

The Effect of Mechanistic and Animalistic Organizational Dehumanization on Turnover Intentions: A Three-Wave Longitudinal Study

Jean-Félix Hamel^{1*}, Gaëtane Caesens² and Fabrizio Scrima³

¹Université de Tours, QualiPsy (UR 1901), Tours, France

²Université catholique de Louvain, Psychological Sciences Research Institute, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

³Kore University of Enna, Department of Medicine and Surgery, Enna, Italy

Author Note

Jean-Félix Hamel  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2218-2514>

Gaëtane Caesens  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6505-4523>

Fabrizio Scrima  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0858-7411>

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Jean-Félix Hamel, Université de Tours, QualiPsy (UR1901), 3 rue des Tanneurs, BP 4103, 37041, Tours, France. E-mail: jean-felix.hamel@univ-tours.fr

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Abstract

Purpose. Prior studies suggested that organizational dehumanization (i.e., employees' perception that their organization denies their humanity) is positively related to employees' turnover intentions. However, evidence of the underlying causality is scarce and prior research did not consider both mechanistic and animalistic organizational dehumanization. Despite having meaningful implications, the temporal stability of mechanistic and animalistic organizational dehumanization also remains unclear.

Design/methodology/approach. English-speaking employees from various organizations ($N = 200$) were invited to take part in a three-wave longitudinal survey (with a 2-month time lag).

Findings. Results from latent cross-lagged panel models suggest that employees with higher mechanistic organizational dehumanization displayed more turnover intentions over time, which was not the case for animalistic organizational dehumanization.

Originality/value. This research answers the calls made by scholars to (1) gather more robust evidence regarding the directionality of relationships between organizational dehumanization and its outcomes and (2) examine the temporal stability of mechanistic and animalistic organizational dehumanization. Employee retention being a key challenge of contemporary organizations, this work also highlights the relevance of strategies aimed at preventing mechanistic organizational dehumanization perceptions.

Keywords: animalistic organizational dehumanization, mechanistic organizational dehumanization, turnover intentions, cross-lagged panel.

The Effect of Mechanistic and Animalistic Organizational Dehumanization on Turnover Intentions: A Three-Wave Longitudinal Study

Introduction

Many features of the modern workplace such as algorithmic management or capitalist pressure contribute to organizational dehumanization, that is, employees' perceptions that their organization denies their humanity (e.g., Brison et al., 2022; Stinglhamber & Caesens, 2024). Due to its detrimental outcomes, this phenomenon has received increasing interest from scholars over the past decade (e.g., Baldissarri & Fourie, 2023; Stinglhamber & Caesens, 2024). Its theoretical roots lying in Haslam's (2006) dual model of dehumanization, two different forms of organizational dehumanization have been theorized to occur in the workplace: mechanistic and animalistic organizational dehumanization (e.g., Bell & Khoury, 2011; Caesens et al., 2017). Mechanistic organizational dehumanization is typically described as "the experience of an employee who feels objectified by his/her organization, denied personal subjectivity, and made to feel like a tool or instrument for the organization's ends" (Bell & Khoury, 2011, p. 168).

Animalistic organizational dehumanization is defined as employees' perceptions of being treated as under-evolved beings such as animals or children by their organization (Brison et al., 2023).

Based on self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012), several studies have demonstrated the pervasive and detrimental consequences of mechanistic organizational dehumanization for both employees and organizations (e.g., Brison et al., 2022; Caesens et al., 2017; Caesens et al., 2019) such as fostering turnover intentions (e.g., Ahmed & Khan, 2016; Lagios et al., 2022). Comparatively, little empirical attention has been devoted to animalistic organizational dehumanization and its potential outcomes, leading scholars to call for more research on this construct (e.g., Brison et al., 2024). As shown by the study of dehumanizing perceptions in interpersonal contexts (e.g., Bastian & Haslam, 2011), animalistic organizational dehumanization may potentially have distinct outcomes and underlying mechanisms (Brison et al., 2023). Despite these differences, the adverse influence of mechanistic and animalistic organizational dehumanization on employees' well-being, attitudes or behaviors may also converge on similar downstream consequences – albeit with varying degrees of intensity (Bell & Khoury, 2011; Demoulin et al., 2021a).

In addition, the vast majority of studies on mechanistic or animalistic organizational dehumanization and their outcomes relied on cross-sectional designs (e.g., Bell & Khoury, 2016; Brison et al., 2024; Hamel et al., 2024). Consequently, scholars have called for more experimental or longitudinal studies (e.g., cross-lagged panel design) to gather robust empirical evidence regarding the directionality between organizational dehumanization and its consequences (e.g., Brison et al., 2022; Stinglhamber & Caesens, 2024). In particular, prior scholars suggested that the relationship between mechanistic organizational dehumanization and certain outcomes might be bidirectional, thus encouraging future research to examine this possibility (e.g., Stinglhamber et al., 2023). More importantly, to our knowledge, few studies discussed and evaluated the temporal stability of mechanistic and animalistic organizational dehumanization. Yet, investigating how stable (or fluctuant) both forms of organizational dehumanization are might have both theoretical and practical relevance.

To address these shortcomings, this three-wave longitudinal research relied on a cross-lagged panel model which aims at empirically testing the prospective relationship between either form of organizational dehumanization (i.e., mechanistic and animalistic) and employees' turnover intentions (i.e., “the subjective estimation of an individual regarding the probability of leaving an organization in the near future”, Cho et al., 2009, p. 374). We decided to focus on turnover intentions because it has been demonstrated as one of the strongest predictors of employees' actual turnover (e.g., Griffeth et al., 2000; Rubenstein et al., 2018), which carries significant consequences for organizations in terms of both direct (e.g., replacement and recruitment) and indirect costs (e.g., loss of knowledge; Biron & Boon, 2013).

By addressing these gaps, this study contributes to the organizational dehumanization literature in several ways. First, it answers the calls made by scholars to examine how organizational dehumanization relates to turnover intentions using longitudinal designs, and more specifically cross-lagged panel models (CPLM) (e.g., Brison et al., 2022). Although prior studies observed a positive relationship between mechanistic organizational dehumanization and turnover intentions, prior work mostly adopted a cross-sectional design (e.g., Ahmed & Khan, 2016). On top of providing a more robust evaluation of this causal relation, this research investigates the relationship between animalistic organizational dehumanization and turnover intentions using the same design, and thus contributes to its nascent nomological network (Brison et al., 2023). Finally, by assessing the temporal stability of both mechanistic and animalistic organizational dehumanization across multiple measurement points, this study carries meaningful practical implications.

Theoretical framing and hypotheses development

Organizational dehumanization

Organizational dehumanization is rooted in social psychology and more particularly in Haslam's (2006) dual model of dehumanization (e.g., Brison et al., 2023; Caesens et al., 2017), which distinguishes two forms of dehumanization. First, individuals can be considered human in contrast with other living organisms, as they possess traits that are uniquely human (e.g., civility, refinement, morality, rationality, maturity). When stripped of uniquely human traits (i.e., *animalistic* dehumanization), people may be treated similarly to animals or immature beings by their social environment. Second, individuals may also be seen as human through the attribution of fundamental characteristics that are considered inherent parts of human nature (e.g., emotionality, interpersonal warmth, cognitive openness). Denying individuals human nature traits may lead them to be treated as machines or mere instruments (i.e., *mechanistic* dehumanization). Prior experimental studies showed that targets of interactions prompting animalistic dehumanization perceptions experience feelings of inferiority and shame-related emotions, whereas victims of mechanistic dehumanization perceptions report feelings of neglect, sadness and cognitive deconstruction (Bastian & Haslam, 2011; Zhang et al., 2017).

Over the last fifteen years, scholars have increasingly argued that dehumanization is not limited to interpersonal relationships and can occur in various contexts including the workplace, and more specifically, employees' perceptions of the relationship with their organization (e.g., Baldissarri & Fourie, 2023). While Bell and Khoury (2011) simultaneously introduced both mechanistic and animalistic organizational dehumanization, the former was theorized to be more prevalent in the professional world, thus becoming the first focus of scholars in the field (Caesens et al., 2017). Although their number remains limited, other studies have since showcased the relevance of animalistic organizational dehumanization (Brison et al., 2023). Employees may perceive that their organization (1) considers them as replaceable tools or mere objects, means to organizational ends (i.e., mechanistic organizational dehumanization, Caesens et al.,

2017) or (2) treats them as immature, incompetent or under-evolved beings (i.e., animalistic organizational dehumanization, Brison et al., 2023). In line with the dual model of dehumanization proposed by Haslam (2006), mechanistic organizational dehumanization is thought to reflect a transactional experience of the employer-employee relationship, wherein employees' *identity* as individuals is denied (e.g., Hamel et al., 2024). Animalistic organizational dehumanization translates a demeaning experience of this relationship, wherein employees' *status* is threatened (e.g., Väyrynen & Laari-Salmela, 2018), leading them to feel considered like “'lesser beings' deprived of maturity through patronizing and child-like treatment” (Brison et al., 2023, p. 123).

Past studies, most of them cross-sectional, indicated that mechanistic and animalistic organizational dehumanization are correlated with a variety of detrimental outcomes (Brison et al., 2022; Stinglhamber & Caesens, 2024), notably because organizational dehumanization thwarts employees' fundamental needs (e.g., Lagios et al., 2022). However, the relative specificity of mechanistic and animalistic organizational dehumanization with respect to outcomes has been explored with mixed results. Using a cross-sectional design, Brison et al. (2023) observed that both forms of organizational dehumanization were negatively related to job satisfaction, the association with mechanistic organizational dehumanization being stronger in one of their two studies. The same authors found that only animalistic organizational dehumanization was negatively associated with employees' in-role performance, which they interpreted as animalistic perceptions (e.g., humiliation) being considered as less acceptable than mechanistic ones (e.g., instrumentalization) in the context of the contemporary employment relationship (Brison et al., 2023). Yet, prior work has also reported a negative correlation between mechanistic organizational dehumanization and employees' in-role performance (e.g., Sarwar & Muhammad, 2020). Despite this growing evidence, questions remain regarding the directionality of the relationships between organizational dehumanization and its potential outcomes.

The directionality of the relationship between organizational dehumanization and turnover intentions

Although both mechanistic and animalistic organizational dehumanization are associated with negative consequences for employees and organizations (e.g., Cheung, 2024; Caesens et al., 2019), albeit with varying intensity, most research has not established the directionality of these relationships with key outcomes, including turnover intentions (e.g., Stinglhamber & Caesens, 2024). For instance, several empirical studies showed positive correlations between mechanistic organizational dehumanization and turnover intentions (e.g., Brison et al., 2024; Caesens et al., 2019); yet, the vast majority of them relied on cross-sectional designs. Despite these correlations, the few longitudinal studies which considered this relationship did not control for prior levels of turnover intentions (e.g., Lagios et al., 2022) or did not measure animalistic organizational dehumanization. Moreover, there are theoretical grounds to believe that both mechanistic and animalistic organizational dehumanization might foster turnover intentions. In their

seminal paper, Bell and Khoury (2011) claimed that “dehumanization is a negative experience that diminishes the individual and is therefore likely to motivate the individual to dissociate from the organization” (Bell & Khoury, 2011, p. 184). Research grounded in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012) converges on this prediction, suggesting that organizational dehumanization perceptions threaten employees’ ability to fulfill their socioemotional needs (Christoff, 2014; Lagios et al., 2022), thus fostering the development of withdrawal cognitions such as turnover intentions. Together, these arguments suggest that mechanistic organizational dehumanization is positively associated with turnover intentions (e.g., Ahmed & Khan, 2016; Nguyen et al., 2021). Extending this reasoning, animalistic organizational dehumanization is also likely to increase turnover intentions. Although it differs from mechanistic organizational dehumanization in the specific emotions it elicits (Bastian & Haslam, 2011), its aversive and degrading nature is likely to produce similarly negative outcomes (e.g., Bell & Khoury, 2011; Brison et al., 2023; Cheung, 2024).

To examine the directionality of these relationships, we employed cross-lagged panel modeling (CLPM), a widely used approach for testing the prospective effects of one construct on another (e.g., Lang et al., 2011). Although CLPM has been critiqued for its inability to disentangle within- and between-person variance, which may bias inferences (e.g., Hamaker, 2023), it remains appropriate when the research focus is on between-person effects. In our case, we examine whether employees with higher levels of organizational dehumanization are more likely to develop turnover intentions. Under such conditions, CLPM remains an appropriate approach, as alternative models may entail comparable or even greater limitations (see Orth et al., 2021). Relative to cross-sectional approaches, this modeling strategy better captures temporal precedence, a key condition for causal inference. It also enables the examination of reciprocal or reverse effects (Newsom, 2015). Finally, this design allows us to assess the temporal stability of the constructs, an aspect that has received limited attention in the organizational dehumanization literature (Caesens et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2022). Building on the theoretical and methodological arguments outlined above, we propose that both mechanistic and animalistic organizational dehumanization act as antecedents of employees’ turnover intentions.

H₁: Mechanistic organizational dehumanization is positively related to changes in turnover intentions over time.

H₂: Animalistic organizational dehumanization is positively related to changes in turnover intentions over time.

Materials and Methods

Participants and procedure

This study was part of a larger research project consisting of a three-wave longitudinal survey with two-month intervals. Participants from the Prolific online platform were invited to complete a survey regarding their work life on three occasions (i.e., November 2024, January 2025 and March 2025). Prolific is a crowdsourcing platform which enables researchers to collect data from participants in exchange of

monetary compensation. Participants from Prolific tend to report higher-quality data than other such platforms like MTurk (see Douglas et al., 2023). Regarding time lag, Dormann and Griffin (2015) have argued that many changes of interest to applied psychology scholars can be captured over a relatively short time-period. In line with this, prior research reported significant longitudinal correlations of mechanistic organizational dehumanization and outcomes using a three-week to three-month time lag (Lagios et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2022; Stinglhamber et al., 2023). Based on this, we relied on a two-month time lag interval. The study received the approval of a local research ethics committee (Kore University of Enna, Italy, protocol number N.24327, dated 31/10/24).

Eligible participants at T1 had to (1) be at least 18 years old, (2) be native English speakers residing in the United Kingdom, (3) have a prior Prolific approval rate of 95% or more and (4) currently be employed in an organization (full-time or part-time). Anonymous IDs provided by the platform were used to match the responses of participants between measurement points. Participants were compensated for their participation (i.e., £0.9 at T1, £0.75 at both T2 and T3) and given the opportunity to offer feedback. The questionnaire contained two attention-checks (e.g., “If you’re reading this, please select ‘Disagree’”) at each measurement point.

Based on theoretical and methodological considerations (Wolf et al., 2013), we recruited 200 employees at T1 (see Statistical analyses). At T1 no participant failed the attention-checks ($N = 200$). Of these, 179 completed the survey at T2 (89.5%) and 130 at T3 (65.0%). At each wave, several respondents were excluded because they had changed employers since the previous wave ($N_{T2} = 6$, $N_{T3} = 3$) or failed an attention-check question ($N_{T2} = 1$, $N_{T3} = 3$), leaving 172 participants at T2 and 124 participants at T3. At T1, the proportion of male participants was 50.0%. Participants’ age ranged from 18 to 69 ($M = 40.56$, $SD = 12.38$). They had been employed in the same organization for 7.48 years on average ($SD = 7.47$). Most participants held a permanent position (91.5%), worked full-time (73.5%), worked in the private sector (54.5%), and were employed by large organizations (i.e., 500+ employees, 52.5%). Most participants either had no higher education degree (39.0%) or a bachelor’s degree (42.0%).

Measures

Unless otherwise indicated, participants were invited to indicate their level of agreement with each statement on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*). Measurement scales were the same across measurement points.

Mechanistic organizational dehumanization. Mechanistic organizational dehumanization was assessed with 5 items developed by Lagios et al. (2024) (e.g., “My organization considers me as a number”) ($\omega_{T1} = .94$, $\omega_{T2} = .96$, $\omega_{T3} = .96$).

Animalistic organizational dehumanization. Animalistic organizational dehumanization was evaluated using the 5-item scale developed by Brison et al. (2023) (e.g., “My organization sees me as lacking intelligence and competence”) ($\omega_{T1} = .94$, $\omega_{T2} = .94$, $\omega_{T3} = .93$).

Turnover intentions. Turnover intentions were assessed using the three-item scale from Jaros (1997) (e.g., “I often think about quitting my organization”) ($\omega_{T1} = .88$,

$\omega_{T2}=.88$, $\omega_{T3}=.89$). Answers were given on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly disagree* to *Strongly agree*.

Control variables. At T1, we chose to measure several control variables which correlated with organizational dehumanization (e.g., organizational size, Lagios et al., 2022), turnover intentions (e.g., tenure, Brison et al., 2023), or may contextualize the employer-employee relationship (e.g., public vs. private sector). These variables included age, gender, organizational tenure, sector (public vs. private), organizational size (5 categories: 1-10, 11-49, 50-249, 250-500 and more than 500 employees), employment contract (permanent vs. temporary), education level, as well as hours worked (full-time vs. part-time). Small Pearson correlations were detected between age and turnover intentions ($-.21$, $p < .05$ at T2 and T3; $-.25$, $p < .01$ at T1). Organization size was also positively related to variables of interest at all measurement points. Occupying a temporary position correlated positively with turnover intentions at T2 and T3 (.17 and .18, $p < .05$). Following the recommendations of Becker et al. (2016), we compared models with and without the control variables which correlated with our dependent variables. As the inclusion of these variables did not change the interpretation of the results (i.e., $\Delta\beta < .1$) (see Supplementary Materials), the results are provided without control variables for parsimony purposes.

Statistical analyses

All SEM analyses were conducted using the lavaan R package version 0.6-19 (Rosseel, 2012) using robust maximum likelihood estimation. Confirmatory factor analyses on measurement models were conducted at each measurement point to ensure discriminant validity. Then, we tested the longitudinal measurement invariance of each scale (Maassen et al., 2025) (see Supplementary Materials). Finally, we tested our hypotheses using latent cross-lagged analyses. Models containing both auto-regressive and cross-lagged parameters were tested and then compared with a stability model, that is, an alternative model containing only auto-regressive relationships. To maximize power and deal with missing data, we relied on a robust two-stage approach, which performs better than alternatives in the presence of non-normal incomplete data (see Savalei & Falk, 2014). Item residuals were allowed to covary over time to account for variability that may consistently influence specific items (Little et al., 2007; Orth et al., 2021). As intervals between measurement points were equal, structural parameters (i.e., auto-regressive and cross-lagged coefficients) were constrained to be equal across time, which increases model precision and reduces complexity (e.g., Meier & Spector, 2013; Orth et al., 2021). Yet, the influence of these constraints on model fit was tested.

We examined the prospective relationship between each form of organizational dehumanization and turnover intentions in separate models for both theoretical and practical reasons. First, while mechanistic and animalistic dehumanization perceptions are indeed related, they are theorized to stem from different mistreatments (e.g., humiliation vs. exploitation), and tend to foster different affective and cognitive reactions in individuals (Bastian & Haslam, 2011). Thus, testing separate models still provides an appropriate test of our hypotheses, with the caveat that future studies may find it interesting to control one form with the other (e.g., Brison et al., 2023). Although our

approach to handling missing data mitigates this concern, estimating separate models for each construct also improved model convergence and statistical power (Feng & Hancock, 2023). Importantly, this modeling choice has implications for sample size determination. Wolf et al. (2013) demonstrated that sample size requirements for structural equation modeling (SEM) are highly model-specific, making commonly cited rules-of-thumb inadequate. Critically, their simulations showed that a two-factor model with six indicators per factor loading at .80 required a minimum of only 100 cases. Additionally, increasing the number of indicators per factor substantially reduces sample size requirements, while adding factors beyond two does not compound them proportionally. Our per-wave measurement model includes two factors respectively measured with five and three items, whose factor loadings consistently exceed .80 and sometimes .90 in prior studies (e.g., Brison et al., 2023; Caesens et al., 2019; Lagios et al., 2024). To maintain a sufficient margin above this empirical benchmark, and in light of the added complexity of multiple measurement waves, we recruited 200 participants at T1.

Model fit was assessed using the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) as well as the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). Some scholars warn that traditionally used fit criteria (e.g., $CFI \geq .95$) may be too restrictive for complex data (Heene et al., 2011). Thus, our analysis adopts more of a relative rather than binary approach to fit criteria. We relied on the strictly positive Satorra-Bentler (SB) chi-square difference test to compare models.

Results

Descriptive results

Table I displays the means and standard deviations of all variables under study as well as bivariate Pearson correlations. Mechanistic organizational dehumanization, animalistic organizational dehumanization and turnover intentions were significantly and positively correlated to one another at all measurement points ($p < .001$).

<INSERT Table I HERE>

Preliminary analyses

Confirmatory factor analyses. Confirmatory factor analyses were conducted separately at each measurement point. Confirmatory factor analyses conducted at T1, T2, and T3 suggested that hypothesized measurement models fit well to our data and significantly better than single-factor models (Table II). In line with this evidence for discriminant validity, all three constructs under study were treated as distinct in further analyses.

<INSERT Table II HERE>

Hypothesis testing. As displayed in Figure I, results of the latent cross-lagged panel model examining the relationship between mechanistic organizational dehumanization and turnover intentions suggest it was well-adjusted to the data ($\chi^2(223) = 355$, $CFI = .967$, $TLI = .960$, $RMSEA = .070$, $SRMR = .064$). Throughout measurement points, standardized factor loadings ranged from .81 to .96 for mechanistic organizational

dehumanization and .82 to .89 for turnover intentions. This model was significantly better than a stability model which did not contain cross-lagged relationships ($\Delta\chi^2(2) = 7.43, p = .02$). The addition of equality constraints on cross-lagged and autoregressive parameters did not significantly worsen model fit ($\Delta\chi^2(4) = 2.59, p = .63$). Autoregressive coefficients were all large and significant ($p < .001$). Mechanistic organizational dehumanization at T1 was found to be positively related to turnover intentions at T2 ($\beta = .09, p < .01$). Mechanistic organizational dehumanization at T2 was also positively related to turnover intentions at T3 ($\beta = .11, p < .01$). In addition, no significant relationship was found between turnover intentions and mechanistic organizational dehumanization at any measurement point. These results support H_1 .

<INSERT Figure I HERE>

The latent cross-lagged panel model testing the relationship between animalistic organizational dehumanization and turnover intentions is displayed in Figure II. Results indicated that this model had adequate fit to the data ($\chi^2(229) = 409$, CFI = .935, TLI = .921, RMSEA = .086, SRMR = .060). Throughout measurement points, standardized factor loadings ranged from .77 to .92 for animalistic organizational dehumanization and .81 to .91 for turnover intentions. This model was not significantly better adjusted compared to a stability model which did not contain cross-lagged relationships ($\Delta\chi^2(2) = 0.15, p = .93$). Model fit was not significantly impacted by the addition of equality constraints ($\Delta\chi^2(4) = 7.90, p = .10$). Autoregressive coefficients were all strong and significant ($p < .001$). No significant cross-lagged relationship was detected between animalistic organizational dehumanization and turnover intentions at any measurement point. These findings do not support H_2 .

<INSERT Figure II HERE>

Discussion

In line with prior calls in the literature, the objective of this study was to provide more robust empirical evidence regarding the directionality of the relationship between each form of organizational dehumanization (i.e., mechanistic and animalistic) and turnover intentions. Building on recent developments in the field (Brison et al., 2023), we examined the specific role of mechanistic and animalistic organizational dehumanization perceptions as antecedents of employees' turnover intentions using CLPM. More particularly, in line with self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012), we expected that mechanistic and animalistic organizational dehumanization would be associated with a significant increase in turnover intentions over time. The results of this research indicated that mechanistic organizational dehumanization was positively related to temporal change in turnover intentions, while the reverse was not true, supporting H_1 . In contrast, neither the effect of animalistic organizational dehumanization on temporal change in turnover intentions nor the reverse were observed, failing to support H_2 .

This study makes several contributions to the literature. First, these findings confirm the previously observed positive relationship between mechanistic organizational dehumanization and turnover intentions in employees using a cross-lagged panel design (e.g., Ahmed & Khan, 2016; Lagios et al., 2022). More importantly, it

answers the call made by scholars to better ascertain the directionality of the relationships between organizational dehumanization and its outcomes (e.g., Brison et al., 2022; Stinglhamber & Caesens, 2024). In line with Bell and Khoury's (2011) proposal, our findings indicate that mechanistic organizational dehumanization may encourage employees to dissociate from their organization. As it renders employees' interchangeability salient, those who feel treated as *disposable* may be more inclined to quit rather than waiting to be replaced by the organization (Brison et al., 2023). However, our results indicated that a reciprocal effect between mechanistic organizational dehumanization and turnover intentions is not observed over the course of 4 months. This result suggests that withdrawal cognitions might not foster differences in perceived organizational treatment.

Interestingly, using a longitudinal design, the results of this study replicate those of Brison et al. (2023) insofar as they do not support a prospective relationship between animalistic organizational dehumanization perceptions and increased turnover intentions. While this non-significant result may stem from our modest sample size, another explanation is that the psychological pathway linking animalistic organizational dehumanization to turnover intentions may be more indirect than the one between mechanistic organizational dehumanization and turnover intentions. Indeed, animalistic organizational dehumanization is primarily described as the perception of the denial of uniquely human attributes (e.g., rationality, maturity, competence) by the organization (Haslam, 2006). In organizational contexts, such experiences may therefore undermine employees' sense of competence, dignity, and social status rather than their fundamental standing within the organization (Brison et al., 2023). Within self-determination theory, the need for competence being thwarted may thus foster proximal psychological states reflecting a diminished sense of self-worth (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020) or disengagement (Jang et al., 2016) rather than translating directly into withdrawal cognitions. In addition, from an empirical perspective, studies have shown that animalistic organizational dehumanization is associated with increased emotional exhaustion (Cheung, 2024) and reduced job satisfaction (Brison et al., 2023), both of which are commonly considered precursors of intentions to leave the organization (Rubenstein et al., 2018). As turnover intentions may represent a more distal outcome in the process triggered by animalistic organizational dehumanization, future longitudinal studies may benefit from investigating potential underlying psychological mechanisms such as psychological needs thwarting, self-esteem, or disengagement. Furthermore, the relationship between animalistic organizational dehumanization and turnover intentions may also be conditioned by certain factors. For instance, as shown by recent research (Saksida et al., 2026), a perceived lack of alternatives, precarity, and high economic dependence may explain why certain individuals remain *trapped* in their job and do not decide to quit their organization, despite animalistic organizational dehumanization perceptions.

Second, among past longitudinal studies conducted on organizational dehumanization, few had the opportunity to examine its temporal stability. By examining it over more than two waves, this study contributes to the literature by showing a strong rank-order stability of mechanistic organizational dehumanization over time. Our

findings indicated that the temporal stability of mechanistic organizational dehumanization ranged between .80 and .89 with a 2-month lag. This temporal stability was stronger or comparable to past studies conducted over both longer and shorter time lags (.78 with a 4-month lag, Caesens et al., 2019; .71 with a 6-week lag, Nguyen et al., 2022; .85 with a one-month lag, Cheung, 2025). To our knowledge, our work is also the first to suggest a similar level of rank-order stability for animalistic organizational dehumanization (.77 and .92). The observed high stability of both mechanistic and animalistic organizational dehumanization highlights that organizational dehumanization reflects a relatively enduring perception rather than a transient state, in other words, that employees' dehumanizing representation of the employer-employee relationship is not merely reactive to short-term fluctuations. This is consistent with previous work showing that, in the absence of meaningful organizational changes, employees' perceptions of organizational treatment are relatively stable over time (e.g., Caesens et al., 2020). In addition, organizational dehumanization's temporal stability highlights its relevance for organizational diagnosis and suggests that effective interventions are likely to require sustained, structural changes rather than short-term or isolated actions. To explore this issue further, future longitudinal studies on organizational dehumanization should adopt designs aimed at capturing both between- and within-person variability (e.g., random-intercept CLPM) or use more intensive time lag (e.g., weekly studies).

Practical Implications

This study carries meaningful practical implications for organizations and Human Resource Management (HRM) practitioners. Accordingly, this research indicates that the temporal stability of organizational dehumanization is strong. Conceptualizing organizational dehumanization as a malleable yet stable representation, rather than a transient state, yields several implications. First, it suggests that organizational dehumanization perceptions may entrench over time, making them unlikely to resolve spontaneously. As mechanistic organizational dehumanization fosters withdrawal cognitions, stakeholders looking to mitigate the human and financial costs of potential turnover should not adopt a passive approach to this issue. In contrast, disrupting employees' organizational dehumanization may require sustained interventions aimed at the practices, beliefs, and norms that underpin mechanistic organizational dehumanization. Interventions aimed at reducing red tape (Lagios et al., 2023), increasing job autonomy (Demoulin et al., 2021b), increasing favorable interpersonal relationships between employees and supervisors (e.g., Caesens et al., 2019; Stinglhamber et al., 2021), or providing an agreeable work environment – such as maintaining appropriate levels of noise and lighting (Stinglhamber et al., 2022) – might help reduce these perceptions. Conversely, the absence of a prospective effect for animalistic organizational dehumanization highlights the need for further research. Yet, considering the many adverse consequences of animalistic organizational dehumanization (e.g., reducing in-role performance, Brison et al., 2023), it remains nevertheless important for organizations to prevent these perceptions. Collectively, these findings underscore that organizational dehumanization warrants sustained managerial attention and proactive organizational interventions, rather than being dismissed as a transient employee perception.

Limitations and future research directions

This research presents several limitations that open avenues for future research. First, despite using robust methods to handle missing data, our effective sample size was relatively small ($N_{T1} = 200$, $N_{T3} = 124$). With rare exceptions, factor loadings exceeded .80 for all measurement scales, which was in line with our expectations regarding sample size requirements (Wolf et al., 2013). Yet, a post-hoc power analysis conducted with the semPower R package (Moshagen & Bader, 2024) suggested that, given the exact parameters of retained models (e.g., factor loadings, number of waves, constraints), power was satisfactory ($1 - \beta \geq .80$) to detect large cross-lagged effects at $\alpha = .05$ (i.e., $|\beta| \geq .12$, Orth et al., 2024). However, achieved power was below the usual threshold for medium effects ($|\beta| \geq .07$) for both the mechanistic (.63) and animalistic (.62) organizational dehumanization models. Responses to self-reported instruments may also have been influenced by social desirability bias. Additionally, the sample was composed of a majority of well-educated employees from Western countries, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, future research should aim to replicate these results using larger and more diverse samples across various cultural and occupational contexts.

Second, although we used an appropriate model to test prospective relationships in field settings (Orth et al., 2021), “a cross-lagged panel design can only suggest the possible direction of a cause and effect relationship between two behaviors” (Myers & Hansen, 2011, p. 146). Accordingly, this type of design can suffer from an “unmeasured third-variable problem” (e.g., Kenny, 1975) (or *spuriousness*), as these quasi-experimental designs do not rely on a random assignment of participants to diverse conditions. Thus, one cannot rule out the possibility that the association between organizational dehumanization and turnover intentions is explained by one or multiple variables which were not included in this research (Finkel, 1995). Future research should consider controlling for omitted variables and might also vary the time-lag intervals between measurements, as it may better capture the dynamic nature of the relationship between organizational dehumanization and its outcomes.

In addition, in order to reduce model complexity, the prospective effects of mechanistic and animalistic organizational dehumanization were examined in separate models, that is, without controlling for each other. Although theoretically independent (Bastian et al., 2011; Haslam, 2006), the core component of one form of dehumanization could partially encompass the other. Therefore, future studies should replicate results while simultaneously considering both forms of organizational dehumanization.

Third, although our results suggest animalistic organizational dehumanization may not directly translate into employees intentions to quit their job, it may still warrant scholarly attention in relation to other forms of divestment from the organization. Indeed, animalistic organizational dehumanization may foster less drastic yet insidious forms of disengagement such as *quiet quitting* (i.e., calibrating one’s efforts at work to meet requirements while consciously refraining from contributing further), which employees use “to maintain a modicum of autonomy and dignity in the face of dehumanizing organizational practices” (Georgiadou et al., 2025, p. 935). As such, it may be fruitful for

future work to test this relationship. Future research would also benefit from assessing actual turnover rather than relying solely on employees' self-reported intentions to leave the organization (Rubenstein et al., 2018).

Declarations

Ethical Approval

All procedures performed in the current study involving human participants were in accordance with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments. An ethics committee from the Kore University of Enna approved the study (protocol number N.24327, dated 31/10/2024).

Data Availability

The data that supports the findings are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

Use of AI

The authors used ChatGPT to improve the spelling, general flow and grammar of this academic paper. All authors reviewed and edited the content and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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Table I*Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. Gender	-	-																
2. Age	40.56	12.38	-.18*															
3. Tenure	7.48	7.47	-.15	.50***														
4. Sector	-	-	.32***	-.02	.13													
5. Organization size	-	-	.13	-.14	.10	.21*												
6. Time	-	-	.26**	.14	-.04	.01	-.01											
7. Education	-	-	.14	-.21*	-.17	.17	.04	-.17										
8. Position	-	-	-.03	-.16	-.20*	.01	.02	.14	-.03									
9. MOD – T1	3.65	1.68	-.01	-.08	.14	-.02	.44***	.02	-.03	.01								
10. MOD – T2	3.64	1.72	-.03	-.02	.22*	.01	.43***	.03	-.05	.01	.80***							
11. MOD – T3	3.75	1.65	-.01	-.04	.17	.04	.39***	-.01	-.09	.03	.83***	.87***						
12. AOD – T1	1.92	1.14	.11	-.15	.08	.02	.20*	-.04	.14	.04	.64***	.52***	.50***					
13. AOD – T2	2.02	1.14	.08	-.10	.18	.06	.28**	-.01	.01	-.03	.56***	.67***	.59***	.69***				
14. AOD – T3	1.92	1.09	.13	-.08	.15	.15	.23*	.04	-.01	-.01	.56***	.62***	.59***	.68***	.84***			
15. Turnover intentions – T1	2.52	1.14	-.01	-.25**	-.08	-.11	.29**	-.12	.09	.05	.64***	.54***	.53***	.61***	.51***	.50***		
16. Turnover intentions – T2	2.59	1.15	.01	-.21*	.01	-.09	.34***	-.08	-.01	.17*	.54***	.61***	.58***	.47***	.56***	.49***	.71***	
17. Turnover intentions – T3	2.52	1.14	-.01	-.21*	-.03	-.06	.23*	-.03	.01	.18*	.55***	.61***	.60***	.50***	.49***	.54***	.75***	.84***

Note. $N = 200$ (T1), 172 (T2), 124 (T3). *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$. Gender (0 = male, 1 = female), Sector (0 = private, 1 = public), Size (0 = 1-10 employees to 4 = 500+ employees), Time (0 = full-time, 1 = part-time), Education (0 = no higher education to 3 = PhD or equivalent), Position (0 = permanent, 1 = temporary), MOD = mechanistic organizational dehumanization, AOD = animalistic organizational dehumanization.

Table II*Confirmatory factor analyses*

Time	Model	χ^2 (df)	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	$\Delta\chi^2(1)$
T1 (N = 200)	Single factor	132 (18)	.931	.893	.178	.079	-
	MOD and TI	44 (17)	.984	.973	.089	.031	88***
	Single factor	131 (18)	.909	.858	.177	.083	-
	AOD and TI	55 (17)	.969	.949	.106	.024	76***
T2 (N = 172)	Single factor	121 (18)	.943	.912	.182	.080	-
	MOD and TI	37 (17)	.989	.982	.082	.030	84***
	Single factor	112 (18)	.914	.867	.174	.077	-
	AOD and TI	36 (17)	.983	.972	.080	.036	76***
T3 (N = 124)	Single factor	97 (18)	.917	.871	.188	.082	-
	MOD and TI	28 (17)	.988	.980	.073	.021	69***
	Single factor	125 (18)	.864	.788	.219	.097	-
	AOD and TI	48 (17)	.960	.935	.122	.027	77***

Note. AOD = animalistic organizational dehumanization, MOD = mechanistic organizational dehumanization, TI = turnover intentions. CFI = Comparative Fit Index, TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index, RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error Approximation, SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual. *** $p < .001$.

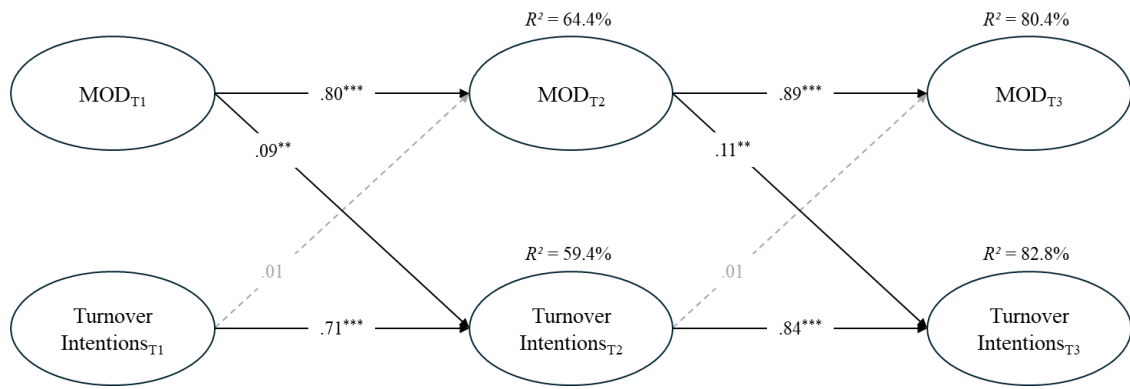


Figure I. Cross-lagged panel model of the relationship between mechanistic organizational dehumanization and turnover intentions.

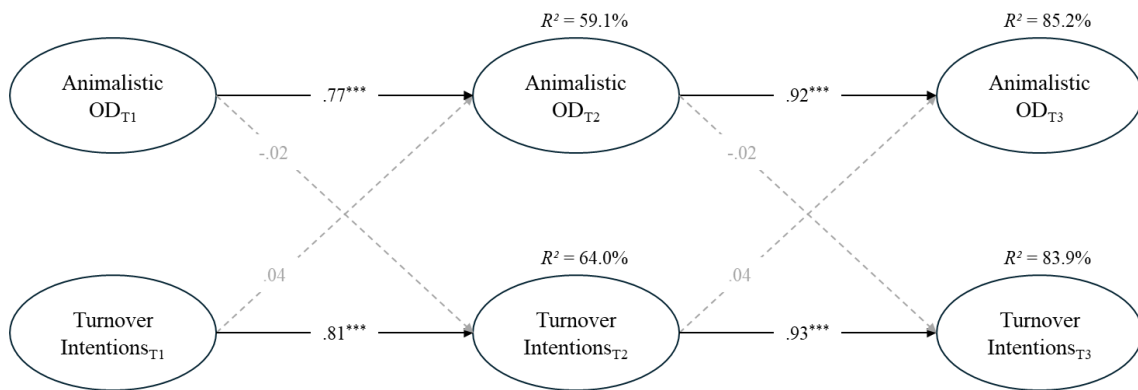


Figure II. Cross-lagged panel model of the relationship between animalistic organizational dehumanization and turnover intentions.