if and how much it is influenced by organisational culture, specifically by commitment, happiness, justice and loyalty. Using survey data from 284 active workers, the results reveal that willingness to stay is positively influenced by organisational commitment, organisational happiness and, organisational

loyalty. Although organisational justice does not directly affect willingness to stay, it acts as a mediator in the other three variables, revealing an indirect relationship between organisational justice and willingness to stay established through organisational commitment, organisational happiness and organisational loyalty.

Keywords: organisational commitment; organisational happiness; organisational justice; organisational loyalty; willingness to stay.

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1 Introduction

Business research have studied the relationship between turnover and organisational performance for decades (Revilla et al., 2020) and how this impact directly the results and performance of companies since “organizations with high employee retention rates enjoy excellence in service design and delivery which is imperative to attain the organizational sustainability goals” [Mannan and Kashif, (2019), p.22]. Turnover intentions are directly influenced by the employee’s perception of the organisation since “in a supportive work environment, employees are more likely to develop favourable attitudes toward the workplace and are less likely to quit their job” [Phungsoonthorn and Charoensukmongkol, (2019), p.196].

The literature supports that the concept of willingness to stay within a company can be influenced by numerous factors such as work conditions, work-life balance, development opportunities, relationships with co-workers, performance, awards (Andrade and Westover, 2019; Arani and Fayyazi, 2022) which gives this research important insights when predicting how some values, if practiced by companies, can have a positive impact on the turnover rates and, consequently, on the success of the organisation as a whole. The relation between a strong organisational culture and the desire of staying in a certain organisation has been proved by numerous research (Rao and Kunja, 2019; Chou et al., 2023), but the factors that contribute to development of organisational culture have not been explored enough in the literature. The present investigation emerges as an attempt to fulfil this gap and seeks to understand how much certain qualitative factors have on an employee’s perspective or desire to remain in the present organisation.

In order to achieve this objective, we start with a review of the existing literature regarding organisational commitment, organisational happiness, organisational justice, and organisational loyalty. The literature review will be the basis to enunciate some hypothesis and construct a questionnaire. After conducting the questionnaire, we’ll analyse the data obtained and cross the various variables. To finish, we’ll discuss the results, elaborate some conclusions regarding the findings, mentioning the limitations of the study and make suggestions for future studies as well.

2 Literature review

In order to being able to provide a scientific and consistent conclusion to the research question, it is necessary to clarify the boundaries of the pillar concepts related with willingness to stay in an organisation. For the purpose of this investigation, the four factors chosen to determine willingness to stay are: organisational commitment; organisational happiness; organisational justice; and organisational loyalty. As such, this

study contributes to the literature because it shows organisational justice acting as a mediator agent to willingness to stay. Furthermore, organisational justice was found to positively influence organisational commitment, organisational happiness and organisational loyalty that, then are positively correlated with willingness to stay. Another contribution is the fact that organisational justice does not directly impact willingness to stay but has the capacity to affect positively other variables and, consequently, impact indirectly willingness to stay.

2.1 Organisational commitment

The definition of organisational commitment evolved along with organisations to face technological developments, with direct implications on human capital management. Porter et al. (1976) define organisational commitment as “relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization”. Deconstructing organisational commitment into three simpler factors:

- 1 “a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization’s goals and values
- 2 a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization
- 3 a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization” [Mowday et al., (1979), p.226].

By contrast, Stevens et al. (1978) suggests that organisational commitment can be divided in two categories:

- 1 exchange approaches that “view commitment as an outcome of inducement/contribution transactions between the organization and member, with an explicit emphasis on the instrumentalities of membership as the primary determinant of the member’s accrual of advantage or disadvantage in the ongoing process of exchange”
- 2 psychological approaches that describe “commitment as a more active and positive orientation toward the organization” [Morris and Sherman, (1981), p.514].

According to the authors previously mentioned, the definition of organisational commitment is assumed as the phenomenon where “committed individuals tend to identify with the objectives and goals of their organizations and want to remain with their organizations”. Moreover, commitment in an organisational environment has also been associated with outcomes like satisfaction, performance, and reduced turnover [Hunt et al. (1989), p.81]. Organisational commitment can also be considered as a three-dimensional concept:

- 1 the affective component of organisational commitment related to the employee’s emotional attachment to the organisation
- 2 the continuance component refers to the costs when an employee leaves the organisation
- 3 the normative component related to the feeling of obligation to remain with the organisation (Allen and Meyer, 1990).

2.2 Organisational happiness

Management ideology has been defending that a happy employee is a productive employee since some researchers have reasons to believe that happiness and performance can be connected (Ledford, 1999). Researchers were keen to accept this since it would “relieves us of any guilt we might feel for theory and research that otherwise would make us feel like an unwitting tool of either management or labour”. Although, the author defends that “it is pointless to try to make employees happier as a way of improving performance”, eliminating the arguments that increased happiness results in better performance [Ledford, (1999), p.27]. On the contrary, Ramlall (2008, p.1582) defends “that the way people see their work is highly predictive of their own individual thriving and has positive implications for groups and organizations where they belong”. According to this author, organisational happiness should be one of the main concerns for leaders and managers at their own organisations.

Although, this idea has changed across time, nowadays, one of the biggest concerns from managers and leaders regarding organisational culture is employees’ well-being since happy employees produce more and take fewer sick days. Organisations are now devoting “considerable organizational resources to enhancing employee well-being in various ways, from professional development and employee recognition practices to healthcare benefits” (Grant et al., 2007).

2.3 Organisational justice

Organisational justice it is complex to define since it involves an abstract level of perception, and managers not always have been concerned with it. Lately, there has been an effort from managers to acknowledge justice issues within organisations since it has increased “the importance of the ideals of justice as a basic requirement for the effective functioning of organizations and the personal satisfaction of the individuals they employ” [Greenberg, (1990), p.399]. However, acknowledging the broader sense of such a subjective concept involves diverse approaches. Greenberg (1990) presents a dual understanding of justice when he suggests distinguishing between two conceptualisations of justice: one that is focused on content like “the fairness of the end achieved with distributive justice approaches”; and another one focused on process like the fairness of the means used to achieve those ends, considered procedural justice approaches. Although justice is commonly related with specific situations, it is often used in organisations’ environment related issues, and correlates directly with the role of fairness towards employees. Moorman (1991, p.845) states that “organizational justice is concerned with the ways in which employees determine if they have been treated fairly in their jobs and the ways in which those determinations influence other work-related variables”.

Most of the times, it is upon the employees to consider if the organisation actions have been fair and, consequently, their attitudes and behaviours are heavily influenced by this perception. “Employees often rely on fairness perceptions to decide whether management is trustworthy, non-biased, and will treat them as legitimate members of the organization”. Since this perception is built on personal experiences, these authors believe that “justice concerns are largely self-interested in that the pursuit of self-focused justice protects individuals’ outcomes and provides evidence of their status and standing within the organization” [Rupp et al., (2006), p.538].

2.4 *Organisational loyalty*

Researchers have been defending for several years that a loyal worker is a good employee and contributes to the success of the organisation (Jauch et al., 1978). Normally, as a consequence of the loyalty shown to the company, these employees are more likely to be promoted since “loyalty in business organizations is a primary criterion for promotion to top management”. Although this premise has been questioned lately since “recent findings about loyalty in research organizations raise a serious question of whether the relationship between organizational loyalty and other variables such as productivity is simple and linear” [Jauch et al., (1978), p.85] or if there are other variables that need to be taken into account.

More recently, organisations have been paying more attention to organisational loyalty since researchers started noticing that organisational loyalty correlated with positive outcomes such as job satisfaction, low turnover, and high organisational commitment (Salanova et al., 2005).

Hoffmann (2006, p.2315) defends that organisational loyalty “has two components: an emotional/affective component and a goal allegiance component”. Both components are pertinent when generating commitment to the organisation in a cost-benefit consequence if the employee decides to leave. For Hirschman (1970), if an employee is unhappy with the current organisation, has only two options:

- 1 exit: just leave the firm
- 2 voice it: express the dissatisfaction to the relevant authority and wait to see if the issue is handled.

3 **Hypothesis development**

Aligned with the topic of this research, which aims to, among others, establish a scientific relationship between willingness to stay and organisational commitment, organisational happiness, organisational justice, and organisational loyalty, it is essential to address the importance of our hypothesis. In order to validate this research question we purpose to evaluate the validity of the four proposed research questions, which are duly described in the purposed research model and are consequently theoretically framed in order to address its academic validity and relevance.

3.1 *Organisational commitment and willingness to stay*

The actual context of gig economies and more flexible working models is threatening the relevance of organisational commitment (Paul et al., 2019) since employees now have more opportunities, some of them are not afraid of changing jobs and other ones really want to try different companies instead remaining on the same one for years. Despite the number of research stressing the importance generating organisational commitment within companies to diminish the levels of turnover, the numbers are still high in a lot of organisations (Albalawi et al., 2019). Previous research concluded that organisation commitment is generated through a social exchange between the employee and the organisation. “Individuals try to gain rewards such as social acceptance or economic gain, engage in actions that are likely to lead to future favours, trust that others will

reciprocate, and respond positively to others (individuals and organizations) who treat them well” [Vora and Kostova, (2019), p.88]. One way to reciprocate these kinds of actions is developing commitment towards the company, which means employees will stay if they feel rewarded in some instances.

As individuals, career play a meaningful part regarding purpose and occupational meaning. Research suggests that “jobs with motivating characteristics, such as providing feedback and autonomy, would lead to autonomous work motivation” which implicates that motivated employees are correlated with higher levels of commitment [Ju, (2020), p.5]. Employees that are engaged with their own work, consequently, develop a sense of commitment towards the organisation. Khan (1990) defines work engagement as individuals that are “physically, cognitively, and emotionally invested in the work role” who tend to “experience more positive work affect and put forth greater effort, innovation, and creativity on behalf of the organization than their less engaged counterparts” [Weer and Greenhaus, (2020), p.4]. When an employee is engaged with the organisation, its energy is focused on achieving the organisation’s goals.

Organisational commitment studies originated the concept of affective organisational commitment (AOC) that “has been established as a consistent predictor of organizational outcomes such as job performance and turnover” [Tang and Vandenberghe, (2020a), p.3]. The concept of AOC is relevant since it considers the emotional bond that an individual can establish with the organisation which can result in a strong desire to contribute to the organisation’s achievements. “Employees with high AOC embrace their responsibilities broadly and may get overwhelmed” (Tang and Vandenberghe, 2020b). Organisational commitment can also lead to intrapreneurial behaviour among individuals since “providing an entrepreneurial environment in companies strengthens organizational commitment” including the affective relationship that one can develop with the organisation itself (Moghaddas et al., 2020). Management also plays an important role since the managers are the ones dealing with employees on a daily basis. How a company manages its own talent is fundamental to maintain the commitment feeling among employees since the relationship between the two parts impacts, not only on the compromise towards the organisation, but also produces positives outcomes regarding innovation and performance (Meyers, 2020).

The bond of commitment is also developed through social pressure – both before and after an individual is hired by the organisation. “After being hired by an organization, there is formal and informal socialization and pressure to bond to the organization” [Nalla et al., (2020), p.3]. When this phenomenon is happening, it is possible that individual act in the organisation’s best interest instead of their own due to a moral obligation that one might feel to repay the organisation for the opportunity or the job itself (Nalla et al., 2020). The concept of organisational commitment can be explained simply as “a way of accounting for people’s willingness to maintain organizational membership” [Husted, (2020), p.5]. It’s related with the personal identification of ab individual towards the organisation itself which implicates a social mechanism of control embedded in the value of commitment (Husted, 2020). In conclusion, commitment is a powerful way of manipulating the individual to the point of view of the organisation, making it harder to leave (Salancik, 1977; Dias and Silva, 2021).

Based on the previous comments, organisational commitment is one of the aspects to take into account when referring to the employee’s perception of the organisation and their willingness to stay within it. “Affective commitment mediates the positive relationship between high-performance HR practice perceptions and intent to remain with

the organization” [Xiu et al., (2019), p.285]. Employees who perceive favourable the organisations, are more bonded and it is less likely that they will show intentions of leaving. Thus, we hypothesise:

- H1 Willingness to stay is positively related with the degree of organisational commitment.

3.2 Organisational happiness and willingness to stay

Organisational happiness is more important than one could imagine since it impacts directly both personal and company wise since happy people are more confident and willing to pursue goals (Teixeira and Vasque, 2020). Although, it can be hard for organisations to tackle all issues related with happiness since is “a predominantly subjective phenomenon, which tends to be more subordinated to psychological and sociocultural traits than to external factors” [Teixeira and Vasque, (2020), p.4] which means than happiness can be the overall perception of one’s life.

Employees with high levels of HAW (happiness at work) are capable of doing more in less time, which impacts directly the productivity which also implicates that a positive mindset at work is fundamental to establish sustainable work relationships, develop technical skills and increase the quality of communication between peers. “Happier employees are willing to give their best in an emotional state of passion and involvement, thus better exploiting their skills” [Salas-Vallina et al., (2020), p.3]. These authors also reinforce the idea that organisations concerned with HAW should promote learning opportunities within the work routine since it is important to invest in the development of employees’ skills (Salas-Vallina et al., 2020).

The fact that the term ‘happiness’ has a philosophical essence increases the difficulty of defining what is, in fact, organisational happiness. The boundaries are fuzzy, and one might find it difficult to understand if the context is the right one. Psychological literature concludes that expressions such as (subjective) well-being, quality of life or satisfaction can be “considered to be loosely synonymous with happiness”. Although, and taking into account that work is an occupational reality, ‘job satisfaction’ seems to be a consensual equivalent to organisational happiness [Bednárová-Gibová, (2020), p.4].

The main responsibility of the HAW lies on the managers or supervisors. “Managers now view themselves as having a responsibility for the wellbeing, and even happiness of workers, outside of the normal parameters of things like health and safety” [Owler and Morrison, (2020), p.136]. Within quantitative research, fun at work promoted by organisations has been found to impact businesses, since the concept of ‘fun’ seems to be aligned with HAW since it affects positively both employee’s productivity and wellbeing (Owler and Morrison, 2020). Another aspect to consider regarding organisational happiness is the fact that managers can impact the happiness of each employee, so they need to maintain a balance between demanding effective productivity and asking for way too many tasks. Some authors alert that “a high level of job demands decreased employee happiness, which subsequently decreased employees’ organizational commitment, task performance, and contextual performance, while increasing turnover intentions and counterproductive work behaviours” [Thompson and Bruk-Lee, (2020), p.1].

HAW includes both pleasant judgements and experiences while spending time at the organisations. Some authors defend that the affective component is a balance between positive and negative effects in the work context and both negative and positive

experiences can have different levels of intensity. “When it comes to the cognitive component of happiness at work, it reflects a person’s appraisal of one’s job in general evaluative judgments and beliefs about various facets of his/her work” [Basinska and Rozkwitalska, (2020), p.3]. The conclusion of these authors is quite straightforward: an individual is committed to a job that brings him/her satisfaction and might quit a dissatisfying one. Some researchers consider that happiness can be referred to as subjective well-being, including negative emotions not found in happiness such as anger and sadness, while other researchers defend that happy individuals normally experience more success than less happy individuals, and vice-versa since successful individuals at work will be happier than unsuccessful ones (Edmondson and Matthews, 2020).

The idea that a happy worker is a productive worker has been around since 1930s when it was highlighted the importance of groups since “the behaviour of individuals at work strongly contributed to the generalized belief that a happy worker is more productive” [García-Buades et al., (2020), p.1]. Although, some authors are now considering this correlation as weak since the performance can also be affected by commitment, engagement or external factors. Satisfaction and performance can be an illusory correlation because unhappy workers can be productive and committed to the job while it is possible that happy employees might not fulfil their tasks at their best.

Organisations should ensure that employees feel happy at work since it will increase the effectiveness of their tasks and promote a healthier environment between peers and managers. “Happy employees not only affect their own psychological aspects but also the organizational performance”. Also, when a company can promote happiness within the work force, the turnover rates will decrease. Adequate measures can be implemented since promoting organisational happiness “help improve their lifelong service expectancy in the organization” [Isa and Atim, (2019), p.2].

Although organisations and “leaders cannot make anyone happy, yet they can champion human well-being by providing and supporting evidence-based, every day, self-care and lifestyle habits, and behavioural-health practices” [Wheaton et al., (2019), p.2], they can create and implement measures that produce happiness within the company. The effectiveness of these measures is proved, and a happy employee is a more productive employee. The success of any organisation is directly linked to the impact of a positive organisational happiness so “it is important for organizations to ensure that the employees are able to remain loyal and continue working in the organizations” [Isa et al., (2019), p.1].

Based on these assumptions, we posit that if employees believe that their efforts are not appreciated or the organisation is not fulfilling its promises, they might start developing feelings of dissatisfaction that will, very likely, be shown through their performance or lack of interest on their daily tasks. These kind of “negative emotions including dissatisfaction with the present job situation and concerns about their future with the organization” [De Clercq et al., (2019), p.386] which means that an unhappy employee will leave the organisation easily. Thus, we hypothesise:

H2 Willingness to stay is positively related with the degree of organisational happiness.

3.3 Organisational justice and willingness to stay

Recently, organisational justice is gaining importance since previous research defend that organisational justice is as crucial concept in modern organisations. In fact,

organisational justice concerns, not only employees, but also management and leadership since each individual has its own set of experiences and perceptions about what is going on within the organisation, so it is important for both workers and organisations' wellbeing (Costa et al., 2021). "Improve organizational justice may have a direct and positive effect on the performance and sustainability of any organization" [Akram et al., (2020), p.1].

Organisational justice needs to be perceived as 'a multidimensional construct' that is impacted by everything from salary to treatment by managers or supervisors. It's much more than a simple process, it is a personal "judgment made by an employee about fairness of outcome distribution, processes in allocating outcomes and interpersonal relationships at the workplace" [Mengstie, (2020), p.2]. While some authors consider organisational justice as crucial construct considered to shape people's willingness to cooperate, other emphasises the fact that employees are becoming more aware about all the events going on within the organisations and that can have repercussions in their actions since employees react to "actions and decisions made by organizations every day" and "perceptions of unjust and unfair treatment can strongly influence individual behaviour" which impacts both individual behaviour and organisational performance [Demmke, (2020), p.10].

Measures of organisational justice should be taken seriously by companies since the outcomes regarding productivity and commitment to the organisation can depend on them. Some authors defend this idea that "when employees believe that performance appraisal systems are inaccurate or unfair, they are unlikely to take them seriously" and the consequences can be hurtful for the company itself since employees "effectiveness as a means of improving employee engagement and productivity are of limited value" [Gu et al., (2020), p.4].

Organisational justice can be divided into three dimensions:

- 1 distributive justice
- 2 procedural justice
- 3 interactional justice.

Distributive justice is related to salaries, compensations and the "employees' feeling that the organization that they are part of is treating them fairly in terms of its allocation of rewards such as wages, incentives, goods, and benefits". Procedural justice is directly concerned with the perceived fairness of the procedures used in making decisions which means that employees will develop a sense of fairness or unfairness regarding decisions taken within the company. Interactional justice is directly correlated with the quality of communication that goes along on the organisation's routines and "the employees' perceptions of the quality of interpersonal treatment they receive during the enactment of organizational procedures" (Donglong et al., 2020).

Organisational justice is the concept of analysing and applying the classic prescripts of justice to an organisation's reality. It's the manager duty to be fair in every situation, to avoid misunderstandings and do not interfere with employees' wellbeing or performance. "Employees regard performance appraisal results as unfair if they are perceived to be aimed at satisfying the supervisor's personal preferences and concerns, rather than attempting to objectively evaluate employee performance". Although, the perception can be quite different if one perceives "that the supervisor is using the appraisal to try to teach

them or motivate them, then outcomes are generally considered to be fair” [Graso et al., (2020), p.4].

Decisions perceived as unfair can take a huge toll on both employees and organisations. These consequences are normally erratic behaviours that “may include any deliberate negative action and behaviour by employees that may threaten other organizational members and violate the norms and standards of the organization” [Haldorai et al., (2020), p.2]. Concluding, organisational justice is the perceived fairness in the workplace by an employee that can provide long-term cognitive, emotional and behavioural positive outcomes (Haldorai et al., 2020). It’s a notion that shall be present and, preferably, as a natural process, in all the decisions made within organisations.

The way organisational justice is perceived by employees is crucial for the sustainability of every organisation that wants to thrive through the years. Organisational justice can be defined as one’s “sense of the more propriety on how they are treated” by one’s employers. When employees perceive justice and fairness within the company, they will trust the managers and will be committed. On the contrary, organisational justice within any company “is like a corrosive solvent that can dissolve bonds within the community and is hurtful to individual and harmful to the organization” [Pérez-Rodríguez et al., (2019), p.1] and the employee will be keener to leave the company and pursue a fairer environment.

Organisational justice is crucial to “achieve organizational harmony and heightened productivity” [Bansal, (2019), p.438] and it is quite important for a company since a unfair decision has the capacity to affect more than one person. If a measure is considered unjust by a group of workers, the disaffection can disseminate, and the company will be in trouble regarding commitment and performance. When employees feel they are treated fairly, they will show positive organisational attitudes like respecting others and collaborating to resolve problems (Pereira et al., 2021). This is also important since “interpersonal justice has been considered as a key component in enhancing performance, respect, and dignity” [Fernández-Salinero et al., (2019), p.2] which means that there’s a sense of solidarity among peers and, one unfair decision, even if does not affect a group, can be taken as such and the whole company can be affected.

The employees’ performance whether in a conscious way or not is influenced by the perception of each employee regarding organisational justice in terms of rewards, promotions, equity. This perception will be crucial when it is time to reciprocate. If employees believe that the organisation is being fair, their enjoyment to the job will be higher. On the other side, “unfair decisions in any work environment negatively affect engagement and retention” and organisational injustice will generate “adverse outcomes like increased employee turnover” [Rai et al., (2019), p.268]. Thus, we hypothesise:

H3 Willingness to stay is positively related with the degree of organisational justice.

3.4 Organisational loyalty and willingness to stay

Organisational loyalty is only positive if promotes positive behaviours as a way of generating organisational change and/or growth. Graham (1991) defines organisational loyalty as a characteristic that can be attributed to all individuals working within the organisation since they all should create identification with the organisation leaders and the organisation. This effect can be observed through behaviours such as “defending the organization against threats; contributing to its good reputation; and cooperating with

others to serve the interests of the whole” [Whiting et al., (2008), p.4]. Increased competition and disruptive innovation are putting tremendous pressure in all organisations that have to move fast in order to adapt to all these changes (Dias et al., 2023). Although new workplace opportunities are emerging, those are followed by other risks that were not taken into consideration until recently. These changes have made company engagement crucial topic when balancing the maximisation of profits and employees’ wellbeing. There is a growing need of understanding “how and why individuals become engaged in the workplace in order to drive both employee wellbeing and organisational outcomes” [Barreiro and Treglown, (2020), p.1] to maintain a stable and loyal relationship.

It’s expected that employees that are engaged with the organisation show signs of loyalty and identification, and even builds a psychological connection. When employees are connected “physically, cognitively, and emotionally with their work role, they are likely to identify with the organisation’s goals and values and devote their time to accomplishing these goals” [Mitonga-Monga, (2019), p.3].

Employees, who are engaged with the company, dedicate themselves to tasks, contribute positively to a good environment within the company, and “feel proud to be associated with the organisation, develop self-esteem from the affective bond with the employer, and display productive behaviours”. An engaged tends to feel valued, shows satisfaction with its job and is focused on maintaining the work relationship (Mitonga-Monga, 2019).

Employee engagement has direct impacts in performance “through increased productivity, job satisfaction and most importantly, organizational and industry loyalty” [George et al., (2020), p.2]. When an individual is not satisfied with its job, there are some behaviours that might start showing up such as miscommunication, neglect of the tasks, loyalty decrease and, or exit; although, some of these individuals might opt to do nothing and remain loyal to the company. There are employees who do not want to get in trouble or do not think it is worth speaking up so they “chose to remain silent if they are afraid that their managers might interpret their expressed concerns as negative or threatening or if they believed that taking action would not make a difference” [Lee and Varon, (2020), p.5].

Organisation loyalty also includes the willingness of an individual to wait for the organisation to recognise and address objectionable conditions or decisions. Employees become more attached when they perceive that the company’s values match their own, what instigating them to feel responsible for the organisation. They will feel like they can not leave because they do not want to harm the company. When this happens, we say that the organisational loyalty bond is established which has a huge impact since “the organization will be considered empowered and the employees will tend to move towards self-empowerment” [Moghaddas et al., (2020), p.3]. According to some authors, organisational loyalty can be defined as “the positive attitude of personnel to company’s management, which supposes emotional and rational evaluation and aspiration to maximum result of working activity in this organization” [Syanevets and Sudakova, (2019), p.1].

Loyalty is a working behaviour that can be developed, stimulated, and oscillate in terms of commitment from the employee towards the organisation. Although, can also be “characterized by law-abidingness and reliability, which is the basis for commitment to company’s values and goals” [Syanevets and Sudakova, (2019), p.2] which means that the responsibility is not entirely on the organisation – the individual also has to play its

part and invest time and effort establishing a healthy connection with the company. The importance of organisational loyalty cannot be stressed enough. Authors believe that employees engaged with the company, perform better, are happier and leave the organisation less. “Employees who feel satisfied from their work environment have higher level of motivation and they use all their skills to contribute to the mission of their organizations” [Yildiz et al., (2020), p.2]. The loyalty culture within a company it is important, both in an individual and collective perspective, since engaged employees will lead by example, promote innovation and it is likely that they will perform better. Also, loyal employees, when emotionally bind to the organisation, will contribute for lower rates of turnover.

The relationship established between employers and employees has been gaining more importance since companies realised that they need to keep their workers engaged and committed to avoid high rates of turnover and assure all the metrics regarding performance were being met. Commitment is important since employees will work more but so is loyalty because “employees who are highly engaged at work are less likely to take time off sick (absenteeism) or to look for work elsewhere (retention)”. Loyal employees are important because they are “committed to contributing towards their organization’s success and who believe that working for their current organization is their best option” [Al-Omar et al., (2019), p.1045].

This being said, we posit that organisational loyalty is essential to any company that wants to succeed because loyal employees “empathize with their management or the company as a whole” so they start looking at the business “their own and may even (to some extent) place the needs of the business above their own” [Shvetsova, (2016), p.2014]. Also, the turnover rates will decrease while productivity will rise. Although, organisational loyalty has to be developed from both parts, which means that, at some extent, employee shall put the interests of the company before their own. Some authors defend the idea of organisational loyalty as a win-win situation, claiming that “best form of loyalty is when both the company and its employees have mutual benefits” [Vuong et al., (2021), p.204]. Building employee loyalty is a process that every organisation should invest since it can be extremely rewarding in the end. Happy and committed employees become loyal employees and these can be extremely helpful since there is a “direct relationship between employee loyalty and a company’s growth and profitability” [Rishipal, (2019), p.430]. As such, we hypothesise:

- H4 Willingness to stay is positively related with the degree of organisational loyalty.
- H5a Organisational commitment mediates the relationship between willingness to stay and organisational justice.
- H5b Organisational happiness mediates the relationship between willingness to stay and organisational justice.
- H5c Organisational loyalty mediates the relationship between willingness to stay and organisational justice.

4 Methodology

4.1 Data collection and sample

We used a non-probabilistic sample, and the questionnaire was distributed through its publication and divulgation in social networks. The questionnaire was built and answered on the Google Forms platform. The target for the questionnaire was any person – currently employed or not – in Portugal, since the goal of the research was to be based on the Portuguese experience. Since the main language of the respondents is Portuguese, the questionnaire was distributed in the Portuguese language. The questionnaire was totally anonymous.

After questionnaire was built, we applied the pre-test validation. The pretesting purpose “is the use of a questionnaire in a small pilot study to ascertain how well the questionnaire works”. It’s crucial to present to questionnaire to a small group of people before publishing it since it needs validation and calibration. The feedback from the respondents of the pre-test is necessary since “no amount of intellectual exercise can substitute for testing an instrument designed to communicate with ordinary people” [Hunt et al., (1982), p.1].

According to some authors, “pretesting refers to testing the questionnaire on a small sample of respondents” and aims to identify aspects of the questionnaire that might raise doubts such as: instructions, ambiguous questions, wording. Based on feedback obtained, to potential problems “should be edited and the identified problems corrected” [Grover and Vriens, (2006), p.91]. The purposed questionnaire was applied to a sample of five participants with different academic and professional backgrounds and, different ages. This pre-test was sent directly to the participants email, who were given 72 hours to answer and provide feedback.

Between 18th August 2021 and 1st September were received 284 valid responses to the questionnaire. Regarding sociodemographic data, these are the characteristics of the sample.

Table 1 Sociodemographic data

<i>Gender</i>		<i>Age</i>	
Male	81%	20–29 years old	22.2%
Female	18.3%	30–39 years old	10.2%
Rather not answer	0.7%	40–49 years old	33.31%
		50–59 years old	31%
		Over 60 years old	3.5%
<i>Literary abilities (completed of finished)</i>		<i>Seniority in company</i>	
High school	29.2%	Less than 6 months	6.3%
Bachelor degree	39.8%	6 months–2 years	19%
Master degree	30.6%	2–5 years	14.1%
Doctoral degree	0.4%	Over 5 years	60.6%

4.2 Instrument and variables

The questionnaire had six different groups: four groups for each variable as in the literature review (organisational commitment, organisational happiness, organisational justice and organisational loyalty), a fifth one with questions regarding the willingness to stay, and the last one with the sociodemographic data. Each group had six questions, which resulted in a total of 36 questions through the whole questionnaire.

The organisational commitment group was based in the organisational commitment questionnaire (OCQ) created by Allen and Myer in 1990 who uses a three-component model to measure organisational commitment. Using this tool and inspired by Naqvi and Bashir's (2015) own questionnaire created by these authors when they were studying retention through organisational commitment, we came up with a total of six statements regarding commitment, necessity, and feeling of belonging within the organisation.

The organisational happiness group was inspired by the authors present in the literature review in Section 2.2 and considering the work of Wesarat et al. (2015) that created a matrix which helped them building a conceptual framework to measure happiness at the workplace. This group had a total of six statements regarding tasks, salary, work peers, management, function and the organisation itself.

The organisational justice group was inspired by the authors present in the literature review in Section 2.3 and considering the work of authors like Cropanzano et al. (2015) that came up with a table regarding justice rules within organisations while measuring justice and fairness within companies. This group had a total of six statements about internal procedures, decisions, ethics, and perception of results.

The organisational loyalty group was inspired by the authors present in the literature review in Section 2.4 and considering the work of authors like Murali et al. (2017) who developed a critical survey to evaluate employee loyalty towards an organisation taking performance into account. The six statements of this group are about loyalty, salary, performance and necessity of defending the organisation.

The willingness to stay group was based on the turnover intention scale developed by Bothma and Roodt (2013) and, the questions were adapted taking into account what we intended to measure with our dependent variables. Some of the questions were inspired by the work of Cho and Lewis (2012) who aimed to study turnover intention and turnover behaviour taking into account the conclusions obtained by Nazim (2008) when this author studied the factors affecting job satisfaction and turnover. The six statements of this group contemplate career perspective, intention to stay in the organisation, happiness and emotional connection.

The statements presented in the questionnaire were evaluated by using an odd-numbered Likert scale to measure attitude. "The concept of Likert appeared when researchers felt the need to measure attitude in a scientifically accepted and validated manner" (Joshi et al., 2015). An attitude is defined as a preferential way of behaving/reacting to a specific circumstance. To measure our variables, we used the standard format of a Likert scale that "consists of a series of statements to which a respondent is to indicate a degree of agreement or disagreement using the following options: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree" (Albaum, 1997). Given this, we established a five-point Likert-scale that ranged from 1 (disagree a lot) to 5 (agree a lot).

4.3 Results

When deciding how to test our conceptual model, we opted to use a structural equation modelling (SEM). Specifically, we used a partial least square (PLS), a variance-based SEM technique, by means of SmartPLS 3 software (Sarstedt et al., 2019).

The analysis and interpretation of the results followed a two-stage approach:

- 1 evaluation of the reliability and validity of the measurement model
- 2 assessment of the structural model.

The assess the quality of the measurement model, the individual indicators of reliability, convergent validity, internal consistency reliability, and discriminant validity were examined (Hair et al., 2017).

The results showed that the standardised factor loadings of all items were above 0.6 (with a minimum value of 0.66) and were all significant at $p < 0.001$, which provided evidence for the individual indicator reliability (Hair et al., 2017). Internal consistency reliability was confirmed because for all constructs Cronbach's alphas and composite reliability (CR) values surpassed the cut-off of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 2 CR, average variance extracted, correlations, and discriminant validity checks

<i>Latent variables</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>AVE</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Organisational commitment	0.814	0.870	0.572	0.756	0.669	0.770	0.596	0.941
Organisational happiness	0.819	0.874	0.582	0.561	0.763	0.923	0.817	0.742
Organisational loyalty	0.687	0.827	0.616	0.577	0.701	0.785	0.750	0.813
Organisational justice	0.931	0.947	0.749	0.524	0.729	0.603	0.865	0.586
Willingness to stay	0.745	0.855	0.663	0.741	0.589	0.583	0.489	0.814

Notes: α – Cronbach alpha; CR – composite reliability; AVE – average variance extracted. Bold numbers are the square roots of AVE. Below the diagonal elements are the correlations between the constructs. Above the diagonal elements are the HTMT ratios.

Convergent validity was also confirmed for three key reasons.

- 1 all items loaded positively and significantly on their respective constructs
- 2 all constructs had CR values higher than 0.7
- 3 as shown on Table 2, the average variance extracted (AVE) for all constructs exceed the threshold of 0.50 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988).

The results in Table 3 show that organisational commitment ($\beta = 0.559$, $p = 0.000$) has a significantly direct positive effect on willingness to stay. These results provide support for H1. The results in Table 3 show that organisational happiness ($\beta = 0.215$, $p < 0.01$) has a significantly direct positive effect on willingness to stay. These results provide support for H2. The results in Table 3 show that organisational justice ($\beta = -0.046$, $p = 0.474$) has a negative direct effect on willingness to stay. These results do not support H3. The results in Table 3 show that organisational loyalty ($\beta = 0.141$, $p < 0.05$) has a significantly direct positive effect on willingness to stay. These results provide support for H4.

Table 3 Structural model assessment

<i>Path</i>	<i>Path coefficient</i>	<i>Standard errors</i>	<i>t statistics</i>	<i>p values</i>
Organisational commitment → willingness to stay	0.559	0.043	13.089	0.000
Organisational happiness → willingness to stay	0.215	0.063	3.406	0.001
Organisational loyalty → willingness to stay	0.141	0.058	2.433	0.015
Organisational justice → organisational commitment	0.526	0.041	12.869	0.000
Organisational justice → organisational happiness	0.729	0.026	27.703	0.000
Organisational justice → organisational loyalty	0.603	0.039	15.503	0.000
Organisational justice → willingness to stay	-0.046	0.065	0.716	0.474

The results of Table 3 provide support for willingness to stay being positively affected by organisational commitment, organisational happiness and organisational loyalty but also show that organisational justice does not affect positively willingness to Stay. Although the results of Table 4 provide support for organisational justice being positively affected by organisational commitment, organisational happiness and organisational loyalty, making organisational justice a mediator variable. The results in Table 4 provide support for organisational justice, when acting as a mediator for organisational commitment, having a direct positive effect ($\beta = 0.294$, $\rho = 0.000$) on willingness to stay. These results provide support for H5a. The results in Table 4 provide support for organisational justice, when acting as a mediator for organisational happiness, having a direct positive effect ($\beta = 0.157$, $\rho < 0.01$) on willingness to stay. These results provide support for H5b. The results in Table 4 provide support for organisational justice, when acting as a mediator for organisational loyalty, having a direct positive effect ($\beta = 0.085$, $\rho < 0.05$) on willingness to stay. These results provide support for H5c. The results of Table 4 show organisational justice having an indirect effect on willingness to stay through the other variables (organisational commitment, organisational happiness and organisational loyalty).

Table 4 Bootstrap results for indirect effects

<i>Path</i>	<i>Path coefficient</i>	<i>Standard errors</i>	<i>t statistics</i>	<i>p values</i>
Organisational justice → organisational commitment → willingness to stay	0.294	0.034	8 561	0.000
Organisational justice organisational happiness → willingness to stay	0.157	0.047	3 372	0.001
Organisational justice → organisational loyalty → willingness to stay	0.085	0.035	2 428	0.015

5 Discussion

According to theory, organisational commitment is the bond created between employees and their organisations through time. Organisations that promote commitment are more likely to have better employee satisfaction, higher rates of performance, flexibility on employees' side and lower turnover will rates. Also, engaged workers are physically and

emotionally invested in the company and will work better towards the company goals. This relation was tested in H1, and the results proved that exists a positive and significant relation between organisational commitment and willingness to stay, which reinforces the idea that perceptions from employees are “positively associated with organizational commitment” [Lambert et al., (2017), p.3]. Companies who are able to instigate the sense of belong among their workers not only have better performers but, most important, will have the capacity to retain people in the organisation. When establishing a connection between organisational commitment and turnover, some contradicting conclusions have come up, resulting in two complete opposite arguments. According to Cavanaugh and Noe (1999), if an employee is committed, more career opportunities may arise and “as a result, stay a shorter period in the current organization” [Buhari et al., (2020), p.38]. Yousaf et al. (2015) contradict this idea proving that a professional can be both committed to the organisation and its own career and that do not implicate a lack of commitment towards the employer since “employees who are committed to the profession seek for opportunities in the current working place to further fulfil their professional goals; as a result, decision to leave the current organization is difficult” [Buhari et al., (2020), p.39].

A happy employee is a productive one, according to theory, which puts organisational happiness as one of the main concerns of organisations that want to assure the best performance possible. However, this concern is now shifting from performance to retainment since a happy employee would be less keen to leave the company. In H2 we tested this relation, and it was proved that willingness to stay is positively influenced by organisational justice, which means that companies should promote measures that promote happiness at work. As Fisher (2010) defends, job satisfaction should be a happiness related variable. Other researchers consider that happiness at work is crucial for employees’ well-being and organisations should promote positive feelings within the work hours since “the benefits for the organizations are highly significant” [Ramlall, (2008), p.1583]. We are aware of the complexity of defining boundaries regard happiness since it is such a complex concept but, it is on the best interest of organisations to pay attention to this variable since it is “a powerful strategy to not only attract, motivate and retain top talent” [Olckers et al., (2017), p.255]. Happy employers take fewer sick days, contribute to a happier work-environment, are more committed, therefore do not leave the organisation easily.

Theory defends that organisational loyalty is benefit for both employees and companies since it generates affective commitment that reflects in performance and disposition to accept changes. Loyal employees will defend the organisation against exterior or internal threats, cooperate more with peers and managers and contribute to the company’s reputation. Also, when engaged with the organisation, employees develop a sense of identification that, ultimately, makes them stay in the organisation, even in times of adversity. This relation was tested in H4 and the results prove that organisational loyalty influences positively willingness to stay so organisations should invest in measures that promote high levels of loyalty since they lead to “increased job satisfaction, higher performance, lower levels of absenteeism and, finally, turnover” [Mohsin et al., (2015), p.39].

Organisational justice can be hard to define, even for researchers, due to the complexity of the justice concept itself. Although, within organisations, it is easier to evaluate since it can be measure by the employees’ perception of the decisions made by managers. Justice inside companies is quite important since it determines how people will

behave in a work-context. If a decision is considered unfair, that can precipitate events harmful to the company. In spite of that, our results proved that organisational justice is not positively correlated with willingness to stay. H3 was proven incorrect which means that organisational justice does not influence the workers' intention of staying in the organisations. Other authors defend that justice can be a subjective concept since it captures what individuals believe to be right, rather than an objective reality, and consider that organisational justice is a personal evaluation about the ethical and moral standing of managerial conduct, aligning with our results. In spite of that, these authors also claim that the act of producing justice within organisations requires that managers take into account the employee perspective (Cropanzano et al., 2007). Although, some authors defend that justice is associated with beneficial work-related outcomes such as increased productivity and greater organisational commitment among employees (Nix and Wolfe, 2016) which means that, even though organisational justice does not influence directly the intention of staying in a company, can affect other variables like organisational commitment, as pointed by Procházka and Jirásek (2023). The results we got when measuring the relation between organisational justice and the other variables (organisational commitment, organisational happiness and organisational loyalty) were substantial.

The three variables are positively affected by organisational justice and the results obtained validated H5a, H5b and H5c. "Organizational justice is a fundamental value and virtue, and the main ethical concern of employees" [Halbusi et al., (2019), p.2] and our results are aligned with that idea. Although organisational justice do not have a direct influence on the willingness to stay in an organisation, we can observe its strong correlation with the other three variables that directly affect willingness to stay. A new contribute to the theory is the direct effect that organisational justice has on organisational commitment, organisational happiness and organisational loyalty. The presence of organisational justice within any organisation will have a positive impact in organisational values like commitment, engagement, happiness, job satisfaction, loyalty. The presence of these values implicates low turnover rates and a stronger willingness to stay within the company. This variable has proved to be an efficient mediator agent to the other variables.

6 Conclusions

6.1 Theoretical conclusions

The present study sought to understand if willingness to stay is directly affected by organisational values like commitment, happiness, justice and loyalty and, if organisations would benefit (or not) from it. To address this topic, we defined organisational commitment, organisational happiness, organisational justice and organisational loyalty, taking into account insights from previous studies on these topics in order to sustain empirically our own research.

Extensive literature points to highly significant relationship between intention to stay in organisations and a strong organisational culture regarding these variables. Through our questionnaire, we obtained results that allowed us to establish some connections between these variables. Our findings pointed towards a positive relation between

organisational commitment, happiness and loyalty, which permitted us to validate H1, H2 and H5.

Although, our findings also showed us that organisational justice was not positively correlated with willingness to stay and, therefore, H3 was not validated. However, we had some interesting results relatively organisational justice. In spite of not being directly correlated with willingness to stay, our results showed us that this variable has a positive impact on the other variables of this study, which allowed us to validate H4, H5 and H5.

In summary, this study contributes to the literature because it shows organisational justice acting as a mediator agent to willingness to stay, which allowed us to validate H8. Concluding, organisational justice affects positively organisational commitment, organisational happiness and organisational loyalty that, then are positively correlated with Willingness to Stay. According to our results, organisational justice does not impact directly willingness to stay but has the capacity to affect positively other variables and, consequently, impact indirectly willingness to stay.

6.2 *Managerial implications*

The objective of any scientific phenomenon in the business field is to be able to provide valuable insights to improve businesses in some way (Dias, 2002; McGahan, 2007). We believe this research has achieved that goal. Firstly, we address the expectable outcome of this research that is expressing and raising awareness of the importance of variables like organisational commitment, organisational happiness, organisational justice and organisational loyalty on the concept of willingness to stay in a company. All organisations should ensure that these values are well implemented in the organisational culture to assure high performances, good reputation and low turnover rates. The literature seems to be in an agreement regarding the importance of retaining talent within organisation and, it has been proved that these variables affect positively the employees' desire of staying in the companies.

In addition to a theoretical contribution, the current investigation also concludes some practical implications that appear to be relevant to be considered in the organisations' culture in order to face the current challenge of the sector under analysis, namely the high turnover rates. The most interesting finding in regard to contribution to management field is the fact that, although organisational justice does not affect directly willingness to stay, which could reduce its importance in the organisational context, strongly affects the other variables under analysis, making organisational justice an important variable that should be taken into account when managers and leadership are taking measures to improve organisational culture.

In summary, the present study highlights the need for continuous research for the development organisational culture and how it can be affected by these variables. Managers who seek to achieve high levels of organisational performance shall understand and address organisational culture, while being aware of the mediating effect that organisational justice has on the willingness to stay. It's crucial that organisations invest time to address issues that might come up, and assure these values are developing a strong organisational culture, not only to cultivate on the work force the desire of staying, but also to improve procedures and assure the sustainability of the organisation itself.

6.3 Research limitations

Although the present study provides a new vision and contribution to research regarding organisational culture, we must take into account some limitations that delimit this study and its results previously presented. A factor presented as a limitation of this study is the fact that the analysis of content has not been subject to validation by an independent researcher, in order to guarantee objectivity and distance from the analysis of the results.

The sample size was a limitation since the questionnaire was only conducted in people working, or that have worked, in Portugal. Our sample is a convenience sample, which does not allow this research to address the general existent population and therefore be considered as representative. For future research, we recommend a wider distribution to assure more accurate results. In an increasingly globalised society, an international sample would make possible an analysis between several countries, not only to verify trends but also establish comparisons between countries.

The questionnaire can also be considered as a limitation factor since the questions were created with basis on the literature review. A more complete or in depth systematic review could have originated answer and, in that case, the answers and results would be different. Also, this questionnaire did not discriminate people from ‘making-decisions’ positions from the employees themselves. For a future research, we suggest interviews with both employees’ and managers/leaders. The comparison between perceptions from both sides would enrich the research and could validate (or not) the results obtained through the questionnaire.

It’s also important to mention that this research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. This situation is generating a lot of struggles to the world economy, unemployment rates are rising so the answers to the some of the questions regarding commitment such as ‘I feel that I have few options if I want to leave my current organisation’ or ‘I am actively looking for other opportunities to leave my current organisation’ could be biased since during times of uncertainty, people tend to stay in the organisations and not risking staying without a job.

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