

CAREER DECISION REGRET AND TURNOVER INTENTION: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF JOB SATISFACTION AMONG OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY SPECIALISTS

Hüsre Gizem AKALP^{1, a}

¹ Bursa Uludag University, Technical Sciences Vocational School, Occupational Health and Safety Program,
Bursa, Türkiye

^agizema@uludag.edu.tr

Abstract In today's working life, employees' career choices play a decisive role in their job performance and organizational commitment. Particularly in professions with high levels of responsibility—such as occupational safety specialists—the processes of making career decisions and the emotional evaluations associated with these decisions significantly shape work-related attitudes.

The aim of this study is to examine the relationships between occupational safety (OS) specialists' levels of career decision regret, job satisfaction, and turnover intention. The study was conducted within a quantitative research design, and the sample consisted of 234 OS specialists working in various sectors. Correlation analyses revealed a negative relationship between career decision regret and job satisfaction at the 1% significance level. This indicates that as OS specialists' regret regarding their career choices increases, their job satisfaction decreases significantly. Additionally, a positive relationship was identified between career decision regret and turnover intention at the 5% significance level. Accordingly, higher levels of career regret are associated with increased turnover tendencies among OS specialists.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that career decision regret is an important determinant of work-related attitudes and should be considered a critical factor for employee commitment and job continuity. Particularly in work environments with high psychosocial risks, the tendency of career regret to reduce job satisfaction and increase turnover intention represents a significant risk factor for both employee well-being and the sustainability of occupational safety services.

Keywords: Career decision regret; job satisfaction; turnover intention; occupational safety specialists.

1. INTRODUCTION

Employees' career decision-making processes significantly influence their work attitudes, psychological well-being, and organizational commitment. This influence becomes particularly pronounced in professions operating under high responsibility and regulatory pressure, such as occupational safety specialists. In such professions, individuals' evaluations of their career choices and their emotional reactions to past decisions shape organizational behavior variables including job satisfaction and turnover intention. Career decision regret is defined as a negative emotional state that arises when individuals evaluate alternative career options and perceive their current choice as suboptimal. Within decision-making theories, particularly in the context of regret theory, this concept has been described as a psychological process that affects individuals' future attitudes and behaviors [1,2].

Job satisfaction, a multidimensional concept encompassing employees' emotional and cognitive evaluations of their work, is one of the most extensively studied topics in the organizational behavior literature. According to Locke's [3] Value–Congruence Theory, job satisfaction is shaped by the degree of alignment between the outcomes employees obtain from their jobs and their personal values. Empirical findings consistently show that job satisfaction is strongly associated with employee motivation, performance, and the tendency to remain in the job. Turnover intention, on the other hand, refers to employees' cognitive propensity to consider leaving their current jobs and is regarded as a critical indicator influencing employee turnover and workforce continuity within organizations. Mobley's [4] model of employee turnover posits that job satisfaction is a fundamental determinant of the turnover process and that dissatisfaction transforms into turnover intention through cognitive evaluations.

Career decision regret has increasingly been examined in the literature as a variable related to job satisfaction and turnover intention. Research indicates that regret reduces individuals' job satisfaction and increases their likelihood of considering job departure [5,6]. However, these relationships have been insufficiently explored specifically among occupational safety specialists. Given the high stress level, substantial legal responsibilities, and continuously evolving regulatory framework of the occupational safety profession, the relationships between career regret, job satisfaction, and turnover intention may be more pronounced within this professional group.

This study aims to contribute to the literature by examining the relationships between career decision regret, job satisfaction, and turnover intention among 234 occupational safety specialists. The findings are expected to provide significant practical insights, particularly regarding workforce management, psychosocial risk factors, and career sustainability in the field of occupational safety.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The intense, fast-paced, and uncertain conditions of contemporary working environments lead employees to reassess their career choices, reconsider their levels of job satisfaction, and experience complex psychological processes that influence their tendencies toward turnover. Increasing workloads, digitalization, organizational demands, role conflicts, and work–life balance issues reshape both employees' psychological well-being and their attitudes toward work. Within this transformation, the relationship between career decision regret, job satisfaction, and turnover intention has become an increasingly prominent topic in the organizational behavior literature.

Studies examining the relationships among career decision regret, job satisfaction, and turnover intention have grown substantially in recent years. A noteworthy aspect of this expanding research area is the conceptualization of regret not merely as a retrospective evaluation but as a comprehensive psychological process that shapes employees' work attitudes and future behavioral intentions [1,6]. In the literature, regret is described as a cognitive comparison mechanism that prompts individuals to re-evaluate their career choices, and the emotional burden arising from post-decision assessments is emphasized as having significant consequences for work-related outcomes [7,8].

Career decision regret is defined as a negative emotional and cognitive state that emerges when individuals compare their past occupational choice with alternative options and perceive that they have missed a “better” alternative. Regret theory [2] emphasizes that regret arises during post-decision evaluations and influences future behavioral intentions. Research increasingly demonstrates

that regret is not merely a residual emotional response rooted in the past but rather a behavior-shaping mechanism. For example, Budjanovcanin, Rodrigues, and Guest [9] argue that career regret is a psychological factor that affects career decisions, job satisfaction, and turnover tendencies. International studies further show that regret extends beyond occupational contexts, creating a general “reorientation tendency” in post-decision behaviors. Similarly, the cross-national study by Ali, Kim, and Issayeva [10] demonstrates that regret strongly influences policy preferences and behavioral changes, showing that individuals past decisions that evoke regret lead to corrective actions in future choices. These findings suggest that regret functions not only in occupational contexts but also as a broader behavioral driver.

Job satisfaction is a comprehensive evaluation formed by comparing the outcomes employees obtain from their jobs with their personal values [3]. It is closely related to organizational commitment, performance, motivation, burnout, and retention behaviors. Job satisfaction is influenced not only by individual characteristics but also by working conditions, organizational support, leadership style, the quality of the physical environment, and work–life balance. In this regard, the study by Özçelik and Çelik [11], conducted within the WELL Building Standard–Mind framework, shows that psychologically supportive work environments significantly enhance job satisfaction, reduce burnout, and increase life satisfaction. These findings confirm that job satisfaction is not only shaped by the nature of the job but also by the quality of the physical and psychological work environment.

Turnover intention refers to the degree to which employees consider leaving their current job and is regarded as the strongest cognitive precursor of actual turnover in the literature. Among turnover models, Mobley’s [4] model posits that low job satisfaction initiates a cognitive withdrawal process that leads to turnover intention. The negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention has been consistently reported for decades. Contemporary international research continues to confirm that job dissatisfaction is one of the strongest predictors of turnover intention. Many recent studies support this model. For instance, Ivziku et al. [12] demonstrate, within the frameworks of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory and Social Exchange Theory, that job demands, job resources, and psychological factors strongly predict nurses’ turnover intentions. These studies reveal that job satisfaction is sensitive not only to individual evaluations but also to the overall quality of the work environment and the level of organizational support. In Turkey, many studies in healthcare, education, and service sectors have similarly confirmed the negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention [13, 14, 15].

The relationship between career decision regret and job satisfaction has increasingly been examined in both international and national literature. Cheval et al. [7], in their prospective cohort study of healthcare professionals, found that career regret significantly reduces job satisfaction. Polat et al. [13], in a Turkish sample, concluded that nurses’ career regret increases their turnover intention. Similarly, Yeşil and Polat [14] found that regret not only directly increases turnover intention but also exerts an indirect effect through occupational stress. These findings demonstrate that career regret is not merely an emotional experience but a powerful cognitive process shaping work attitudes.

Although the Turkish literature on occupational safety specialists is limited, existing studies indicate that job satisfaction in this profession is sensitive to working conditions, workload, autonomy, and managerial support. Karakaya and Sancı [15] revealed that job satisfaction levels differ significantly based on work environment and job scope within this group. In cases of low job satisfaction, employees are more likely to question their career choices, making the emergence of regret more probable. In this context, career regret may form a mechanism that reduces job satisfaction and

increases turnover intention. This mechanism may be even more pronounced among occupational safety specialists due to the high regulatory pressure, substantial responsibility, role ambiguity, and increasing job demands.

The triad of career decision regret, job satisfaction, and turnover intention has become a critical research domain for professions operating under intense psychological and organizational pressures in modern working environments. The conceptual literature reveals a strong mechanism whereby regret reduces job satisfaction, which in turn increases turnover intention. A holistic review of Turkish and international literature confirms that these relationships are theoretically sound and consistently supported, highlighting the importance of examining these three variables together, particularly in professions characterized by high stress, significant responsibility, and evident psychosocial risks [16]. However, research specifically focusing on occupational safety specialists remains limited. Existing studies mainly emphasize job satisfaction and working conditions (e.g., 15), indicating a significant gap regarding the integration of career decision regret into this context.

The proposed research model integrates career decision regret, job satisfaction, and turnover intention within a unified theoretical structure. The rationale for examining these three variables together is grounded in both regret theory and traditional turnover models. According to regret theory [2,1], regret is a cognitive–emotional evaluation that emerges when individuals perceive that their past decisions—such as their choice of profession—may not have yielded the optimal outcome. This negative appraisal influences future attitudes and behavioral intentions, particularly in contexts where individuals must continuously evaluate the consequences of their decisions.

In parallel, turnover models emphasize job satisfaction as one of the strongest antecedents of employees' intention to leave their jobs [4]. Job satisfaction serves as a proximal attitudinal variable that reflects employees' day-to-day evaluations of their work experience. When job satisfaction is low, cognitive withdrawal processes are activated, leading to increased turnover intention [16].

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the model assumes that career decision regret functions as a more distal, cognition-based determinant that shapes job satisfaction, which in turn influences turnover intention. Regret may reduce job satisfaction by triggering negative comparisons with alternative career paths, diminishing the perceived alignment between personal values and job outcomes. This decline in satisfaction is expected to translate into a higher likelihood of considering job departure.

This mechanism is particularly relevant for occupational safety specialists, whose work involves high legal responsibility, regulatory pressure, and psychosocial risk factors. In such professions, career-related cognitions (e.g., regret, misalignment, perceived loss) may exert stronger effects on job-related attitudes compared to other occupational groups. Therefore, integrating these three variables within a single model enables a more comprehensive understanding of how deeper career evaluations translate into daily job attitudes and long-term behavioral intentions.

Therefore, the present study aims to address this gap in the literature by examining the relationship between career decision regret, job satisfaction, and turnover intention among occupational safety specialists working in high psychosocial risk environments.

2.1. Research

In today's work environments, increasing workloads, regulatory pressures, performance demands, and organizational expectations directly influence employees' work experiences and their evaluations of their careers. Occupational safety specialists operate in settings characterized by high psychosocial risks, critical decision-making responsibilities, and continuously evolving regulatory requirements. In this context, organizational behavior variables such as career decision regret, job satisfaction, and turnover intention emerge as essential concepts for understanding the work life experiences of occupational safety specialists. This study aims to fill a gap in the literature by empirically examining the relationships among these variables.

2.2. Sample and Data Collection Procedure

In this study, the sample consisted of occupational safety specialists actively working in Türkiye. In this study, the data were collected from occupational safety specialists reached through online platforms using a combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling methods. The data were collected from occupational safety specialists representing the certification categories defined in the Turkish OHS legislation (Class A, B, and C), as well as from a variety of sectors. To be included in the study, participants were required to meet the following criteria: (1) being actively employed as an occupational safety specialist at the time of data collection, (2) holding a valid Class A, B, or C certification, (3) having at least one year of professional experience, (4) working in a workplace officially classified under a low, medium, or high hazard category, and (5) voluntarily participating and completing the questionnaire in full. Individuals who did not meet these criteria or who provided incomplete responses were excluded from the analysis.

The questionnaire was administered online through professional OHS communication groups, regional safety networks, and specialist platforms. A total of 324 responses were obtained; after removing incomplete or invalid submissions, 234 valid cases remained for analysis. This sampling strategy was designed to capture the occupational diversity of safety specialists in Türkiye and to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

In addition to the scale items, participants were asked to provide demographic and professional information such as gender, age, years of professional experience, sector of employment, and workplace hazard classification. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Bursa Uludağ University. The confidentiality of personal data was ensured throughout the research process, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. The data collection instrument consisted of four sections: (1) Career Decision Regret Scale, (2) Job Satisfaction Scale, (3) Turnover Intention Scale, and (4) Demographic Information Form.

Career Decision Regret Scale

To measure participants' evaluations regarding their career choice, the Career Decision Regret Scale (CDRS) was used. The original scale was developed by Brehaut et al. [8] within the framework of Regret Theory, and the Turkish adaptation, validity, and reliability studies were conducted by Erdurcan and Kırdök [17]. The scale has a unidimensional structure and consists of five items assessing individuals' retrospective evaluations of their career decisions.

Job Satisfaction Scale

Job satisfaction levels were measured using the five-item, unidimensional Job Satisfaction Scale originally developed by Brayfield and Rothe [18] and later revised by Judge, Locke, Durham, and Kluger [19]. The Turkish adaptation and psychometric analyses of the scale were performed by Keser and Öngen Bilir [20]. The scale consists of five items rated on a five-point Likert-type response format and evaluates employees' overall satisfaction with their job.

Turnover Intention Scale

Turnover intention was measured using the scale developed by Cook, Hepworth, Wall, and Warr [21]. Although no Turkish adaptation specific to this version. The scale is one of the most widely used instruments in the turnover intention literature, known for its brevity, reliability, and unidimensional structure. It consists of items that assess employees' behavioral intention to leave their current job, rated on a five-point Likert-type scale.

2.3. Research Model and Hypotheses

The research model conceptualizes career decision regret (X) as the independent variable, job satisfaction (M) as the mediating variable, and turnover intention (Y) as the dependent variable.

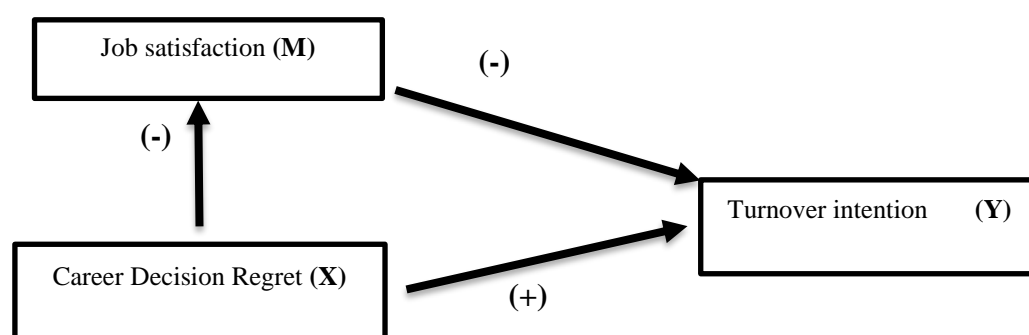


Figure 1. $X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y$ (Mediation Model).

The following hypotheses were developed based on the literature, theoretical framework, and the influence of psychosocial risk factors on occupational safety specialists:

H1: Career decision regret is negatively associated with job satisfaction.

H2: Career decision regret is positively associated with turnover intention.

H3: Job satisfaction is negatively associated with turnover intention.

2.4. Findings

Among 234 occupational health and safety specialists participating in the study, 57.3% were female and 42.7% were male, indicating a slight male predominance. This finding aligns with national labor statistics, where male professionals are more represented in occupational safety roles.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of occupational health and safety specialists (N = 234).

VARIABLE	CATEGORY	N	%
GENDER	Female	134	57.3
	Male	100	42.7
AGE	18–25 years	24	10.3
	26–44 years	117	50.0
	45–54 years	57	24.4
	55–64 years	25	10.7
	65 years and above	11	4.7
YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	1–5 years	65	27.8
	6–10 years	39	16.7
	11–15 years	41	17.5
	16 years or more	89	38.0
CERTIFICATION LEVEL	A class	36	15.4
	B class	90	38.5
	C class	108	46.2

In terms of age distribution, half of the participants (50%) were between 26 and 44 years old, while 10.3% were aged 18–25 and 24.4% were aged 45–54. The relatively balanced age distribution suggests that the sample encompasses both early-career and experienced specialists.

Regarding professional experience, 38% of participants reported more than 15 years in the profession, while 27.8% had 1–5 years of experience. This distribution reflects a workforce composed of both seasoned and newly qualified specialists, enhancing the representativeness of the sample.

In terms of certification level, C-class specialists accounted for the largest group (46.2%), followed by B-class (38.5%) and A-class (15.4%). This is consistent with national certification structures, where C-class represents entry-level qualifications and A-class specialists are relatively fewer due to stricter certification criteria.

Overall, the demographic profile indicates that the sample consists predominantly of mid-career professionals with moderate to extensive experience, ensuring sufficient variation for analyzing the relationships between career decision regret, job satisfaction, and turnover intention.

Table 2. Cross-tabulation of gender by occupational safety certification class (N = 234).

GENDER	A CLASS	B CLASS	C CLASS	TOTAL
FEMALE	20	54	60	134
MALE	16	36	48	100
TOTAL	36	90	108	234

Note. Certification classes are coded according to Turkish OHS legislation: A (advanced), B (intermediate), C (entry level).

A cross-tabulation was conducted to examine the distribution of certificate levels across gender categories. As shown in Table 2, female specialists (n = 134) had slightly higher representation across all certification levels compared to male specialists (n = 100).

The largest group for both genders was C-class certification, with 60 females and 48 males holding this entry-level qualification. This pattern reflects the broader national distribution, where C-class specialists constitute the majority of occupational health and safety professionals.

For B-class certification, 54 females and 36 males were represented, indicating that women had proportionally higher representation at the intermediate certification level.

At the A-class level, the most advanced certification, the distribution was relatively balanced (20 females vs. 16 males), although overall representation remained low (15.4% of the sample).

Overall, the results suggest that both genders are fairly represented across certification categories, with female specialists showing slightly higher participation at advanced and intermediate certification levels.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between gender and certification class. The association was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(2, N = 234) = 0.45$, $p = .80$, and the effect size was negligible (Cramer's $V = .04$). These results indicate that certification level (A, B, C) is distributed similarly among male and female occupational safety specialists.

The data were transferred from SPSS format and the analyzes were carried out in Python (statsmodels) environment. Mediation test: Performed using Multiple regression, non-standardized coefficients, 5000 bootstrap sampling, and 95% confidence interval. In the evaluation of effect significance, the fact that the confidence interval does not include zero was taken as the main criterion.

Before conducting the mediation analysis, reliability tests were performed for the three scales. All Cronbach's Alpha values were above .70, indicating good internal consistency (Career Decision Regret: $\alpha = .81$; Job Satisfaction: $\alpha = .78$; Turnover Intention: $\alpha = .74$).

Table 3. Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among study variables (N = 234).

VARIABLE	1	2	3	M	SD
1. CAREER DECISION REGRET	—	-.381***	.145*	3.41	0.86
2. JOB SATISFACTION	-.381***	—	.034	2.56	0.81
3. TURNOVER INTENTION	.145*	.034	—	2.82	0.87

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Pearson correlation analysis indicated that career decision regret was significantly negatively correlated with job satisfaction ($r = -.381$, $p < .001$). Regret was also positively correlated with turnover intention ($r = .145$, $p = .027$). Job satisfaction, however, was not significantly related to turnover intention ($r = .034$, $p = .603$).

A mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether job satisfaction (M) mediated the relationship between career decision regret (X) and turnover intention (Y). The analysis followed the regression-based approach recommended by Hayes (2018), and indirect effects were evaluated using 5000 bias-corrected bootstrap samples.

Effect of Career Decision Regret on Job Satisfaction (a Path): The first regression model tested the effect of career decision regret on job satisfaction. The results indicated that regret significantly predicted lower job satisfaction ($B = -0.359$, $SE = 0.057$, $t = -6.28$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-0.47, -0.25]$). This finding shows that individuals who experience higher regret tend to report notably lower job satisfaction.

Table 4. Mediation analysis for the effect of Career Decision Regret on Turnover Intention via Job Satisfaction (N = 234).

EFFECT	PATH	B (unstandardized)	B (standardized)	SE	T	P	95% CI (B)	RESULT
A	Regret → Job Satisfaction	−0.359	−.38	0.057	−6.28	< .001	[−0.47, −0.25]	Significant
B	Job Satisfaction → Turnover Intention (X control)	0.112	.10	0.075	1.49	.137	[−0.04, 0.26]	did not significant
C' (DIRECT)	Regret → Turnover Intention (M kontrol)	0.185	.18	0.070	2.64	.009	[0.05, 0.32]	Significant
C (TOTAL)	Regret → Turnover Intention	0.145	.14	0.065	2.23	.027	[0.02, 0.27]	Significant
INDIRECT T (A×B)	Regret → Satisfaction → Turnover	−0.040	−.04	—	—	.208 (boot)	[−0.10, 0.02] (boot)	did not significant

Note: N= B = non-standardized coefficient; β = standardized coefficient.

– 95% GI for pathways a, b, c, and c' was calculated by the classical t-dispersion regression approach.

– 95% CI for indirect impact (a×b) calculated by 5000 bootstrap sampling.

– GA = Confidence Interval.

Effect of Job Satisfaction and Career Decision Regret on Turnover Intention (b and c' Paths): In the second regression model, both job satisfaction and career decision regret were entered as predictors of turnover intention. Job satisfaction did not significantly predict turnover intention (B = 0.112, SE = 0.075, t = 1.49, p = .137, 95% CI [−0.04, 0.26]).

However, career decision regret remained a significant predictor of turnover intention even after controlling for job satisfaction (B = 0.185, SE = 0.070, t = 2.64, p = .009, 95% CI [0.05, 0.32]).

This suggests that regret exerts a direct effect on employees' intention to leave their job, independent of their satisfaction levels.

Total Effect of Career Decision Regret on Turnover Intention (c Path): The total effect of regret on turnover intention was also significant (B = 0.145, SE = 0.065, t = 2.23, p = .027, 95% CI [0.02, 0.27]), indicating that regret increases employees' turnover intention overall.

Indirect Effect (a×b) Through Job Satisfaction: The indirect effect was tested using bootstrap estimation. The indirect effect of regret on turnover intention through job satisfaction was not statistically significant (B = −0.040, 95% Bootstrap CI [−0.10, 0.02], p_{boot} ≈ .208).

The confidence interval includes zero, indicating that job satisfaction does not mediate the relationship between regret and turnover intention.

2.5. Conclusion of Mediation Analysis

Overall, the findings indicate that job satisfaction does not function as a mediator between career decision regret and turnover intention. Although regret strongly reduces job satisfaction and directly increases turnover intention, job satisfaction does not play a significant role in explaining this relationship.

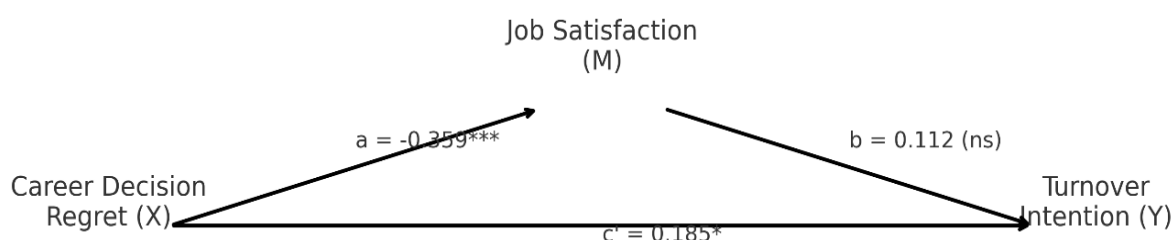


Figure 2. SEM Mediation diagram illustrating the effect of Career Decision Regret (X) on Turnover Intention (Y) through Job Satisfaction (M). Path coefficients represent unstandardized regression weights: $a = -0.359^{*}$, $b = 0.112 \text{ (ns)}$, $c' = 0.185^{**}$, and the indirect effect ($a \times b$) = -0.040 (95% CI $[-0.100, 0.024]$).**

The diagram presents the hypothesized mediation model in AMOS structural equation modeling style. Career Decision Regret (X) negatively predicts Job Satisfaction (M), while Job Satisfaction (M) shows a non-significant relationship with Turnover Intention (Y). The direct effect (c') from Career Decision Regret to Turnover Intention remains significant, indicating the absence of mediation.

2.6. Discussion

The primary aim of this study was to investigate whether job satisfaction mediates the relationship between career decision regret and turnover intention among occupational safety specialists. The results partially support the theoretical assumptions but do not provide evidence for a mediating mechanism.

Consistent with previous research, career decision regret significantly predicted both lower job satisfaction and higher turnover intention. This finding aligns with the literature suggesting that negative career-related cognitions can undermine employees' psychological attachment to their jobs and foster withdrawal behaviors.

Contrary to expectations, job satisfaction did not significantly predict turnover intention when controlling for career decision regret. Moreover, the indirect effect was not statistically significant, indicating that job satisfaction does not mediate the relationship between regret and turnover intention. This suggests that regret operates as a direct cognitive-emotional predictor, influencing an individual's desire to leave their job independently of how satisfied they are with their current position.

These findings imply that regret reflects deep-rooted career evaluations that transcend day-to-day work experiences. Organizations may need to provide career counseling, mentoring, and career path clarity to reduce regret-based turnover intentions. Interventions targeting job satisfaction alone may be insufficient.

A summary of the hypothesis testing results is presented below. H1 was supported, indicating that career decision regret significantly and negatively predicts job satisfaction. H2 was also supported, showing that career decision regret has a significant positive effect on turnover intention. However, H3 was not supported, as job satisfaction did not significantly predict turnover intention. Accordingly, only H1 and H2 received empirical support within the proposed research model.

3. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the relationships among career decision regret, job satisfaction, and turnover intention among occupational safety specialists working in high psychosocial risk environments. The results demonstrated that career decision regret is a significant predictor of both lower job satisfaction and higher turnover intention. However, contrary to theoretical expectations and prior research, job satisfaction did not mediate the relationship between regret and turnover intention. Instead, the findings indicate that career decision regret exerts a direct *and* independent influence on employees' intention to leave their jobs.

These results highlight an important theoretical implication: regret appears to function as a deep-rooted cognitive-emotional evaluation that goes beyond day-to-day job experiences. While job satisfaction is a well-established determinant of turnover intention in many organizational contexts, the unique pressures of the occupational safety profession—such as legal responsibilities, risk-based decision-making, and regulatory demands—may intensify the role of career-related cognitions. Thus, turnover intentions among safety specialists may stem more strongly from career-level misalignment than from dissatisfaction with immediate working conditions.

From a practical perspective, the findings underscore the importance of organizational strategies aimed at reducing career decision regret rather than focusing solely on improving job satisfaction. Providing clearer career pathways, structured mentoring programs, professional development opportunities, and realistic job previews may help mitigate regret-based turnover tendencies. Additionally, enhancing role clarity and reducing bureaucratic burdens may strengthen specialists' long-term commitment to the profession.

This study also contributes to the limited body of literature on occupational safety specialists, a professional group that has received relatively little empirical attention despite their critical role in workplace risk management. By examining regret as a determinant of turnover intention, the research provides new insights into the psychological mechanisms that influence workforce stability in safety-critical occupations.

However, several limitations should be acknowledged. The data were based on self-reported measures, which may be subject to social desirability or recall biases. The cross-sectional design limits causal inferences, and the sample—although diverse—was restricted to Türkiye, which may limit generalizability to other cultural or regulatory contexts. Future studies could employ longitudinal designs, integrate qualitative approaches, or explore additional mediators (e.g., burnout, perceived organizational support, occupational stress) to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of turnover dynamics. Moreover, examining how organizational culture or hazard level moderates these relationships may provide further theoretical enrichment.

In conclusion, career decision regret is an important yet understudied factor that directly shapes turnover intention among occupational safety specialists. Addressing regret-driven mechanisms may

play a crucial role in strengthening professional retention, enhancing workforce sustainability, and ultimately improving the quality and continuity of occupational safety services.

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