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Effects of HR policies on organizational performance in the Korean public sector: moderation roles of the JD-R model

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This study investigates the impact of Family-Friendly Policies (FFPs) and Employee Welfare Policies (EWPs) on employee wellbeing and organizational outcomes in the Korean public sector, with a particular focus on the moderating role of job demands and resources. Utilizing data from the 2023 Public Employee Perception Survey ($n = 6,444$), the study adopts the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework to examine how satisfaction with HR policies influences employees' quality of life (QOL), public service satisfaction, and turnover intention. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses revealed that satisfaction with both FFPs and EWPs positively influenced QOL and public service satisfaction. However, EWP satisfaction showed a more robust and consistent association across all outcomes, including a significant negative relationship with turnover intention. Among the JD-R variables, job stress and autonomy emerged as significant predictors of employee outcomes. Importantly, interaction effects were observed: the turnover-reducing effect of FFP satisfaction was amplified under conditions of high job autonomy, whereas the influence of EWP satisfaction slightly weakened in similar contexts. These findings contribute to the theoretical integration of HRM and the JD-R model, highlighting the interplay between policy-level support and workplace conditions. Practically, the study offers actionable insights for public sector managers aiming to enhance workforce sustainability through integrated and context-sensitive HR strategies—particularly relevant for governments navigating evolving employee expectations and complex administrative challenges.

KEYWORDS

public service satisfaction, quality of life, turnover intention, Employee Welfare Policies, Family-Friendly Policies, job demands-resources model

1 Introduction

In recent years, human resource management (HRM) practices in public sector organizations have undergone substantial transformation. Traditional public administration, centered on rule compliance and operational efficiency (Wilson, 1887; Hood, 1991), is increasingly being replaced by paradigms, such as New Public Governance, that prioritize employee wellbeing (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2017; Osborne, 2010), work–life balance, and sustainable workforce engagement. Governments worldwide now face complex challenges such as talent retention, declining public sector motivation, and evolving demographic trends (OECD, 2021; UN, 2022). Within this context, the strategic implementation of

HR policies—particularly Family-Friendly Policies (FFPs) and Employee Welfare Policies (EWPs)—has become crucial to building a resilient and high-performing public workforce.

Public administration is gradually moving beyond bureaucratic rigidity, shifting toward a model that recognizes public employees as key drivers of organizational performance and citizen satisfaction. Empirical research supports this shift, demonstrating that supportive HR policies not only improve individual outcomes, such as job satisfaction and wellbeing, but also enhance organizational-level metrics, including service quality and employee retention (Blom et al., 2020).

The ongoing digital transformation and increased automation of public services further reinforce the need for adaptive, human-centered HR strategies (Mergel et al., 2019). As routine tasks become increasingly automated, the value of human capital lies in complex problem-solving, emotional intelligence, and creative policymaking. This evolution underscores the importance of keeping public employees engaged, motivated, and adequately supported to meet modern governance demands.

Over the past decade, the pace of change in public HRM has accelerated, particularly in response to global disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic. These events have reshaped work environments, intensified job-related stress, and heightened societal expectations for work–life balance. In countries like South Korea, these developments intersect with structural challenges such as very low birth rates and a long-hours work culture. Recent data show that approximately 5.52 million households in South Korea—around 25.7% of all households—are raising pets, reflecting evolving family structures and a broader demand for inclusive and supportive workplace environments (Korean Statistical Office, 2023; Korea Rural Economic Research Institute (KREI), 2023). Social phenomena such as the emergence of “no-kids zones” further highlight ongoing issues of exclusion, pointing to the urgent need for public organizations to set a precedent in fostering inclusive, family-friendly, and welfare-oriented work cultures.

Against this backdrop, the present study applies the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007) to examine how satisfaction with FFPs and EWPs influences key employee outcomes in the Korean public sector—namely, quality of life (QOL), public service satisfaction, and turnover intention. Additionally, the study explores how workplace factors such as job stress, workload, and perceived autonomy moderate these relationships. By integrating domestic and international literature, this research contributes to the theoretical development of public sector HRM and offers practical guidance for policymakers and public managers seeking to promote sustainable performance and employee wellbeing in increasingly complex work environments.

2 Theoretical background and literature review

2.1 The job demands–resources (JD-R) model in the public sector

Originally developed in occupational health psychology (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker and Demerouti, 2007), the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model has become one of the most

influential frameworks for understanding employee wellbeing and organizational performance. Its strength lies in its broad applicability across various job types, sectors, and national contexts.

Although initially applied in high-stress professions such as nursing and teaching, the JD-R model has increasingly been adopted in public administration research (Schaufeli et al., 2009; Borst et al., 2019). Public-sector roles are often characterized by limited resources, political constraints, and high emotional demands—conditions that make the JD-R framework particularly apt for analyzing the interplay between organizational structures and employee outcomes.

Empirical evidence suggests that excessive workloads, bureaucratic inertia, and conflicting stakeholder expectations contribute to burnout and cynicism among government employees (Bakker et al., 2004, 2012; Tummers and Bekkers, 2014). In contrast, job resources such as autonomy, supervisory support, and organizational justice are positively associated with job satisfaction, public service motivation (PSM), and service performance (Giauque et al., 2013; Kim, 2009).

Recent studies have also underscored the moderating roles of contextual and individual-level factors within the JD-R model. For instance, Van Wingerden et al. (2017) found that job-crafting behaviors can enhance the positive effects of job resources on work engagement. In the public sector, PSM has been conceptualized as a “personal resource” that can buffer the adverse effects of high job demands on burnout (Borst et al., 2019), although elevated PSM may also increase susceptibility to stress.

Additionally, scholars have emphasized the need to adapt the JD-R model to cultural and institutional contexts (Schaufeli et al., 2009; Giauque and Weissbrodt, 2021). The unique characteristics of public-sector work—such as political accountability and complex stakeholder environments—necessitate nuanced applications of the model. In East Asian contexts like South Korea, where hierarchical organizational cultures and collectivist norms are prevalent, the perception and impact of job autonomy, social support, and job design may differ significantly from those in Western settings, requiring careful contextual consideration.

In sum, the JD-R model offers a robust theoretical lens through which to examine how public employees’ experiences of job demands and resources influence their wellbeing and performance. This study extends the JD-R framework by integrating it with HR policy satisfaction—specifically, Family-Friendly Policies (FFPs) and Employee Welfare Policies (EWPs)—to explore their combined effects on key employee outcomes in the Korean public sector.

2.2 Family-friendly and employee welfare policies in public HRM

Over the past two decades, Family-Friendly Policies (FFPs) have evolved from optional organizational benefits to strategic imperatives in both the public and private sectors. These policies encompass a wide array of programs such as parental leave, telecommuting, job sharing, and childcare support—designed to promote work–life balance and mitigate work–family conflict (Allen et al., 2013). While originally rooted in discourses on gender equity and labor rights, FFPs are now widely recognized for their potential

to enhance employee performance, organizational commitment, and overall wellbeing (Kossek and Michel, 2011; Chung and van der Horst, 2018).

A substantial body of empirical research supports the positive relationship between FFPs and individual-level outcomes. For example, Allen (2001) demonstrated that perceived organizational support for family life is associated with lower levels of work–family conflict and higher job satisfaction. In the public sector context, Moon and Roh (2010) found that U.S. government employees with access to family-supportive policies were less prone to emotional exhaustion and reported lower turnover intentions.

In East Asian administrative systems—including South Korea, Japan, and Singapore—governments have actively promoted FFPs as part of broader national strategies to address workforce sustainability and demographic decline. In South Korea, initiatives such as family-friendly certification programs and legally mandated parental leave have driven widespread adoption of FFPs, particularly in the public sector, with recent studies continuing to explore their link to outcomes like organizational commitment (Bae and Yang, 2023; Kim and Wiggins, 2011). However, the effectiveness of these policies often hinges not just on their formal availability but also on contextual factors such as organizational culture, managerial support, and job design. As Park and Lee (2021) emphasize, these factors can either enable or constrain the actual use of family-friendly programs.

Alongside the growing emphasis on FFPs, Employee Welfare Policies (EWPs) have gained renewed attention as organizations increasingly recognize the importance of holistic wellbeing in building sustainable workplaces. EWPs include both traditional benefits—such as health insurance, paid leave, and retirement programs—and newer initiatives like mental health services, ergonomic improvements, and workplace wellness programs. The World's Healthy Workplace Model (WHO, 2010) positions employee wellbeing as a critical component of organizational productivity and social responsibility.

In the public administration domain, welfare-oriented HRM is considered a strategic lever for attracting and retaining professional talent, reducing absenteeism, and mitigating presenteeism (Kim and Fernandez, 2017). Perceived fairness and adequacy of welfare benefits have been shown to predict key organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction and trust (Perry et al., 2010; Moynihan and Pandey, 2007). Garcia-Pardo et al. (2022) further highlighted that wellness programs, when paired with supervisory support, can significantly enhance affective commitment and job performance.

Recent literature reinforces these insights. Kossek and Michel (2011) and Chung and van der Horst (2018) emphasize that FFPs contribute to improved employee performance, wellbeing, and organizational commitment. However, Blom et al. (2025) caution that while the direct effects of FFPs on career and work–family outcomes may be modest, their impact is significantly amplified by informal support from supervisors and coworkers.

Building on this foundation, the present study proposes the following hypotheses to examine the effects of satisfaction with family-friendly and employee welfare policies on key employee outcomes in the public sector:

H1a: FFP satisfaction is positively associated with QOL and public service satisfaction.

H1b: FFP satisfaction is negatively associated with turnover intention.

H2a: EWP satisfaction is positively associated with QOL and public service satisfaction.

H2b: EWP satisfaction is negatively associated with turnover intention.

2.3 HR policies and their outcomes: quality of life, public service satisfaction, and turnover intention

Quality of Life (QOL) has gained recognition as a key indicator of human resource management (HRM) effectiveness. The OECD Guidelines on Measuring Subjective WellBeing (2013) advocate the inclusion of QOL metrics in policy evaluation, highlighting their value in capturing employees' holistic experiences. In workplace studies, QOL reflects the broader impacts of job characteristics—beyond compensation and working hours—encompassing stress levels, autonomy, personal growth, and family life. Family-Friendly Policies (FFPs) and Employee Welfare Policies (EWPs) are especially well-positioned to enhance QOL by reducing work-related stress, improving work–life integration, and fostering supportive environments (Frey and Stutzer, 2002; Greenhaus and Allen, 2011).

Public Service Satisfaction, while studied less frequently than general job satisfaction, is a crucial construct in the public sector. It represents the degree to which employees find meaning in their roles and believe their work contributes to the public good. This form of satisfaction reflects employees' alignment with organizational missions and values, and has been shown to strengthen motivation and performance (Bright, 2008; Taylor, 2007). Supportive HR policies, by reinforcing this alignment and promoting a sense of purpose, can elevate both individual morale and collective effectiveness.

Turnover Intention remains a persistent challenge in public sector HRM. High turnover disrupts service continuity, depletes institutional knowledge, and negatively affects team dynamics. Extensive research indicates that job stress, limited autonomy, and perceived unfairness are significant predictors of employees' intentions to leave (Cho and Sai, 2022; Park and Rainey, 2007). HR policies that are supportive, inclusive, and well-implemented can serve as protective factors, helping retain talent and ensuring organizational stability.

In the Korean public sector, turnover among young and mid-career employees has become increasingly problematic. Surveys conducted by the Korean Institute of Public Administration (KIPA, 2023) identify long working hours, high stress levels, and poor work–life balance as the primary drivers of attrition—even among those with secure tenure—an issue academically linked to job satisfaction and policy effectiveness (Ko, 2022). These findings underscore the urgent need to understand how HR policies can serve as buffers against such adverse conditions.

Building on this foundation, the present study posits that the relationship between HR policy satisfaction and employee outcomes is not purely linear or direct. Rather, it is contingent upon the broader work environment. Specifically, job demands (e.g.,

workload, stress) and job resources (e.g., autonomy) are expected to moderate the impact of HR policies on quality of life, public service satisfaction, and turnover intention. These contextual factors may either amplify or constrain the influence of FFP and EWP satisfaction on employee wellbeing and performance. Accordingly, we propose the following hypotheses:

H3: The relationship between HR policies and Organizational performance is moderated by job resource and job demand.

2.4 Research gaps and study contribution

Despite growing recognition of the importance of supportive HR policies, several critical gaps remain in the literature. This study seeks to fill these gaps, thereby making both academic and practical contributions to understanding the effectiveness of HR policies, particularly within the Korean context.

First, existing research has tended to examine Family-Friendly Policies (FFPs), Employee Welfare Policies (EWPs), and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model in isolation, with few studies integrating these three dimensions into a single analytical framework (Bal and Dóci, 2018; Teelken, 2012). The literature on the JD-R model has largely focused on specific job characteristics like workload or autonomy, failing to comprehensively analyze the role of institutionalized HR policies as a whole (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017; Pirrotta et al., 2024). Although some scholars have called for the integration of HRM and the JD-R model, urging research to explore how organizational-level policies (e.g., staffing) affect individual-level outcomes (Bakker and Demerouti, 2018), studies remain fragmented. This segmentation hinders a holistic understanding of how HR policies interact and function within real-world, high-pressure work environments.

Second, the majority of existing research has concentrated on private sector organizations in Western countries, leaving the public sector—especially in the East Asian context—relatively under-researched. The critique of a Western-centric academic discourse in public administration and HRM is well-established, raising questions about the validity of applying Western models to different cultural and institutional settings without due consideration (Haque, 2019; Drechsler, 2018). Core concepts such as job autonomy, leadership, and work-life balance may be perceived and valued differently in East Asian cultures, which are often characterized by collectivism, high power distance, and hierarchical norms (Hofstede, 1980). Therefore, empirical research reflecting the unique characteristics of bureaucratic systems in East Asia, including South Korea, is necessary (Kim and Lee, 2020; Haque, 2019; Rowley and Benson, 2002). Such studies are essential for testing the universality of Western-centric theories and building more culturally nuanced theoretical frameworks.

Third, prior studies have predominantly focused on the direct effects of HR policies on outcomes, often overlooking the moderating role of contextual factors like job stress and autonomy. Despite the emphasis on the importance of ‘context’ in HRM research, empirical evidence on how the actual work environment shapes the effectiveness of HR policies remains scarce (Paauwe, 2009; Farndale and Paauwe, 2007). This reveals the limitations of a “best practice” approach that treats HR policies as universally applicable and highlights the need to identify the “best fit” for

specific situations (Delery and Doty, 1996). In particular, a deeper exploration of how factors such as job stress, autonomy, and leadership moderate the relationship between HR policies and employee outcomes is required (Wright and Pandey, 2010; Rasool et al., 2021; Kwon and Kim, 2020).

By employing Korean administrative data and testing how FFP and EWP satisfaction interact with job demands and resources, this study provides new insights into how HR policies influence employee wellbeing and organizational sustainability. This contributes to the theoretical advancement of JD-R and HRM integration and offers practical guidance for public managers seeking to create supportive, high-performing organizations.

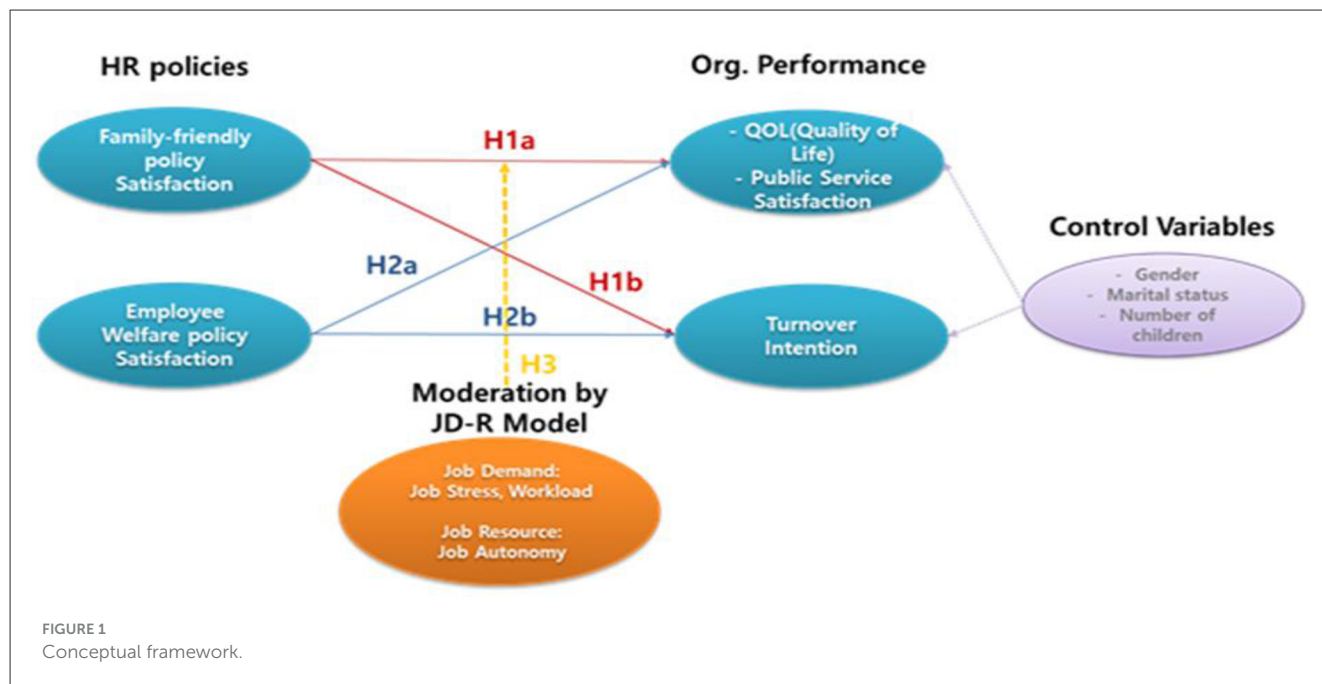
By leveraging administrative data from the Korean public sector, this study investigated how satisfaction with FFPs and EWPs interacts with job demands and resources to influence employee wellbeing and organizational sustainability. This study makes several contributions. It advances the theoretical integration between HRM and the JD-R framework, offers empirical insights grounded in an East Asian context, and provides actionable guidance for public managers striving to cultivate supportive, high-performing organizations amid growing environmental complexities (Figure 1).

3 Methods

3.1 Data gathering and sample characteristics

This¹ study uses data from the 2023 Public Employee Perception Survey conducted by the Korean Institute of Public Administration (KIPA, 2023). The survey was designed to examine the perceptions of public officials in general service or technical positions regarding their quality of work and life, with the aim of informing evidence-based human resource policy development. According to the Government Organization Management Information System, as of August 2023, approximately 1,000,000 individuals were employed in general service roles in the Korean public sector. The survey employed a multistage stratified sampling method to ensure representativeness. Specifically, the first stratification variable was organizational type, and the second was the number of employees within each organization. The survey was distributed to 47 central administrative agencies and 17 local governments through door-to-door interviews and postal mailings between August 21 and October 25, 2023. A total of 6,444 valid responses were collected, comprising 752 central administrative officials and 5,692 local public officials. The sampling error was calculated at $\pm 2.15\%$ with a 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$). Demographically, the majority of respondents were male (50.4%), in their 30s (38.6%), married (58.1%), held a bachelor's degree (79.2%), and were employed in ranks 6–7 within the public service hierarchy (54.8%). Further details of the sample composition are presented in Table 1.

1 This research data makes use of research material produced by the Korea Institute of Public Administration (KIPA), and has been authorized for use according to KIPA's regulations on the ownership and use of said research material.

TABLE 1 Characteristics of respondents ($n = 6,444$).

Variable	Contents	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	3,248	50.4
	Female	3,196	49.6
Age	20's	746	11.6
	30's	2,490	38.6
	40's	1,898	29.5
	Over 50's	1,310	20.3
Marital status	Single	2,730	41.9
	Married	3,741	58.1
Education	High School	349	5.4
	College	389	6.0
	Bachelor's	5,103	79.2
	Master's	526	8.2
	Doctorate	76	1.2
Rank	8–9 Rank	2,120	32.9
	6–7 Rank	3,534	54.8
	5 Rank	642	10.0
	1–4 Rank	148	2.3

TABLE 2 Reliability and validity test.

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	C.R. (> 0.70)	AVE (> 0.50)
FFP satisfaction	0.803	0.861	0.609
EWP satisfaction	0.846	0.850	0.654
Workload*	-	-	-
Job stress	0.885	0.656	0.597
Job autonomy	0.828	0.915	0.782
Quality of life	0.834	0.823	0.700
Public service satisfaction	0.850	0.802	0.674
Turnover intention*	-	-	-

*One-item.

0.4. The EFA results indicated that all measurement items demonstrated factor loadings exceeding 0.6, confirming their suitability for further analysis. In addition to construct validity, internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The results revealed that Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs exceeded 0.6, indicating acceptable reliability (see Table 2). Moreover, for the latent variables, the composite reliability (C.R.) scores were above the recommended threshold of 0.70, and the average variance extracted (AVE) values surpassed 0.50. These findings collectively confirm the high level of internal consistency in the measurement model (Table 2).

4 Results

4.1 Reliability and validity tests

To verify the validity of each construct, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted using principal component analysis with varimax rotation. The selection criteria for retaining items included eigenvalues >1.0 and factor loadings of at least

4.2 Correlation analysis

Before proceeding with the analysis of variable relationships, Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to examine the

TABLE 3 Zero-order correlations among antecedents, moderators, and consequences.

Category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Gender	1										
Marital status	0.136**	1									
No. of children	−0.130**	−0.740**	1								
FFP satisfaction	−0.008	−0.001	0.012	1							
EWP satisfaction	−0.027*	−0.048**	0.075**	0.202**	1						
Workload	−0.063**	−0.006	−0.011	−0.092**	−0.134**	1					
Job stress	0.060**	0.035**	−0.051**	−0.179**	−0.212**	0.202**	1				
Job autonomy	−0.055**	−0.051**	0.101**	0.286**	0.322**	−0.258**	−0.386**	1			
Quality of life	−0.020	−0.111**	0.098**	0.207**	0.268**	−0.171**	−0.274**	0.348**	1		
Public service satisfaction	−0.024	−0.050**	0.093**	0.026	0.337**	−0.179**	−0.301**	0.360**	0.534**	1	
Turnover intention	−0.055**	0.109**	−0.161**	0.044*	−0.193**	0.159**	0.312**	−0.251**	−0.377**	−0.521**	1

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

TABLE 4 The hierarchical multivariate regression results of QOL.

IV	DV: QOL			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	t-statistics (β)	t-statistics (β)	t-statistics (β)	t-statistics (β)
Step 1: demographic				
Gender	0.039 (0.001)	−0.172 (−0.003)	0.596 (0.009)	588 (0.009)
Marital status	−2.587** (−0.065)	−2.982** (−0.071)	−4.022** (−0.091)	−3.981*** (−0.090)
No. of children	0.114 (0.004)	−1.269 (−0.030)	−2.629 (−0.060)	−2.517** (−0.057)
Step 2: HR policies				
FFP satisfaction (1)		9.613*** (0.158)	5.198*** (0.084)	3.456*** (0.093)
EWP satisfaction (2)		14.485*** (0.240)	9.119*** (0.151)	4.110*** (0.141)
Step 3: JD-R Model				
Workload (3)			−3.139** (−0.050)	−2.231** (−0.066)
Job stress (4)			−7.581*** (−0.128)	−3.221** (−0.080)
Job autonomy (5)			12.701*** (0.229)	7.333*** (0.196)
Step 4: moderation effects				
(1) * (3)				0.416 (0.022)
(1) * (4)				−1.475 (−0.077)
(1) * (5)				0.329 (0.019)
(2) * (3)				−0.164 (−0.009)
(2) * (4)				0.317 (0.016)
(2) * (5)				−0.164 (−0.009)
	adjR ² = 0.005	adjR ² = 0.102	adjR ² = 0.186	adjR ² = 0.189
	F = 5.242, p = 0.000	F = 78.247, p = 0.000	F = 98.399, p = 0.000	F = 57.100, p = 0.000
D.W. = 1.998				

** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

associations among the study variables. The results revealed that most variables were significantly correlated. Specifically, the outcome variables—Quality of Life (QOL), public service satisfaction, and turnover intention—were significantly correlated with nearly all other variables except for gender. Workload and job stress were negatively correlated with QOL and public service satisfaction, indicating that higher job demands were associated with lower levels of wellbeing and satisfaction. Notably, job

autonomy showed the strongest correlation with the JD-R variables, reinforcing its importance as a key job resource. Furthermore, public service satisfaction exhibited particularly strong correlations with JD-R factors, including workload, job stress, and job autonomy, suggesting a close link between employees’ perceptions of their work environments and their satisfaction with their public service roles. The detailed correlation coefficients are listed in [Table 3](#).

TABLE 5 The hierarchical multivariate regression results of public service satisfaction.

IV	DV: public service satisfaction			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	t-statistics (β)	t-statistics (β)	t-statistics (β)	t-statistics (β)
Step 1: demographic				
Gender	−0.437 (−0.007)	−0.769 (−0.012)	0.036 (0.001)	0.058 (0.001)
Marital Status	3.470*** (0.087)	3.426*** (0.080)	2.684** (0.060)	2.643*** (0.059)
		4.790*** (0.120)		
No. of children	4.790*** (0.120)	3.341*** (0.078)	2.230** (0.050)	2.111** (0.047)
		4.790*** (0.120)		
Step 2: HR policies				
FFP satisfaction (1)		8.901*** (0.144)	4.464*** (0.071)	1.926* (0.051)
EWP satisfaction (2)		18.692*** (0.304)	13.320*** (0.215)	6.673*** (0.225)
Step 3: JD–R Model				
Workload (3)			−2.958** (−0.046)	−1.726 (−0.050)
Job Stress (4)			−8.949** (−0.148)	−7.927*** (−0.080)
Job Autonomy (5)			12.070*** (0.213)	8.343*** (0.219)
Step 4: moderation effects				
(1) * (3)				0.977 (0.029)
(1) * (4)				1.717 (0.088)
(1) * (5)				−0.032 (−0.002)
(2) * (3)				0.107 (0.005)
(2) * (4)				−0.603 (−0.030)
(2) * (5)				−0.110 (−0.006)
	adjR ² = 0.007	adjR ² = 0.135	adjR ² = 0.218	adjR ² = 0.218
	F = 7.774, p = 0.000	F = 108.768, p = 0.000	F = 121.369, p = 0.000	F = 69.922, p = 0.000
	D.W. = 1.997			

p < 0.05, *p < 0.01.

5 Results summary and interpretation

This study conducted hierarchical multiple regression analyses to assess how satisfaction with family friendly policies (FFPs) and Employee Welfare Policies (EWPs) affect three key outcome variables among Korean public employees: Quality of Life (QOL), Public Service Satisfaction, and Turnover Intention. Additionally, the moderating effects of job demands (workload and stress) and job resources autonomy) were examined using the JD-R framework.

5.1 Effects on quality of life (QOL)

The analysis revealed that both FFP and EWP satisfaction were significantly and positively associated with employees' perceived QoL. In Model 2 of the regression, FFP satisfaction had a significant positive coefficient ($\beta = 0.158, p < 0.001$), while EWP satisfaction showed an even stronger effect ($\beta = 0.240, p < 0.001$). These results

suggest that public employees who perceive their organizations as supportive of family life and welfare experience higher overall wellbeing.

In Model 3, in which the JD-R variables were added, the coefficients for both policy satisfaction variables slightly decreased but remained statistically significant. Notably, job stress ($\beta = -0.128, p < 0.001$) and workload ($\beta = -0.050, p < 0.01$) had negative effects on QoL, while job autonomy had a strong positive effect ($\beta = 0.229, p < 0.001$). These findings are consistent with the dual-pathway theory of the JD-R model: job demands undermine wellbeing, whereas job resources enhance it.

In the final model (Model 4), the interaction terms between HR policy satisfaction and the JD-R variables were added to test the moderation effects. However, none of the interaction terms was statistically significant in predicting QoL, indicating that the positive impact of HR policy satisfaction on quality of life was relatively stable, regardless of variations in job demands or resources (Table 4).

TABLE 6 The hierarchical multivariate regression results of turnover intention.

IV	DV: turnover intention			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	t-statistics (β)	t-statistics (β)	t-statistics (β)	t-statistics (β)
Step 1: demographic				
Gender	1.349 (0.023)	1.545 (0.023)	0.728 (0.012)	0.740 (0.012)
Marital status	−2.295** (−0.152)	−2.195** (−0.054)	−1.485 (−0.035)	−1.561 (−0.036)
		4.790*** (0.120)		
No. of children	−6.121*** (−0.152)	−5.280*** (−0.129)	−4.634*** (−0.109)	−4.832*** (−0.144)
		4.790*** (0.120)		
Step 2: HR policies				
FFP satisfaction (1)		−3.461*** (−0.059)	0.171 (0.003)	0.493 (0.014)
EWP satisfaction (2)		−10.063*** (−0.172)	−5.552*** (−0.095)	−4.064*** (−0.144)
Step 3: JD–R Model				
Workload (3)			2.119** (0.035)	0.076 (0.002)
Job Stress (4)			13.181*** (0.229)	7.203*** (0.085)
Job autonomy (5)			−6.238*** (−0.116)	−3.121** (−0.086)
Step 4: moderation effects				
(1) * (3)				−0.647 (0.036)
(1) * (4)				1.606 (0.086)
(1) * (5)				−2.596** (−0.152)
(2) * (3)				1.533 (0.082)
(2) * (4)				−0.552 (−0.029)
(2) * (5)				2.130** (0.125)
	adjR ² = 0.015	adjR ² = 0.051	adjR ² = 0.131	adjR ² = 0.136
	F = 17.124, p = 0.000	F = 37.215, p = 0.000	F = 65.144, p = 0.000	F = 38.668, p = 0.000
	D.W. = 1.949			

p < 0.05, *p < 0.01.

5.2 Effects on public service satisfaction

The results of Public Service Satisfaction showed similar patterns. In Model 2, FFP satisfaction ($\beta = 0.144$, $p < 0.001$) and EWP satisfaction ($\beta = 0.304$, $p < 0.001$) were both strong predictors of public service satisfaction. These effects remained significant in Model 3, with EWP satisfaction retaining a particularly strong effect ($\beta = 0.225$, $p < 0.001$).

Among JD–R variables, job stress ($\beta = -0.148$, $p < 0.001$) and workload ($\beta = -0.046$, $p < 0.01$) were negatively associated with public service satisfaction, while job autonomy again showed a strong positive relationship ($\beta = 0.213$, $p < 0.001$). These findings highlight the role of supportive work environments in fostering pride and satisfaction with public service delivery.

Similar to the QOL model, the moderating effects in Model 4 were not statistically significant. This finding suggests that the positive association between HR policy satisfaction and public service satisfaction is consistent across different levels of stress, workload, and autonomy (Table 5).

5.3 Effects on turnover intention

The analysis of turnover intentions revealed several notable findings. First, in Model 2, both FFP satisfaction ($\beta = -0.059$, $p < 0.001$) and EWP satisfaction ($\beta = -0.172$, $p < 0.001$) significantly reduced employees' intention to leave the organization. However, when JD–R variables were added in Model 3, the effect of FFP satisfaction became non-significant, while the effect of EWP satisfaction remained strong ($\beta = -0.144$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that employee welfare satisfaction may have a more robust and sustained effect on turnover intention even under high-stress conditions.

Job stress emerged as the strongest positive predictor of turnover intention ($\beta = 0.229$, $p < 0.001$), while job autonomy significantly reduced turnover intention ($\beta = -0.116$, $p < 0.001$). These results align with JD–R theory, confirming that excessive job demands drive employee withdrawal, whereas supportive resources promote retention.

Model 4 revealed significant interaction effects between HR policy satisfaction and job autonomy.

- The interaction between FFP satisfaction and job autonomy had a significant negative effect ($\beta = -0.152$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that the turnover-reducing effect of FFPs is stronger when employees experience greater autonomy.
- Conversely, the interaction between EWP satisfaction and job autonomy had a positive coefficient ($\beta = 0.125$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that the impact of welfare policy satisfaction on turnover intention may diminish slightly in high-autonomy settings.

These contrasting patterns imply that, while both FFPs and EWPs reduce turnover intention, their effectiveness is conditioned by different aspects of the work environment. FFPs appear to complement job autonomy by amplifying retention effects, whereas EWPs may be especially critical for employees with lower decision latitudes, providing compensatory support in more rigid work environments (Table 6).

6 Summary of findings

- EWP satisfaction consistently demonstrated stronger and more stable effects across all outcome variables than FFP satisfaction.
- Job stress and autonomy are powerful predictors of employee wellbeing and turnover intentions.
- Interaction effects were minimal for QOL and public service satisfaction but meaningful for turnover intention, highlighting the importance of contextual conditions in shaping the effectiveness of HR policies.
- The findings emphasize the necessity of adopting integrated HRM strategies that align policy provisions with job design considerations to enhance employee sustainability and organizational performance in the public sector.

7 Conclusion and discussion

This study examined the effects of Family-Friendly (FFPs) and Employee Welfare Policies (EWPs) on key employee outcomes in the Korean public sector. Our analysis yielded two critical findings: first, EWP satisfaction demonstrated a uniquely robust and stable positive influence across all outcomes, including a significant reduction in turnover intention. Second, the impact of FFP satisfaction on turnover was significantly moderated by job autonomy, amplifying its effect in high-autonomy settings. Drawing on these key empirical results, this study provides both theoretical and practical insights into how supportive HR policies, contingent on workplace conditions, can enhance employee wellbeing and promote organizational sustainability.

8 Theoretical implications

These findings contribute to the public administration theory by demonstrating the distinct and robust effects of HR policy

satisfaction, particularly EWP satisfaction, on critical individual-level outcomes. While both FFPs and EWPs were found to improve QOL and public service satisfaction, only EWPs had a stable and significant influence on turnover intention, after controlling for job demands and resources. This suggests that welfare-oriented HR policies play a vital role in long-term employee retention, possibly because they address a broad range of work-related and personal needs.

More importantly, this study extends the JD-R framework by showing that job autonomy moderates the effect of HR policy satisfaction on turnover intention. Specifically, the turnover-reducing effects of FFPs were amplified in high-autonomy settings, whereas the influence of EWPs declined slightly when autonomy was high. These findings partially support both the buffering and boosting hypotheses within the JD-R model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). FFPs may require discretionary use and therefore benefit more from job resources such as autonomy, whereas EWPs may function more effectively in rigid, low-autonomy environments where they compensate for structural constraints.

The results also underscore the complementarity between policy support and structural job characteristics, an underexplored area in public administration research. By integrating JD-R dynamics into HRM evaluation, this study highlights how organizational context shapes the actual effectiveness of HR policies, an important nuance often overlooked in prior studies. This theoretical advancement not only enriches the JD-R framework but also provides a more holistic understanding of how HR policies operate in the complex, high-stress environments characteristic of public administration.

Furthermore, job autonomy acted as a significant moderating variable in the relationship between FFP satisfaction and turnover intention, whereas no moderating effect was found in relation to quality of life or public service satisfaction. This implies that behavioral outcomes (turnover intention) require FFP to be a 'usable resource' to have an impact, while emotional outcomes (QOL, satisfaction) can be positively influenced by 'symbolic resources'. In particular, in the strongly hierarchical organizational culture of the Korean public sector, when autonomy is low, FFP remains a formal existence and the policy effects are limited. Conversely, in environments with high autonomy, members may recognize the discrepancy between FFP and the actual organizational culture more clearly, which could increase turnover intention. This suggests a 'dual effect' where autonomy acts as a protective buffer while simultaneously increasing critical awareness of the policies. In conclusion, from the perspective of the JD-R theory, the same resource (FFP satisfaction) can yield different outcomes depending on contextual factors such as autonomy. It is necessary to distinguish the mechanisms at play between emotional and behavioral outcomes. This provides practical implications for policy design and organizational culture improvement in public organizations.

9 Practical and policy implications

For public managers and policymakers, this study provides several actionable insights:

1. Prioritizing and strengthening welfare-oriented HR policies: our analysis revealed that EWP satisfaction had a more robust and consistently positive effect on QOL ($\beta = 0.240, p < 0.001$) and public service satisfaction ($\beta = 0.304, p < 0.001$), and was the only policy satisfaction variable to significantly reduce turnover intention ($\beta = -0.144, p < 0.001$) after accounting for job conditions. This powerful finding suggests that EWPs should be treated as a cornerstone strategic investment for workforce stability. Beyond these basic benefits, organizations should consider offering targeted support for mental health, career development, and personal wellbeing.
2. Cultivating an autonomy-supportive culture for FFPs: a key finding of this study is the significant interaction effect between FFP satisfaction and job autonomy on turnover intention ($\beta = -0.152, p < 0.01$). This indicates that the turnover-reducing benefit of FFPs is amplified only when employees feel they have high autonomy. Therefore, merely providing FFPs is insufficient. Public organizations must cultivate a culture that empowers employees to use them, which can be achieved through flexible scheduling, trust-based management, and explicit supervisor support. To maximize the impact, public organizations must not only offer FFPs but also cultivate a culture that normalizes their use, particularly through flexible scheduling, trust-based management, and supervisor support.
3. Actively managing job demands: our results consistently show that job stress is a powerful detriment to employee wellbeing, negatively impacting QOL ($\beta = -0.128, p < 0.001$) and public service satisfaction ($\beta = -0.148, p < 0.001$), while being the strongest predictor of turnover intention ($\beta = 0.229, p < 0.001$). This evidence underscores that supportive HR policies cannot fully compensate for a highly demanding work environment. Therefore, policy implementation must be paired with proactive efforts to manage demands through workload audits, staffing adjustments, and stress-reduction programs. Therefore, policies must be embedded in broader efforts to monitor and reduce job demands such as workload audits, staffing adjustments, and stress management programs.
4. Adopting an integrated JD-R-informed HRM strategy: HR managers should view policy provision not as an isolated intervention but as part of an integrated system shaped by job design, leadership style, and organizational culture. The JD-R model offers a valuable diagnostic framework that aligns HR practices with the lived experiences of employees.

These insights are particularly salient in the Korean context, where civil service organizations face rising expectations from citizens and generational shifts in workforce values. However, they can also be generalized to other governments seeking to build a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable public workforce.

10 Limitations and directions for future research direction

This study had several limitations must be acknowledged. First, it was based on cross-sectional data, which limits causal

inferences. Future studies should use longitudinal or panel data to track the evolution of HR policy perceptions and outcomes over time. Although the dataset spans a longitudinal period from 2011 to 2024, the structural characteristics of the data limit the feasibility of conducting a true longitudinal analysis. Specifically, the survey respondents differ from year to year, and organizational identifiers are not provided, thereby preventing the tracking of individual or organizational trajectories over time. As such, despite the availability of multi-year data, the analysis is constrained to a cross-sectional approach owing to inherent limitations in the design of the dataset.

Second, the use of self-reported measures may introduce common method bias, although this is somewhat mitigated by the multistage regression design and use of interaction terms.

Third, the study focused on the general constructs of FFP and EWP satisfaction without distinguishing between specific policy types (e.g., teleworking vs. maternity leave). Future studies should adopt a more fine-grained approach to assess the components that most effectively drive employee outcomes. Additionally, while the JD-R variables used here—job stress, workload, and autonomy—are central, other important moderators (e.g., leadership style, coworker support, or public service motivation) warrant examination.

Fourth, although examining heterogeneity across demographic and occupational subgroups (e.g., generational cohorts, gender, frontline vs. administrative roles) could yield richer theoretical insights, such analyses were not feasible owing to the structural limitations of the dataset. Future research could leverage panel data with individual or organizational identifiers to investigate how HR policy effects vary across employee subgroups, thereby enhancing the theoretical differentiation and practical relevance.

Finally, this study is conducted within the Korean public sector, which has unique institutional and cultural characteristics. Comparative studies across different administrative traditions could reveal whether the observed patterns hold in other governance contexts and labor markets.

Taken together, addressing these limitations will not only strengthen the empirical foundations of future research but also enhance the theoretical and practical understanding of how HR policies can foster sustainable, high-performing public sector organizations globally.

11 Scholarly contribution

Despite these limitations, this study makes meaningful theoretical and empirical contributions to the fields of public HRM and organizational behavior. It bridges previously fragmented research streams by integrating HR policy satisfaction with the JD-R model into a unified analytical framework. It also highlights the need to consider the interaction between supportive policies and workplace conditions rather than assessing their effects in isolation.

By focusing on the experiences of public employees and contextualizing HRM within dynamic organizational environments, this study advances a holistic and evidence-based understanding of how governments can promote workforce sustainability in the 21st century. In doing so, it not only enriches the theoretical discourse on HRM effectiveness in the public

sector but also provides a foundation for future research aimed at designing resilient and employee-centered public organizations.

Data availability statement

Publicly available datasets were analyzed in this study. This data can be found at: <https://www.kipa.re.kr/html/kor/main/main>.

Ethics statement

The studies involving humans were approved by the Korea Institute of Public Administration (KIPA). The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

YL: Writing – original draft. MK: Data curation, Writing – original draft, Conceptualization, Methodology.

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