

JOB AUTONOMY, JOB ROTATION, AND SOCIAL INTERACTION AT WORK: EVIDENCE FROM ORGANIZATIONS IN NORTH MACEDONIA

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Abstract

This research aims to examine the impact of autonomy and job rotation on positive social interaction within private organizations in North Macedonia. Specifically, whether employees who report higher levels of autonomy and opportunities for job rotation also report more positive interactions with their colleagues. The study sample consists of 300 employees from private organizations in North Macedonia. The study is based on cross-sectional data measured at a single point in time. Regression analysis was used to determine whether certain dimensions of workplace design share a positive and statistically significant relationship. The results indicate that job autonomy and job rotation are positively and significantly associated with positive social interaction. In this context, this research suggests that human resource management practices aimed at improving interpersonal relationships at work should consider increasing the level of autonomy among employees and implementing rotation practices in order to enhance workplace cooperation.

Keywords: autonomy; job rotation; positive social interaction; job design; human resource management

1. Introduction

Workplace organization creates the level of collaboration among employees, which in turn can influence their communication patterns and social interactions. Autonomy gives employees freedom in how they perform their tasks, while job rotation provides access to different work activities and encourages different forms of collaboration with different colleagues. Within the framework of job design, these features can play an important role in creating positive social experiences.

The workplace is a social environment where people interact through various forms of collaboration and where their well-being is of great importance. Rotation and autonomy are two key characteristics of workplace design. According to Marmaras, & Nathanael (2021) workplace design is crucial for creating a collaborative and creative work environment. Autonomy and job rotation have been extensively studied alongside other organizational variables to understand their influence on internal organizational processes and employee performance outcomes.

Job rotation is one of the key variables of job design that, according to previous research, positively influences employee satisfaction and motivation (Kaymaz, 2010; Mohsan et al., 2012; Fernando et al., 2019; Helaudho et al., 2024). Meanwhile autonomy has been studied in relation to various organizational factors, such as employee psychological well-being (Clausen et al., 2022), and employee performance (Khoshnaw and Alavi, 2020).

In today's organizations, decisions regarding job design are not limited only to how tasks are structured. Factors such as employee autonomy, task rotation, flexibility, and social interaction are all significant.

This research aims to examine the relationship between certain work environment design characteristics in the Republic of North Macedonia. Specifically, it seeks to determine how job rotation and autonomy influence social interactions and collaboration among employees. While previous studies have examined the link between job design characteristics and employee performance, this study focuses on the relationships among these characteristics themselves. Specifically, it investigates whether job autonomy and task rotation are associated with more positive social interaction in the workplace. Such interactions can create better conditions for collaboration and, consequently, for improved performance.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of this study encompasses structural and social aspects of job design to explain how specific job design characteristics can contribute to positive social interaction in the workplace.

Job rotation provides employees with the opportunity to perform various tasks within the organization. Through job rotation, workers can alleviate the boredom associated with daily routine tasks, gain new knowledge, foster new collaborations, and increase their flexibility (Su et al., 2023). Therefore, job rotation is expected to have a positive relationship with positive social interaction. On the other hand, autonomy refers to the degree of control an employee has over how a task is completed and when the work is finished Morgeson & Humphrey (2006). Jobs with a high level of autonomy offer workers flexibility to communicate, exchange ideas, and collaborate with colleagues. Therefore, job autonomy is expected to be positively associated with positive social interaction.

In this conceptual framework, job autonomy and job rotation are treated as independent variables, while positive social interaction represents the dependent variable.

Based on the aim of this study, the hypotheses are as follows:

H1: Job autonomy is positively related to positive social interaction.

H2: Job rotation is positively related to positive social interaction.

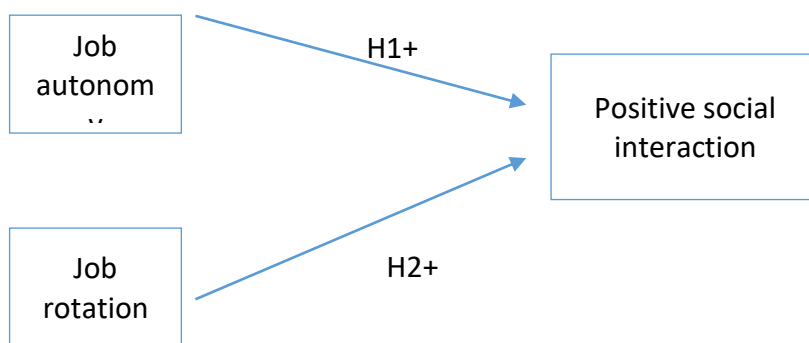


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of job rotation, job autonomy, positive social interaction

2. Literature Review

Autonomy plays an important role in the organization of work and the management of organizational processes, which has attracted considerable attention in the fields of organizational research and human resource management. According to (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) autonomy represents the degree to which organizations give individuals the freedom and ability to make decisions and plan their work. Within this context, employees are not only assigned tasks, but are also given the opportunity and freedom to determine how to perform them.

Based on this approach, researchers have further expanded the concept of autonomy by creating three main dimensions. According to Morgeson and Humphrey (2006), these three dimensions include autonomy in work planning, autonomy in decision-making, and autonomy in work methods. This multidimensional approach places particular emphasis on autonomy as a component of the job characteristics model that can influence organizational processes. Previous studies have shown that higher levels of autonomy create a higher level of job satisfaction, thus increasing motivation and organizational performance, while low levels of autonomy create stress in employees and consequently lower performance (Humphrey et al., 2007) or fail to feel supported by the organization (Sekiguchi & Li, 2017). As a result, higher levels of autonomy create opportunities for collaboration with others, enabling knowledge sharing and promoting positive social interaction.

While job rotation represents the systematic movement of workers to different jobs, tasks or organizational functions in organizations, whether those jobs are mandatory or they may be performed voluntarily. Through rotation, workers reduce the boredom of daily routine work and also create the opportunity for them to gain new knowledge, other skills while performing another task and one of the most important is increasing the flexibility of the workforce (Ortega, 2001)

Based on analyses of 56 studies, Mlekus and Maier (2021) emphasize that rotation had a positive impact on several employee and organizational outcomes, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, career success, job flexibility, individual performance, and productivity.

Kaymaz (2010) in his study on job rotation in employee motivation also includes the social dimension by identifying the development of social relationships as one of its important outcomes. The author emphasizes that rotation, in addition to its impact on reducing monotony and developing new skills, can also affect the creation of positive social interaction within the workplace. Based on this, we can say that during rotation through different positions, employees can interact with a larger number of colleagues, thus facilitating communication, cooperation and positive social interaction.

Another study in this field by Su et al. (2023) presents job rotation as a Human Resources practice that creates opportunities for employees to interact in the organization. Based on this approach, the authors emphasize that rotation can expand employees' interpersonal relationships while also bringing positive social interaction with individuals they may not normally encounter in their regular positions. While Boyi et al. (2022) emphasize the social dimension during job rotation by suggesting that positive relationships between coworkers improve as employees move through different roles.

Given these circumstances, job rotation can be considered a practice that can change social interactions within organizations, which can consequently bring about collaborations among employees, knowledge sharing, learning and growth, which are very important for organizational performance (Maksuti, Maksuti, & Ameti, 2022).

While previous studies have examined job rotation and job autonomy in relation to various organizational variables, very few studies have directly investigated their relationship with positive

social interaction in the workplace. Filling this gap is particularly important in the context of developing countries, where organizational culture, HRM practices, and workplace relationships may differ from those observed in more developed economies and may have an impact on the way employees interact and collaborate. Given these circumstances, this study aims to address this gap and provide empirical evidence from a developing country context. Furthermore, the findings of the study are expected to contribute to the expansion of the literature in the field by also offering practical implications for organizations that wish to foster collaboration and create a positive organizational climate.

3. Methodology

This study uses a quantitative approach to examine how some of the dimensions of the job characteristics model are related to each other. This analysis focuses on two variables extracted from the job design model: job autonomy and job rotation and examines their relationship with positive social interaction among employees

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire that was administered to private sector organizations in the Republic of North Macedonia. The study approach is cross-sectional as data were collected at a single point in time. To empirically test the relationships proposed in the conceptual framework, this research raises two hypotheses that propose a positive relationship between job autonomy and positive social interaction, and between job rotation and positive social interaction. The sample is random and includes a total of 300 employees in organizations of different sectors and organizational levels in the Republic of North Macedonia.

The questionnaire was designed in the form of a 1-5 Likert scale statement rating, based on which constructs were created for each variable.

Three main constructs are included in the empirical analysis.

Job autonomy (AU) which indicates the degree to which employees perceive that they have freedom and discretion in organizing and performing their work; Job rotation (JR) involves the transition of employees to different tasks and roles within the organization; Positive social interaction (PSI), expresses the positive interpersonal dimension of the workplace, which includes communication, cooperation, exchange of ideas and cooperative interaction of employees with colleagues.

Autonomy and rotation are considered explanatory variables while positive social interaction is the dependent variable.

To empirically test this relationship, we used the method of correlation and regression.

$$PSI = \beta^0 + \beta^1 JR + \beta^2 AU + \varepsilon_i$$

In this model, β_0 represents the constant term, β_1 and β_2 represent the regression coefficients of the independent variables, and ε represents the error term. PSI represents positive social interaction; AU represents job autonomy and JR represents job rotation.

4. Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics indicate that the three variables included in the econometric model have relatively high mean scores. Positive Social Interaction (PSI) records the highest mean score (4.18), indicating that employees generally perceive a high level of communication, cooperation, exchange of ideas, and positive interaction with colleagues. Job Autonomy (AU) has a mean score of 3.94, suggesting that employees generally perceive a relatively high degree of freedom and discretion in organizing and performing their work. Job Rotation (JR) has the lowest mean score (3.62), although it remains above the midpoint of the five-point Likert scale, indicating a moderate-to-relatively-high presence of job rotation practices. These descriptive findings are consistent with the structure of the proposed econometric model, in which job autonomy and job rotation are expected to have positive relationships with positive social interaction. The results therefore provide an initial descriptive basis for testing H1 and H2 through correlation and regression analysis. Job rotation has the highest standard deviation ($SD = 0.82$), indicating that there is greater heterogeneity among employees for job rotation; while positive social interaction has the lowest standard deviation ($SD = 0.63$), indicating that respondents' attitudes toward social interaction in the workplace are more stable.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Variables Included in the Econometric Model

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Positive Social Interaction (PSI)	300	4.18	0.63	2	5
Job Autonomy (AU)	300	3.94	0.71	1.8	5
Job Rotation (JR)	300	3.62	0.82	1.4	5

Source: Authors' calculations

5. Results

5.1 Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis indicates that both explanatory variables are positively associated with positive social interaction. Job autonomy has a relatively strong positive correlation with positive social interaction ($r = .55$), indicating that employees who report higher levels of autonomy tend to report more positive interactions with their colleagues. Similarly, job rotation is positively correlated with positive social interaction ($r = .41$), although the relationship is comparatively weaker. The correlation coefficients, however, indicate association rather than causality; therefore, the regression analysis is subsequently used to assess the independent contribution of each explanatory variable.

Table 3. Correlations between Job Design Factors and Positive Social Interaction

Relationship	Correlation (r)	Interpretation
Job Autonomy and Positive Social Interaction	0.55	Positive, significant
Job Rotation and Positive Social Interaction	0.41	Positive, significant

Source: Authors' calculations

5.2 Regression Analysis

The multiple regression analysis indicates that the proposed model is statistically significant ($F = 121.85$, $p < .001$). The model explains approximately 57% of the variation in Positive Social Interaction ($R^2 = .571$), while the adjusted R^2 is .568. This suggests that Job Autonomy and Job Rotation jointly provide a substantial explanation of differences in employees' perceptions of positive social interaction.

Table 4. Multiple Regression Results for Positive Social Interaction

Predictor	Standardized β	Significance	Interpretation
Job Autonomy (AU)	0.65	$p < .001$	Supported
Job Rotation (JR)	0.52	$p < .001$	Supported

Source: Authors' calculations

Table 5. Model Summary

Statistic	Result
R	0.755
R^2	0.571
Adjusted R^2	0.568
F-statistic	197.41
Model significance	$p < .001$
N	300

Source: Authors' calculations

Job Autonomy (AU) has a positive and statistically significant standardized coefficient ($\beta = .65$, $p < .001$). This indicates that autonomy is the stronger predictor of positive social interaction in the model. Employees who perceive greater freedom and discretion in organizing and performing their work tend to report higher levels of positive communication, cooperation, and interaction with colleagues. Job Rotation (JR) also has a positive and statistically significant effect ($\beta = .52$, $p < .001$). Although its standardized effect is weaker than that of job autonomy, the result indicates that employees exposed to different tasks and organizational roles tend to report more positive social interaction.

The regression results therefore provide empirical support for both hypotheses proposed in the study:

H1: Job autonomy is positively related to positive social interaction - Supported.

H2: Job rotation is positively related to positive social interaction - Supported.

6. Discussion

The study findings suggest that job autonomy and job rotation are positively and significantly associated with positive social interaction among employees in private sector organizations in North Macedonia.

Referring to the correlation results, job autonomy is positively associated with positive social interaction ($r = 0.55$), suggesting that the more autonomy is given to employees, the more communication, exchange of ideas, and collaboration among employees will increase. This is in line with Morgeson and Humphrey (2006), who emphasize that autonomy is an important characteristic of work design.

Job rotation is also positively associated with positive social interaction ($r = .41$). This result suggests that the more diverse job roles and tasks are given to employees, the more opportunities for communication and collaboration will be created. This finding is consistent with Kaymaz (2010), who found that the development of social relationships is closely related to job rotation, and Boyi et al. (2022), who highlighted the importance of social relationships in employees' experiences during job rotation.

Finally, the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 197.41$, $p < .001$) and explains approximately 57% of the variance in positive social interaction ($R^2 = .571$; adjusted $R^2 = .568$).

These results support both hypotheses and suggest that job autonomy and job rotation as factors of job design promote positive social interaction in the workplace.

7. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between two important dimensions of job design, job autonomy and job rotation and positive social interaction among employees in private-sector organizations in North Macedonia. Drawing on this perspective, the study proposed that greater employee autonomy and exposure to different tasks and organizational roles would be positively associated with communication, cooperation, knowledge exchange, and positive interpersonal relationships in the workplace. Based on survey data collected from 300 employees and analyzed using correlation and multiple regression techniques, the empirical findings provide support for both hypotheses developed in the study.

The correlation analysis confirms that both job autonomy and job rotation are positively associated with positive social interaction.

From the results, this study emphasizes the importance of autonomy and job rotation. Organizations in North Macedonia that aim to improve collaboration, communication, and create a positive climate should practice higher employee autonomy and job rotation.

8. Limitations and Future Research

In addition to the main contributions of this paper, the study also has limitations that can be addressed in future studies.

The first limitation is related to the nature of the data which includes self-reported data.

The second limitation is related to the sample determined in a single country such as the Republic of North Macedonia where specific and cultural characteristics may limit the findings and they cannot be generalized to organizations in other countries. On the other hand, this can also be treated as a gap for future studies to expand the research.

Also, future research could explore these relationships by examining them in specific industries or by distinguishing between different organizational levels. Finally, future studies could be expanded by adding other organizational variables and mechanisms such as organizational culture and leadership style that could be potential influencing factors in the relationship between job design characteristics and positive social interaction.

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