

## The potential effects of organisational cynicism on job satisfaction

### Örgütsel sinizmin iş tatmini üzerindeki potansiyel etkileri

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#### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of organisational cynicism on job satisfaction among retail sales employees. Organisational cynicism is related to an employee's negative attitude towards the organisation. Due to its potential detrimental impact on individuals, it is presumed that organisational cynicism might affect job satisfaction. Questionnaires gather research data. The validity of the scales is ensured using principal component analysis. To assess reliability, Cronbach's alpha values are calculated. Multiple regression analysis is executed to test the hypotheses. Research findings demonstrate that the affective and cognitive dimensions of organisational cynicism affect job satisfaction, whereas the behavioural dimension does not exert any significant effect. This research extends the existing literature by analysing the potential impact of organisational cynicism on job satisfaction within the retail sales workforce. The results of the study emphasise the importance of additional management efforts to reduce the formation of employee cynicism and to increase job satisfaction within organisations.

**Keywords:** Organisational Cynicism, Job Satisfaction, Retail Industry

**JEL Codes:** M10, M12, M54, D23

#### Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, perakende satış çalışanlarında örgütsel sinizmin iş tatmini üzerindeki etkisini araştırmaktır. Örgütsel sinizm, bir çalışanın örgüte yönelik olumsuz tutuma sahip olmasıyla ilgilidir. Bireyler üzerindeki potansiyel zararlı etkileri nedeniyle, örgütsel sinizmin iş tatmini üzerinde olumsuz bir etkiye sahip olabileceği tahmin edilmektedir. Araştırma verileri anketler yoluyla toplanmıştır. Ölçeklerin geçerliliği temel bileşenler analizi kullanılarak sağlanmıştır. Güvenilirliği değerlendirmek için Cronbach alfa değerleri hesaplanmıştır. Hipotezleri test etmek için çoklu regresyon analizi kullanılmıştır. Araştırma bulguları, örgütsel sinizmin duyuşsal ve bilişsel boyutlarının iş tatmini üzerinde etkili olduğunu, davranışsal boyutun ise anlamlı bir etkisinin olmadığını göstermektedir. Bu araştırma, perakende satış işgücü özelinde örgütsel sinizmin iş tatmini üzerindeki potansiyel etkilerini analiz ederek mevcut alan yazını genişletmektedir. Çalışmanın sonuçları, çalışan sinizminin oluşumunu azaltmak ve örgütlerde çalışanların iş tatminini artırmak için ek yönetim çabalarının önemini vurgulamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Örgütsel Sinizm, İş Tatmini, Perakende Sektörü

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## Introduction

Organisational cynicism refers to a pessimistic and distrustful outlook toward an organisation (Dean, Brandes, & Dharwadkar, 1998). Due to its detrimental effects on employees, this phenomenon has a negative influence on work performance (Bayram, Biçkes, Karaca & Çakı, 2017; Panchali & Seneviratne, 2019). Job satisfaction is the general feelings and opinions of an employee regarding liking or disliking the job (Spector, 1997). Employees who feel satisfied with their jobs are more likely to be fulfilled (Drucker, 1955), productive (Utami, Herlyna, Widiatna, Ariani, & Karyati, 2020; Yardımcı & Erbil, 2024) and demonstrate improved performance (Dziuba, Ingaldi & Zhuravskaya, 2020; Yang, Obrenovic, Kamotho, Godinic & Ostic, 2024). The potential for cynical behaviour among employees can easily result in low job satisfaction if the signs are not adequately understood and managed promptly. This situation could have adverse ramifications for the individual and then the organisation. Therefore, the relationship between the two concepts is worth exploring across various sectors to obtain more comprehensive findings on the subject.

In this study, retail sales employees serve as the research sample. The retail industry is a vital part of the global economy and labour markets in many countries. In the context of Türkiye, the retail sector holds substantial significance for the national economy, primarily due to its large scale and its considerable contribution to overall employment. When manufacturers and suppliers are included, approximately 58% of the total workforce is engaged in retail-related activities. The revenue generated by enterprises in this sector accounts for nearly 75% of the total revenue across all industries of the country (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Trade, 2025). Research conducted in 2022 in the United States indicates that the turnover rate among retail workers is more than 70% higher than that observed in other industries. Furthermore, 63% of frontline retail managers have reported contemplating resignation soon, with a considerable number expressing a desire to leave the sector entirely (McKinsey & Company, 2022). Retail is a fast-paced industry with never-ending monthly and yearly target expectations. Employees in this sector typically experience a heavy workload and often work long hours, sometimes including weekends. Also, retail employees are in frequent contact throughout the day to provide service to customers (Pehlivanoglu, 2023). These characteristics create a challenging environment for managing employee satisfaction. The retail industry offers a distinct setting to explore the complexities of job satisfaction and organisational cynicism. The given numbers highlight the critical need to examine and address factors that influence employee satisfaction in the retail sector. Analysing this high-demand industry can yield insights that support the development of initiatives aimed at improving the well-being of workers.

The relationship between the two concepts has been studied by various researchers in international and national literature. While national literature addresses the relevant concepts, further research into retail store salespeople could provide critical industry-specific perspectives. From this standpoint, the outcome of this research is anticipated to enrich the existing body of literature. To collect data from the research participants, the shortened edition of the Job Satisfaction (JS) scale by Brayfield and Rothe (1951), as adapted by Judge, Locke, Durham, and Kluger (1998), and the Organisational Cynicism (OC) scale by Brandes, Dharwadkar, & Dean (1999)'s were employed. These scales are recognised for their established reliability and validation for assessing key constructs in organisational research. The combination of both scales facilitates a comprehensive analysis, capturing both job satisfaction and organisational cynicism among employees within an organisational context. The study comprises the conceptual background of the research constructs, a theoretical model, hypothesis development, research methods, discussion, and conclusion.

## Conceptual background

In light of the literature, the research constructs of Organisational Cynicism and Job Satisfaction are explicated. The theoretical model is created accordingly.

### Organisational cynicism

Dean Jr. et al. (1998) introduced the concept into academic literature, and subsequent scholars have conceptualised it as an attitude comprising cognitive beliefs, emotional responses, and behavioural

inclinations directed toward an organisation. Organisational cynicism is characterised by a fundamental lack of trust (Thomas & Gupta, 2018) and perceived organisational injustice (Kutanis & Çetinel, 2010; Efeoğlu & İplik, 2011) resulting in disbelief in the organisation's goals, principles, and procedures. A plethora of research has been developed to explore the antecedents and outcomes of organisational cynicism. Former studies provide evidence of its adverse effects on individuals and the overall functioning of organisations. Scholars have demonstrated that organisational cynicism is linked to decreased commitment (Aydin & Gürkan, 2016; Yalçınsoy & Sığrı, 2022), higher level of turnover intention (Çınar, Karcioğlu, & İmran, 2014; El-liethiey & Atalla, 2021), lower employee performance (Rehan, Iqbal, Fatima, & Nawab, 2017; Arslan, 2018; Tuna, Bacaksız, & Seren, 2018), declined level of motivation (Mert & Yılmaz, 2019), and an increased level of suspicion (Grama, 2017). Leadership is critical in managing employee cynicism (Davis & Gardner, 2004; Qian & Jian, 2020).

Organisational cynicism, as conceptualised by Brandes et al. (1999), has three main dimensions: affective, cognitive, and behavioural. The affective dimension addresses the emotional facets of employee cynicism. It comprises negative emotional responses such as resentment, anger, and dissatisfaction towards the organisation. These emotions may arise from perceived organisational injustices, unfulfilled commitments, or a sense of dishonesty. The cognitive dimension encompasses negative beliefs, perceptions, and attributions that employees develop regarding the organisation. This dimension includes mistrust in the organisation's policies, decisions, and management. The behavioural dimension captures the external manifestations of organisational cynicism. It includes behaviours such as reduced commitment and effort, increased absenteeism, and indifference to organisational goals. Employees who exhibit organisational cynicism may become disengaged from their work and show apathy toward their colleagues (Dean et al., 1998; Brandes et al., 1999). By considering these dimensions, the study employed the measurement tool developed by Brandes et al. (1999), which provides a comprehensive assessment of organisational cynicism, capturing the main aspects of this concept.

### **Job satisfaction**

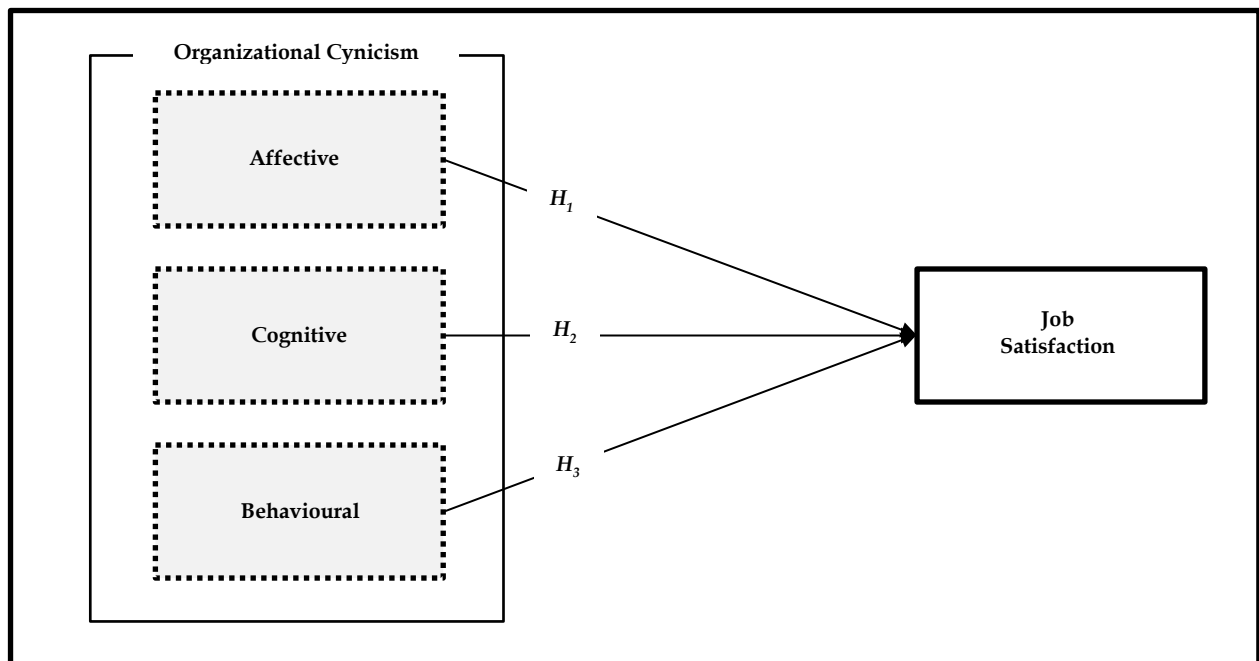
Job satisfaction refers to an employee's general feelings of liking or disliking the job (Spector, 1997). It reflects the sense of fulfilment that an employee obtains from their work (Drucker, 1955). The term relates to how much someone likes and reveals meaning in what they do and is motivated to continue in their present role. The degree of job satisfaction a person experiences can vary depending on several factors. The most frequently mentioned factors are work itself (Castillo & Cano, 2004; Tutuncu & Kozak, 2007), pay (Serreqi, 2020), job security (Wilczyńska, Batorski, & Sellens, 2016), work-life balance (Haar, Russo, Suñe, & Ollier-Malaterre, 2014; Azeem & Akhtar, 2014), working conditions (Roelen, Koopmans, & Groothoff, 2008; Pandey & Asthana, 2017), rewards (Linz & Semykina, 2012; Tessema, Ready, & Embaye, 2013), relationship with colleagues and supervisors (Stringer, 2006), and a supportive work environment (Ramli, 2019; Taheri, Kamaruzzaman, & Miah, 2020). In contrast to lower levels of job satisfaction, which might increase stress (Flanagan & Flanagan, 2002; Bemana, Moradi, Ghasemi, Taghavi, & Ghayoor, 2013), absenteeism (Hrebiniak & Roteman, 1973), and retention (Biason, 2020); higher levels of job satisfaction can increase motivation (van Scheers & Botha, 2014) and commitment (Yücel, 2012; Pehlivanoglu, Eymür, & Civelek, 2022).

To explain job satisfaction, various theories have been put forth. Some of the most widely recognised studies in this field are described as follows. Hoppock (1935) conducted one of the earliest studies to investigate the concept of job satisfaction in the 1930s. In the 1950s, Maslow's (1954) Hierarchy of Needs approach was a seminal tool for grasping motivation by exposing people's needs and levels of personal growth. Shortly afterwards, the Two-Factor Theory by Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman (1959) suggested that certain aspects of a job can either cause satisfaction or dissatisfaction. In the 1960s, Vroom (1964) proposed that motivation is influenced by the conviction that effort will lead to high performance, which in turn will yield the desired results. Additionally, the Equity Theory, proposed by Adams (1965), posits that an individual's degree of job satisfaction depends on their perception of how fairly they are treated in comparison to others. During these years, various scales were created to elaborate the concept. The Job Satisfaction Index (Brayfield & Rothe, 1951), the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967), and the Job Descriptive Index (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969) were

some popular measurement tools used to support additional field research. In the 1970s, Hackman and Oldham (1975) developed the Job Characteristics Model as a significant theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between work-related traits and outcomes, including job satisfaction, motivation, and well-being. In the 1980s, Staw, Bell, & Clausen (1986) developed the Dispositional Approach, a theory that further interprets job satisfaction. Accordingly, an individual's affective disposition affects their job satisfaction. Job assignments would be more accurately matched with personal traits if individual dispositions were measured better. In addition to these, various theories relating to theoretical concepts are available in the literature.

## Theoretical model

The relationship between Job Satisfaction and the dimensions of Organizational Cynicism has been explored in this research. Figure 1 depicts the development of a theoretical model depending on the theoretical underpinnings of these concepts.



**Figure 1:** Theoretical Model

**Note:** Created by the author.

In the model, Brandes et al. (1999) related the OC scale dimensions to Brayfield & Rothe's (1951) shortened edition of the JS scale, as cited by Judge et al. (1998). The three main dimensions of Organizational Cynicism (affective, cognitive, and behavioural) were assumed to influence Job Satisfaction. This conceptual model was developed to facilitate research analysis and inform the formulation of hypotheses. The model visually illustrates the relationships between the primary constructs and provides a structured framework for testing theoretical assumptions.

## Hypothesis development

The relationship between these two concepts has been explored by different researchers in the international literature (Srivastava & Adams, 2011; Volpe, Mohammed, Hopkins, Shapiro, & Dellasega, 2014; Yim & Moses, 2016; Aly, Ghanem, & El-Shanawany, 2016; Khan, Naseem, & Masood, 2016; Adristy & Soelton, 2025), and the national literature (Kahya, 2013; Gün, 2016; Soyuk, Aktash, & Ozyaral, 2017; Türe & Bilge, 2019; Kosa, 2019). Dean et al. (1998) mention that job satisfaction appears to have potential overlaps with organisational cynicism, but these two concepts are distinct. Drawing upon previous research that highlights the relationships between these two concepts in the literature, this study assumed that organisational cynicism might have an effect on employee job satisfaction, and the underlying hypotheses were developed accordingly. By scrutinising the research hypotheses, this study aims to expand theoretical understanding and yield evidence-based contributions. Within this perspective, the following hypotheses were developed to explore the relationships between the dimensions of organisational cynicism and job satisfaction.

*H<sub>1</sub>: Affective Cynicism has a direct effect on Job Satisfaction*

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Cognitive Cynicism has a direct effect on Job Satisfaction

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Behavioural Cynicism has a direct effect on Job Satisfaction

## Research methods

For the survey, ethics approval was obtained from Istanbul Kent University, as per a decision dated November 29, 2024, and meeting number 2024/12. The scales used in this study were adapted from prior research. A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was administered to collect quantitative data. Multiple regression analysis was selected as the statistical technique to examine intricate relationships. Explanatory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to assess the construct validity of the scales, while confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was utilised to test convergent validity. Composite reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were calculated to evaluate both reliability and discriminant validity. All data analyses were performed using the SPSS and AMOS statistical software packages.

### Sampling and measures

Scales drawn from existing literature were utilised to quantify the constructs outlined in the theoretical model. Data were gathered using five-point responses on a Likert scale that ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Three hundred questionnaires were distributed to Turkish retail industry sales employees using a convenience sampling method. Two hundred forty-five valid responses were gathered and taken into analysis. This approach was chosen due to its practicality in accessing retail employees, who are typically busy with customers during the day but are readily available at stores and willing to participate. The measurement instruments included three demographic questions and two scales. Job satisfaction was measured using a 5-item abbreviated edition of the Job Satisfaction (JS) scale generated by Judge et al. (1998), adapted from the original scale by Brayfield and Rothe (1951). Organisational Cynicism (OC) was evaluated by utilising a 13-item scale proposed by Brandes et al. (1999). The target population of this research included store sales personnel in the retail sector in Türkiye. The sample population can be characterised by its demographic distribution as follows: 45% are between 18 and 29 years old, 32% are between 30 and 39, and 23% are over the age of 40. In terms of educational level, 47% have completed high school, 45% have a high school diploma, and 8% have a postgraduate degree. 58% have 0-9 years, 27% have 10-19 years, and 10% have over 21 years of work experience.

### Construct reliability and validity

The purification process was the initial step, and an exploratory factor analysis was executed (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Every item has been incorporated into this analysis. Only variables with a value equal to or greater than 0.50 were taken into the final scales. After conducting the EFA, a total of 17 of the 18 items remained, except for only one item (JS03), which was not included in the analysis. These remaining items underwent confirmatory factor analysis, and the fit indices were adequate, with  $\chi^2/df = 2.501$ , CFI = 0.952, IFI = 0.949, and RMSEA = 0.047.

**Table 1:** Number of items and Cronbach's Alpha values

Scales and Dimensions	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Affective Cynicism	5	0.817
Cognitive Cynicism	4	0.727
Behavioural Cynicism	4	0.863
Job Satisfaction	4	0.778

*p* < 0.05

Table 1 presents the number of items remaining in the analysis and Cronbach's alpha values. As indicated by the values, the internal consistency of each construct suggests that the items collectively measure the intended underlying concept.

**Table 2:** CR, Correlation Coefficient and AVE values

Dimensions	R	AVE	1	2	3	4
Affective Cynicism	.937	0.887				
Cognitive Cynicism	.769	0.631	0.627			
Behavioural Cynicism	.648	0.559	0.532	0.410		
Job Satisfaction	.802	0.708	-0.473	-0.470	-0.322	

$p < 0.05$

Table 2 shows composite reliability, AVE values, and Pearson correlations between the dimensions. To assess the validity of the measurement model, the square roots of the AVE values were computed. The AVE values were found to be near the recommended threshold of 0.5, indicating acceptable convergent validity (Byrne, 2010). The square roots of AVE values turned out to be greater than the correlation coefficients, indicating discriminant validity (Civelek, 2018). The reliability of the constructs was verified using composite reliability and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values, which were found to be within the acceptable ranges defined in the literature (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

### Test of the hypotheses

The research hypotheses were tested with multiple regression. This approach enabled the evaluation of how each dimension of Organisational Cynicism affects Job Satisfaction.

**Table 3:** Hypotheses Test Results

Relationships	Standardised Coefficients	Unstandardised Coefficients	Hypotheses	Results
OCA $\rightarrow$ JS	-0.168*	-0.262*	$H_1$	Supported
OCC $\rightarrow$ JS	-0.173*	-0.280*	$H_2$	Supported
OCB $\rightarrow$ JS	-0.039	-0.057	$H_3$	Not supported

\* $p < 0.05$

The results of the tests are in Table 3. The  $H_1$  hypothesis is supported. Affective Cynicism (OCA) has a direct effect on Job Satisfaction (JS). The  $H_2$  hypothesis is supported. Cognitive Cynicism (OCC) has a direct effect on Job Satisfaction (JS). The  $H_3$  hypothesis is not supported. Behavioural Cynicism (OCB) does not have a direct effect on Job Satisfaction (JS).

### Discussion

The impact of organisational cynicism on job satisfaction was investigated across three dimensions: affective, cognitive, and behavioural. It was found that both the affective and cognitive dimensions had direct effects on job satisfaction, whereas the behavioural dimension did not show a direct effect. The findings indicate that the development of affective cynicism and cognitive cynicism among retail employees can influence their levels of job satisfaction. This is due to the unique dynamics of retail work, where emotional responses and perceptions of the organisation play a key role in shaping the collective work experience of employees.

In the retail environment, affective cynicism, characterised by negative emotions and feelings toward the organisation, and cognitive cynicism, which pertains to employees' critical beliefs about the organisation's motives, can contribute significantly to employee dissatisfaction. Retail employees often face considerable stress due to factors such as strict monthly sales targets, demanding customer-facing roles, and organisational expectations that may conflict with their values. These challenges are often exacerbated by relatively low wages and a perceived lack of recognition. As a result, employees may come to view their contributions as undervalued. This might cultivate a belief that the organisation prioritises profit over employee well-being. Behavioural cynicism did not have a direct effect on the research analysis, which could be attributed to the nature of the work. Retail sales positions are often highly structured by workplace rules and closely monitored with figures, leaving little room for employees. In general, it is worth noting that employees with potential feelings of cynicism may be more likely to adopt pessimistic viewpoints due to circumstances such as monotonous tasks, a lack of appreciation, limited opportunities for career advancement, or an unbalanced work-life balance. Over time, these individuals may become increasingly doubtful of the organisation's goals and become more sceptical, leading to various forms of cynicism.

Existing literature supports the notion that cynicism affects job satisfaction. Numerous studies in the international literature provide empirical evidence to support this perspective (Srivastava & Adams, 2011; Volpe et al., 2014; Yim & Moses, 2016; Aly et al., 2016; Khan et al., 2016; Adristy & Soelton, 2025). In the national literature, some researchers have found significant and negative relationships across all dimensions of organisational cynicism and job satisfaction (Gün, 2016; Soyuk et al., 2017; Türe & Bilge, 2019; Kosa, 2019), while others have found dimension-based relationships (Kahya, 2013). In many cases, a negative correlation has been observed, where higher levels of cynicism among employees are associated with lower job satisfaction. To sum up, studies examining the impact of organisational cynicism on job satisfaction across different sectors have yielded supporting results.

## Conclusion

Ensuring that employees feel satisfied with their jobs and do not show cynical behaviour requires the attention of all levels of management in organisations. To reduce the likelihood of developing affective-cognitive, cynical attitudes and increase employees' job satisfaction, organisations should provide opportunities for self-development, ensure organisational justice, establish transparent and trustworthy communication, and cultivate a positive organisational culture. Fostering a positive work environment may enhance employee satisfaction while also improving business performance. In this respect, both unit supervisors and human resources should conduct employee-specific and enterprise-wide studies to identify employees who are experiencing difficulties and increase job satisfaction.

Retail store sales employees frequently encounter a range of challenges that can lead to stress. As mentioned in the study, these challenges include frequent interpersonal interactions with customers, relentless monthly and annual goals to meet, physical fatigue from demanding tasks, and long working hours. All these elements contribute to the negative or positive feelings that retail employees have. For this reason, retail organisations should strive to ensure that their store employees do not engage in potentially cynical behaviours and to ensure their job satisfaction. These employees are the front face of the company to the consumer, and their dissatisfaction can negatively impact the company's image. Although not classified as highly compensated employees, store salespeople play a crucial role in the efficient and high-quality operation of a company in terms of customer interaction, turnover contributions, and overall presence. Addressing the affective and cognitive aspects of cynicism could be key to improving employee satisfaction and performance in the retail sector.

According to the research findings, the impact of organisational cynicism on job satisfaction in the retail industry is influenced by affective and cognitive factors rather than behavioural ones. While employees engage in their roles professionally, their satisfaction is influenced by how they feel about the organisation and how they perceive its values and actions. Therefore, focusing on improving emotional well-being and reshaping perceptions of the organisation is crucial for enhancing job satisfaction and reducing cynicism in the retail sector. Retail managers should prioritise addressing affective cynicism and cognitive cynicism through transparent communication, fair management, regular employee feedback mechanisms, and creating a supportive work environment. Training programs that promote positive thinking and stress management can also be effective in countering the negative emotional impacts of cynicism. The retail industry's higher turnover rates compared to other sectors emphasise the necessity for focused research and strategies aimed at improving employee satisfaction within this sector. Enhancing trust and emotional well-being in retail organisations can be a strategic approach to reducing cynicism and enhancing employee satisfaction.

This research provides insights into the relationship between organisational cynicism and job satisfaction within the context of the Turkish retail industry, using recent data. Although studies have explored these variables individually and about one another, there remains a need for more examinations that consider specific industries, organisational settings, and employee demographics. The study enriches the existing body of literature and offers evidence that can inform both organisational practices and future research. The study's limitations must be considered when interpreting the results. The conclusions drawn from this research should primarily consider the study's sample size. These findings are derived from the perceptions of the selected research sample. For a more comprehensive analysis, future research could benefit from expanding the sample to include a larger number of employees from diverse industries and countries. It might also consider employing qualitative methods to gain deeper insights into employees' personal experiences. This would enable a more comprehensive examination of the subject matter.

**Peer-review:**

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**Conflict of interests:**

The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

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**Ethics Committee Approval:**

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