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Internal Public Relations, Organisational Commitment, Burnout, and Job Satisfaction in Public Universities

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Abstract

This study examines the direct and indirect relationships among internal public relations (IPR) practices, organisational commitment (OC), job-related emotional burnout (JREB), and job satisfaction (JS) by testing a sequential mediation framework under two directional specifications. The study employed a cross-sectional survey of administrative staff working at public universities in Turkey. Data were collected from 1,289 respondents across 115 public universities and analysed using structural equation modelling (SEM). The findings indicate that IPR is positively associated with OC, while its relationship with JS operates primarily through indirect pathways involving OC and JREB. The form of the IPR–JREB relationship differs across the two directional specifications: the direct relationship is not statistically significant in the primary OC→JREB specification but is significant and negative in the alternative JREB→OC specification. Across both specifications, OC and JREB jointly mediate the relationship between IPR and JS, highlighting their roles in explaining the association between internal communication practices and job satisfaction. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory (SET), Perceived Organisational Support (POS), and the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, the study provides an integrated theoretical interpretation of these relationships. The findings offer context-specific evidence on the associations between IPR, organisational commitment, burnout, and job satisfaction among administrative staff in Turkish public universities.

Keywords: Internal Public Relations, Job Satisfaction, Organisational Commitment, Job-Related Emotional Burnout, Public Universities.

JEL Codes: M39, M12, M14, J28, J45

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1. Introduction

Internal public relations (IPR), often referred to as *internal communication* in the literature, is a strategic managerial function that shapes employees' relationships with their organisation through information sharing, feedback, trust-building, and support mechanisms. Rather than merely transmitting messages, IPR involves communication practices that facilitate employee participation in organisational processes, reduce uncertainty, and foster supportive employee–organisation relationships. In this respect, IPR may function as an organisational resource that contributes to stronger organisational commitment and lower levels of burnout by enhancing informational clarity and perceived organisational support (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Yeomans & FitzPatrick, 2017).

Organisational commitment (OC) refers to employees' psychological attachment to, identification with, and sense of belonging within their organisation (Tatar & Uzun, 2023; Manata, 2023). Job satisfaction (JS) reflects individuals' overall evaluation of and satisfaction with their job experiences (Bakotic, 2016). Job-related emotional burnout (JREB), in turn, refers to feelings of emotional exhaustion and depletion associated with work-related demands (Wharton, 1993; Gunay, 2021). Together, these employee outcomes are important for understanding employees' attitudes and psychological well-being within organisations. In public universities, they are also relevant to managerial effectiveness and the quality and continuity of service delivery. The psychological and motivational well-being of employees is closely associated with service quality (Ki & Kim, 2024). In this context, IPR practices may play an important role in shaping employees' relationships with their organisation and their work-related experiences.

In recent years, IPR has increasingly been framed in the public administration literature not merely as a supportive function, but as a strategic mechanism of governance (Wilcox et al., 2015; Yeomans & FitzPatrick, 2017; Grunig & Kim, 2021). Effective IPR strategies enhance employees' identification with the organisation by fostering knowledge sharing, trust, participation and the co-creation of shared meaning. In turn, these processes shape core psychological outcomes, including OC, JS and JREB.

Research has examined IPR in a range of organisational settings, including private-sector contexts (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011; Falkheimer & Heide, 2015). This study focuses specifically on public universities, where administrative staff may operate under complex role demands, bureaucratic constraints, and resource limitations. In such settings, IPR may be particularly relevant for understanding employees' organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and job-related emotional burnout.

This study examines the direct and indirect effects of IPR practices on employees' OC, JS and JREB in public universities in Turkey. Accordingly, we first address the following descriptive research question to profile the sample's perceptions of the focal constructs.

RQ1. What are the perceived levels of IPR, OC, JREB, and JS among administrative staff working at public universities in Turkey?

The study draws on Social Exchange Theory (SET), the Perceived Organisational Support (POS) framework, and the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model to explain how IPR may shape employee outcomes. SET and POS provide a relational perspective by suggesting that supportive and fair organisational communication may foster reciprocity, perceived support, and stronger organisational commitment, whereas the JD-R model conceptualises effective communication as a job resource that may help reduce work-related strain and burnout. Together, these perspectives provide a complementary basis for examining the relationships among IPR, OC, JREB, and JS. Data were collected from administrative staff working in public universities and analysed using SEM.

In this respect, the study contributes to the literature by offering an integrated examination of the relationships between IPR, organisational commitment, burnout, and job satisfaction among administrative staff in Turkish public universities.

1.1. IPR in Public Universities: Organisational Characteristics and Contextual Differences

Research conducted in for-profit settings has linked internal communication to organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and organisational citizenship behaviour (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011). In these settings, competitive pressures, performance-metric-based reward systems, and the primacy of customer satisfaction tend to position IPR around efficiency, employee retention, and corporate reputation. Accordingly, IPR approaches examined in private-sector research often reflect organisational conditions shaped by relatively flexible hierarchies and market-driven pressures (Falkheimer & Heide, 2015).

This study examines the relationships among IPR, OC, JREB, and JS among administrative staff working in Turkish public universities. Administrative staff constitute a relevant internal public because their roles place them within routine internal communication and administrative processes. Drawing on SET, POS, and the JD-R model, the study tests a sequential mediation model to examine how IPR is associated with organisational commitment, job-related emotional burnout, and job satisfaction within the specific context of Turkish public universities.

Turkish public universities operate within a highly centralised and hierarchical higher-education governance structure. The Turkish higher-education system has been characterised by strong central coordination through the Council of Higher Education (YOK), with implications for institutional autonomy and university governance (Kurt et al., 2017; Yasa & Aksoy, 2025). Research has also highlighted the strong position of rectors within public universities and the centralised nature of rector appointments, including concerns regarding political influence on these processes (Kurt et al., 2017; Elgin, 2024; Yasa & Aksoy, 2025). At the organisational-cultural level, research conducted in Turkish state-university settings has associated high power distance with hierarchy, centralised power, selective information flow, and constraints on open communication (Gokturk et al., 2017). Taken together, these institutional and cultural characteristics make Turkish public universities a distinctive organisational context in which to examine IPR.

1.2. Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Development

IPR can be understood as a relational and communicative resource through which organisations provide employees with information, support, feedback, and opportunities for participation. Social Exchange Theory (SET) explains the relational pathway by suggesting that employees tend to reciprocate supportive and fair organisational treatment with more positive attitudes toward the organisation, providing a theoretical basis for the relationships of IPR with organisational commitment and job satisfaction (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The Perceived Organisational Support (POS) framework complements this perspective by proposing that organisational practices signalling that employees are valued and supported are associated with stronger commitment and more favourable work attitudes (Kurtessis et al., 2015). The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, in turn, explains the strain-related pathway by conceptualising information, feedback, and organisational support as job resources that can help employees cope with job demands and reduce burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Thus, SET and POS primarily provide the relational and attitudinal rationale linking IPR with OC and JS, whereas the JD-R model provides the resource-based rationale linking IPR with JREB and, subsequently, JS. Together, these perspectives provide complementary theoretical foundations for the direct and indirect relationships examined among IPR, OC, JREB, and JS.

From a SET perspective, fair, transparent, and responsive internal communication may be interpreted by employees as a form of supportive organisational treatment, encouraging more favourable evaluations of both the organisation and the job. IPR may contribute to JS through several related mechanisms: timely and accurate information can reduce uncertainty, constructive feedback can clarify expectations, and open managerial communication can strengthen employees' perceptions of support and involvement. This reasoning is also consistent with the POS framework, which links perceived organisational support to favourable employee attitudes, including job satisfaction (Kurtessis et al., 2015). Empirical evidence from the internal and organisational communication literature further supports this relationship. Pincus (1986) found a significant positive relationship between communication satisfaction and job satisfaction, with supervisor communication, communication climate, and personal feedback showing the strongest associations with global job satisfaction. Similarly, Nikolić et al. (2013) found that several dimensions of internal communication satisfaction significantly predicted dimensions of job satisfaction among middle managers in Serbian companies. Taken together, these theoretical mechanisms and related empirical findings support the expectation of a positive relationship between IPR and JS.

H1. IPR positively influences JS.

Drawing on SET, fair, open, and dialogic internal communication may be interpreted by employees as supportive organisational treatment, encouraging reciprocity and stronger attachment to the organisation (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The POS framework complements this perspective by suggesting that organisational practices signalling that employees are valued and supported are associated with stronger organisational commitment (Kurtessis et al., 2015). Taken together, these perspectives provide a theoretical basis for expecting a positive relationship between IPR and OC.

H2. IPR positively influences OC.

Within the JD-R framework, burnout emerges when job demands exceed or deplete employees' available resources (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Communication-related resources such as timely information, constructive feedback, managerial support, and opportunities for participation may help employees cope with job demands and reduce uncertainty and emotional strain. In JD-R terms, social and organisational resources, including support, recognition, feedback, and open communication, are associated with lower burnout risk (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Accordingly, IPR may function as a communicative job resource associated with lower levels of JREB.

H3. IPR negatively influences JREB.

1.3. Psychological Mechanisms Linking OC, JREB, and JS

Employees' attitudes toward both their work and the organisation are closely tied to the quality of IPR. When IPR is effective, it fosters trust, belonging and a sense of meaning, which in turn supports psychological well-being and strengthens JS (Grunig et al., 2002). Within this logic, OC is a central mechanism through which IPR translates into employee outcomes. Drawing on SET and POS, supportive and inclusive communication may foster reciprocity and perceptions of organisational support, thereby contributing to stronger OC, in turn, stronger OC helps employees experience their work as more meaningful, which ultimately elevates JS (Simbula et al., 2023).

IPR cultivates a fair, supportive and trust-based communication climate that tends to strengthen OC. When OC erodes—particularly under conditions of heavy workload, emotional demands and role conflict—employees become more psychologically vulnerable to JREB. Positioning JREB downstream of OC is theoretically consistent with both SET and JD-R. From a JD-R perspective, insufficient job resources may increase employees' vulnerability to work-related strain, whereas resources such as social support, constructive feedback, and high-quality supervisory relationships can help buffer job demands and reduce burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). In this sense, IPR helps sustain the process by strengthening information flow, managerial support, and employees' sense of autonomy.

The relationships among OC, JREB, and JS constitute the psychological mechanisms through which IPR is examined in this study. Within the primary theoretical specification, OC is positioned upstream of JREB. From a SET perspective, supportive organisational relationships may strengthen employees' attachment to the organisation, while the JD-R perspective suggests that such relational and organisational resources may help employees cope with work-related demands and strain. Accordingly, stronger OC is expected to be associated with lower JREB and higher JS, whereas higher JREB is expected to be associated with lower JS.

The relationship between OC and JREB, however, may also be theoretically plausible in the reverse direction. Emotional exhaustion represents a depletion of employees' psychological resources and may weaken their attachment to and identification with the organisation. Related empirical evidence indicates that emotional exhaustion, a core dimension of burnout, is negatively associated with organisational commitment (Sarisik et al., 2019). Therefore, the study also examines JREB→OC as an alternative directional specification.

Importantly, the OC→JREB and JREB→OC paths are not estimated simultaneously as reciprocal causal paths within a single structural model. The OC→JREB specification constitutes the primary theoretical model, whereas the reversed JREB→OC specification is estimated separately as a complementary alternative model. Given the cross-sectional design of the study, these alternative specifications are intended to examine theoretically plausible directional structures rather than to establish temporal or reciprocal causality.

Accordingly, H4 is grounded primarily in the relational and attitudinal logic of SET and POS, whereas H5 and H6 are interpreted primarily through the resource–strain logic of the JD-R model.

Primary OC→JREB specification

H4. OC positively influences JS.

H5. OC negatively influences JREB.

H6. JREB negatively influences JS.

Alternative JREB→OC specification

H7. JREB negatively influences OC.

1.4. Mediation Pathways via OC and JREB

OC is the primary psychological mechanism through which IPR influences JS. From a SET perspective, employees reciprocate supportive organisational treatment by developing stronger OC (Blau, 1964). When IPR signals that employees are valued, well-informed, and meaningfully included, OC is reinforced. Stronger OC, in turn, makes work feel more purposeful and strengthens positive evaluations of the job while buffering strain—thereby contributing to higher JS and lower JREB. Accordingly, OC is theorised to operate as a mediator linking IPR to both JS and JREB, consistent with SET and the JD-R model (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

IPR practices characterised by transparency and participation may strengthen employees' perceptions of involvement and organisational support (Dong et al., 2025). From SET and POS perspectives, such supportive communication may contribute to stronger OC. Higher OC, in turn, is associated with more favourable job evaluations and lower levels of work-related strain. Lower JREB is associated with higher JS. Taken together, OC and JREB are theorised to function as sequential mediators in the relationship between IPR and JS.

Primary OC→JREB specification

H8. OC mediates the relationship between IPR and JREB.

H9. JREB mediates the relationship between OC and JS.

Within the alternative JREB→OC specification, IPR is expected to relate to OC indirectly through JREB. Communication-related resources may help reduce emotional strain, while lower emotional exhaustion is associated with stronger organisational commit-

ment (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Sarisik et al., 2019). Because stronger OC is, in turn, associated with higher JS, this alternative ordering provides the theoretical basis for testing JREB as a mediator of the IPR–OC relationship and OC as a mediator of the JREB–JS relationship.

Alternative JREB→OC specification

H10. JREB mediates the relationship between IPR and OC.

H11. OC mediates the relationship between JREB and JS.

Across both specifications

H12. OC and JREB jointly mediate the relationship between IPR and JS.

1.5. Research Model

Figures 1 and 2 present the research model as two separately estimated directional specifications. The primary specification follows the OC→JREB pathway, whereas the alternative specification reverses this relationship and examines JREB→OC. Both specifications are considered because prior research provides theoretical and empirical support for both directional relationships, while the cross-sectional design of the present study does not permit temporal precedence between OC and JREB to be established. Accordingly, the two paths are not estimated simultaneously as reciprocal effects within a single structural model.

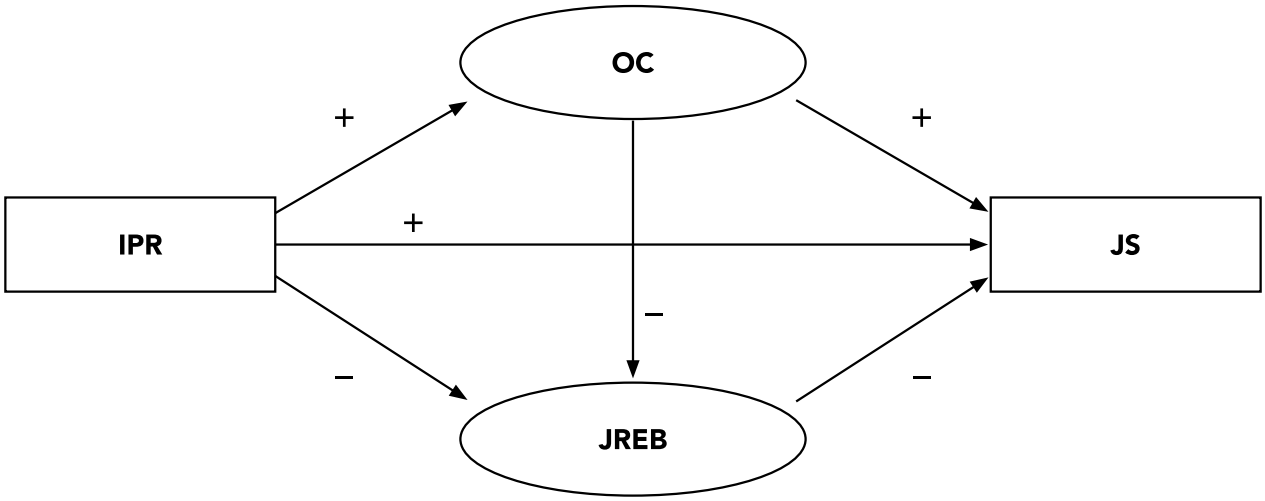


Figure 1. Research Model (Primary OC→JREB specification)
Source: Developed by the authors.

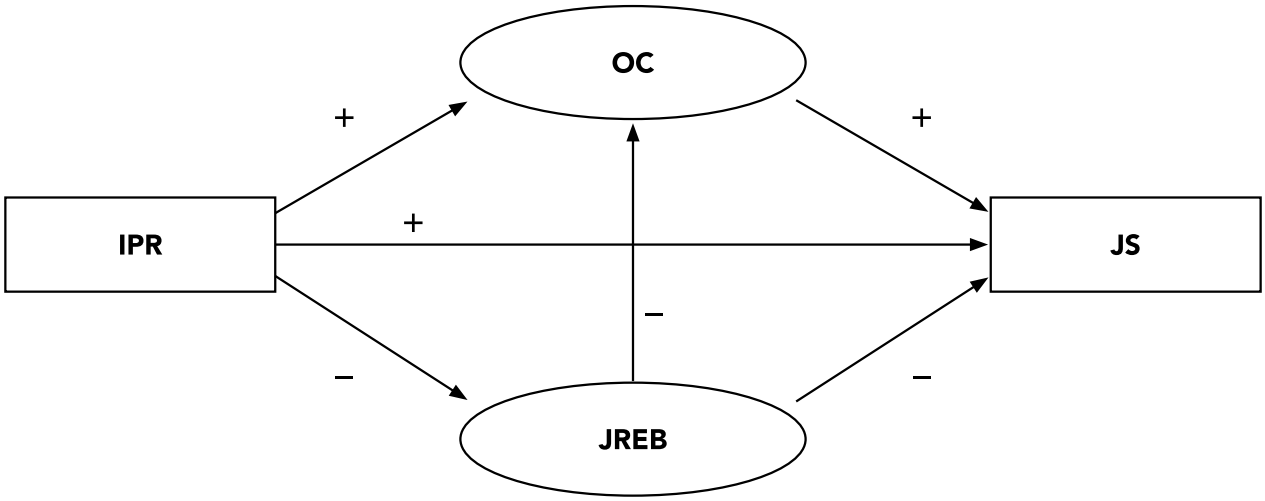


Figure 2. Research Model (Alternative JREB→OC specification)
Source: Developed by the authors.

2. Method

2.1. Population

The target population of this study comprises administrative personnel employed at public universities across Turkey. According to the *University Monitoring and Evaluation General Report 2023* published by the Council of Higher Education (YOK), 237,464 administrative personnel were employed across 204 higher education institutions during the 2022–2023 academic year, of whom 205,172 were employed at public universities and 32,292 at foundation universities (YOK, 2023). Accordingly, the relevant target population for the present study consists of approximately 205,172 administrative personnel working at public universities. The final sample comprised 1,289 respondents from 115 public universities. As participation was obtained through the institutional distribution of an online survey rather than through a probability-based sampling procedure, confidence-level and margin-of-error estimates were not used to claim statistical representativeness. The sample is therefore treated as a broad multi-institutional sample, and the findings are interpreted within the specific context of administrative staff at Turkish public universities.

2.2. Participants

Information pertaining to the participants' socio-demographic characteristics is presented in Table I. These variables provide a foundational context for interpreting the study's findings and offer insights into the composition and diversity of the sample group.

Table I. Participant Profile

Variable	Category	N	%
Gender	Female	525	40.7
	Male	764	59.3
Marital Status	Married	955	74.1
	Single	334	25.9
Age	50-65	315	24.5
	35-49	713	55.3
	25-34	243	18.9
	18-24	18	1.4
Education	Bachelor's Degree	683	53.0
	Associate Degree	196	15.2
	Graduate Degree	291	22.6
	High School Graduate	106	8.2
	Other	13	1.0
Length of Service	20+ years	331	25.7
	10-20 years	520	40.3
	1-3 years	184	14.3
	4-9 years	207	16.1
	<1 year	47	3.6
Position	Civil Servant	640	49.7
	Senior Administrative Officer	145	11.2
	Supervisor	149	11.6
	Other	205	15.9
	Division Head	74	5.7
	Director	20	1.6
	Office Attendant	50	3.9
	Secretary General	6	0.5

Source: Authors' own calculations based on the research data.

The sample includes administrative personnel from different hierarchical levels, although it is concentrated primarily in lower- and middle-level administrative positions. Civil servants constitute the largest group (49.7%), followed by participants classified under "Other" positions (15.9%), supervisors (11.6%), and senior administrative officers (11.2%). The specific positions within the "Other" category could not be further identified because the questionnaire did not include an open-ended specification field. Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted as reflecting the administrative staff included in the sample rather than as statistically representative of all administrative personnel working at Turkish public universities.

Analytical results derived from the university-based responses are summarised in Table II below, providing a comprehensive overview of the dataset used in this study.

Table II. Distribution of Participation by University

Number of Responding Universities	115 Universities	89.1% (Out of 129 universities)
Number of Non-Responding Universities	14 Universities	10.9% (Out of 129 universities)

Source: Authors' own calculations based on the research data.

Within the scope of the study, data were collected from administrative staff at 115 of the 129 public universities in Turkey, providing institutional coverage of approximately 89.1%.

2.3. Measures

In this study, a quantitative data collection method was employed via an online survey. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, which adheres to a formal ethics protocol for academic research. In accordance with institutional procedures, an application was submitted to the Non-Interventional Clinical Research Ethics Committee. The study was reviewed and approved during the committee's meeting held on January 8, 2025 (Meeting No: 2025/1; Decision No: GO 2025/998), thereby ensuring full compliance with established ethical standards for human subjects research.

As part of the ethical research protocol, written authorisation from the original developers of the measurement instruments was required. Accordingly, permissions for all four scales employed in the study were formally obtained from the respective scholars. The survey link was disseminated to all public universities in Turkey via institutional channels coordinated by the Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University. Data collection occurred between February and May 2025, during which a total of 1,289 valid responses were gathered through the online platform.

As shown in Table III, the study employed established, psychometrically sound instruments to measure the four focal constructs.

Table III. Constructs, Measures, and Sample Items

Scale	Source	Total Items	Sample Item	CFA Status
IPR - I. Dimension, Information Sharing	Isik (2020)	7	"I receive the information I need to do my job accurately and in a timely manner"	1 Item dropped
IPR - II. Dimension, Managerial Comm.	Isik (2020)	7	"Senior management is understanding toward employees."	1 Item dropped
IPR - III. Dimension, Internal Events	Isik (2020)	3	"Internal events organised for employees make me feel more connected to my organisation."	All retained
OC	Tatar & Uzun (2023)	7	"I feel at home at my university."	All retained
JREB	Wharton (1993); Gunay (2021)	6	"I feel emotionally drained by my job."	1 Item dropped
JS	Judge et al. (1998); Basol & Comlekci (2020)	5	"Overall, I am satisfied with my current job."	All retained
Socio-demographic Items	—	7	"Age, gender, education…"	Not applicable

Source: Compiled by the authors based on the measurement instruments cited in the table.

The first measurement instrument is a 17-item scale developed by Isik (2020), which represents one of the most up-to-date Turkish measures of internal public relations. It assesses efforts that shape employee-organisation relationships in both public and private sector settings. Its validity was demonstrated through exploratory factor analysis, and reliability was established for the overall scale and its subdimensions. With a three-factor structure and satisfactory KMO and Bartlett statistics, the scale shows robust psychometric properties.

The IPR scale comprises three dimensions:

- Information Sharing – captures the extent to which employees receive timely, accurate information about their work, organisational goals, and ongoing or anticipated changes.
- Managerial Communication – reflects managers' openness, the degree to which they take employees' views into account, the effectiveness of feedback processes, and the overall quality of communication across units.
- Internal Events – gauges how social and cultural activities within the organisation support employees' socialisation and foster a sense of belonging.

Together, these three dimensions constitute a holistic IPR structure that encompasses the core components of internal public relations: organisational information flow, managerial communication, and social integration.

The JS scale, originally developed by Judge et al. (1998) and adapted into Turkish by Basol and Comlekci (2020), consists of five items. The JREB scale, developed by Wharton (1993), adapted into Turkish by Gunay (2021) comprises six items. The OC scale, developed by Tatar and Uzun (2023), includes seven items. All three scales are unidimensional. In addition, a seven-item socio-demographic questionnaire was administered to capture basic participant characteristics. Although the item formulations varied slightly across the three scales, all responses were recorded on a standardized five-point Likert-type scale. The JREB scale is rated from "never" to

"always," whereas the remaining scales (JS, OC, and IPR) are rated from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

Data were analysed using Jamovi and IBM SPSS Amos. Jamovi was used for preliminary statistical analyses, including descriptive statistics, reliability, normality, and correlation analyses. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modelling (SEM) were conducted using IBM SPSS Amos to examine the measurement model and test the direct and indirect relationships among the study variables. Structural model parameters were estimated using maximum likelihood estimation. Indirect effects were evaluated using 5,000 bootstrap samples with 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals. An indirect effect was considered statistically significant when the confidence interval did not include zero.

3. Findings

The findings of the study are presented and interpreted in the following sections, accompanied by the relevant tables.

3.1. Descriptive and Relational Statistics

Before proceeding to hypothesis testing, confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were conducted for all measurement instruments. Within the SEM framework, the three-factor structure of the IPR scale (Information Sharing, Managerial Communication, and Internal Events) was supported. However, two items with factor loadings below .40 ["Relationships among employees are characterised by sincerity and genuine concern" (Information Sharing) and "I believe that communication between units in my organisation is good" (Managerial Communication)] were removed from the model. Similarly, the CFA performed on the JREB scale led to the exclusion of one item with a factor loading below .40 ("I feel exhausted at the end of the workday"). After these modifications, the overall model fit indices reached acceptable levels, as presented in Table IV.

As shown in Table IV, the scales were assessed for normality and reliability. Skewness and kurtosis values were within the acceptable ±1 range, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were above .70, and inter-variable correlation coefficients ranged between −.574 and .720. These results indicate that the scales meet the generally accepted thresholds for validity and reliability in the literature (Field, 2013).

Table IV. Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, Normality, Correlations, and CFA Fit Indices

Variables	Mean	C.Alpha	Skewness / Kurtosis	IPR	JREB	OC	JS
IPR	3.06	0.952	-0.181 / -0.445	1			
JREB	2.80	0.881	0.364 / -0.680	-0.574**	1		
OC	2.94	0.893	-0.015 / -0.822	0.704**	-0.657**	1	
JS	3.46	0.933	-0.657 / 0.021	0.613**	-0.707**	0.720**	1

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001
IPR (χ^2/df = 3.250; GFI = .974; AGFI = .960; NFI = .983; TLI = .984; CFI = .988; RMSEA = .042)
JREB (χ^2/df = 3.139; GFI = .996; AGFI = .986; NFI = .997; TLI = .995; CFI = .998; RMSEA = .041)
OC (χ^2/df = 2.955; GFI = .993; AGFI = .982; NFI = .995; TLI = .994; CFI = .997; RMSEA = .039)
JS (χ^2/df = 1.652; GFI = .998; AGFI = .992; NFI = .999; TLI = .999; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .022)
Source: Authors' own calculations based on the research data.

The findings for Research Question 1 (RQ1) indicate that administrative staff in Turkish public universities tend to report perceptions on the focal variables that cluster around the midpoints of the respective scales (Table IV). Among the measured constructs, the highest mean score belongs to JS (M = 3.46), whereas the lowest mean is observed for JREB (M = 2.80). This pattern suggests that employees are relatively satisfied with their roles, yet they experience a non-trivial level of JREB. The mean IPR score (M = 3.06) was close to the midpoint of the five-point scale. Overall, the descriptive results indicate that respondents' ratings of the focal constructs were generally around the scale midpoints, with JS showing the highest mean and JREB the lowest. Taken together, these findings highlight the need for university administrations to revise and strengthen their internal public relations strategies so that they are more effective and explicitly employee-centred.

As reported in Table IV, IPR efforts are positively associated with OC (.704) and JS (.613), and negatively associated with JREB (−.574) (all p < .01). In addition, strong negative associations (Schober et al., 2018) were observed between OC and JREB (−.657), whereas OC was positively related to JS (.720). JREB, in turn, showed a strong negative association with JS (−.707) (all p < .01). Overall, the direction and magnitude of these correlations offer preliminary empirical support for the study's proposed hypotheses and overarching conceptual model.

3.2. Hypotheses Testing

To test the hypotheses that form the backbone of the study, analyses were conducted using SEM.

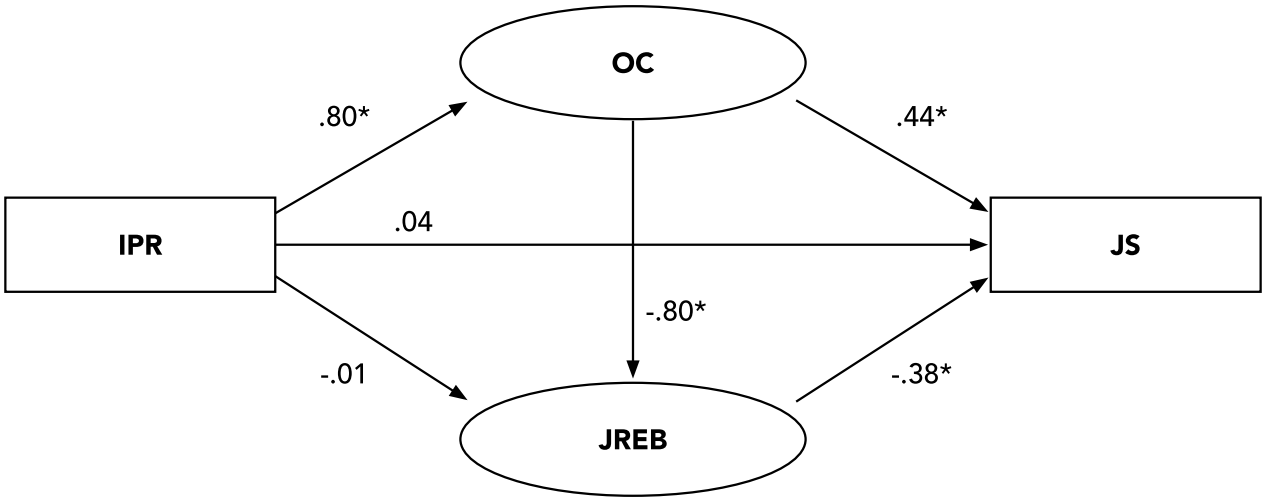


Figure 3. Hypothesized Model (Primary OC→JREB specification) (*p< 0.05)
Source: Authors' own analysis.

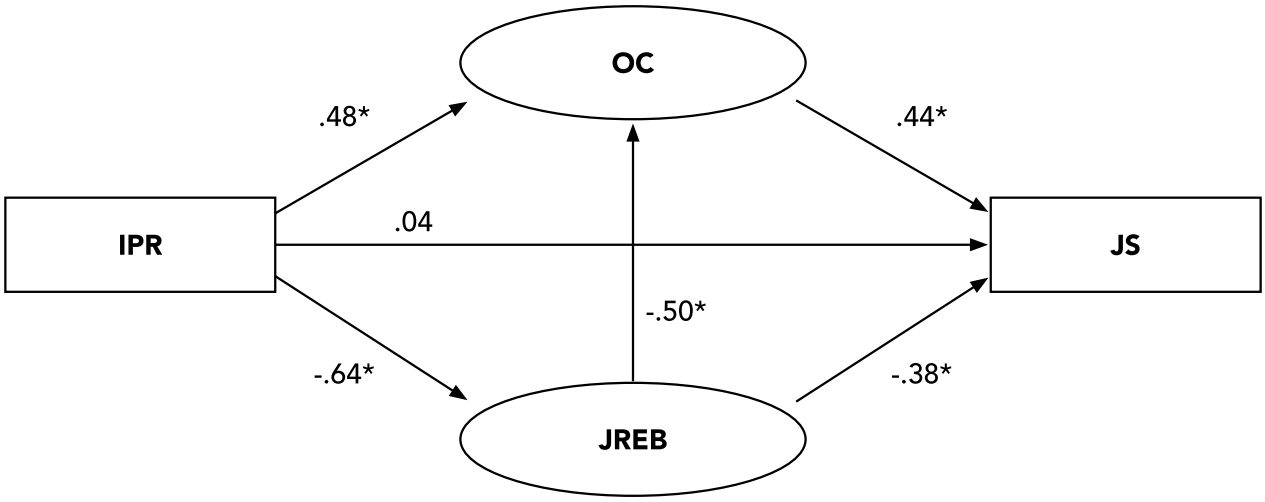


Figure 4. Hypothesized Model (Alternative JREB→OC specification) (*p< 0.05)
Source: Authors' own analysis.

Analyses for the hypothesized model were carried out under two directional specifications: OC→JREB and JREB→OC. The first directional specification, which models the effect of OC on JREB, constitutes the backbone of the study's theoretical framework. The second specification reverses this direction (JREB→OC) and was conducted as a complementary analysis, designed to further probe the role of JREB in shaping OC and to evaluate the robustness of the model under this alternative orientation.

Under the first directional specification (OC→JREB), 66% of the variance in JS was explained by IPR, OC, and JREB. IPR exerted a strong, positive effect on OC, whereas OC positively predicted JS and negatively predicted JREB. JREB, in turn, negatively predicted JS. However, the direct effects of IPR on JS and JREB were not statistically significant. The model fit indices (χ^2/df = 3.242; GFI = .935; AGFI = .922; NFI = .961; TLI = .958; CFI = .970; RMSEA = .042) met commonly accepted thresholds and indicated good model fit (Wheaton et al., 1977; Hair et al., 2010).

Under the second directional specification (JREB→OC), 66% of the variance in JS was explained by IPR, OC, and JREB. IPR had a negative effect on JREB and a positive effect on OC, and JREB negatively predicted OC. The effects of IPR, OC, and JREB on JS remained unchanged relative to the first specification. The model fit indices (χ^2/df = 3.242; GFI = .935; AGFI = .922; NFI = .961; TLI = .970; CFI = .973; RMSEA = .042) indicated good fit (Wheaton et al., 1977; Hair et al., 2010). The standardized path coefficients for both directional specifications are reported in Table V. Overall, these results suggest that the OC-centred specification provides equal explanatory power for JS, whereas the JREB-centred

orientation accounts for exactly the same proportion of variance.

3.3. Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects of the Model

Table V presents the standardized direct and indirect effects derived from the structural model tested in this study.

Table V. Bootstrap Analysis Results of Effects Relating to the Model

OC→JREB				
Pathways	Bootstrap Values		Bias %95 Conf. Intrv.	
	Coef.	Std. Error	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Direct Effects				
IPR→JS	.04	.04	-.03	.11
IPR→OC	.80*	.02	.76	.83
IPR→JREB	-.01	.04	-.08	.07
OC→JS	.44*	.05	.33	.54
OC→JREB	-.80*	.04	-.87	-.73
JREB→JS	-.38*	.04	-.46	-.30
JREB→OC				
Indirect Effect				
IPR→JREB (OC)	-.64*	.03	-.70	-.57
OC→JS (JREB)	.31*	.04	.24	.38
IPR→OC (JREB)				
JREB→JS (OC)				
IPR→JS (OC and JREB)	.60*	.03	.54	.65
Total Effect				
IPR→OC	.80	.02	.76	.83
IPR→JREB	-.64	.02	-.68	-.60
IPR→JS	.64	.02	.59	.68
OC→JREB	-.80	.04	-.87	-.73
OC→JS	.75	.04	.68	.81
JREB→JS	-.38	.04	-.46	-.30
JREB→OC				

JREB→OC				
Pathways	Bootstrap Values		Bias %95 Conf. Intrv.	
	Coef.	Std. Error	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Direct Effects				
IPR→JS	.04	.04	-.03	.11
IPR→OC	.48*	.03	.41	.54
IPR→JREB	-.64*	.02	-.68	-.60
OC→JS	.44*	.05	.34	.54
OC→JREB				
JREB→JS	-.38*	.04	-.46	-.30
JREB→OC	-.50*	.03	-.56	-.44
Indirect Effect				
IPR→JREB (OC)				
OC→JS (JREB)				
IPR→OC (JREB)	.32*	.03	.28	.36
JREB→JS (OC)	-.22*	.03	-.28	-.17
IPR→JS (OC and JREB)	.60*	.03	.54	.65
Total Effect				
IPR→OC	.80	.02	.76	.83
IPR→JREB	-.64	.02	-.68	-.60
IPR→JS	.64	.02	.59	.68
OC→JREB				
OC→JS	.44	.05	.34	.54
JREB→JS	-.60	.03	-.66	-.55
JREB→OC	-.50	.03	-.56	-.44

* $p < .05$

Source: Authors' own calculations based on the research data.

Under the OC→JREB directional specification, the direct effects indicated that IPR had a significant positive effect on OC (.80), but its direct effects on JREB (−.01) and JS (.04) were not significant. OC exerted a strong negative effect on JREB (−.80) and a positive effect on JS (.44). In addition, JREB had a significant direct negative effect on JS (−.38). Overall, the results show that OC is the strongest direct predictor of both JREB and JS. With respect to indirect effects, IPR indirectly predicted JREB (−.64) through OC and indirectly predicted JS (.60) through OC and JREB. OC also had an additional indirect effect on JS (.31) via JREB. Considering total effects, IPR had total effects on OC (.80), JREB (−.64), and JS (.64). Likewise, OC showed total effects on JREB (−.80) and JS (.75), while JREB retained a total effect on JS (−.38).

Under the JREB→OC directional specification, the direct effects indicated that JREB exerted a significant negative effect on OC (−.50). Compared with the OC→JREB specification, IPR's effect on OC decreased to .48, while its effect on JREB (−.64) became statistically significant. No changes were observed in the remaining direct effects. Regarding indirect effects, IPR indirectly predicted OC (.32) via JREB, and JREB indirectly predicted JS (−.22) via OC. Considering total effects, JREB showed total effects on JS (−.60) and OC (−.50), while OC retained its total effect on JS (.44).

Across both directional specifications, the results indicate that the effect of IPR on JS is transmitted

through indirect pathways via OC and JREB, such that OC and JREB jointly fully mediate the IPR–JS relationship in both models. Under the OC→JREB specification, OC fully mediates the IPR–JREB link, and JREB partially mediates the OC–JS relationship. Under the JREB→OC specification, OC partially mediates the JREB–JS relationship, and JREB partially mediates the IPR–OC relationship.

Based on these findings, H1 (IPR positively influences JS) is not supported. H2 (IPR positively influences OC) is supported. H3 (IPR negatively influences JREB) was not supported in the primary OC→JREB specification; however, the corresponding IPR→JREB path was significant and negative in the alternative JREB→OC specification.

The primary specification supported H4–H6, H8, H9, and H12, whereas the alternative specification supported H7, H10, H11, and H12. H2 was supported in both specifications, while H1 was not supported in either. H3 was not supported in the primary specification but was supported in the alternative specification.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined the direct and indirect relationships among IPR, OC, JREB, and JS by testing an integrated model with two mediating variables. Overall, the findings indicate that IPR is closely associated with commitment- and burnout-related mechanisms and provide an integrated theoretical interpretation of the relationships among these constructs.

The theoretical model is anchored in the OC→JREB directional specification, which explains 66% of the variance in JS. An alternative JREB→OC directional specification was estimated as a complementary alternative specification, explicitly testing the effect of JREB on OC; under this orientation, the explained variance in JS reaches 66% too. This same R^2 indicates that both specifications also explain exactly the same proportion of JS variance, despite their different theoretical assumptions regarding the directional relationship between OC and JREB.

4.1. Empirical and Theoretical Implications

IPR represents an important component of organisational internal communication by facilitating information sharing, feedback, participation, and supportive employee–organisation relationships. Within the context of the present study, IPR is examined in relation to employees' organisational commitment, job-related emotional burnout, and job satisfaction. The observed relationships therefore highlight the relevance of internal communication practices for understanding employees' organisational attitudes and work-related experiences.

The results reveal significant relationships among IPR, OC, JREB, and JS. In particular, the positive association between IPR and OC is consistent with literature linking employee-centred internal communication with more favourable organisational attitudes (Wilcox et al., 2015; Yeomans & FitzPatrick, 2017). The observed negative relationship between JREB and JS is also consistent with previous research reporting associations between burnout and job satisfaction (Seo et al., 2016; Lee & Chang, 2022). Within the present model, the relationship between IPR and JREB is primarily indirect in the OC→JREB specification, operating through OC.

A central finding of this study is that the relationship between IPR and JS operates primarily through indirect pathways. The SEM results indicate that the direct relationship between IPR and JS is not statistically significant, whereas significant indirect relationships operate through OC and JREB. This pattern highlights the roles of OC and JREB in explaining the association between IPR and JS.

This pattern is consistent with both SET and the JD-R model. From a SET perspective, supportive internal communication may be associated with stronger OC through reciprocity and perceived organisational support, which may in turn be related to more favourable job evaluations. From a JD-R perspective, communication-related resources such as informational clarity and managerial support may be associated with lower levels of work-related strain. Accordingly, the observed indirect relationships are compatible with the theoretical expectation that OC and JREB constitute relevant psychological mechanisms linking IPR with JS.

In this respect, the study adds to the IPR literature by incorporating JREB as a distinct psychological construct alongside OC and JS. Previous IPR research has examined employee outcomes such as commitment, trust, and job satisfaction, while the inclusion of JREB in the present study enables work-related strain to be examined within the same framework. This provides an additional perspective on the psychological mechanisms associated with IPR.

Consistent with the JD-R model, the observed relationships are compatible with the view that informational clarity, autonomy, and perceived support can function as organisational resources associated with lower levels of JREB. Within the tested model, JREB also operates as a mediating variable in the indirect relationship between IPR and JS, giving it a theoretically meaningful role in understanding this association.

Within the OC→JREB directional specification, OC showed the strongest negative path coefficient with JREB. This finding suggests that stronger organisational commitment is associated with lower levels of JREB and highlights the role of OC within the proposed psychological pathway.

Results from the JREB→OC directional specification further indicate that higher JREB is associated with lower OC. This alternative specification therefore provides complementary evidence regarding the negative relationship between JREB and OC and its potential relevance to JS.

The indirect-effects analysis further indicates that the relationship between IPR and JS is primarily characterised by pathways involving OC and JREB. Within the primary specification, higher IPR is associated with higher OC, which is in turn associated with lower JREB and higher JS. OC shows the largest total association with JS in this specification, while JREB is negatively associated with JS. These findings are consistent with the broader theoretical expectation that organisational support, commitment, and work-related strain are interrelated in employees' evaluations of their work experiences.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that the relationship between IPR and JS is primarily characterised by indirect pathways involving OC and JREB rather than by a direct relationship. The results therefore highlight the importance of considering commitment and burnout together when examining how internal communication practices are associated with job satisfaction. By integrating these relationships within a single framework, the study provides a context-specific interpretation of the psychological mechanisms associated with IPR among administrative staff in Turkish public universities.

This study provides context-specific evidence on the relationships among IPR, OC, JREB, and JS within Turkish public universities. By examining these relationships among administrative staff working in Turkish public universities, the study extends the empirical examination of IPR to a specific public higher-education context. The findings therefore contribute to a more contextually grounded understanding of how IPR is associated with organisational commitment, job-related emotional burnout, and job satisfaction in this setting.

4.2. Practical Implications

The findings yield two key implications for managers and policymakers in Turkish public universities. First, IPR may be associated with stronger OC and, through this mechanism, lower JREB and higher JS among administrative staff. Accordingly, public universities may benefit from institutionalising IPR processes, strengthening communication leadership, and integrating internal communication more systematically into managerial practices. These implications should be understood within the specific context of Turkish public universities and the administrative staff represented in the present study.

Second, the findings may also have implications for public relations and communication education, particularly in relation to internal communication in public higher-education settings. Case studies, scenario-based discussions, and simulations based on university contexts may help students examine the theoretical, managerial, and ethical dimensions of IPR and understand how internal communication is associated with employees' organisational attitudes and work-related experiences.

Overall, the findings provide practical insights into the mediating roles of OC and JREB in the relationship between IPR and JS among administrative staff in Turkish public universities. The tested model may serve as a useful framework for university managers seeking to evaluate internal communication practices in relation to employee commitment, burnout, and job satisfaction, while also providing a basis for future comparative research in other institutional settings.

4.3. Limitations and Future Studies

A key limitation of this study is that the sample comprised only administrative staff employed at public universities. Accordingly, the findings cannot be directly generalised to academic staff or to other organisational settings (e.g., ministries, municipalities, other public agencies, or foundation universities). The results should therefore be interpreted within the specific context of administrative staff working in Turkish public universities.

In addition, the study's cross-sectional design –based on data collected between February and May 2025– precludes conclusions about change over time or longer-term effects. Finally, because the analyses relied on self-reported survey data, potential respondent biases and instrument-related limitations should also be taken into account.

Despite these limitations, the findings indicate that IPR is associated with OC, JREB, and JS through both direct and indirect relationships. Future research could test the model using longitudinal or panel designs and multilevel or mixed-method approaches. Future studies could also compare administrative staff in public and foundation universities and employ qualitative interviews or focus groups to explore how employees experience IPR processes in greater depth.

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