



The working conditions of the individual – in the interest of the organization?

Turnover intentions among Swedish employees

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Abstract

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Background and problem: Since the 1990s, the Swedish work environment has developed towards increased demands and employees experience a decreasing amount of influence over their own work. This creates job dissatisfaction, which in turn may cause employee turnover. Voluntary turnover is usually dysfunctional and costly for the organization, involving both visible and hidden costs. The Job-Demand-Control-Support model developed by Karasek and Theorell has been used to investigate how job demands, control and social support affect well-being. Few studies have investigated the organizational consequences in the form of turnover intentions.

Aim of study: This thesis is concerned with how job demands and control affect turnover intentions among Swedish employees. Additionally, it investigates how social support from managers, organizational commitment and satisfaction with career opportunities alter the relationship between job demands, control, and turnover intentions. It also investigates whether the willingness to exert extra effort on behalf of the organization differs depending on the individuals' working conditions.

Methodology: The analysis is based on empirical material collected by Statistics Sweden (SCB) on behalf of the Department for Sociology at the University of Gothenburg.

Analysis and conclusion: This study reveals differences in turnover intention depending on the degree of job demands and control. High demands in combination with low control ('high strain') cause the highest turnover intention. Social support, organizational commitment, and satisfaction with career opportunities each have a buffering effect on turnover intentions in cases of 'high strain'. Employees in 'high strain' situations are the second least ready to exert extra effort on behalf of the organization.

Keywords: Turnover intention, Job demands, Job control, Social support, Organizational commitment, Career opportunities, Job satisfaction

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and research problem

The Swedish work environment has developed towards increased demands since the 1990s – including rationalization and reorganization (Theorell & Karasek, 2013). At the same time, employees experience a decreasing amount of influence over their own work. A yearly survey from the union Unionen showed a significant deterioration in the psychosocial working environment in 2013 compared to 2012; and 2014 is showing similarly alarming numbers (Unionen, 2014). Furthermore, Unionen's safety delegates see stress and strain as one of the top three issues to improve in the working environment, along with management issues and the physical working environment.

It is claimed that the recent development towards more strain leads to stagnation rather than development in society, due to its failure to stimulate employees' creativity and enthusiasm (Theorell & Karasek, 2013). Moreover, job dissatisfaction may cause employees to leave the organization (Weisberg & Kirschenbaum, 1991). This makes strain not only a problem for individual employees, but also an important issue for organizations, managers and policy-makers.

Voluntary turnover has been a critical issue for organizations for a long time (Joo & Park, 2009). It is usually dysfunctional and "can be most detrimental to the organization" (Wells & Peachey, 2011). The issue is that the "smartest and most talented" employees are most likely to leave the organization (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000). As a consequence, 'brain drain' may occur – affecting the organization negatively through the loss of key employees. This implies negative effects on innovation and quality of service. It may even jeopardize the organization's objectives, considering existing views that "employees are the major contributors to the efficient achievement of the organization's success".

Employee turnover is costly and creates instability; and is seen as an "important factor for the financial performance of organizations" (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000; Berglund in Furåker, Håkansson and Karlsson, 2007; Flint, Haley & McNally, 2013; Joo & Park, 2009). The costs of replacing an employee are often underestimated since it includes both visible and 'hidden' costs. In order to keep employees within the organization, a long-term perspective is required – meaning that the organization must invest in, and value its employees.

Not only does job stress affect turnover intentions, but also attendance rate (Chiu et al, 2009). In addition, employees who are dissatisfied with their work situation may start putting in less effort at work (Withey & Cooper, 1989).

Paradoxically, at the same time as the job characteristics seem to become more and more disadvantageous from the perspective of the employees, another trend has emerged that focuses on maintaining and attracting talent – employer branding. Employer branding is a strategy and a critical tool for “talent acquisition, development, and retention” (Biswas & Suar, 2014). The growing interest for employer branding can be explained by the ‘war for talent’ in the labour market and it may concern “functional, economic, and psychosocial benefits of employment and identification with the company”. These two trends are seemingly opposed; on the one hand, the psychosocial working environment becomes alarmingly worse, but on the other hand companies are working harder than ever before to offer (seemingly) beneficial working environments with the potential to attract and retain talent.

The Job-Demand-Control-Support model developed by Karasek and Theorell has previously been used to investigate how job demands, control, and social support affect well-being. In this study, this model will be expanded to include turnover intentions as a dependent variable. It will also be investigated whether high organizational commitment or satisfaction with career opportunities may have a buffering effect on the expected high turnover intentions among employees experiencing high demands and low control. Organizational commitment has been subject to previous research, but not satisfaction with career opportunities. Furthermore, the effect that high strain has on the employee’s willingness to exert extra effort on behalf of the organization. Hence, this study contributes to research focused on job demands and control by showing the short and long-term implications of high strain jobs. It also contributes to research focused on turnover intentions by investigating how variables may interact to result in turnover intentions. Furthermore, the sample of this study is larger than previous studies and focuses on the general Swedish population rather than specific age groups or segments that have been subject to previous research.

This study has potential practical implications for how organizations should work strategically with the working conditions of their employees – wanting to avoid turnover intentions and the potential negative consequences connected to it. Knowing what conditions causes turnover intentions among Swedish employees also enables understanding about what *prevents* employees from leaving or wanting to leave. This makes it possible to create and/or adapt

working conditions among, for example, strategically important employee groups; or among the periphery of the workforce in order to avoid replacement costs. All in all, the results of this study can contribute to a better long-term perspective in modern organizations.

1.2 Purpose and research questions

The purpose is to investigate the connection between a number of independent variables and turnover intentions, as well as willingness to exert extra effort on the behalf of the organization, among Swedish employees in order to increase understanding of the impact that the working conditions of the individual has on the organization.

The questions that will be investigated in the study are the following:

- How do job demands and job control affect turnover intentions?
- How does social support alter the relationship between job demands, job control, and turnover intentions?
- How does organizational commitment alter the relationship between job demands, job control, and turnover intentions?
- How does satisfaction with career opportunities alter the relationship between job demands, job control, and turnover intentions?
- How do job demands and job control affect employees' willingness to exert extra effort on behalf of the organization?

In order to answer the research questions, a quantitative approach will be used – analyzing data from a survey with 2156 respondents from 2010, which allows for conclusions generalizable to the Swedish workforce.

In the next section, earlier research upon turnover intentions and employer branding will be presented, followed by theory and the creation of the hypotheses that have been tested in this study. Thereafter the methods for data collection and analysis will be presented. The paper continues with a presentation and a discussion of the results, and it ends with the conclusions of this study.

2. Previous research

In this section, earlier research on the topic of turnover intentions – a dependent variable of this study – will be presented. It will include the antecedents and the organizational consequences of turnover intentions. Thereafter, the concept of employer branding will be presented due to its recent development and strategic goal of attracting and retaining talent which is associated with favorable work characteristics.

2.1 Antecedents of turnover intentions

Turnover intentions have been described as one of the most important phenomena of organizational behaviour (Van Dick et al, 2004). When an employee is having turnover intentions, it means that there is a risk of actual, voluntary change of jobs (Weisberg & Kirschenbaum, 1991). Intentions to leave the organization arise because of organizational factors and personal characteristics such as age, educational level, and family status (Lambert et al, 2012). The organizational factors include for example job satisfaction, job commitment, and chances of promotion (Weisberg & Kirschenbaum, 1991).

The work environment has an impact on turnover intentions indirectly through job satisfaction; which is the variable that has most commonly been investigated as a predictor to turnover intentions (Van Dick et al, 2004). Job satisfaction is an overall attitude towards the total job situation, and satisfaction may be balanced against dissatisfactions to create overall job satisfaction (Kalleberg, 1977). More specifically, job satisfaction can include pay satisfaction, job characteristics, and the quality of support from managers (Van Dick et al, 2004).

Another predictor of turnover intentions is organizational identification or organizational commitment, which is associated with the employee's feeling of identification with the organization and its values (Van Dick et al, 2004). High identification with the organization leads to lower intentions of leaving the organization, not least since these employees are “less likely to consider alternative job opportunities” (Huang, Lawler & Lei, 2007).

A survey from 2003 investigating turnover intentions among 3259 Swedish employees, showed how employees' work situation affected their intentions to leave the organization (Berglund in Furåker, Håkansson and Karlsson, 2007). A considerable amount – 45,3 percent – of the respondents declared that they had thoughts of leaving the organization, in

comparison to 54,5 percent who did not. Working conditions that are less satisfying and job insecurity seemed to be what caused turnover intentions. It was also suggested that working conditions that usually represent the functional core in an organization – such as high-performance work systems that “facilitate innovation and performance in the organization by providing employees with influence, skills and information, and by involving them in teamwork” – has a “stabilizing effect on the core workforce”.

In another survey from 2015 including Swedish and Danish employees, 15 percent wished to leave their workplace immediately, and it was this group of people who was the most stressed at work (Ambjörn, 2015).

2.2 Consequences of turnover intentions

The relationship between turnover intention and actual turnover can be described as a moderate positive one, based on extensive previous research (Weisberg & Kirschenbaum, 1991). Others have found an important impact, a relatively strong or a ‘significant’ relationship (Chiu et al, 2009; Tett & Meyer, 1993). At the same time, other authors stress the fact that turnover intentions are “attitudinal dispositions” which must be distinguished from actual turnover (Berglund in Furåker, Håkansson and Karlsson, 2007). However, as mentioned by Van Dick and colleagues (2004); “turnover intention is a very specific attitude towards the organization and should, as such, be predictive of future behaviour”, which emphasizes the importance of the employees’ turnover intentions and not only their actual turnover.

To conclude, turnover intentions are partly affected by job satisfaction, organizational commitment and chances of promotion, which has a clear connection to the independent variables of this study. The fact that previous studies have shown a significant relationship between turnover intentions and actual turnover makes turnover intentions a relevant dependent variable for this study.

2.3 Employer branding

Employer branding has “emerged as a strategic tool to retain and attract talent” and has recently become popular among practitioners (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). It is concerned with the image that is put forth about the organization or more

explicitly; “showing the organization as a good place to work” through emphasizing how it is different from other employers and why it is desirable (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

It has both an internal and external focus; focusing on retaining existing employees through increasing loyalty as well as attracting potential employees, and several authors have emphasized employer branding’s potential of bringing about a competitive advantage through differentiation (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Simply put, “organizations that can attract the best minds will have a distinct edge in the marketplace”.

More specifically, employer branding may include functional, economic, and psychological benefits (Biswas & Suar, 2014). Thus, among other things, it may include job characteristics such as job demands and control, and other variables such as support, organizational commitment, and career opportunities – which are the variables of this study. Externally, employer branding is about attracting employees through convincing potential employees about the desirability of the organization. Internally, it is about developing a workforce that is committed to both the organizational goals and values, and it “carries the ‘promise’ made to recruits” (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). However, “in general, firms have been perceived to fail to deliver some of these offerings”.

Previous studies have shown that strong employer branding affects both an organization’s culture and productivity positively (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). Further benefits that may come in place is improved employee relations, increased retention, and the ability of offering lower salaries than other companies without strong employer brands.

3. Theory and hypotheses

In this section, the main theory of the Job-Demand-Control(-Support) model will be presented together with previous research upon the model and its implications. Furthermore, the concepts of organizational commitment, Social Exchange Theory and ‘neglect’ will be explained. The section also includes the hypotheses that will be tested in this study.

3.1 The Job-Demand-Control model

3.1.1 Development

The Job-Demand-Control model (JDC) developed by Karasek and Theorell in 1979 has become one of the most influential and dominant ones in research in the field of work and organizational psychology and on the work-health relationship (Van der Doef & Maes, 1999; Verhofstadt et al, 2009). Furthermore, it is the most tested occupational stress model (Kain & Jex in Perrewé & Ganster, 2010). The model describes the relationship between work and health including the two work factors job demands and job control (Van der doef & Maes, 1999; Verhofstadt et al, 2009). Job demands include work load and time pressure, whilst job control refers to the individual’s ability to control their own work.

The JDC model suggests that high demands in combination with low control – ‘high strain’ jobs – have a negative effect on well-being causing stress (Häusser et al, 2010; Van der doef & Maes, 1999). Too many tasks, i.e. demands, and little control leads to a situation where people “continually devote high amounts of cognitive resources to those tasks, which results in an elevated level of physiological arousal and increased cardiovascular and nervous system tension” (Kain & Jex in Perrewé & Ganster, 2010). This is the job type that has been subject to most research.

Another combination of demands and control may instead create greater satisfaction, namely the combination of high demands and high control; ‘active’ jobs – allowing for skill development and personal growth (Kain & Jex in Perrewé & Ganster, 2010).

Low control and low demands – ‘passive jobs’ – causes dissatisfaction and boredom due to constant repetition (Kain & Jex in Perrewé & Ganster, 2010). The fourth and final type of job has high control but low demands; ‘low strain’ jobs. However Karasek and Theorell proposed no hypotheses about its effects on wellbeing, which may be due to that this type of job is rarely found.

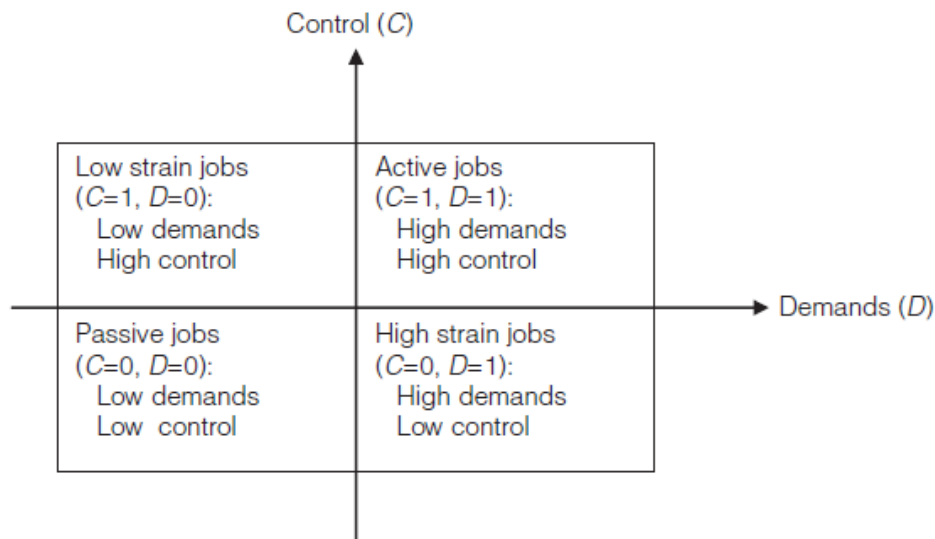


Figure 1. Job types in the Job-Demand-Control model

Source: Verhofstadt et al, 2009

The JDC model has been criticized by researchers arguing that it is too simplistic, and that it does not take individual characteristics into account (Kain & Jex in Perrewé & Ganster, 2010). Therefore, several studies have added more variables to the original model.

The JDC model was later expanded to include social support at work; including support from supervisors and co-workers at the workplace (Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Van der Doef & Maes, 1999). According to the JDCS model, employees experiencing high demands, low control and low social support are more stressed than others (McClenahan, Giles & Mallett, 2007). Those with high social support however, seem to experience a more favorable situation: “supervisor and coworker support, like job control, are considered to be job resources beneficial to the conduct of work and personal functioning of employees”.

This study is concerned with how the recent developments in the psychological working environment affect employees’ turnover intentions, and the JDC and JDCS model fits the aim of this study due to its clear connection to psychosocial working environment through including the characteristics of the job itself (demands and control) and the characteristics of the workplace (social support).

3.1.2 Previous research on the Job-Demand-Control-model

Although developed more than 30 years ago, it is claimed that the original model is still applicable, using the results from a European study conducted in 2012 (Theorell & Karasek, 2013). The study contained almost 200 000 participants, and it turned out that those who had ‘high strain’ jobs were at greater risk of myocardial infarction.

The extensive previous research has yielded inconsistent results, which may be partly due to the fact that a wide variety of measures have been used for the dimensions of demand, control, and strain (Kain & Jex in Perrewé & Ganster, 2010).

The JCD model has “rarely been used to predict turnover” (Verhofstadt et al, 2009). However, work characteristics have an important impact on turnover intentions (Luchman & González-Morales, 2013). Furthermore, demands and control affect job satisfaction, and job satisfaction is one of the antecedents to turnover intentions and actual turnover (Weisberg & Kirschenbaum, 1991; Verhofstadt et al, 2009).

One of the few studies that have used the JDCS model to predict turnover intentions investigated 373 Taiwanese nurses – random sampled within the requirement of full-time work longer than one year (Chiu et al, 2009). It was found that high job demands do not automatically lead to turnover intentions. Rather, high demands in combination with low job control are what seem to cause turnover intentions which is in accordance with the Job-Demand-Control model. High strain-nurses had the highest turnover intentions of all groups, whilst low strain nurses had the lowest turnover intentions. Adding social support into the analysis, it was found that it had a significantly counteracting effect on turnover intentions. Chiu and colleagues conclude that “giving more job control (...) may decrease the negative effects of job demand on turnover intentions” and that “social support may be a good means to reduce turnover intention”.

In another study of 346 Californian social workers, it was shown that lack of social support increased turnover intention “regardless of their perceived level of burnout” (Hansung & Stoner, 2008).

Furthermore, a study has been made of 247 hospitality industry workers, using a survey sent out to all the alumni of the Hotelschool The Hague and included only the answers from respondents who have worked in the hospitality industry since their graduation (Tromp, Rheede & Blomme, 2015). The results indicated that the more psychological strain and the

less social support that the employees experienced, the higher became their turnover intention. Commitment had a clear negative effect on turnover intention. Tromp and colleagues conclude that it may be difficult to change all work characteristics in the hospitality industry, however management has an opportunity to build a supportive organizational climate which in turn can reduce turnover intention.

Another study investigated the relationship between demands, control, and actual turnover among 3000 randomly selected young Flemish workers (Verhofstadt et al, 2009). The study showed that those starting in a high strain job at age 23 were more likely to change jobs than their peers who started in active jobs due to job dissatisfaction.

The few previous studies on job strain and turnover that has been conducted are focused on specific occupational groups or segments – such as nurses, truck drivers or young people (Chiu et al, 2009; Verhofstadt et al, 2009). Therefore, it is interesting to expand previous research to the Swedish workforce in general, covering different occupational groups and ages.

Recognizing the extensive previous research that differs between the JDC and JDCS model, this study will take the same approach and investigate them both separately.

Through time there has been a change in the nature of work from mainly physical to mental demands, explaining the current wide interest in mental demands (de Jonge et al, 2010). The type of demands that were included in the original JDCS model was psychological ones; namely mental workload and arousal (de Jonge et al, 2010). It is also stated that it is important to differ between physical, mental and emotional demands. Previous studies on physical demands in particular has “showed that the particular interaction between physical demands and control in relation to employee well-being failed to reach statistical significance”. Another study that investigated the effects from both mental and physical demands found support only for mental demands (Häusser et al, 2010).

In this study, information has been collected about both physical and mental demands; which will according to the above advice be analyzed separately:

Hypothesis 1a) *High mental demands and low control lead to higher turnover intentions than other combinations of demands and control*

Hypothesis 1b) *High physical demands and low control lead to higher turnover intentions than other combinations of demands and control*

Secondly, the JDCS model will be applied, adding low/high social support to the previous model. Social support from co-workers and social support from managers have in previous studies commonly been treated as one variable although it has been argued that the two forms of social support are not equivalent (Luchman & González-Morales, 2013). More specifically, social support from managers could “diminish the stressful perceptions of resource insufficiency and loss owing to demanding tasks”, whilst social support from co-workers “tends to be more valued, consistent over time, and less likely to be viewed as motivated by organizational politics or impression management”.

Several previous studies that have investigated support from managers and co-workers separately, have found that only social support from managers could counteract a part of the negative effect from high demands and low control (Häusser et al, 2010).

Considering the above statements about the differences between social support from managers and co-workers, respectively, this study will use social support from managers instead of a general variable for social support. Due to inconsistency in the index created of social support from co-workers, this variable will not be included in the analysis (for further explanation, see 4.2.1 Measures.)

Following the theoretical expectations and the previous research showing that social support can buffer the negative effects of high strain, the following hypotheses are created:

Hypothesis 2a) *High mental demands, low control, and high social support lead to lower turnover intentions than high mental demands, low control, and low social support from managers*

Hypothesis 2b) *High physical demands, low control, and high social support lead to lower turnover intentions than high physical demands, low control, and low social support from managers*

3.2 Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment can be described as the psychological bond the employee has with an organization (Joo & Park, 2009). Definitions of organizational commitment usually

include an “affective attachment to the organization”, “perceived costs associated with leaving the organization” and an “obligation to remain with the organization” (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Moreover, it is also related to the employee’s belief in the goals and values of the organization and a willingness to “exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization” (Joo & Park, 2009). Previous studies have shown a negative association between organizational commitment and turnover (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Strain may cause turnover intentions, whilst high organizational commitment may make employees prone to stay within the organization. It is interesting to investigate the outcome of turnover intentions of employees who have a job characterized by high strain, but who simultaneously experience high organizational commitment. Considering the strong statements connected to the concept of organizational commitment mentioned above, it seems likely that organizational commitment has great impact on turnover intentions and might be able to buffer some of the impact from high strain. In accordance to this reasoning, the third hypothesis is created:

Hypothesis 3a) *High mental demands, low control, and high organizational commitment leads to lower turnover intentions than high mental demands, low control, and low organizational commitment*

Hypothesis 3b) *High physical demands, low control, and high organizational commitment leads to lower turnover intentions than high physical demands, low control, and low organizational commitment*

3.3 Career opportunities

Organizational factors such as chances of promotion have an impact on turnover intentions (Weisberg & Kirschenbaum, 1991). Turning to Social Exchange Theory, it becomes evident that workers can form social exchange relationships with their employer: “because individuals return the benefits they receive, they are likely to match goodwill and helpfulness towards the party with whom they have a social exchange relationship” (Cropanzano, 2005). Following this logic, employees who experience satisfaction with their career opportunities, may respond with greater loyalty towards the organization i.e. experiencing less turnover intention than if dissatisfied with career opportunities offered by their employer.

This implies that employees satisfied with their career opportunities may be less prone to leave even in cases when they are experiencing high demands and low control – perhaps expecting to gain more job control in a future position. It may also be the case that some employees have low career opportunities, but since they have little or no ambition to make a career, they are satisfied with their current level of career opportunities.

Satisfaction with career opportunities in connection to strain and turnover intentions is interesting to investigate, not least since previous research calls for taking other variables into account in addition to the original Job-Demand-Control model (Kain & Jex in Perrewé & Ganster, 2010). The fourth hypothesis will therefore explore whether satisfaction with career opportunities alters the relationship between job demands, control and turnover intentions:

Hypothesis 4a) *High mental demands, low control, and high satisfaction with career opportunities leads to lower turnover intentions than high mental demands, low control, and low satisfaction with career opportunities*

Hypothesis 4b) *High physical demands, low control, and high satisfaction with career opportunities leads to lower turnover intentions than high physical demands, low control, and low satisfaction with career opportunities*

3.4 Neglect

Building on Hirschman's theory about exit and voice, Withey & Cooper (1989) present different ways that people who are dissatisfied with their work situation may act. Dissatisfied employees may quit their current job in order to find a better one (exit), try to improve the situation (voice), stay and support the current organization (loyalty), or a fourth alternative: neglect. Neglect includes an acceptance of that the situation will not improve – and the employee may respond by putting in less effort in connection to their current job.

In a study about job mobility among 3000 young Flemish workers, it became evident that almost 30 percent of the employees, who started their career in a job characterized by 'high strain' at the age 23, remained at this job at age 26 (Verhofstadt et al, 2009). Verhofstadt and colleagues argue that "disadvantaged workers (...) are trapped in bad jobs" – especially women and lower educated workers.

Connecting the study about being trapped in 'bad jobs' such as high strain jobs, with the theory about neglect, one may assume that for 'high strain' jobs it is more common for

employees to respond with neglect. Partly because those workers are more dissatisfied with their job situation than other workers and therefore are more likely to act through either exit, voice, loyalty or neglect – and also considering that not all employee groups have good opportunities to either leave their current job or try to improve their situation through voice. The fifth and last hypothesis will therefore investigate the relationship between high strain and neglect:

Hypothesis 5a) *High strain (from mental demands) jobs lead to ‘neglect’ i.e. putting in less effort, to a greater extent than active, passive and low strain jobs*

Hypothesis 5b) *High strain (from physical demands) jobs lead to ‘neglect’ i.e. putting in less effort, to a greater extent than active, passive and low strain jobs*

4. Method

In this section, the methodology that was used to answer the research questions will be explained – including the choice of method, data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations.

4.1 Choice of method

The main aim of this study is to investigate the associations between a number of independent variables and turnover intentions. This makes a quantitative study a suitable research design considering its possibility of describing causal processes (Hakim, 2000).

The study was conducted by using survey data collected by Statistics Sweden (SCB) in 2010. The main advantages of surveys are their transparency and accountability, and the method facilitates replication (Hakim, 2000). Structured questionnaires obtain less depth and quality of information than other research designs such as interviews. However, a quantitative study of this kind produces statistics that are representative for the study population.

Collecting my own empirical data would have made it possible to tailor the survey questions in accordance with recommendations expressed in previous research. On the other hand, access to the high-quality data and the larger sample collected by SCB gives greater credibility to the conclusions of this study and allows for generalization to the study population which is the entire Swedish workforce. This facilitates understanding and allows for drawing general conclusions. All in all, the chosen method allows for greater impact on managers and policy-makers dealing with issues related to working environment and the retention of talented employees.

4.2 Data collection

The collected data included data from two different sources that regard the same individuals. Firstly, it contained data from a survey conducted by SCB, called Labour Force Surveys (LFS). LFS are conducted monthly, quarterly and yearly, describing the development on the Swedish labour market among employed and unemployed people between 15 and 74 years old (Statistics Sweden, 2015a). The specific LFS survey that is used in this study is from 2010. The data used from this study included gender, sector and education level.

Secondly, the data set contained data from a survey made by SCB on behalf of the Department of Sociology at Gothenburg University, called “Security in work, employment and income”. The survey was conducted in 2010 and contained 54 questions (see the questions used in this study in *Appendix 1*). The respondents were picked out from previous respondents to LFS. The survey was sent out to 3993 people and responded by 2156 people – creating a response rate of 54 %. The data used from this study included questions about job demands, job support, social support, organizational commitment, intentions to leave the organization and willingness to exert extra effort on behalf of the organization.

From the two surveys, a total of 831 variables were available. Out of these, the variables presented in the next section were chosen in order to answer the research questions of this study.

4.3 Measures

Job control was measured through question 1, consisting of 8 variables including to what extent the respondent can influence/control the contents of their work tasks, the order in which the tasks are to be conducted, the pace of work, the work methods, the division of work between different people, who they are working with, deadlines, and working hours (see *Appendix 1*). The variables were recoded so that low scores reflected low job control and high scores reflected high job control. The variables were then summed, creating a standardized index (ranging from 0-100 with a mean value of 56.8) with the Cronbach’s alpha reliability of 0.873 which is considered an acceptable value (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011)

Job demand was measured through question 4, containing five variables. Physical job demands were measured through question 4a. Question 4b-e measured mental demands, dealing with how often the respondent experience that their work is mentally demanding, whether they have enough time to perform their work in the best way, whether their work demands a high tempo, and whether they have time to finish their work during regular working hours. The variables were recoded so that low scores reflected low mental job demands and high scores reflected high mental job demands. The variables were then summed, creating a standardized index (ranging from 0-100 with a mean value of 48.22) with a reliability of 0,684 - close to 0.7 which is considered an acceptable value (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011)

Social support was measured through question 5, consisting of 5 variables on the topic of how common it is for the respondent that their colleagues, immediate supervisor or other organizational contacts help them and appreciate their work. This dimension was separated into social support from managers and co-workers, respectively. The standardized index for social support from managers was created from question 5b and 5d (ranging from 0-100 with a mean value of 57.91), with a reliability of 0,761 which points at good internal consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The index for social support from co-workers was created from question 5a and 5c with a reliability of 0.572. This is not an acceptable value, leading to the decision to exclude social support from co-workers from the analysis.

Satisfaction with career opportunities was measured through question 7i, with a scale ranging from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. The variable was recoded so that a low score reflected low satisfaction and a high score reflected high satisfaction.

Willingness to work extra hard on behalf of the organization was measured through question 8a. The variable was recoded so that a low score reflected low willingness and a high score reflected high willingness.

Organizational commitment was measured through question 8, consisting of six variables on the topic of how ready the individual employee is to work extra hard on behalf of the organization, the fit between individual and organizational values, the willingness to stay in the current organization, loyalty towards the organization, and how proud the individual is over their current organization. The variables were recoded so that low scores reflected low organizational commitment and high scores reflected high organizational commitment. The variables were then summed, creating a standardized index (ranging from 0-100 with a mean value of 57.3) with a reliability of 0,697 which is close to the 0.7 limit for acceptable values (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Turnover intentions were measured through question 24, where the respondents had three alternatives: yes, maybe or no. In the analysis, the alternatives were represented by the numbers 1, 2 and 3, respectively.

4.4 Data analysis

The groups included in the analysis were created using the scales of job demands and job control, where a combination of high demands and low control created 'high strain', a

combination of high demands and high control created 'active', a combination of low demands and high control created "passive", and a combination of low demands and low control created 'low strain'. The division of "high" and "low" of each variable was made using the median of the variable.

Thereafter, the four combinations of demands and control were combined with other factors - social support from managers (low/high), organizational commitment (low/high) and satisfaction with career opportunities (low/high). This creates eight categories for each analysis, investigating how these differed in turnover intentions. Lastly, it was investigated whether the willingness to exert extra effort on behalf of the organization differed among the four groups 'high strain', 'active', 'passive' and 'low strain'.

The method used for analysing the created categories was a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), conducted in the statistics program SPSS. ANOVA enables testing of the significance between the differences between more than two means (Blaikie, 2003). Hence, it is a useful tool in order to answer the research questions of this study which included comparisons between groups. A *t* test could have provided a similar analysis in cases of fewer categories, but is not recommended due to the large number of categories of this study. Moreover, ANOVA has been used in a previous study that investigated job demands, control and support and its impact on turnover intentions (Chiu et al, 2009).

4.5 Validity and reliability

Criticism has been raised towards previous research on the Job Demand-Control model because of the wide variety of measures used for the different dimensions (Kain & Jex in Perrewé & Ganster, 2010). The measures in this study that contains indices was tested for internal consistency in order to enhance the validity of the study (see section 4.2.1 *Measures*). Since only the indices with acceptable alpha values were included in the analysis, it is ensured that the different questions on the same topic measure a similar phenomenon (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). Furthermore, construct validity is enhanced since almost all measures can be placed in theoretical context. For example, the items included in the index "mental job demands" are connected to Karasek and Theorell's description of job demands; and items that measures organizational commitment corresponds to descriptions of the concept 'organizational commitment'.

This study contains data from a single survey and therefore the results cannot be compared to an identical previous study in order to test reliability (Carmines & Zeller, 1979).

4.6 Limitations

The response rate of this study was 54 percent, which raises questions about how generalizable the results are in connection to the study population. Out of the 2156 respondents, 47 percent were men and 53 percent were women. Compared to the population (aged 15-74) in 2010, 50.6 percent were men and 49.4 were women (Statistics Sweden, 2015b). The respondents' distribution between the public and private sector was 35.2 and 64.8 percent, respectively. Compared to the population (aged 15-74) in 2010, 29 and 71 percent worked in the public and the private sector, respectively. Hence, differences are found in the distribution of gender and sector between this study's respondents and the study population. However, when investigating the impacts of gender and sector on the dependent variable turnover intentions, no significant differences were found (see *5.1 Turnover intentions*).

4.7 Ethical considerations

Among the ethical considerations of the study, we find the confidentiality of the respondents (Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler, 2005). During the execution of the survey, the respondents' answers were de-identified, and the answers are protected according to the Personal Data Act (1998:204), Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act (2009:400), Official Statistics Act (2001:99) and Official Statistics Ordinance (2001:100). The respondents were informed about this before conducting the survey which can be assumed to have raised the degree of truthful answers (see *Appendix 1*).

The requirements from the University of Gothenburg to give access to the data used for this study included that the raw material will not be shared, and that it will be deleted from the author's personal computer after completing this study.

5. Results

In this section, the turnover intentions among the respondents will be presented, followed by the results for one hypothesis at a time.

5.1 Turnover intentions

14.2 percent of the respondents stated that they wanted to change employer; 29.1 percent maybe wanted to change employer, whereas 56.7 percent did not have any turnover intention. No significant difference was found between men and women with mean values of 2.44 and 2.41, respectively. Neither was any significant difference found between the public or private sector, with mean values of 2.46 and 2.41, respectively. Education level showed slight differences in turnover intention, where a primary level had a mean value of 2.52, secondary level 2.43 and tertiary level 2.4.

5.2 Mental demands and control

Table 1 shows the combinations between the two variables mental demands and control. Most respondents belonged to the group ‘high strain’ (26.9 percent), followed by ‘low strain’ (26.2 percent), ‘active’ (24.7 percent) and ‘passive’ (22.2 percent).

Table 1. Mental demands and control, distribution

		Frequency	Valid percent
Valid	Active	424	24.7
	High strain	462	26.9
	Passive	382	22.2
	Low strain	451	26.2
	Total	1719	100
Missing		437	
Total		2156	

One-way ANOVA indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between groups ($F= 36.8$, $p = .000$). A Tukey post-hoc test indicated that turnover intentions was statistically significantly higher among employees in ‘high strain’ jobs (2.18 ± 0.8 , $p = .000$) than in ‘passive’ jobs (2.4 ± 0.73); as for ‘high strain’ in comparison to ‘active’ (2.47 ± 0.66 , p

= .000) and ‘low strain’ (2.67 ± 0.6 , $p = .000$). There was no statistically significant difference between the groups ‘active’ and ‘passive’ ($p = .526$).

5.3 Physical demands and control

Table 2 shows that most respondents belonged to the group ‘high strain’ (29.3 percent), followed by ‘low strain’ (29.2 percent), ‘active’ (21.7 percent) and ‘passive’ (19.8 percent).

Table 2. Physical demands and control, distribution

		Frequency	Valid percent
Valid	Active	374	21.7
	High strain	504	29.3
	Passive	340	19.8
	Low strain	503	29.2
	Total	1721	100.0
Missing		435	
	Total	2156	

One-way ANOVA indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between groups ($F = 25$, $p = .000$). A Tukey post-hoc test indicated that turnover intentions were statistically significantly higher among employees in ‘high strain’ jobs (2.25 ± 0.79 , $p = .000$) than in ‘active’ jobs (2.57 ± 0.66). Turnover intentions was also statistically significantly higher for ‘high strain’ jobs in comparison to ‘low strain’ jobs (2.58 ± 0.62 , $p = .000$).

There were no statistically significant differences between the groups ‘high strain’ and ‘passive’ (2.32 ± 0.76 , $p = .509$). Neither between the groups ‘low strain’ and ‘active’ ($p = .997$).

5.4 Mental demands, control, and managerial social support

Table 3 shows that most respondents belonged to the group “passive + high support” (17.4 percent), followed by “high strain + low support” (17.3 percent). Overall, it was more common to have high support than low support in all groups except ‘high strain’.

Table 3. Mental demands, control, and managerial social support, distribution

		Frequency	Valid percent
Valid	Active + low support	171	10.6
	Active + high support	196	12.2
	High strain + low support	278	17.3
	High strain + high support	170	10.6
	Passive + low support	129	8.0
	Passive + high support	280	17.4
	Low strain + low support	181	11.2
	Low strain + high support	204	12.7
	Total	1609	100.0
Missing		547	
	Total	2156	

One-way ANOVA indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between groups ($F = 22.58$, $p = .000$). A Tukey post-hoc test indicated that turnover intentions were statistically significantly lower among employees in “high strain + high support” (2.39 ± 0.77 , $p = .000$) than those experiencing “high strain + low support” (2.04 ± 0.8).

The highest turnover intentions were found among those in ‘high strain’ jobs combined with low managerial social support with a mean value of 2.04.

There was no statistically significant difference between the groups “active + high support” and “active + low support” ($p = .24$). Neither was there any statistically significant difference between the groups “passive + high support” and “passive + low support” ($p = .074$), or between the groups “low strain + high support” and “low strain + low support” ($p = .072$).

5.5 Physical demands, control, and managerial social support

Table 4 shows that most respondents belonged to the group “passive + high support” (16.9 percent), followed by “high strain + low support (16.7 percent). Overall, it was more common to have high support in a ‘low strain’ or ‘passive’ job, and low support in ‘high strain’ or ‘active’ jobs.

Table 4. Physical demands, control, and managerial social support, distribution

		Frequency	Valid percent
Valid	Active + low support	181	11.2
	Active + high support	147	9.1
	High strain + low support	269	16.7
	High strain + high support	218	13.5
	Passive + low support	183	11.4
	Passive + high support	272	16.9
	Low strain + low support	127	7.9
	Low strain + high support	213	13.2
	Total	1610	100.0
Missing		546	
	Total	2156	

One-way ANOVA indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between groups ($F = 17.82, p = .000$). A Tukey post-hoc test indicated that turnover intentions were statistically significantly lower among employees in “high strain + high support” jobs ($2.4 \pm 0.74, p = .000$) than those experiencing “high strain + low support” (2.11 ± 0.81).

The highest turnover intentions were found among those in ‘high strain’ jobs combined with low managerial social support with a mean value of 2.11.

The turnover intentions were statistically significantly lower among employees in “active + high support” jobs ($2.5 \pm 0.7, p = .001$) than those in “active + low support” jobs. The same relationship became evident between “passive + high support” ($2.65 \pm 0.58, p = .003$) in comparison to “passive + low support” (2.39 ± 0.68).

There was no statistically significant difference between the groups “low strain + high support” and “low strain + low support” ($p = .035$).

5.6 Mental demands, control, and organizational commitment

Table 5 shows that most respondents belonged to the group “passive + high commitment” (17.1) followed by “low strain + high commitment” (16.9). Overall, it was more common to have high organizational commitment in ‘passive’ and ‘low strain’ jobs, whilst low organizational commitment was most common in ‘high strain’ jobs. For ‘active’ jobs, it was equally common to experience low and high commitment.

Table 5. Mental demands, control, and organizational commitment, distribution

		Frequency	Valid percent
Valid	Active + low commitment	158	10.9
	Active + high commitment	158	10.9
	High strain + low commitment	244	16.8
	High strain + high commitment	151	10.4
	Passive + low commitment	112	7.7
	Passive + high commitment	249	17.1
	Low strain + low commitment	137	9.4
	Low strain + high commitment	245	16.9
	Total	1454	100.0
Missing		702	
	Total	2156	

One-way ANOVA indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between groups ($F = 61.1, p = .000$). A Tukey post-hoc test indicated that the turnover intentions was statistically significantly lower among employees in “high strain + high commitment” situations ($2.6 \pm 0.64, p = .000$), than those experiencing “high strain + low commitment” (1.91 ± 0.79).

Turnover intentions were also significantly lower among those experiencing “active + high commitment” ($2.69 \pm 0.54, p = .000$) than those experiencing “active + low commitment” (2.09 ± 0.77). The same relationship is true for “passive + high commitment” ($2.82 \pm 0.45, p = .000$) in comparison to “passive + low commitment” (2.32 ± 0.73), as well as for “low strain + high commitment” ($2.68 \pm 0.53, p = .000$) in comparison to “low strain + low commitment” (2.02 ± 0.69).

5.7 Physical demands, control, and organizational commitment

Table 6 shows that most respondents belonged to the groups “passive strain + high commitment” (20.3 percent) followed by “high strain + low commitment” (18 percent). Overall, it was more common to have high commitment in ‘active’, ‘passive’ and ‘low strain’ jobs, whilst it was more common to have low commitment in ‘high strain’ jobs.

Table 6. Physical demands, control, and organizational commitment, distribution

		Frequency	Valid percent
Valid	Active + low commitment	141	9.7
	Active + high commitment	149	10.2
	High strain + low commitment	262	18.0
	High strain + high commitment	159	10.9
	Passive + low commitment	139	9.6
	Passive + high commitment	296	20.3
	Low strain + low commitment	109	7.5
	Low strain + high commitment	200	13.7
	Total	1455	100.0
Missing		701	
	Total	2156	

One-way ANOVA indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between groups ($F = 56.67$, $p = .000$). A Tukey post-hoc test indicated that turnover intentions were statistically significantly lower among employees in “high strain + high commitment” situations (2.67 ± 0.6 , $p = .000$) than those experiencing “high strain + low commitment” (1.97 ± 0.78).

Turnover intentions were also significantly lower among those experiencing “active + high commitment” (2.63 ± 0.59 , $p = .000$), than those experiencing “active + low commitment” (1.99 ± 0.81). The same relationship is true for “passive + high commitment” (2.74 ± 0.5 , $p = .000$) in comparison to “passive + low commitment” (2.17 ± 0.69), as well as for “low strain + high commitment” (2.77 ± 0.49) in comparison to “low strain + low commitment” (2.14 ± 0.77).

5.8 Mental demands, control, and satisfaction with career opportunities

Table 7 shows that most respondents belonged to the groups “high strain + low satisfaction with career opportunities” (22.6 percent), followed by “passive + low satisfaction with career opportunities” (17.4 percent). In all four groups, it was most common to experience low rather than high satisfaction with career opportunities.

Table 7. Mental demands, control, and satisfaction with career opportunities, distribution

		Frequency	Valid percent
Valid	Active + low satisfaction	251	14.7
	Active + high satisfaction	168	9.8
	High strain + low satisfaction	386	22.6
	High strain + high satisfaction	74	4.3
	Passive + low satisfaction	297	17.4
	Passive + high satisfaction	85	5.0
	Low strain + low satisfaction	260	15.2
	Low strain + high satisfaction	185	10.8
	Total	1706	100.0
Missing		450	
	Total	2156	

One-way ANOVA indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between groups ($F = 23.85, p = .000$). A Tukey post-hoc test indicated that turnover intentions were statistically significantly lower among employees who experience “high strain + high satisfaction with career opportunities” ($2.49 \pm 0.69, p = .001$) in comparison to those experiencing “high strain + low satisfaction with career opportunities” (2.12 ± 0.807).

There was no statistically significant difference between the groups “active + high satisfaction with career opportunities” and “active + low satisfaction with career opportunities” ($p = .009$). Neither was there a statistically significant difference between the groups “passive + high satisfaction with career opportunities” and “passive + low satisfaction with career opportunities” ($p = .013$), nor between the groups “low strain + high satisfaction” and “low strain + low satisfaction” ($p = .01$).

5.9 Physical demands, control, and satisfaction with career opportunities

Table 8 shows that most respondents belonged to the groups “high strain + low satisfaction with career opportunities” (24.4 percent), followed by “passive + low satisfaction with career opportunities” (15.6 percent) and “low strain + low satisfaction with career opportunities” (15.6 percent). In all four groups, it was most common to experience low rather than high satisfaction with career opportunities.

Table 8. Physical demands, control, and satisfaction with career opportunities, distribution

		Frequency	Valid percent
Valid	Active + low satisfaction	244	14.3
	Active + high satisfaction	123	7.2
	High strain + low satisfaction	417	24.4
	High strain + high satisfaction	85	5.0
	Passive + low satisfaction	267	15.6
	Passive + high satisfaction	73	4.3
	Low strain + low satisfaction	267	15.6
	Low strain + high satisfaction	231	13.5
	Total	1707	100.0
Missing		449	
	Total	2156	

One-way ANOVA indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between groups ($F = 19.12$, $p = .000$). A Tukey post-hoc test indicated that turnover intentions were statistically significantly lower among employees who experience “high strain + high satisfaction with career opportunities” (2.58 ± 0.61 , $p = .000$) in comparison to those experiencing “high strain + low satisfaction with career opportunities” (2.18 ± 0.8).

There was no statistically significant difference between the groups “active + high satisfaction with career opportunities” and “active + low satisfaction with career opportunities” ($p = .016$). Neither was there a statistically significant difference between the groups “passive + high satisfaction with career opportunities” and “passive + low satisfaction with career opportunities” ($p = .029$), nor between the groups “low strain + high satisfaction” and “low strain + low satisfaction” ($p = .006$).

5.10 Demands, control, and ‘neglect’

For mental demands, one-way ANOVA indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between groups ($F = 40.22$, $p = .000$). The groups that were most ready to work extra hard for the organization to reach its goals belonged to groups ‘active’ (4.4) and ‘low strain’ (4.14), followed by ‘high strain’ (3.9) ‘passive’ (3.8).

For physical demands, one-way ANOVA indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between groups ($F = 39.05$, $p = .000$). The groups that were most ready to work

extra hard for the organization to reach its goals belonged to groups 'low strain' (4.3) and 'active' (4.2), followed by 'high strain' (3.8) and 'passive' (3.9).

6. Discussion

In this section, the results will be discussed – one hypothesis at a time – and compared to theory and previous research.

6.1 Demands and control

Hypothesis 1a) *High mental demands and low control lead to higher turnover intentions than other combinations of demands and control*

The analysis revealed that employees who have jobs characterized by high mental demands and low control ('high strain'), have higher turnover intentions than other combinations of demands and control ('active', 'passive' and 'low strain'). Here we can imagine an employee who perceives his/her work as mentally demanding, does not have enough time to perform his/her tasks in the best way, has a high working pace and cannot finish his/her work during normal working hours – and at the same time he or she cannot influence his/her work through for example working methods, the order in which to perform the tasks, and deadlines.

Consequently, hypothesis 1a is supported. This is in accordance with the Job-Demand-Control model's suggestions that high strain causes negative effects on wellbeing (Häusser et al, 2010); and less satisfying working conditions can in turn lead to turnover or turnover intentions (Weisberg & Kirschenbaum, 1991). Furthermore, the findings reinforce previous studies that have used turnover intentions or turnover as the dependent variable, since 'high strain' was found to have higher turnover intention than all other combinations (Chiu et al, 2009; Verhofstadt et al, 2009).

It is interesting that no statistically significant difference was found in the turnover intentions among employees belonging to the groups 'active' and 'passive', considering the different characteristics of the two groups. 'Active' jobs include the most positive characteristics of all four groups which are suggested to lead to great satisfaction, whilst 'passive' jobs are suggested to create dissatisfaction. This indicates that turnover intention cannot solely be explained by the job characteristics demand and control, and as previously mentioned it is decided by several factors (Weisberg & Kirschenbaum, 1991).

Karasek and Theorell presented no hypothesis on the effect of 'low strain' jobs on well-being (Kain & Jex in Perrewé & Ganster, 2010). In this analysis, this was the group that turned out

to have the least turnover intentions – which corresponds to the previous research made by Chiu and colleagues (2009). It is also consistent with the research on actual (voluntary) turnover among young workers made by Verhofstadt et al (2009). This may indicate that the job characteristics of ‘low strain’ jobs have a positive effect on well-being and/or job satisfaction – in turn making the employees prone to stay in their current job situation.

Hypothesis 1b) *High physical demands and low control lead to higher turnover intentions than other combinations of demands and control*

The analysis revealed that employees with jobs characterized by high physical demands and low control (‘high strain’), have higher turnover intentions than those with ‘active’ or ‘low strain’ jobs. Here we can imagine an employee that has a physically demanding work, and at the same time he/she does not have any influence, for example in terms of working methods, deadlines and working hours. However, there were no difference in turnover intentions between ‘high strain’ and ‘passive’ jobs. Consequently, hypothesis 1b is partially supported.

No statistically significant difference in turnover intentions was found between the groups ‘low strain’ and ‘active’. This differs from the analysis which included mental instead of physical demands, where there was no difference between ‘active’ and ‘passive’. This makes more sense if studying demands and control in isolation from other factors that could influence well-being and job satisfaction. ‘Low strain’ jobs as well as ‘active’ jobs have characteristics that could be assumed not to produce stress (differing from ‘high strain’ jobs). On the other hand, there is a crucial difference between the two job types, since ‘active’ jobs are considered to allow for skill development through its combination of high control and high demands whilst ‘low strain’ jobs are characterized by low demands.

Turnover intentions were lower amongst employees experiencing high strain from physical demands rather than mental demands. This difference, and the difference between which groups that statistical differences was found, reinforce previous statements about the importance to differ between different types of demands (de Jonge et al, 2010). There is however a difference in relation to the study that only found support for mental demands (Häusser et al, 2010).

Similar to the analysis of mental demands, the analysis of physical demands revealed that it is ‘low strain’ jobs that lead to the lowest turnover intentions out of the four groups.

6.2 Demands, control, and managerial social support

Hypothesis 2a) *High mental demands, low control, and high social support from managers lead to lower turnover intentions than high mental demands, low control, and low social support from managers*

The analysis revealed that employees who have jobs characterized by high mental demands and low control ('high strain') in combination with high social support, have lower turnover intentions than those in 'high strain' jobs in combination with low social support. Consequently, hypothesis 2a is supported.

The highest turnover intentions were found among those in 'high strain' jobs combined with low social support from managers. This is in accordance with the Job-Demand-Control-Support model, which suggests that this group would be more stressed than others (McClenahan, Giles & Mallett, 2007). 'High strain' jobs are already causing stress and higher turnover intentions than other groups, so adding another factor that is less satisfying (low social support) should therefore logically lead to even higher turnover intentions. However, adding a factor that leads to higher satisfaction (high social support) has the opposite effect – buffering a part of the effect of high strain. Here, we could imagine an employee who experience dissatisfaction due to the basic characteristics of his or her work and logically would want to leave, however the employee experience high support from his or her manager in the form of getting help when in difficulties at work and receiving appreciation for the work that he or she does. This makes the overall satisfaction higher and therefore the employee has lower intentions to leave than his/her counterparts who do not experience high support from their managers. This can be related to Kalleberg's (1977) statement that satisfaction may be balanced against dissatisfactions in the creation of overall job satisfaction.

These findings support the results from previous studies made by Chiu and colleagues (2009); Tromp, Rheede and Blomme (2015) and Hansung & Stoner (2008) where adding social support to high strain jobs decreased turnover intention.

It is interesting that it was only in the 'high strain' group that turnover intentions differed depending on the level of managerial social support. This point at the importance of managerial social support among this group of employees, and an opportunity of lowering turnover intentions despite this group's less satisfying job characteristics – through "balancing" satisfaction against dissatisfaction.

Moreover, it is also interesting that social support made no difference in the turnover intentions among ‘active’ jobs. Knowing that ‘active’ jobs have the most satisfying job characteristics, it may be the case that social support has no effect because of already high satisfaction (i.e. dissatisfaction with social support cannot undermine the satisfaction with control and demands).

Hypothesis 2b) *High physical demands, low control, and high social support lead to lower turnover intentions than high physical demands, low control, and low social support*

The analysis revealed that employees who have jobs characterized by high physical demands and low control (‘high strain’) in combination with high social support, have lower turnover intentions than those in ‘high strain’ jobs in combination with low social support. Consequently, hypothesis 2b is supported.

The highest turnover intentions were found among those in ‘high strain’ jobs combined with low managerial social support.

For both ‘passive’ and ‘active’ jobs, it was found that higher social support affects turnover intentions. For ‘low strain’ jobs, the level of social support made no difference. In comparison to the analysis including only mental demands, this constitutes a difference since no effect was found in any other group than ‘high strain’. This indicates that managerial support may be more important in jobs with physical rather than mental demands, again reinforcing the importance of separating physical and mental demands in the analysis.

The fact that no difference was found for ‘low strain’ jobs could be explained by the fact that these jobs had the second lowest turnover intention; pointing at already high job satisfaction which may not be undermined by adding a negative variable in the form of low social support.

6.3 Demands, control, and organizational commitment

Hypothesis 3a) *High mental demands, low control, and high organizational commitment leads to lower turnover intentions than high mental demands, low control, and low organizational commitment*

The analysis revealed that employees, who have jobs characterized by high mental demands and low control (‘high strain’) in combination with high organizational commitment, have

lower turnover intentions than those in ‘high strain’ jobs in combination with low social support. Consequently, hypothesis 3a is supported.

The highest turnover intentions were found among the group “high strain + low commitment”. There was a big difference between the turnover intentions among ‘high strain’ jobs with high or low commitment, which indicates the ability of organizational commitment to buffer the higher turnover intentions that ‘high strain’ jobs usually imply. Here we could imagine an employee who is experiencing dissatisfying basic job characteristics and therefore should be prone to leave the organization, but something holds them back – namely the ‘psychological bond’ that can be created through high organizational commitment (Joo & Park, 2009). The employee simply feels obligated to stay for some reason, as for example a strong identification with the organization’s values, loyalty, or pride in working for the organization. These findings corresponds with previous research made on the topic, for example Tromp, Rheede & Blomme (2015) who revealed that commitment had a clear negative effect on turnover intentions even in cases of psychological strain, as well as Meyer & Allen (1991) who showed a negative association between organizational commitment and actual turnover.

The other three groups, ‘active’, ‘passive’ and ‘low strain’ showed the same effect from organizational commitment, reinforcing its important role.

Hypothesis 3b) High physical demands, low control, and high organizational commitment leads to lower turnover intentions than high physical demands, low control, and low organizational commitment

The analysis revealed that employees, who have jobs characterized by high physical demands and low control (‘high strain’) in combination with high organizational commitment, have lower turnover intentions than those in ‘high strain’ jobs in combination low social support. Consequently, hypothesis 3b is supported.

The highest turnover intentions were found among the group “high strain + low commitment”. The other three groups, ‘active’, ‘passive’ and ‘low strain’ showed the same effect from organizational commitment, which was also the case in the analysis of mental demands.

6.4 Demands, control and satisfaction with career opportunities

Hypothesis 4a) *High mental demands, low control, and high satisfaction with career opportunities leads to lower turnover intentions than high mental demands, low control, and low satisfaction with career opportunities*

The analysis revealed that employees who have jobs characterized by high mental demands and low control ('high strain') in combination with high satisfaction with career opportunities, have lower turnover intentions than those in 'high strain' jobs in combination with low satisfaction with career opportunities. Consequently, hypothesis 4a is supported.

It was only in the 'high strain' group that turnover intentions differed depending on the level of career opportunities.

Hypothesis 4b) *High physical demands, low control, and high satisfaction with career opportunities leads to lower turnover intentions than high physical demands, low control, and low satisfaction with career opportunities*

The analysis revealed that employees who have jobs characterized by high physical demands and low control ('high strain') in combination with high satisfaction with career opportunities, have lower turnover intentions than those in 'high strain' jobs in combination with low satisfaction with career opportunities. Consequently, hypothesis 4b is supported.

Turnover intentions differed only in the 'high strain' group depending on the level of satisfaction with career opportunities, which was also true in the case of mental demands. Hence, it is suggested that although experiencing non-favorable work characteristics, employees can – perhaps through formations of social exchange relationships with their managers including explicit or implicit promises about future promotions – be more willing to stay within their current organization. Here, we could imagine an employee who is dissatisfied with the characteristics of their job that they conduct at the moment, but who sees opportunities to advance and reach positions that possess more favorable work characteristics. Therefore, he or she is willing to stay within the current job despite high demands and low control – but probably only for a limited period of time.

The results indicate that satisfaction with career opportunities is not an important factor in the deciding of turnover intentions among the ‘active’, ‘passive’, and ‘low strain’ group – in contrast to Weisberg & Kirschenbaum’s (1991) suggestion that chances of promotion affects turnover intentions. It may be logical in the cases of ‘active’ and ‘low strain’, taking into account the favorable job characteristics of the ‘active’ group and the demonstrated low turnover intentions that indicates high job satisfaction among the ‘low strain’ group. For the ‘passive’ group, one explanation may be that the disadvantageous job characteristics cannot be outweighed by other, more favorable, characteristics.

6.5 Demands, control, and neglect

Hypothesis 5a) *High strain (from mental demands) jobs lead to ‘neglect’ i.e. putting in less effort, to a greater extent than active, passive and low strain jobs*

Hypothesis 5b) *High strain (from physical demands) jobs lead to ‘neglect’ i.e. putting in less effort, to a greater extent than active, passive and low strain jobs*

The analysis revealed that employees who have jobs characterized by high demands and low control (‘high strain’) had the second lowest willingness to exert extra effort on behalf of their organization, both for mental and physical demands. In both cases, it was the ‘passive’ groups that had the lowest willingness to exert extra effort. Consequently, hypothesis 5a and 5b are partially supported.

This indicates that ‘high strain’ and ‘passive’ situations does not only affect turnover intention but may also be harmful on a daily basis for the organization. Here, we could imagine an employee who experience unfavorable working characteristics, for example he or she does not feel that their daily work is rewarding or stimulating (‘passive’) or it is too stressful and involves too little autonomy (‘high strain’). As a consequence, the employee does not feel encouraged to work harder than what is required for keeping his or her job. Simply put, such employees feel no obligation to “give something extra” back to their employer who does not appear to invest in them and their well-being.

To sum up, all hypotheses were fully or partly supported. Differences were found concerning the buffering effects of social support, organizational commitment and satisfaction with career opportunities on different combinations of job control and demand. ‘High strain’ jobs

revealed significant opportunities of buffering effects. However, it also became evident that in some cases it was not possible to outweigh negative job characteristics through other favorable conditions. The results of this study show that Kalleberg's (1989) notion of 'balancing' satisfactions against dissatisfactions may provide great opportunities for managers – but at the same time limitations are revealed. The results of this study also highlight the importance of separating mental and physical demands in the analysis, since they in some cases show different impacts of the buffering variables.

Moreover, it also seems like some job characteristics, such as 'low strain' and 'active', are so favorable that adding another negative variable (such as low social support or low satisfaction with career opportunities) makes no significant difference in turnover intentions. Hence, two opportunities for increasing job satisfaction and lowering turnover intention becomes evident: changing the job characteristics, and/or changing variables such as the employee's social support, organizational commitment and satisfaction with career opportunities.

In connection to the upcoming trend employer branding, it seems to be possible for employers to compete in the 'war of talents' despite of unfavorable psychosocial working environments. However, as mentioned previously, employer branding may concern several different factors and it may also be more about presenting an attractive image rather than actual beneficial work characteristics. The fact that many firms seem to fail to deliver on some of the 'promises' made supports this view (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

As well as being a strategic choice to offer jobs that have favorable psychosocial characteristics (for example, high demands and high control), it may also be a strategic choice to offer other favorable aspects in the working environment that allows for retention of talented employees, such as this study's buffering variables. The only variable that had a buffering effect on all groups as well as for both mental and physical demands was organizational commitment. Hence, out of the variables analyzed in this study, a high organizational commitment seems to be the most successful strategy to retain talent within a modern organization

As mentioned by Tromp and colleagues (2015), managers do not always have the possibility to change all work characteristics – there will always be industries and jobs that are characterized by high strain. However, management has great opportunities to create an otherwise satisfactory work environment which is not only beneficial for individual employees but also for the organization.

7. Conclusions

First of all, 'high strain' in the case of mental demands was found to cause higher turnover intention than all other combinations of demands and control, and in the case of physical demands it was 'high strain' and 'passive' which had the highest turnover intentions. 'Low strain' jobs lead to the lowest turnover intentions. Generally, turnover intentions were lower among employees experiencing high strain from physical demands rather than mental demands.

Secondly, when adding social support, the highest turnover intentions were found among those in 'high strain' jobs combined with low social support from managers. For mental demands, only the 'high strain' group turnover intentions differed depending on the level of managerial social support. For physical demands, there was also a difference among 'passive' and 'active' groups.

Thirdly, when adding organizational commitment, the highest turnover intentions were found among the group with 'high strain' in combination with low organizational commitment. The other three combinations of job demands and control also showed decreased turnover intentions when adding high from organizational commitment.

Fourthly, when adding satisfaction with career opportunities, it turned out that employees in 'high strain' jobs who experience high satisfaction with career opportunities have lower turnover intentions than employees with low satisfaction. It was only in the 'high strain' group that satisfaction with career opportunities made any difference on turnover intentions.

Lastly, in the analysis regarding employees' willingness to exert extra effort on behalf of the organization, it was revealed that the 'passive' and 'high strain' groups had the lowest and second lowest willingness to do so, respectively.

To conclude, the results from this study indicate that 'high strain' situations do not automatically lead to turnover intentions. Rather, evidence indicates that management has opportunities to compensate for the effects of high strain on turnover intentions in a number of ways. The most effective strategy that shows impact for all groups and both types of demands is the existence of organizational commitment. Furthermore, job characteristics such as demands and control may counteract the impact from low social support, low organizational commitment or low satisfaction with career opportunities.

Ending reflections

This study has contributed to research concerning the psychosocial working environment and the JDC(-S) model by using turnover intentions rather than health as the dependent variable. It has also added a new variable to the research that has already been done on the same topic, namely satisfaction with career opportunities. Moreover, it has shown that high strain can cause not only turnover intentions but also a negative impact on the organization on a daily basis.

The results of this study and previous studies could be of use for organizations, managers and policy-makers who acknowledge the importance of keeping key employees within the organization, reducing replacements costs, as well as striving towards making the organization successful through making employees willing to exert extra effort on its behalf. Knowing what factors that cause turnover intentions to increase or decrease facilitates designing working environments with an opportunity to retain talented employees.

Job demands, job control and social support and its impact on turnover intentions is still a relatively unexplored research area, and has so far been focused on specific employee groups and included limited sample sizes. More attention should be devoted this area due to this study's indication that the individual's working conditions impact the organization. Larger sample sizes and re-tests could raise the reliability of the results of this study.

In this study, interesting patterns were found also among other combinations of demands and control than 'high strain' which may call for more attention on all groups – not only high strain which has so far yielded most interest – in future research.

Furthermore, it is probably the case that also the labour market has an impact on turnover intentions. For example, knowing that you could quickly find an equal or a better job somewhere else should logically affect turnover intentions. Among the variables available from the two surveys used for this study, labour market variables existed. Several indexes were created, but their internal consistency was too low to be included in the analysis. This interest area could be subject of future research.

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Appendix 1. Survey



Statistiska centralbyrån
Statistics Sweden



GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET
Sociologiska institutionen

Security in work, employment and income

Here comes the survey with questions about work, employment and income that we talked about in connection to the AKU-interview. Statistics Sweden (SCB) is conducting the survey on behalf of the Department for Sociology at the University of Gothenburg.

In discussions about how our labour market should be designed, there are many opinions about what security in the labour market means for different circumstances. Some believe that job security is of central importance for human well-being. Others consider the economic security that for example unemployment insurance gives, as crucial for people's readiness to change jobs. A thirds perspective points at the importance of how easy it is to find a new job for security in the labour market.

In a research project at the Department for Sociology at the University of Gothenburg it is investigated how employees assess their security when it comes to employment and income. The aim is to investigate how these assessments relate to wellbeing, work commitment, readiness to adapt to change (being flexible), and attitudes towards central regulations (for example unemployment insurance regulations) and actors (for example the Employment Agency) in the labour market.

The results will provide knowledge about what different factors mean for providing security in the labour market, and how security affects people's actions in the labour market. This knowledge is important for discussions on how future regulations for the labour market will be formed. A first compilation of the results will be available on the website of the Department for Sociology in April 2011 (www.sociology.gu.se – click on 'Forskning'). It is also possible to contact Tomas Berglund (see below) to get the compilation sent to you.

To reduce the number of questions in the survey, answers from the AKU-interviews will also be used. It involves data about age, gender, country of birth, union membership, working hours etc. Your answers will be de-identified and handled in a way that will protect your personal integrity. *This means that it will not be possible to identify individuals. The information provided will be protected at Statistics Sweden through the Personal Data Act (1998:204) and Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act (2009:400), and the information from AKU through the Official Statistics Act (2001:99) and Official Statistics Ordinance (2001:100).* The material that the University of Gothenburg is working with will therefore not contain any information that makes it possible to identify individuals. The University of Gothenburg will have access to the de-identified data during at least 10 years to enable scientific review. Participation in the survey is of course voluntary.

Some of the questions may not concern you (at the moment). Still, we ask you to answer the survey as completely as possible. *Your answers are important and cannot be replaced by someone else's!*

The completed questionnaire is sent back as soon as possible, preferably within a week, in the stamped addressed envelope.



If you have any questions about the survey and the gathered information, you are welcome to write or call:

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Gothenburg and Stockholm autumn 2010
Tomas Berglund
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Statistics Sweden

Questions about your current job

1. To what extent can you influence...

	Great extent	Fairly great extent	Small extent	Not at all	Not applicable
	1	2	3	4	5
a) ... the content of your work tasks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) ... the order in which you perform your tasks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) ... your work pace?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) ... your working methods?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) ... the division of work between different people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) ... who you are working with?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) ... deadlines for projects, assignments, deliveries etc?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) ... your working hours?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Here follows some questions about the strain and intensity in your work. How often...

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
	1	2	3	4	5
a) ... is your work physically demanding?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) ... is your work psychologically demanding?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) ... do you have enough time to perform the work in the best way?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) ... does your work demand working in a high tempo?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) ... do you have time to finish your work during your normal/regular working hours?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Below there are questions about the support that you have in your work

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	Not applicable
	1	2	3	4	5	6
a) Do you usually get help from <u>colleagues</u> if you have difficulties in your work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Do you usually get help from your <u>immediate supervisor</u> if you have difficulties in your work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Do <u>colleagues</u> usually show appreciation for the work that you do?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Do your <u>immediate supervisor</u> usually show appreciation for the work that you do?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Do you usually get appreciation from customers, patients, students or other stakeholders?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. How satisfied are you with the following conditions in your workplace?

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
	1	2	3	4	5
a) Salary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Length of work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Working hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Work tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Workload	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Working environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Manager/management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Possibilities for further education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Career opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j) Job security	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k) Employee participation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l) Opportunities to combine work and life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m) Work in general	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Totally agree	Partly agree	Neither agree or disagree	Partly disagree	Totally disagree	I don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	6
a) I am ready to work extra hard to help the workplace/organization become successful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) My values and the organization's values differ a lot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) I would decline another job with higher salary to be able to stay at my current workplace	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) I feel very little loyalty towards the organization that I am working at	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) I would almost take any job to be able to stay at my current workplace	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) I am proud of the organization I am working for	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Attitude towards job mobility**24. Would you currently want to change workplace/employer?**

Yes	Maybe	No
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>