# DECISIONS ON ENDING A CAREER IN THE CZECH POLICE FORCE: THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER AND LEVEL OF EDUCATION

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## Abstract

The main aim of this paper is to identify the differences in how the factors of education and gender influence the decision to leave a career as a police officer. A questionnaire survey was conducted among members of the Czech Republic's police force, yielding 384 responses. The analysis is based on seven reasons that police officers may consider when leaving the service, including retirement allowance, workload, family background, the need for a career change, health status, superiors, and stress in the workplace. It was determined whether the individual variables differed depending on the respondent's gender or level of education. Due to the unconfirmed normality of the data, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used. Correlation analysis was also applied. Descriptive statistics show that the most influential determinants when considering a possible resignation are retirement allowance, workplace stress, and health status. However, based on the statistical testing performed, it was not found that the importance of individual factors differed depending on gender or education. Correlation coefficients show predominantly statistical significance, but they acquire low values. The study also includes a critical comparison with international literature, providing the scientific community with opportunities for further research and offering practical recommendations for the Czech Republic's police.

## Introduction

The aging population poses a challenge not only for human resource management (Krestová *et al.*, 2024) but also for the public administration sector (Silva and Helal, 2022). Krestová *et al.* (2024) further state that this issue is addressed through age management and its procedures. Age management is human resource management with an emphasis on the aging workforce. However, this concept should not only address older employees but should emphasize all employees so that their potential can be fully utilized (Macassa *et al.*, 2024). Da Silva and Helal (2022) note that age management is the most effective way to strategically manage changes related to population aging, as well as changes in the labor market that arise due to the aging workforce. A crucial question is therefore how to retain older workers, especially in sectors where there is a labor shortage. Organizations, not only in these sectors, should play an active role in developing, modifying, or providing flexible working conditions in order to adapt work to the abilities and preferences of older employees (Jonsson *et al.*, 2023). Proper age management should be based on the fact that ageism can affect anyone at any time, and therefore equality for older employees should not be achieved at the expense of younger colleagues and vice versa. This commitment should be applied to both senior management and line management. This has a significant impact on everyday working life, satisfaction, and well-being in the workplace, but can also contribute significantly to retaining older workers in the organization. The task of senior management is to contribute to encouraging appropriate behavior in the workplace but also to influencing the organizational culture. The issue of sustainability is also of fundamental importance. Human resource management experts can therefore play a key role in facilitating the involvement of all age groups in the creation of age management strategies in the area of work-life inclusion and employee age (Taylor and Earl, 2023).

## Theoretical Background

The Police of the Czech Republic is an armed security force established by law in 1991. The role of this force is to serve and protect the public. Protection refers to the safety of persons and property, but also to public

order. Another task of the Police of the Czech Republic is to prevent crime. It also performs tasks assigned to it under the Criminal Code, tasks in the area of internal order and security, which are laid down by European or international laws or regulations. The Police of the Czech Republic is subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior. The structure of the Czech Police consists of the Police Presidium, departments with nationwide jurisdiction, regional directorates, and departments subordinate to regional directorates (Czech Police, n.d.).

The population of the Czech Republic is demonstrably aging (Czech Statistical Office, 2025), and so are the people working for the Czech Police (Independent Trade Union of the Czech Police, 2024). For this reason, it is necessary to pay attention to possible factors that could cause police officers to leave active service.

Retirement allowances are paid to police officers, and not only to them, based on two factors. The first is the amount of the officer's monthly salary, and the second is the number of years of service, i.e., the number of years that the person has been an employee of the Czech Police. In order for a police officer to be eligible for the minimum retirement allowance, they must have worked for at least 15 years. In this case, the amount of the retirement allowance will be 20% and will gradually increase with each additional year of service (Czech Police, n.d.). O'Guinn *et al.* (2024) argue that the higher a police officer's salary, the lower the likelihood of their leaving. It is therefore clear that the service allowance can play a role in a police officer's decision to terminate their employment with the police.

The nature of this work is considered to be very demanding and dynamic. Police work itself involves a wide range of duties and activities, and officers are often exposed to situations that are dangerous for them (López-Cabarcos *et al.*, 2022). Workload can therefore be defined as a subjective state characterized by the demands placed on the performance of tasks, the effort expended to complete them, and the costs associated with them. Workload is also influenced by experience, skills, and the level of available resources (Tan *et al.*, 2022). Howes and Goodman-Delahunty (2014) state in their study that workload is one of the factors that cause police officers to consider ending their careers.

The conflict between work and family life has been observed among police officers in recent decades. This conflict can be divided into three categories: conflict based on time, tension, or behavior. However, all categories of work–family conflict can lead to exhaustion, burnout, and consideration of leaving the police force (Xu *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, Wilson *et al.* (2023) recommend adopting policies that are more family-friendly for police officers in order to reduce potential turnover.

The health of police officers can also be a reason for them to leave. This is demonstrated, for example, by a study by Charman and Tyson (2024), which states that the long-term and short-term health problems of police officers are an area that is not supported or discussed in any way. In terms of health, it is also important to focus on the mental health of police officers. According to research by Nonis *et al.* (2024), police officers consider seeking help in the context of mental health to be negatively perceived in their careers. Furthermore, it has been shown that the relationship between superiors and subordinates is significant for police burnout, but also for their decision to leave their jobs. Another essential factor is the support of superiors, although very few sources and studies focus on this issue. However, it can be argued that support from superiors is crucial for police officers when deciding to change careers. This support should not only concern procedural justice and technical progress but also health problems and work-related stress (Ha *et al.*, 2024). It is therefore clear that a change of superior can cause a change in support in individual areas, thus contributing to thoughts of leaving the police force.

Overall, a career change can be influenced by one of the factors mentioned above, but also by other factors. A career change may also be caused by regional factors, organizational justice, or organizational culture in general (Siddiqi and Khan, 2023). Today, police officers' careers can follow several career paths, with one of the factors influencing a police officer's career being their professional priorities, which change over the course of their life. Around mid-life, the most common factors for career change are highly specialized education in a given field or, for example, specific professional experience. It should be noted that a career must be a combination of three basic factors: authenticity, balance, and challenges (Howes and Goodman-Delahunty, 2014).

## Methodology and Methods

The main aim of this paper is to identify the differences in how the factors of education and gender influence the decision to leave a career as a police officer. Based on this aim, two research questions were formulated:
- RQ1: What influence does education have on the decision to end a career in the police force?
- RQ2: What influence does the gender of police officers play in the decision to end their careers?

These two factors (education, gender) were selected based on available studies and professional literature. Demographic variables, including education level and gender, are often discussed in relation to the reasons for police officers leaving the profession, whether in the form of transitioning to another job or taking early retirement. There is also discussion about differences in the perception of individual factors from the perspective of these demographic characteristics (AlKaabi and Davies, 2022; Boag-Munroe *et al.*, 2016; Bonner and Brimhall, 2021; Charman and Bennett, 2021; Davis *et al.*, 2024).

The data were collected in 2025 from members of the Czech Police. All respondents were members of the state police, not the municipal police. The questionnaire was distributed both online and in person or via the social network LinkedIn. A total of 384 responses were obtained, with 292 responses coming from men and the remaining 92 responses coming from women. In percentage terms, men accounted for 76% and women for 24%. A further descriptive description of the research sample, including a graphical representation, can be found in the Results chapter.

The questionnaire consisted of both closed and open-ended questions (Roopa and Rani, 2012). Open-ended questions were used as identification questions, such as the year of joining the Czech Police or a question focused on the specific age, i.e., the number of the respondent. Closed questions dominated the questionnaire. The vast majority were evaluated using a scale. The Likert scale was chosen for the evaluation as one of the most frequently used scales in the social sciences (Heo *et al.*, 2022), ranging from 1 to 4. The number 1 then represented the respondents' disagreement or non-preference for this answer, while the number 4 represented the exact opposite, i.e., complete agreement with the answer or preference for this option. This four-point scale was chosen deliberately, as the aim was to avoid the possibility of a neutral response. A neutral option may give respondents the impression that they do not need to think about the question, which may reduce the quality of the responses obtained (Weijters *et al.*, 2010). Similarly, this middle option can be misused in various ways, preventing respondents from expressing their true position (Chyung *et al.*, 2017).

The data were then tested using several statistical methods. First, it was necessary to verify whether the data had a normal distribution. Therefore, the Shapiro-Wilk test, which verifies the normality of data, was used (Shatz, 2023). The normality of the data was not confirmed at a significance level of 0.05 for any of the variables. This significance level of 0.05 was chosen because it is the most commonly used level in the social sciences (Khalilzadeh and Tasci, 2024). Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the data, or the reliability of the questionnaire, with values between 0.7 and 0.9 considered satisfactory (Crutzen and Peters, 2015). The data obtained had a final statistic of 0.59, which the literature considers debatable but still acceptable. Subsequently, the Kruskal-Wallis test was performed, which is used to detect differences between three or more groups, as a non-parametric version of the ANOVA test (Johnson, 2022). Spearman's correlation was used to determine the mutual relationships between the individual reasons for police officers leaving. Based on the correlation coefficient value, we can speak of very high correlation (0.9–1.00), high correlation (0.7–0.89), moderate correlation (0.5–0.69), low correlation (0.3–0.49), and in the case of lower values, a very weak or no relationship (Asuero *et al.*, 2006). MS Excel and R Studio were used for all calculations.

## Results

The introduction itself presents the structure of the research sample and basic descriptive statistics. Fig. 1 shows the distribution of the sample in terms of gender. As can be seen, men predominate, accounting for 292 of the total 384, or 76%. Women make up the remaining part of the sample, i.e., 92 respondents (24%).

An overview of the education of individual respondents is also provided. Fig. 2 offers a graphical representation of this distribution. A total of 132 respondents (i.e., 34% of the research sample) state that they graduated from secondary school (with a high school diploma, in one case with a vocational certificate). Eighty-one respondents have a bachelor's degree from a university (21%), and 152 respondents, i.e., the highest proportion, have a master's or engineering degree (40%). Nineteen respondents stated that they had attained other education (5%), which is understood to mean higher vocational school or a Ph.D.
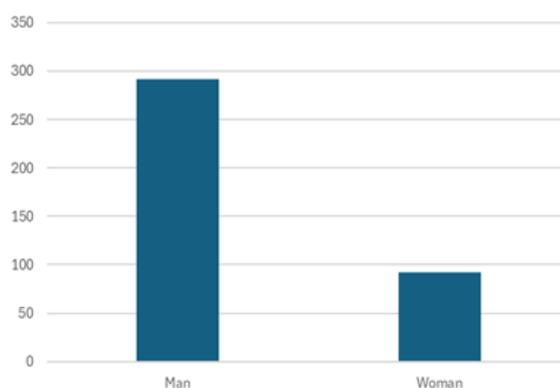


*1: Structure of the sample according to gender*
Source: own processing (2025)
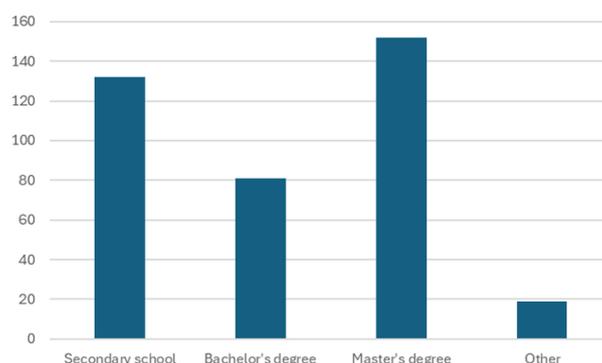
2: *Structure of the sample according to education*
Source: own processing (2025)

Tab. I provides a basic overview of the factors observed to influence decisions about potentially ending a career with the Czech Police. The absolute number of responses for each factor is given. All these factors were rated on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 indicating that the factor has the smallest influence and 4 indicating that the factor has the greatest influence.

As can be seen, not all factors carry the same weight among members of the Czech Police. Some of them have a greater influence on decision-making. As can be seen from the responses themselves, the retirement allowance has a significant influence (the average score for this factor is 2.951), as does the person's state of health (average 2.940). Stress in the workplace also has a significant influence (2.818). Only then are factors related to family (average 2.719) or the workload of the member (2.789) perceived as important. The least important factors in decision-making are perceived to be career change (average value of 2.313) and superiors (2.385). The difference in the importance of individual factors at the overall level is therefore obvious and, thanks to basic descriptive statistics, also demonstrable.

I: *Factors determining the end of a career in the Czech Police Force*

| Factor | Degree of influence | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | The least | Rather no | Rather yes | The most |
| Retirement allowance | 48 | 73 | 113 | 150 |
| Workload | 31 | 106 | 160 | 87 |
| Family | 41 | 128 | 113 | 102 |
| Career change | 78 | 160 | 94 | 52 |
| State of health | 51 | 70 | 114 | 149 |
| Superiors | 75 | 144 | 107 | 58 |
| Workplace stress | 35 | 108 | 133 | 108 |

Source: own processing (2025)

II: *Kruskal-Wallis test results (education)*

| Factor | H | Df | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Retirement allowance | 5.791 | 4 | 0.215 |
| Workload | 7.274 | 4 | 0.122 |
| Family | 2.206 | 4 | 0.698 |
| Career change | 4.590 | 4 | 0.332 |
| State of health | 1.232 | 4 | 0.873 |
| Superiors | 7.803 | 4 | 0.099 |
| Workplace stress | 6.628 | 4 | 0.157 |

Source: own processing (2025)

Subsequently, statistical analysis was performed using the Kruskal–Wallis test. Its results provide a basic guide for evaluating and answering the defined research questions. The first step was to determine whether education influences the factors that determine the end of a career in the Czech Police. The results of the test are shown in Tab. II.

The test results do not show a significant relationship between the level of education and the influence of the relevant factor in any case. Therefore, the null hypothesis (no difference) cannot be rejected. No evidence was found that the influence of individual factors differs between levels of education. The results therefore suggest that education is not a strong differentiator in the perception of the specified factors. The factor that comes closest to the specified level of significance is superiors, with a p-value of 0.099. This may be a weak indication of a possible statistically significant relationship, but it is not a conclusive difference. The answer to RQ1, "What influence does education have on the decision to end a career in the police force?" is therefore that education has no statistically significant influence on the decision to end a career for any of the factors.

In the next step, it was possible to proceed to finding answers to the second research question. This question investigated whether gender is a factor that has a significant influence on individual factors. The Kruskal–Wallis test was used again. In this case, the Mann–Whitney test could also be considered, as the gender variable is divided into only two categories, but given the continuity of the results, it is more appropriate to use the same test as in the previous case. The test results are presented in Tab. III.

As in the previous case, no significant relationship was found, this time between gender and the influence of specific factors. Therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected in either case. No evidence was found that the influence of individual factors differs between genders. Here, too, it can be argued that gender is not a strong differentiator in the perception of the importance of individual factors. The factor closest to achieving statistical significance is workplace stress (p-value 0.157), but even here, it is only a weak indication, not a conclusive relationship. The answer to RQ2, which was formulated as "What influence does the gender of a police officer play in the decision to end their career?" is therefore that gender has no significant influence in this decision.

In the final step of the analysis, correlation analysis was applied. It aimed to determine whether there were any interrelationships between the individual reasons for police officers leaving the force. For greater clarity, the following abbreviations are used in the resulting table: retirement allowance (RA), workload (WL), family (FA), career change (CC), state of health (SH), superiors (SP), workplace stress (WS). If statistical significance is found (i.e., p-value of coefficient < 0.05), the coefficient is marked with an asterisk (*). The resulting overview is provided in Tab. IV.

*III: Kruskal-Wallis test results (gender)*

| Factor | H | Df | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Retirement allowance | 0.223 | 1 | 0.637 |
| Workload | 0.000 | 1 | 0.993 |
| Family | 0.192 | 1 | 0.661 |
| Career change | 0.588 | 1 | 0.443 |
| State of health | 0.132 | 1 | 0.716 |
| Superiors | 0.356 | 1 | 0.551 |
| Workplace stress | 2.006 | 1 | 0.157 |

Source: own processing (2025)

*IV: Correlation analysis*

| | RA | WL | FA | CC | SH | SP | WS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| RA | 1.000 | 0.138* | 0.063 | -0.044 | 0.147* | 0.050 | 0.097 |
| WL | 0.138* | 1.000 | 0.262* | 0.188* | 0.226* | 0.134* | 0.405* |
| FA | 0.063 | 0.262* | 1.000 | 0.211* | 0.443* | 0.136* | 0.202* |
| CC | -0.044 | 0.188* | 0.211* | 1.000 | 0.176* | 0.146* | 0.208* |
| SH | 0.147* | 0.226* | 0.443* | 0.176* | 1.000 | 0.114* | 0.218* |
| SP | 0.050 | 0.134* | 0.136* | 0.146* | 0.114* | 1.000 | 0.352* |
| WS | 0.097 | 0.405* | 0.202* | 0.208* | 0.218* | 0.352* | 1.000 |

Source: own processing (2025)

As can be seen, the vast majority of relationships are statistically significant. Only in the case of the retirement allowance can we not speak of statistically significant correlation coefficients. However, it is important to note that in the case of this factor, the correlations were very weak or non-existent. In general, all correlations found are either very weak (or even non-existent) or low. The highest correlation coefficient (0.443) can be seen between the variables state of health and family. This relationship is most likely because excessive workload affects the health of police officers, leading to changes in family life and relationships with family. It is noteworthy that the coefficient value directly between workload and family is only 0.262. A correlation coefficient with a value above 0.4 (specifically 0.405) can be seen between the factors workplace stress and workload. It is likely that as the volume of work for police officers increases, work stress will increase and vice versa. However, even this relationship (although statistically significant) is weak. The analysis did not reveal any high or moderate correlations between the variables, although most of the relationships are statistically significant. In exceptional cases, there are only weak relationships between the individual factors; otherwise, there are none.

## Discussion

The following section focuses on discussing the findings and critically reflecting on them in relation to the literature on the topic. With regard to the first research question, the Kruskal–Wallis test did not reveal any statistically significant difference in how police officers with different levels of education value the factors influencing their decision to remain with the Czech Police. None of the observed variables, i.e., retirement allowance, workload, family, career change, state of health, superiors, and workplace stress, achieved a p-value lower than 0.05, with the factor of superiors coming closest to this value (0.099). It can therefore be argued that, based on empirical analysis (n = 384), the importance of individual factors does not differ depending on whether a police officer has a high school diploma, a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, or other education.

This result is interesting because it can be compared with studies that claim that education influences the work attitudes and general behavior of police officers. Boag-Munroe *et al.* (2016) point out that career advancement opportunities and career prospects (which are often linked to education or qualifications) are a significant reason for police officers leaving the service. AlKaabi and Davies (2022) also monitored the individual factors that police officers consider when taking early retirement, with the level of education being one of the control variables they used in their study. It is therefore clear that education has a significant influence in police officers' considerations about ending their service. In contrast, Jones *et al.* (2005) point to the fact that police officers without a university degree show the same rate of departure from the police force as those who do have one. Charman and Bennett (2021) found that police officers with a university education are more inclined to leave the police force than police officers with a lower level of education. The scientific debate on this topic is rich and full of conflicting findings. However, within the Czech Police, education does not explain any differences, and one possible explanation is that in the Czech context, operational or institutional factors prevail over individual qualifications.

No statistically significant differences were found for gender in the second research question either. The factor closest to statistical significance was workplace stress (0.157). This result is also somewhat at odds with other literature, as the influence of gender, or gender differences, on police officers' intentions has been repeatedly observed. Davis *et al.* (2024) report that female police officers show a higher intention to leave their job than male police officers, based on rude behavior in the workplace and its impact on the emotional exhaustion of officers. It is precisely rude behavior that is associated with work stress, for which the lowest p-value was observed. Bonner and Brimhall (2021) also point to differences between male and female police officers in terms of stress and confirm that female police officers score worse in this regard. Charman and Bennett (2021) also point out that the reasons and factors influencing leaving the police force differ according to gender. One explanation is that the Czech police force may have a different cultural and institutional environment compared to other countries, which mitigates gender differences when assessing individual factors. Thus, gender does not show any differences when considering leaving the police force, which probably reflects the specifics of the Czech environment and context.

The correlation analysis confirmed statistically significant but weak relationships. The highest coefficients were measured at 0.443 and 0.405. The first pair consists of the factors state of health and family, the second of workload and workplace stress. It is noteworthy that the relationships involving retirement allowance are very weak and do not show significant statistical significance. From this, it can be concluded that retirement allowance functions as an independent, systemic, and separate motive and does not spill over into other areas such as family or state of health. The identified links reveal a simple model in which workload increases workplace stress, which leads to a poorer state of health, which in turn affects the family. This fact is also supported by the literature, as the interrelationship between workload, stress, and family relationships among police officers is an integral part of scientific discourse (Li *et al.*, 2021).

The literature discusses a whole range of other reasons for police officers leaving the service. First and foremost, it is important to note that, according to the literature, the issue of police turnover itself is relevant and should be given the same attention as issues related to the recruitment of officers (Wilson *et al.*, 2023). In addition to the aforementioned stress factor, other reasons may include professional disappointment or ethical dilemmas related to the service, particularly professional and personal ones (Demoulin and Stinglhamber, 2024). Similarly, research has shown that common reasons for leaving or considering leaving are a lack of voice, the inability to advance in one's career and get promoted, a lack of flexibility, or insufficient leadership, which can also be perceived as inadequate superiors (Charman and Tyson, 2024), as is the case in our study. Factors such as burnout or trauma also have influence in leaving (Drew *et al.*, 2024). The fact that stress itself is one of the most important and most frequently cited factors among police officers is also because it causes further problems in the form of burnout, deterioration of health, and reduced job satisfaction (Nonis *et al.*, 2024).

### Limitations and Outlook

Despite the findings and their critical reflection in the literature, it is necessary to characterize the basic limitations of the research. The first limitation is the geographical scope of the research, which is limited to the Czech Republic. It is also necessary to mention the fact that the survey focused exclusively on quantitative characteristics, not qualitative ones. Self-assessment on an ordinal scale can undoubtedly also be considered a limitation, as there may have been overlap in some responses or distortion of responses to a selected factor based on the perceived problem in another factor. This fact may also partially explain the correlations found between some variables. Unfortunately, within the scope of this limitation, it is not possible to rule out bias in the form of socially desirable responses. It is also necessary to point out that the survey focused on factors that evoke the intention to leave, rather than actual departures from the Czech Police.

Further research on this topic could focus on several aspects. First, it would be useful to supplement the qualitative aspect of the research in order to explain why police officers consider some reasons and not others. It would also be beneficial and desirable to determine whether the reasons for leaving the police force differ according to other characteristics, such as department or region. There is also the possibility of international comparison, for example, within Central Europe or the V4. It would be very important to expand the research to include actual departures of police officers, as it would then be possible to determine whether the selected factors that determine the decision to leave also lead to the actual departure from the workplace. From an analytical point of view, the application of more robust statistical methods, such as factor analysis, can be proposed.

## Conclusion

The main aim of this paper was to identify the differences in how the factors of education and gender influence the decision to leave a career as a police officer. This aim has been achieved. The study points to the fact that police officers combine work-related and personal factors when deciding to terminate their employment, as a relationship has been found between their workload and subsequent problems in their family life, since it is precisely their workload that contributes to increased work-related stress. This can subsequently cause a deterioration in the health of police officers, which is reflected in their personal and family lives. Neither education nor gender appears to be a predictor of specific reasons for leaving the police force. The findings complement the current international literature on similar topics, with some findings contradicting it and others supporting it. The significance of this study lies in the fact that it bridges the individual factors determining departure from the police force (health, family) with organizational factors (workload, workplace stress). At the same time, it brings to the Czech environment current knowledge on this issue within the Czech Police, supplemented by international literature and findings.

This contribution is beneficial not only for the Czech Police itself but also for the scientific community. In terms of its contribution to the academic sphere, it is important to mention that it places the situation in the Czech Republic in an international context, thereby contributing to the expansion of knowledge. Each country has its own institutional structure, norms, and culture. This allows researchers from other countries to make international comparisons that can highlight which factors can be considered cross-cultural and which are sensitive to the national context. The significance for the leadership of the Czech Police is also indisputable, as the contribution points to the need to understand the family or health status of police officers. On a practical level, measures are proposed that will increase the predictability of work schedules, thereby stabilizing the workload of police officers and ensuring the transparent allocation of duties among individual officers. Similarly, the Czech Police can use this study methodologically as a basis for its own employee satisfaction surveys, which it can then use to set HR indicators.

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