

Job resources as predictors for older workers' willingness to continue working: moderated mediation model of job category and job satisfaction

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper examines how job resources influence older workers' willingness to continue working (WCW) in their current roles, with the mediating role of job satisfaction (JS) and moderating role of job category (support, professional and manager).

Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected from 432 employees aged 50 and older in a Dutch local government through an online questionnaire. Linear regressions with bootstrapping tested mediation, and the Hayes method assessed moderation.

Findings – JS mediated the relationship between job resources and WCW, fully for job autonomy and social support and partially for learning opportunities. Job category moderated the relationship between JS and WCW, showing a strong association among older professionals, and employees in support roles and none in managerial positions.

Research limitations/implications – The cross-sectional design limits causal inferences.

Practical implications – The results reaffirm the important role of job resources in influencing JS and WCW. It suggests that managers and Human Resources (HR) professionals consider differences in job categories when redesigning roles for older employees to motivate them to continue working.

Originality/value – This paper reveals that older employees with access to job resources are willing to continue working their current job, with JS mediating this relationship. The findings uniquely show that the relationship between JS and WCW is moderated by job category.

Keywords Older employees, Job resources, Job satisfaction, Willingness to continue working, Job categories

Paper type Research article

Introduction

European Union countries are addressing challenges posed by an aging population that affects health care, social insurance and pension systems. In response, many have raised the retirement age and implemented policies to encourage older workers to remain employed longer (Eurofound, 2025). In the Netherlands, the average retirement age increased to 66 in 2024, labor participation among those aged 55 and older rose to 27% (Statistics Netherlands, 2025) and the preferred retirement age has increased slightly (Pak et al., 2021). The Dutch government promotes continued employment (OECD, 2014) through measures such as

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reducing work pressure, providing flexible hours and offering higher wages (de Lange and Thijssen, 2007), as well as enhancing working conditions and increasing job satisfaction (JS) (UWV, 2023). HR practices are more focused on retaining older workers in their current roles rather than on career advancement (Veth *et al.*, 2015). However, little evidence links these measures to a desire to work longer (van Vuuren and Montizaan, 2015), underscoring the need for effective job design to keep older workers satisfied and motivated (Truxillo *et al.*, 2012) and willing to continue working (Zaniboni *et al.*, 2014). Several researchers have emphasized the significance of job design, which involves creating and modifying the content, structure and organizational context of jobs (Morgeson and Campion, 2003). This approach aims to make jobs more suitable for older workers, allowing them to continue working rather than retiring (Dychtwald *et al.*, 2004). Working conditions appear to influence the retirement decisions of older workers (Debrand and Sirven, 2009) and those who are satisfied with these conditions are more likely to extend their working lives (van Kalmthout, 2012).

Job design research investigates how job characteristics influence work outcomes, including JS and sustainable employability. The job demand-control model (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001) proposes that job resources, including autonomy, skills and social interaction, can motivate employees and influence work outcomes (van den Broeck *et al.*, 2013). Increasing these job resources can lead to higher JS (Martinussen *et al.*, 2007). Because job resources have a motivating effect, they are negatively associated with the intention to retire early (Schreurs *et al.*, 2011). Specifically, job autonomy (JA), learning opportunities (LO) and social support (SS) from colleagues are identified as key motivators that can enhance work engagement (Schaufeli, 2015). Older workers value the opportunity to have autonomy in performing their jobs, share their knowledge and maintain strong workplace relationships (Marvell and Cox, 2017). A limitation in research on job design for older workers is that job resources, which could enhance work outcomes such as JS and willingness to continue working (WCW), are often generalized across different occupations. This assumption suggests that individuals will value the same work characteristics regardless of their specific roles. Studies tend to overlook individual differences, particularly in work content (Marvell and Cox, 2017). A one-size-fits-all approach appears insufficient to address the challenges associated with aging in the workplace. As a result, tailored job design that meets the needs of various job categories is essential for supporting older employees in extending their working lives (Ilmarinen, 2009).

Our research focused on a cluster within a large Dutch municipality, aiming to enhance public spaces, health and sports, safety and youth support. The public sector experiences budget cuts (Weske *et al.*, 2014) while assuming more responsibility for neighborhood maintenance without additional staff, resulting in shortages and increased workloads. To maintain service levels, municipalities are considering staffing strategies and retirement planning to retain older employees (Rutten *et al.*, 2025). Therefore, this study investigates how job categories (support, professional and managerial) affect the associations among job resources, JS and older workers' WCW in their current jobs. The proposed research model is presented in Figure 1. Our study contributes to the existing literature in three ways. First, we examine whether older workers with access to job resources are more likely to continue working (Schreurs *et al.*, 2011; van den Berg, 2011). Second, we explore the mediating role of JS in this relationship, and third, whether the association between JS and WCW among older workers varies by job category.

Theory and hypotheses

Willingness to continue working

The psychological term 'WCW' (van den Berg, 2011) can also be defined as "want to continue working until 65 or beyond" (Geuskens *et al.*, 2012; Nilsson *et al.*, 2011), "how long they wish to work" (Ybema *et al.*, 2009) and "intention to retire" (Beehr, 1986). Retirement intentions

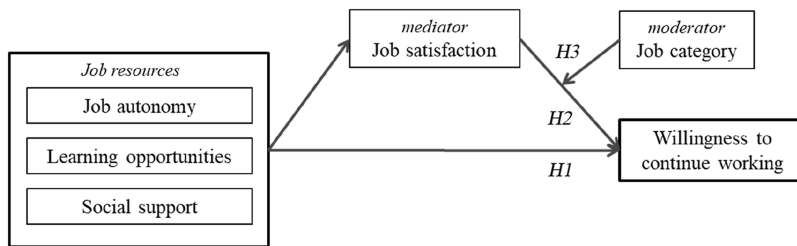


Figure 1. Proposed moderated mediation model

are psychological predictions of employees' retirement plans. These intentions are often formed well before a final decision to retire; they precede actual behavior (Beehr and Bennett, 2015). Factors influencing retirement intentions can be categorized into personal and work-related aspects (Wang *et al.*, 2009). Research has shown that personal factors, including health (Kooij *et al.*, 2008), age (Ybema *et al.*, 2009), gender (Forma *et al.*, 2005) and education (Jettinghoff and Smulders, 2008), are associated with the retirement intentions of older employees. Key work-related factors that encourage WCW include financial incentives to remain employed (Nilsson *et al.*, 2011), supportive attitudes from managers (Oude Hengel *et al.*, 2012) and a healthy social climate (Geuskens *et al.*, 2012). Job resources, such as JA and skill development opportunities, are essential for older workers, helping them remain in the workforce as the retirement age increases (El Khawli *et al.*, 2025).

Understanding the underlying motivations for working is essential for promoting longer working lives, as it reduces the intention to retire (Beehr, 1986). Motivation to work is not only associated with the actual age at which employees retire (Kooij *et al.*, 2008), but it also influences their decision to work longer (van den Berg, 2011) and sustains engagement in work (Kanfer *et al.*, 2013). The motivation to work is rooted in three key needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2017), which are linked to job resources identified in the Job Demands-Resources model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). JA, LO and SS from colleagues are considered valuable job resources that enable employees to achieve their work goals, such as working longer (Parker, 2014).

Job autonomy

Workplace autonomy refers to the degree of freedom employees have in their jobs, including their independence in organizing tasks, scheduling work and choosing methods for completing them (Hackman and Oldham, 1976). When employees are granted sufficient autonomy to manage their work, they are better equipped to cope with stressful situations (Karasek, 1979). In contrast, employees who lack autonomy may feel controlled (van Poppel and Kamphuis, 2004). Older employees tend to feel more valued when they have responsibility for their tasks, including how they perform them, the order in which they complete them and the timing of their work (de Lange and Thijssen, 2007).

Providing employees with autonomy enhances their intrinsic motivation, leading to improved performance (Muecke and Iseke, 2019). This job resource increases employees' commitment to their work (Malinowska *et al.*, 2018) and decreases their intention to leave the organization (Kimmsw and Stoner, 2008). Additionally, a higher level of perceived autonomy is positively associated with older workers' WCW (Jettinghoff and Smulders, 2008). Age-oriented personnel policies often aim to offer older employees more freedom, as this group seeks greater autonomy in their jobs (de Lange and Thijssen, 2007). Therefore, JA is a significant predictor of older workers' WCW (Frins *et al.*, 2011). Based on the above arguments and evidence from prior research, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1a. Job autonomy is positively associated with older workers' willingness to continue working.

Learning opportunities

One of the most important factors affecting employment opportunities for older workers is access to training and development. A lack of LO can lead to outdated skills, negatively affecting job performance and reducing their employability (OECD, 2024). Older employees appreciate access to on-the-job training and education to learn new skills, apply existing ones to new situations and share their knowledge and experience with colleagues (Marvell and Cox, 2017). Providing these LO also keeps their skills valuable for job performance (Hunter, 1986), harnesses their talents and maximizes their potential (Schaufeli, 2015). Lifelong learning research indicates that continuous development enhances work ability, employability and vitality (van Vuuren *et al.*, 2011).

Learning is linked to older employees' willingness to work until retirement (Frins *et al.*, 2011; Zoomer *et al.*, 2019). Recognizing the knowledge, experience and judgment of older workers increases their WCW (Marvell and Cox, 2017; Visser-Lapr , 2008; Zoomer *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, when older workers have access to adequate development opportunities, they are more likely to delay retirement (de Wind *et al.*, 2014; Picchio and van Ours, 2013) and are encouraged to continue working (Brouwer *et al.*, 2013; van Dam *et al.*, 2009).

Conversely, a lack of development opportunities can make older workers feel disconnected from the rest of the workforce (Visser-Lapr , 2008), potentially leading them to retire earlier (Henkens and Tazelaar, 1997). Having few opportunities for challenge and development in one's work is associated with the intention to retire early (Nordlinder *et al.*, 2024). However, a recent study indicates that older workers with fewer opportunities for skill development did not necessarily retire earlier (El Khawli *et al.*, 2025). Generally, a supportive work environment that provides LO for older workers is associated with a reduced intention to retire early. To continue working, older employees must stay flexible by engaging in continuous learning and knowledge acquisition (Newman, 2011). Therefore, organizations that promote education for older workers contribute to sustainable employment (de Grip *et al.*, 2020; Montizaan and van Vuuren, 2015). Based on the above arguments and findings from prior research, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1b. Learning opportunities are positively associated with older workers' willingness to continue working.

Social support

Social support at work is a key job design resource that fulfills the need for belonging and enhances motivation, such as WCW (Demerouti and Bakker, 2011). It enables employees to receive assistance and advice from colleagues (Karasek, 1979; Karasek *et al.*, 1998), to count on their colleagues and feel supported by them (van Poppel and Kamphuis, 2004) and to form friendships (Sims *et al.*, 1976). According to socio-emotional selectivity theory (SST), older employees value social support for emotional intimacy and social embeddedness within the organization (Carstensen *et al.*, 1999). They prefer a limited number of meaningful relationships rather than an extensive social network (Carstensen, 2006) and often feel fulfilled by collaborating in mixed-age teams (Marvell and Cox, 2017).

Social support influences older workers' attitudes toward retirement (Dendinger *et al.*, 2005) and is therefore linked to their turnover intentions (Humphrey *et al.*, 2007). This job resource is a major reason for not choosing early retirement, serving as a motivating factor to continue working (Proper *et al.*, 2009; Zoomer *et al.*, 2019). Older workers may delay their intention to retire because they anticipate losing their social networks (Wang, 2007). The presence of friends in the workplace (van Breukelen *et al.*, 2004) and the quality of relationships with colleagues (Rothmann *et al.*, 2013) can predict employee retention. A recent

systematic review indicates that strong social support is an important determinant for late retirement intentions (Nordlinder *et al.*, 2024). Conversely, a poor social climate can reduce their WCW until age 65 (Geuskens *et al.*, 2012; Reeuwijk *et al.*, 2013). Healthy social relationships are fundamental for retaining older workers, suggesting that social support contributes to WCW. Based on the above arguments and evidence from prior research, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

- H1c.* Social support is positively associated with older workers' willingness to continue working.

Job satisfaction as a mediator

JS refers to employees' attitudes towards their jobs, sense of accomplishment at work and overall enjoyment of their roles (Spector and Jex, 1991). Job resources are strongly and positively related to JS, an important indicator of well-being among older workers (Rothmann, 2008; Truxillo *et al.*, 2012). Autonomy is positively associated with JS, as older employees can work autonomously due to their extensive work experience and crystallized intelligence (Humphrey *et al.*, 2007; Kanfer and Ackerman, 2004). JS among older workers is negatively affected by poor perceptions of autonomy in their work (Rice *et al.*, 2022). LO are also a key component in promoting JS (Kanter, 1993); recent research has confirmed that training increases JS among older workers (Visser *et al.*, 2021). Support from colleagues is another valuable job resource that significantly enhances JS (Cummins, 1989; Truxillo *et al.*, 2012; Winstead *et al.*, 1995). When coworkers offer social support, employees feel accepted, valued and cared for, contributing to their overall JS (Ducharme and Martin, 2000).

Job resources, such as autonomy, learning opportunities and social support, predict JS and WCW (Frins *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, JS is an important motivating factor that influences employees' WCW (de Vos *et al.*, 2020). When employees are satisfied with their jobs, they are more likely to remain with their employer. Research indicates that JS is negatively associated with the intention to leave (McCarthy *et al.*, 2007) and turnover intentions (Allisey *et al.*, 2014; McKnight *et al.*, 2009). Higher levels of JS tend to reduce employee turnover (De Simone *et al.*, 2018), while low JS can prompt employees to leave their positions sooner (van den Berg *et al.*, 2010). Employees who are dissatisfied with their jobs are more likely to leave than satisfied employees (Cotton and Tuttle, 1986; Schmitt and McCune, 1981). Since JS influences the intention to remain working, it likely mediates the relationship between job resources and WCW. Based on this reasoning and evidence from previous research, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

- H2.* Job satisfaction mediates the positive association between job resources and older workers' willingness to continue working.

Job category as a moderator

Older workers are not a homogeneous group, and significant individual differences exist in employees' work content (Marvell and Cox, 2017). These variations suggest that allowing room for customization in their work is important (van Dam *et al.*, 2016). Since job resources and work outcomes are individual factors, they are likely to vary among older workers across job categories. Recognizing these differences can help guide the design of jobs for older workers, ultimately supporting a longer working life (Ilmarinen, 2009).

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission developed a job classification system in 2006 to organize and categorize jobs by the type of work performed. This system enables effective comparisons of positions across organizations. The main categories include administrative support, professional roles and managerial positions. A similar system used by Statistics Netherlands is based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO), which is a global framework established by the International Labour Organization (ILO). The main ISCO categories include clerical support workers, professionals and

managers (ILO, 2012), which closely align with the EEOC's broad occupational groups. Employees in the support category perform tasks that support the company's daily operations, focusing on administration, facilities and logistics. The professional (knowledge worker) category encompasses individuals with specialized knowledge and skills who are dedicated to applying their expertise. Employees in the managerial category are responsible for leading or supervising teams and managing resources to achieve organizational goals.

Organizations depend on older employees in the professional category, especially those with crystallized intelligence, for effective problem-solving and the delivery of tailored services, and therefore aim to retain these valuable workers (Alvesson, 2000). However, there has been limited research on whether the willingness of older employees to remain in the workforce varies by job category. The SST (Carstensen *et al.*, 1999) posits that older adults perceive time as running out to achieve their goals. However, older workers in the professional category who operate within a decentralized network organizational structure (Reed, 1996) tend to be less affected by this limited time perspective, which can contribute to a greater sense of sustainable employability (Zacher and Frese, 2009). Highly educated workers, such as professionals, are generally more inclined to work until retirement age (Jettinghoff and Smulders, 2008) because they have more options, such as consultancy assignments, that allow them to continue in their professional roles (Wang and Shultz, 2010). Conversely, when older employees feel dissatisfied with the limited use of their skills and knowledge, it can reduce their motivation to continue working (Reeuwijk *et al.*, 2013).

JS is a strong predictor of employees' WCW, and several studies have found differences in JS and turnover predictors across staff groups (Onyett *et al.*, 1997; Scanlan and Still, 2019; Yanchus *et al.*, 2015). JS refers to an employee's overall emotional response to their current work roles, and different occupational categories vary in the job characteristics that influence JS (Kalleberg, 1977), which in turn shapes the extent to which overall JS influences employees' WCW. For professionals, JS is largely driven by intrinsic job characteristics such as autonomy, learning opportunities and competence (Ryan and Deci, 2017). Professionals often see their role as a key part of their identity, not just a job or a source of income, and JS plays a positive role in shaping and reinforcing this professional identity (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Additionally, JS enhances their commitment to both their field and their organization (May *et al.*, 2002). Research indicates a strong correlation between JS and employee retention, with JS acting as a significant negative predictor of turnover intentions (Kuuttila *et al.*, 2025). Professionals who are satisfied with their jobs will have a greater intention to continue working (House *et al.*, 2022). JS among support staff is primarily influenced by extrinsic factors, including supervision, pay and job security (Kalleberg, 1977), as well as workplace environment and working conditions (Al-Alawi *et al.*, 2016). Work flexibility was identified as a means of increasing JS among support staff (Parlalis, 2011). As a result, their decisions to remain in their positions may be based not only on their satisfaction with their work but also on contextual and employment conditions, which may diminish the role of JS in their WCW. Managers experience JS that results from a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, but it is significantly shaped by high levels of responsibility, challenges they face and performance pressure (Agarwal and Gupta, 2018). Moreover, their reasons for staying in their roles may depend on opportunities for career advancement (Proper *et al.*, 2009; Wang and Shultz, 2010). Poor work-life balance and low remuneration are critical factors in low JS among managers (Verulava, 2024). Consequently, while JS remains relevant, it may be less central in determining managers' WCW. Accordingly, we expect the relationship between JS and WCW to differ across roles, with professionals showing a stronger association than support staff or managers. Based on this reasoning and evidence from previous research, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

- H3.* Job category moderates the association between job satisfaction and willingness to continue working such that this positive association is stronger for older workers in the professional category than for those in the support (H3a) and managerial (H3b) categories.

Method

Participants

This study collected data in May 2018 from full-time employees aged 50–67 employed in a large municipality in the Netherlands. This ensured that all participants adhered to the same formal policy on the employability of older workers and had access to consistent HR management procedures. By focusing on employees from a single municipality, the study reduced variation in organizational policies and practices. This enabled a consistent examination of the associations among job resources, JS and WCW within a shared organizational context. The online survey included a cover letter from management that outlined the research objectives. It explained that the survey was anonymous and that participants could withdraw at any time. Additionally, it specified that the data would be stored securely, answers would be kept confidential and that participants provided informed consent by completing the questionnaire. Of the 903 older employees in the target group, 432 completed the questionnaire, resulting in a response rate of 48%. Several demographic characteristics were identified in the sample. Of all participants, 64.4% were women and 35.6% were men. Ages ranged from 50 to 67 years (mean = 58, SD = 4.2): 28.2% in the age group 50–55, 36.6% in the age group 56–60, 34% in the age group 61–65 and 1.2% in the age group older than 65. 23.1% worked in the support category, 65.3% in the professional category and 11.6% worked in the managerial category. The education level of the respondents was high school or lower (17.6%); 17.8% had completed higher vocational education; and the remaining 64.6% had completed university education. Most respondents lived with a partner (72.9%), and 77.3% of these partners had either a part-time or full-time paid job. Regarding respondents' financial situation, 12.2% indicated that they fall within the lower municipal income scales (2–6), 66.3% within the average scales (7–11) and 21.5% within the higher income scales (12–16). Overall, 15.1% of the sample reported their health status as “excellent,” 24.3% as “very good,” 46.5% as “good,” 13.2% as “moderate” and 0.9% as “poor.”

Measures

Self-report instruments were used to measure study and control variables. Responses were rated on a five-point scale (1 = disagree, 5 = agree).

WCW is a work outcome and was measured using three items from previous studies ([van Dam et al., 2009](#); [van den Berg, 2011](#)). A sample item includes “I am willing to keep working as long as possible in my current job, even after the retirement age.” The reliability of this measure was $\alpha = 0.80$.

JS is a work outcome measured using four items from the JS Scale ([Brayfield and Rothe, 1951](#)). A sample item is “I find real enjoyment in my work.” The reliability of this measure was $\alpha = 0.77$.

JA is a job resource measured using three items from the Work Design Questionnaire ([Morgeson and Humphrey, 2006](#)). A sample item is “My job allows me to make my own decisions about how to schedule my work.” The reliability of this measure was $\alpha = 0.77$.

LO are a job resource and were measured using three items derived from the Job Content/Wellbeing at Work Questionnaire ([Kraan et al., 2000](#)). A sample item is “My job requires that I keep learning new things or keep my knowledge up to date.” The reliability of this measure was $\alpha = 0.70$.

SS is a job resource measured using three items from the Social Support Survey ([Sarason et al., 1983](#)). A sample item is “In my job, I can count on colleagues to really care about me.” The reliability of this measure was $\alpha = 0.75$.

Job category is a moderator variable and was measured as an ordinal variable using a single item, “Based on the descriptions below, in which category does your current job fit best?” with responses coded as 1 = support, 2 = professional or 3 = managerial.

The *control variables* were demographic variables relevant to older employees, including age, gender, education, financial situation and health, which were kept constant throughout the

study. Age was measured as a continuous variable using one item: “In what year were you born?” Gender was measured as a categorical variable using a single item, “What is your gender?”, with responses coded as 1 = male, 2 = female. Education was measured as an ordinal variable using a single item, “Which level of education did you complete?”, answered on a five-point scale ranging from 1 = less than high school to 5 = postgraduate degree. Financial situation was measured as an ordinal variable using one item: “What is your financial situation by approximation?” and answered on a three-point scale ranging from 1 = lower income, 2 = average income, to 3 = higher income. Health was measured as an ordinal variable using one item: “How would you describe your health to being able to do your job?” and answered on a five-point scale ranging from 1 = poor to 5 = excellent.

Statistical analysis strategy

Before conducting hypothesis testing, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the factor structure of the models used in each analysis. Hierarchical regression analyses were then conducted, including control variables, to examine the hypotheses (H1 and H2) regarding the direct relationships between job resources (independent variables) and older workers’ WCW (outcome variable) and JS (mediator).

This research used the PROCESS macro (version 3.1) in SPSS (version 24.0) to examine mediation and moderated mediation models, as described by Hayes (2018). To test the second hypothesis, we used Model 4 from Hayes (2013). We applied the bootstrapping method described by Preacher and Hayes (2008) to assess whether JS (*M*) mediates the relationships between independent variables (*X*), JA, LO and SS, and the dependent variable (*Y*), WCW. Covariates such as age, gender, education, health and financial status were included. We generated 5,000 resamples to estimate the indirect effect of the mediator, using a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval for significance, as recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2008). Results are significant if confidence intervals do not include zero.

To test the third hypothesis regarding the moderation effect of job category on the relationship between JS and WCW, we used Model 14 (Hayes, 2013). Dummy coding was applied to represent the job category variable in the regression analyses. We chose the professional category as the reference group for comparison because it had the largest number of participants, and our hypothesis was based on this category. We created two variables: D1, which compares the professional with the support category, and D2, which compares the professional with the management category. These dummy variables and their interactions with the mediator were included to examine whether the indirect effect of job resources on WCW, mediated by JS, varied by job category.

Results

The means, standard deviations and correlations of all variables used in this study are presented in Table 1. The correlation analysis revealed that the independent variables of JA, LO and SS were positively associated with JS and WCW. Moreover, JS was significantly correlated with WCW ($r = 0.37, p \leq 0.01$). There was also a significant relationship among all combinations of the three job resources, with the strongest association between JA and LO ($r = 0.59, p \leq 0.01$). Of the control variables, health was significantly and positively associated with JS ($r = 0.26, p \leq 0.01$) and WCW ($r = 0.21, p \leq 0.01$).

The results from the CFA revealed that the selected five-factor model, which included the variables of WCW, JS, JA, LO and social support as distinct factors, provided a better fit for the data compared to alternative one-factor and three-factor models (see Table 2). This five-factor model demonstrated a good fit to the data ($\chi^2(15) = 27.12, p = 0.03$; TLI = 0.99; CFI = 0.99; RMSEA = 0.04).

Table 1. Means, standard deviations and correlations of study variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Willingness to continue working (Y)	2.08	1.00											
2. Job satisfaction (M)	3.55	0.72	0.37**										
3. Job autonomy (X)	3.90	0.96	0.21**	0.45**									
4. Learning (X)	3.91	0.84	0.23**	0.36**	0.59**								
5. Social support (X)	3.78	0.75	0.21**	0.38**	0.26**	0.37**							
6. Age (C)	58.28	4.19	0.12*	−0.05	−0.05	−0.05	−0.02						
7. Gender (a) (C)	1.64	0.48	−0.04	0.02	−0.07	0.05	−0.02	0.11*					
8. Health (C)	3.39	0.93	0.21**	0.26**	0.27**	0.23**	0.19**	−0.08	−0.04				
9. Education (C)	3.51	0.83	0.06	0.06	0.27**	0.31**	0.01	−0.06	−0.10*	0.16**			
10. Financial status (C)	9.59	2.39	0.08	0.08	0.44**	0.34**	−0.02	0.00	0.15**	0.22**	0.63**		
11. Support staff (D1)	0.23	0.42	−0.12*	−0.09	0.31**	0.40**	0.02	0.06	0.17**	0.17**	0.58**	0.60**	
12. Managers (D2)	0.11	0.31	−0.06	0.03	0.16**	0.07	−0.03	−0.04	−0.18**	0.08	0.10*	0.29**	−0.19**

Note(s): (a) 1 = male, 2 = female; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; $n = 432$; professional category is the reference group in dummy coding, and support and managerial categories are the dummy variables D1 and D2

Table 2. Results of confirmatory factor analyses

Models	df	χ^2	χ^2 diff	df diff	Pr ($>\chi^2$)	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
One-factor model (WCW, JS, JA, LO, SS in one factor)	90	1734.35				0.86	0.84	0.20	0.16
Three-factor model (JA, LO, SS in one factor, WCW, JS in separate factors)	87	487.61	1246.74	3	<0.001	0.96	0.96	0.10	0.09
Five-factor model (WCW, JS, JA, LO, SS in separate factors)	80	151.10	336.51	7	<0.001	0.99	0.99	0.04	0.05

Note(s): $n = 432$; WCW = willingness to continue working; JS = job satisfaction; JA = job autonomy; LO = learning opportunities; SS = social support

Hypothesis 1 predicted associations between job resources and WCW. As shown in [Table 3](#), JA ($B = 0.24, p < 0.05$), LO ($\beta = 0.27, p < 0.05$) and SS ($\beta = 0.30, p < 0.05$) were positively associated with WCW, confirming [Hypotheses 1a, b and c](#). Furthermore, JA ($\beta = 0.48, p < 0.05$), LO ($\beta = 0.35, p < 0.05$) and SS ($\beta = 0.35, p < 0.05$) were also significantly associated with JS. Additionally, we found a significant positive association between JS and WCW ($\beta = 0.33, p < 0.05$). The results remained consistent after controlling for covariates, indicating that participants’ characteristics had minimal impact on the findings.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that JS mediates the relationship between job resources and WCW. [Table 3](#) presents the mediation analysis results, which are considered significant if the confidence intervals do not include zero. When JS was included in the regressions, the associations between JA ($\beta = 0.04, ns$) and SS ($\beta = 0.07, ns$) and WCW were no longer significant, indicating full mediation through JS. The association between LO and WCW declined ($\beta = 0.10, p < 0.05$), but remained significant, indicating partial mediation. Bootstrapping results supported an indirect association between JA ($\beta = 0.16, LLCI = 0.11, ULCI = 0.23$), LO ($\beta = 0.11, LLCI = 0.07, ULCI = 0.16$) and SS ($\beta = 0.11, LLCI = 0.07, ULCI = 0.16$) and WCW via JS, in support of [Hypothesis 2](#).

The results of the moderated mediation analysis indicated that job category influences the strength of the indirect associations between job resources and WCW, mediated by JS. Significant moderated mediation indices were found for JA ($\beta = -0.16, LLCI = -0.30, ULCI = -0.04$), LO ($\beta = -0.12, LLCI = -0.22, ULCI = -0.03$) and SS ($\beta = -0.10, LLCI = -0.22, ULCI = -0.01$). [Table 4](#) shows that the conditional indirect associations for JA, LO, and SS were significant for both support and professional job categories. Furthermore, no significant indirect associations were found for the managerial category: JA ($\beta = 0.03, ns$), LO ($\beta = 0.03, ns$), and SS ($\beta = 0.04, ns$). **Hypothesis 3** predicted a stronger association between JS and WCW for the professional job category. The interaction graph in [Figure 2](#) shows that job category is a significant moderator of the association between JS and WCW. However, the difference between the professional and support categories was not statistically significant ($b = -0.071, p = 0.492$). These results do not support [Hypothesis 3a](#). The difference between professionals and managers was statistically significant ($b = -0.373, p = 0.009$), indicating a stronger association for professionals than for managers. This finding supports [Hypothesis 3b](#), and therefore [Hypothesis 3](#) received partial support.

Table 3. Results of regression and mediation analyses predicting WCW

	Direct effect on WCW (Y)	Direct effect on JS (Y)	Effect on WCW (Y) through JS (M)
Intercept	1.82	3.79	2.47
<i>Control variables</i>			
Age	0.15*	−0.02	0.15*
Gender	−0.03	0.04	−0.03
Health	0.12*	0.17*	0.12*
Education	0.03	0.01	0.03
Financial situation	−0.01	−0.18*	−0.01
<i>Independent variables</i>			
Job autonomy	0.24*	0.48*	0.04
Learning opportunities	0.27*	0.35*	0.10*
Social support	0.30*	0.35*	0.07
<i>Mediator</i>			
Job satisfaction	—	—	0.33*
<i>F</i>	7.658	23.17	11.06
<i>R</i> ²	0.11	0.29	0.17

Note(s): **p* < 0.05; *n* = 432; WCW = willingness to continue working; JS = job satisfaction

Table 4. Mediated moderation of job category

Job resources (X)	Job autonomy		Learning opportunities		Social support	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>SE</i>
<i>Mediated moderation of Job category (W) on Job satisfaction (M) → Willingness to continue working (Y)</i>						
Support category	0.15*	0.05	0.12*	0.03	0.14*	0.04
Professional category	0.19*	0.04	0.14*	0.03	0.14*	0.03
Managerial category	0.03	0.06	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.05

Note(s): **p* < 0.05; *n* = 432

Discussion

We investigated the relationships among job resources, JS and WCW among a sample of Dutch municipal employees aged 50 and older in the support, professional and managerial job categories. Our hypotheses state that job resources are associated with JS, and that JS, in turn, is associated with WCW. Additionally, we proposed that the association between JS and WCW is stronger among older workers in professional categories than among those in support or managerial categories. Our findings show that JS mediates the relationship between job resources and WCW, and job category significantly moderates the influence of JS on this willingness.

Theoretical implications

This study contributes to the existing literature on aging at work and job design, which suggests that a well-designed job can stimulate the intention to continue working. The results complement the few studies that have investigated the relationship between job resources, JS and older employees' WCW (Geuskens *et al.*, 2012; Oude Hengel *et al.*, 2012; van den Berg, 2011). Our findings show that autonomy, learning opportunities and social support are

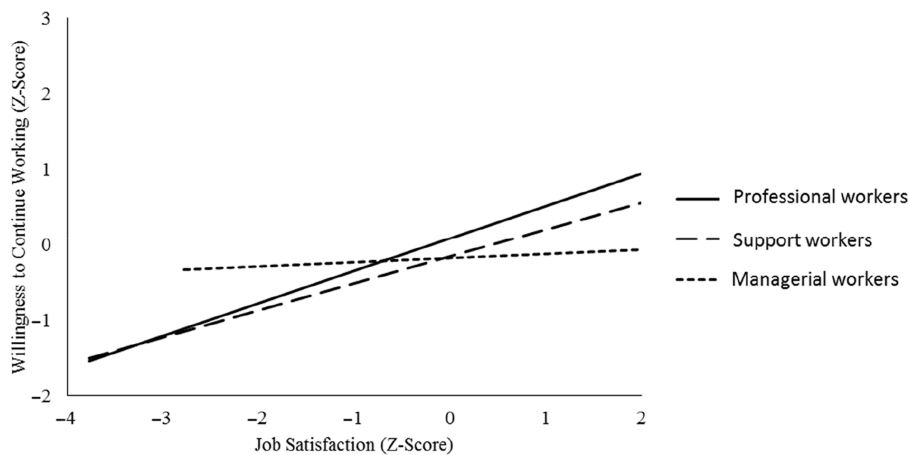


Figure 2. Moderating effect of job category on the relation between job satisfaction and willingness to continue working

positively associated with older workers’ WCW in their current jobs. These results were consistent with previous studies that suggest a positive association between job resources and WCW (de Wind *et al.*, 2014; El Khawli *et al.*, 2025; Frins *et al.*, 2011; Marvell and Cox, 2017; Nordlinder *et al.*, 2024; Parker, 2014; Visser-Lapr , 2008; Zoomer *et al.*, 2019).

Our research builds on existing literature on job resources and older workers’ WCW, demonstrating that JS mediates this relationship. In line with the Job Demand-Resources Model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007), which posits that job resources are positively correlated with work outcomes, our findings confirm that older workers who had access to job resources such as autonomy, learning opportunities and social support reported higher levels of JS, which in turn positively affected their WCW in their current jobs. Specifically, our results show that JS fully mediates the influence of both autonomy and social support on older workers’ WCW. Conversely, the influence of LO is only partially mediated by JS, consistent with previous research indicating that LO significantly contribute to WCW, irrespective of JS (Picchio and van Ours, 2013).

To our knowledge, this study is the first to explore how job category can act as a moderator in the relationship between job resources, JS and the willingness of older workers to continue working in their current positions. Our results show that the influence of JS on WCW varies depending on the type of job an older employee holds. This finding contributes to limited research emphasizing the importance of recognizing differences among older workers rather than viewing them as a homogeneous group (Gut *et al.*, 2024; Marvell and Cox, 2017). Our research shows that older employees highly value autonomy in their tasks, which aligns with research indicating that their JS declines when they perceive this autonomy as insufficient (Rice *et al.*, 2022). Our results indicate that LO positively affect JS among older workers, thereby increasing their WCW. This aligns with studies indicating that having few opportunities for challenge and development in one’s work is associated with the intention to retire early (Nordlinder *et al.*, 2024). Those with higher levels of education, such as professionals, are more likely to take advantage of LO than those with lower levels of education, such as support staff (Fouarge *et al.*, 2013; Newman, 2011). This finding supports research indicating that learning and development opportunities motivate professionals to remain with their organizations (Reddy and Govender, 2014) and enhance their JS (Visser *et al.*, 2021). We found that the relationship between social support and WCW, which is influenced by JS, remains consistent across support and professional categories. This aligns

with research suggesting that maintaining healthy social relationships with colleagues is essential for retaining older workers (Gut *et al.*, 2024), as older workers often prefer opportunities to collaborate in teams and develop supportive relationships with coworkers (Fouché *et al.*, 2017).

Among the three job categories examined, we found that older workers in professional roles are the most significantly affected by JS when deciding whether to stay in their jobs. Those in professional and support positions generally report higher levels of JS and are more inclined to continue working when they have access to job resources than their counterparts in management roles. An unexpected finding revealed that JS among older managerial employees did not influence their motivation to continue working. This aligns with studies showing no relationship between JS and retirement attitudes in high-income workers, such as managers, who typically engage in complex, non-routine tasks that require flexible and adaptive behavior (Morgeson and Humphrey, 2006) and often have greater financial resources, higher skill levels and high-status roles (Davies *et al.*, 2017). Our results suggest that while autonomy, learning opportunities and social support contribute to JS, they do not necessarily increase older managers' willingness to remain in their jobs. Studies show that work-related factors beyond job resources may play a more significant role in managers' decision to continue working, such as the desire for challenging work that provides opportunities for development and achievement (Proper *et al.*, 2009; Wang and Shultz, 2010), mentoring opportunities as they may be motivated to help the younger generation develop successfully (Newman, 2011), and manageable workloads, as high stress levels from an overwhelming workload may lead them to consider early retirement (Boumans *et al.*, 2008). Additionally, factors such as the meaning of work, social status, access to leisure activities and social networks influence managers' retirement decisions (Davies *et al.*, 2017).

Practical implications

By investing in job resources for all older workers and tailoring retention strategies by job category, companies can create a workplace where older workers are more willing to continue working. Employers can design jobs for older workers that offer as much autonomy as possible, provide appropriate LO and maximize social contact and interaction, thereby contributing to their JS. To increase JA, companies should give older workers sufficient control over tasks, methods, schedules and decision-making processes. LO directly affect older workers' WCW, making it essential for companies to provide and tailor this job resource. An effective training method is dual-way knowledge sharing or reverse mentoring programs, which can enhance older workers' motivation to continue working (Pfrombeck *et al.*, 2024). This involves younger employees sharing expertise with older colleagues, such as through intergenerational lunches, rather than just transferring knowledge from older to younger workers. On-the-job training to refresh the skills of older workers can also improve retention (Picchio and Van Ours, 2013). To enhance workplace social support, companies should encourage collaboration, recognize contributions and foster an inclusive work environment that supports older workers.

Furthermore, JS significantly affects older workers' WCW, with variation by job category. Companies should tailor their retention strategies to these insights. Employees, colleagues, line managers and HR professionals can incorporate this information into discussions about encouraging a willingness to work longer. For older professionals, focusing on intellectual stimulation and growth can be beneficial. Companies can achieve this by offering special projects, research opportunities and continuing education programs. Providing ergonomic workplace adjustments, flexible work arrangements or reskilling options for older support workers can help keep their work engaging and rewarding. Regarding older managers, companies should recognize that JS alone may not be enough to drive their intention to stay. Factors beyond JS likely influence their decision to continue working. Therefore, companies may consider offering financial incentives, engaging them in succession planning, providing executive coaching or improving their work engagement.

Limitations and future research

This study has several limitations. First, the findings should be interpreted in light of the characteristics of the study sample. Participants were drawn from a single municipality in the Netherlands, and they all experienced the same organizational policies and human resource practices regarding sustainable employability. This uniformity reduced organizational variation and strengthened the internal consistency of the analyses. However, this specific public sector context may limit the generalizability of the findings to other sectors, countries or organizational contexts. Additionally, the sample was divided into three job categories (support, professional and managerial) to examine moderation effects. Although the relatively small managerial group reflects the composition of the organization's workforce, it may have reduced the statistical power to detect moderation effects involving this subgroup. Furthermore, the study deliberately focused on employees aged 50 and older, which means the findings cannot be generalized to younger employees. Therefore, future research should investigate whether the associations among job resources, JS and WCW differ across sectors, organizational contexts and age groups, using adequately sized samples within each job category.

Second, the use of self-report measures may have introduced common method bias, as participants provided information on all study variables at a single point in time. Future research could incorporate multi-source data designs to reduce this concern. In addition, nonresponse bias cannot be fully ruled out, although the 48% response rate is relatively high for organizational survey research. Given the municipality's focus on sustainable employability at the time of data collection, older employees with a particular interest in this topic may have been more likely to participate, potentially resulting in topic-related self-selection. The use of survey reminders may have reduced this risk by encouraging participation among initially less motivated or available employees. Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted with some caution, as non-respondents may still differ systematically from respondents. Future research could further assess sample representativeness by conducting follow-up analyses of non-respondents or replicating the study in contexts with less organizational emphasis on sustainable employability.

Third, our cross-sectional design revealed associations among job resources, JS and WCW but limits conclusions regarding the temporal order and causal relationships among these variables. Longitudinal research could investigate whether job resources contribute to changes in JS, which in turn may influence older workers' WCW over an extended period.

Fourth, future research could examine additional work characteristics and outcomes not included in this study, such as organizational support (Cheung and Wu, 2013), particularly among older managers. Given that work engagement encompasses vigor, dedication and absorption, which contribute to a positive work experience (Schaufeli et al., 2006), future research could examine whether it provides an alternative motivational pathway explaining older managers' WCW (Agarwal and Gupta, 2018; Zoomer et al., 2019).

Finally, future research could explore additional factors that may influence older workers' WCW. Aging may bring additional responsibilities and life changes, particularly when work interferes with family life or family responsibilities interfere with work (Cho et al., 2021). Although this study focused on job-related factors, future research could also examine personal circumstances, such as leisure activities and informal caregiving responsibilities (e.g. caring for elderly parents or grandchildren), which may influence older workers' availability and motivation to continue working (Carr et al., 2018). In addition, intergenerational collaboration represents an important area for future research as workplaces become increasingly diverse (Iqbal, 2024). Engaging younger and older employees can enhance learning conditions (Maslo, 2019) and foster greater social cohesion (Nurhas et al., 2023). Future research should focus on intergenerational collaboration, particularly among professionals, to improve knowledge sharing, social relationships, organizational performance and support extended working lives.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that job resources (autonomy, learning opportunities and social support) positively influence older workers' WCW, with this effect mediated by increased JS. Additionally, the job category plays a significant role in this relationship, with professionals showing a stronger association than managers between JS and their WCW in their current positions. We hope these insights will inform the design of suitable jobs for older employees, tailored to their specific job categories and motivating them to remain in the workforce.

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