

DEVIAANT ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOUR FROM A PERSONALITY PERSPECTIVE – SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract: *The aim of our study is to provide insight into a phenomenon that can be considered deviant organizational behaviour, which is not often highlighted in the field of management, namely work addiction within an organizational framework, primarily from a personality perspective. Research on work addiction typically approaches the problem from a psychological perspective, but the phenomenon itself goes far beyond the individual level, as it has a significant impact on both the health and quality of life of employees and the functioning and effectiveness of organizations. The presence of work addiction in an organization affects a number of key areas, including performance, workplace climate and work-life balance. As employees are one of the most valuable resources of an organization, virtually all organizational factors based on the human factor may be affected. Therefore, we considered it important to review the results of research on work addiction in a context where it is already present, with a specific focus on the organizational context, placing particular emphasis on the examination of personality. Following the PRISMA procedure, the study presents a systematic literature review of the personality factors associated with work addiction in an organization, the organizational circumstances that influence workaholism through personality, and the consequences of workaholism in an organization. Based on more than forty thousand publications, after specific screening and evaluation, 295 studies were selected and reviewed, of which we summarize the findings of 31 articles in order to gain a better understanding of the personality issues underlying work addiction within organizational frameworks. According to our results, research on workaholism in the field of management appears to be expanding. There is no certainty that work addiction is determined by personality, but there are workplace conditions that can specifically lead to an increase in work addiction. When personal predisposition and reinforcing workplace conditions come together, work addiction can clearly emerge in the organization, the effects of which we will also examine. Overall, perfectionism, narcissistic and neurotic traits play a major role in work addiction, but inadequate salary, lack of feedback, or excessive accountability all contribute to the strengthening of work addiction. In such organizations, job satisfaction is decreased, workplace conflicts are more frequent, stress is higher, and the risk of burnout is greater. The results of our research are beneficial reviewing and applying by managers and human resources professionals in order to achieve organizational success.*

Keywords: *systematic literature review, work addiction, personality*

JEL Classification: M12, I12

1. Introduction

In today's global and constantly changing work environment, increasing attention is being paid to employee behaviour, which is not helped in the slightest by deviant behaviour within the organization, which can directly or indirectly damage workplace performance and the organizational atmosphere. Work addiction is a phenomenon that may initially seem positive for the organization, as the individuals concerned invest a great deal of time and energy in their work. However, research shows that work addiction is often associated with certain personality traits, such as perfectionism, narcissistic traits or type A personality, which can have a negative impact on organizational functioning and employee well-being (Clark et al., 2016). The relationship between personality and work addiction is particularly important because these factors can lead to behaviours that deviate from what are considered ideal organizational norms and are described in the literature as deviant organizational behaviour. Such behaviours may include, for example, disregarding rules, fomenting conflicts between colleagues, or unethical behaviour in the workplace, all of which can damage organizational culture and performance. In today's global, rapidly changing workplace environment, increased expectations are placed on employees, which can contribute to the spread of work addiction and related adverse organizational behaviours. Therefore, it is important to thoroughly examine the relationship between personality and work addiction in the field of management so that organizations can take more effective action against harmful behaviours and support the health and well-being of their employees. In this study, we undertake to review the relevant literature and summarize the personality factors underlying work addiction in an organizational context, the working conditions that influence work addiction, and the effects that work addiction can have on an organization.

2. Theoretical Background

Deviant organizational behaviour is behaviour that is different from organizational norms and rules and has a detrimental effect on the functioning of the organization or its employees (Di Stefano, Scrima & Parry, 2019). Although the harmful effects of organizational deviant behaviour may seem obvious, it is still present in organizations, and management and human resources professionals should focus on identifying and eliminating it. There are forms of deviant organizational behaviour that are easier to identify because they have an apparent impact, such as open violations of rules or norms (e.g. stealing, damage, aggression, social exclusion, etc.). These are easier to recognize for society or the environment (Di Stefano, Scrima & Parry, 2019). However, there are also deviant organizational behaviours that do not have directly tangible consequences because they cannot be directly linked to the behaviour in question in terms of time and space, only becoming apparent later, or, on the contrary, appearing to serve the interests of the organization. Work addiction may be one such factor, which is welcome in the short term but has undesirable effects in the long term, both for the organization and for

the individual. Work addiction is a compulsive work pattern in which an individual devotes excessive time and energy to work, often at the expense of health, family life or social relationships. It is not exclusively a matter of a heavy workload, but also of a compulsive focus on work and the resulting stress (Clark et al., 2016). Today's modern work environment is transforming the attitude of employees towards work, making work addiction an increasingly important issue worldwide (Gillet et al., 2017). Furthermore, it is also conceivable that factors prevailing within the organization itself may partly trigger these unfavorable behavioural manifestations, including work addiction. An internal factor of this kind may also be organizational culture. Based on Filep's (2019) cultural analysis, employees of the examined organization operating in the competitive sector would prefer to replace the market culture with a more people-oriented clan culture. However, for a profit-oriented service organization, this direction may not be entirely feasible or desirable, as a market-oriented approach is also necessary to maintain efficiency. Nevertheless, even if a change in organizational culture is not possible, based on the findings of Dajnoki et al. (2021), in organizations with a similar profile, leaders should pay special attention to maintaining and enhancing employee motivation by providing opportunities for continuous professional development as well as space for independent and creative work. However, in addition to workplace conditions, individual characteristics and personality differences are also responsible for the development of work addiction. It is therefore crucial to examine the personalities of those working in the organization, as this helps to understand the behaviour, motivation and work addiction tendencies of employees (Sharma, Sharma, 2011). This allows for the development of more effective human resource strategies and workplace support (McIlveene, Davis & O'Sullivan, 2024). There are several ways to learn about the personalities of employees, but the assessment is usually done using psychological tests and questionnaires that reveal, for example, the role of internal control and perfectionism (Gholipour, Nargesian & Tahmasbi, 2008), which helps to identify work addiction.

3. Methodology

We chose PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses) systematic literature analysis as the methodology for our research, considering that this procedure is very useful and widespread among researchers for summarizing concepts and correlations in the literature (Flavia, 2024). It ensures high-quality reproducibility through the objective and transparent processing of the literature (Moher et al., 2009, Tricco et al., 2018). The process used in this research is summarized in Figure 1.

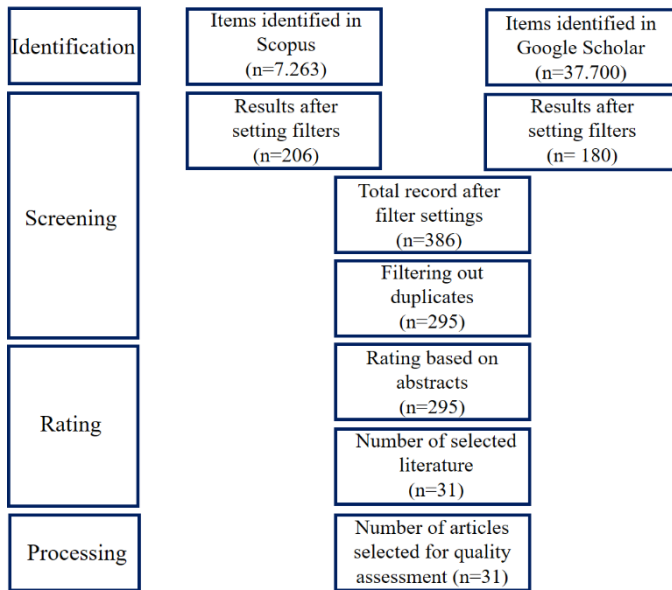


Figure 1: Flowchart of systematic literature review

Source: Own editing based on Moher et al. (2009), 2025

The literature search was conducted in June 2025 in the Scopus and Google Scholar databases. The search terms ‘work addiction’ and “workaholism” were used, along with the ‘OR’ operator. Based on the results obtained, we identified more than 44,000 results. We then implemented filters to narrow the search down to the field of management, searching in the title and abstract. This reduced the number of results to 206 in Scopus and 180 in Google Scholar. After filtering out 91 duplicates from the two databases, the number of journals articles whose abstracts were read fell to 295. We introduced a new criterion at this point in the PRISMA protocol, according to which we retained studies that also dealt with personality. As a result of the qualification, we were able to select 31 journal articles for quality assessment.

4. Results

In the following, we would like to provide a summary of the manifestations of work addiction and personality within organizational frameworks based on the 31 studies selected for quality assessment. It can be concluded (Figure 2) that the number of studies discussing work addiction in the field of management – which also take into account some aspect of personality – has been increasing over the years. Although work addiction has been identified for more than half a century, the first study on personality in the field of management was published in 2001, according to the

Scopus and Google Scholar databases. Interest in the topic has since grown, with the highest number of such studies, five, identified in 2024.

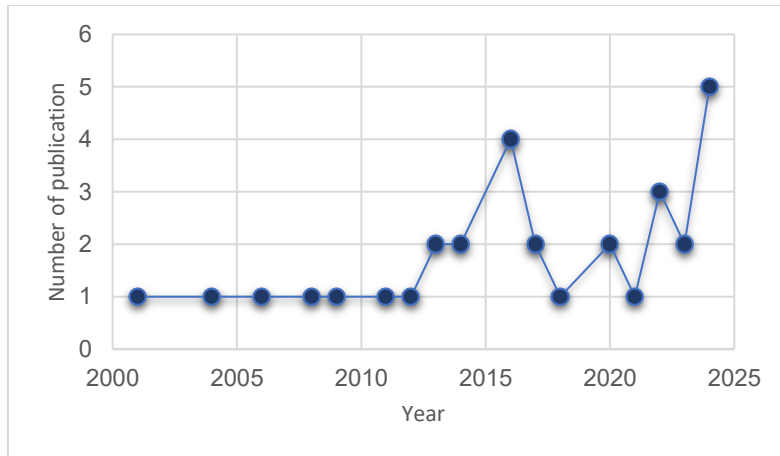


Figure 2: Research developments in work addiction within organizational frameworks in relation to personality
Source: Own editing, 2025

Figure 3 shows sample data from publications selected for quality assessment, with particular regard to the number of items and nationality. The number of items in studies dealing with the same nationalities have been combined. The research collaborated with a total of 14,086 people, and it can be seen that many nationalities are involved in this topic. In terms of the number of participants, the largest proportion of research was conducted in the Netherlands, but similar research is also being conducted in Asia and America beyond Europe.

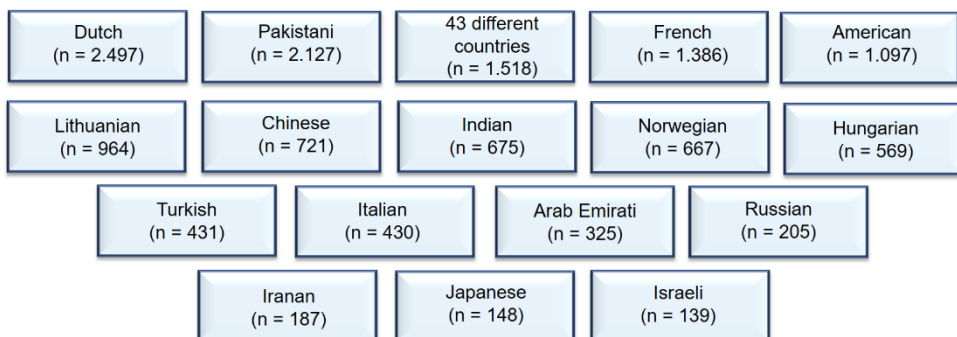


Figure 3: Number and nationality of research participants
Source: Own editing, 2025

The studies selected for this paper provide a comprehensive picture of how work addiction develops, what individual and organizational factors reinforce it, and what consequences it has in the workplace. We considered it worthwhile to group the selected articles into the following three dimensions: personality and individual disposition, organizational and environmental conditions, and the consequences of workaholism for the individual and the organization as a whole. Most of the publications address extensively with the phenomenon of personality and workaholism within organizational frameworks, so a single study may belong to more than one dimension. In the following, we present the main findings of the studies along these three dimensions.

4.1. Personality traits and the dimension of work addiction

The selected studies analyze a number of personality traits that may be relevant factors in relation to work addiction. These are illustrated in Figure 4, where the frequency of occurrence is also reflected in the font size.



Figure 4: The role of personality traits in work addiction

Source: Own editing, 2025

Perfectionism is a key factor in workaholism (Morkevičiūtė, Endriulaitienė, 2022). It can even be suggested that strong perfectionist traits serve as a driving force for workaholism, as maladaptive perfectionism is one of the strongest predictors of workaholism (Falco et al., 2020, Tziner, Tanami, 2013, Fayyazi et al., 2013).

Maladaptive perfectionism is a form of perfectionism that does not serve to improve performance but rather impairs effective functioning and can lead to harmful consequences. This can happen, among other things, because the individual establishes excessively high, often unrealistic expectations for themselves that are never met, thus creating constant dissatisfaction. All this can be accompanied by an extreme fear of failure, which can lead to chronic anxiety. If the end result is not perfect, it is in conjunction with a decrease in self-esteem. Chronic procrastination or compulsive overwork are also manifestations of maladaptive perfectionism, as

such individuals obsessively improve their work due to their feeling of 'not being good enough' and never feel that it is finished. Perfectionism in itself would not be a problem, as there is also such a thing as healthy perfectionism, which is characterized by high but realistic expectations, thereby motivating the individual and helping them to achieve their goals, thus ending the process with a feeling of satisfaction (Falco et al., 2020, Bovornusvakool et al., 2012).

Behind maladaptive perfectionism may be driven by an external locus of control attitude, i.e. the belief that the main factors in an individual's life are controlled by external elements, not by themselves. Those with an external locus of control are more likely to work overtime compulsively because they feel that they can only 'keep things under control' if they work continuously (Gillet et al., 2017). Other studies have also confirmed the link between external control and work addiction (Gholipour, Nargesian & Tahmasbi, 2008).

Narcissism and narcissistic traits are personality characteristics that are increasingly associated with work addiction. Narcissistic traits and work addiction are often related, especially among entrepreneurs and managers. These personality traits can initially drive entrepreneurial innovation, which is the key to success, but only in the short term. Narcissistic traits lead to a strong entrepreneurial spirit and a tendency to overwork. (Shirokova et al., 2024, Veksler et al., 2024). However, this behaviour is not sustainable in the long term, and adequate family or organizational support is necessary to avoid harmful consequences (Gubik, Vörös, 2023).

As mentioned earlier, there are numerous theories on the study of personality traits, but the Big Five dimensions – extroversion/introversion, openness, neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness – are often associated with work addiction, and important results have been found. Researchers have found a strong positive correlation between neuroticism and work addiction (Clark et al., 2016, Schaufeli, 2016), which may be in some part attributed to the fact that more anxious people use work to reduce negative feelings. Paradoxically, conscientiousness, openness and extroversion are all associated with work addiction. Both low and high levels of conscientiousness can lead to hard work and thus activate a tendency towards work addiction (Hung, 2020).

In the former case, this is induced to excessive compulsive work (since people with weak conscience are less capable of self-discipline, planning and organization, they are forced to compensate for this with excessive work), and in the latter case, it is caused by an increased need to prove oneself (Therthani et al., 2022). Furthermore, high extroversion and openness can increase the risk of work addiction through the desire for social recognition. A high level of agreeableness may be the only protective factor against work addiction through a tendency to cooperate. Conversely, those who are less friendly and, for example, more disposed to competing with others, are more likely to become workaholics (Babalhavaej, Taghvaei & Soleimani, 2016, Fayyazi et al., 2013, Mazzetti, Schaufeli & Guglielmi, 2014).

The pursuit of dominance (e.g., acquiring a leadership role or controlling others) can also be linked to work addiction, as dominant individuals are more likely to take on too many tasks in order to strengthen their positions of power (Veksler et al., 2024). Other studies suggest that work addiction is more prevalent among Type A personalities (who are most characterized by competitive, impatient and hostile

traits) because they are unable to relax or quit as a result of the constant pressure to perform and compete (Burke, Ronald J., Richardsen & Martinussen, 2004). Self-esteem and self-evaluation – especially when weak – can be linked to a tendency towards work addiction. This is because these individuals try to compensate for their inner insecurity with success at work (Gillet et al., 2017, An et al., 2021, Zahid, Fiaz & Taus, 2024). Workaholics often have an ambivalent mindset ('I'm either perfect or a failure'), an excessive need for self-control, and the belief that work is the main source of self-esteem (Van Wijhe, Peeters & Schaufeli, 2014). These cognitive patterns are often reinforced by early attachment problems (e.g., anxious or avoidant attachment styles), which are compensated for in adulthood through work, and these individuals may even take on excessive amounts of work with the intention of strengthening their social connections (Tziner, Tanami, 2013). This intention can even manifest itself in altruism, i.e. a behaviour pattern in which helping others is prioritized over oneself. Remarkably, this noble act also poses a risk in terms of work addiction: excessive commitment to supporting colleagues or clients can easily lead to overload and neglect of one's own needs (Ali Nisar et al., 2024).

An individual's time interpretation is particularly important in the manifestation of work addiction, which is also reflected in the time management of those affected. According to some analyses, a future-oriented time perspective (when someone constantly focuses on future goals) can predispose them to workaholism because it increases action without procrastination and the constant pursuit of performance. (Eslami, Kanai & Matsumoto, 2022). Workaholics are often future-oriented, and because of their concerns about the future – which in many cases are mediated by perfectionism – they are unable to live in the present, thus missing out on opportunities for regeneration.

On the other hand, flexible thinking, self-confidence and optimism appear to be protective factors against work addiction. In other words, the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and set realistic goals (Sharma, Sharma, 2011), to which the individual adheres faithfully, consistently representing their inner values (Vitiello, Aziz & Wuensch, 2016). This state of high self-efficacy – i.e. an individual's belief in their ability to achieve their own goals – can be protective against work addiction, as it reduces the compulsion to work excessively, but only when combined with high self-esteem and low dependence on work (Razzaghian, Shah, 2018).

4.2. Dimension of organizational circumstances

There is no doubt that personality traits play a significant role in workaholism, but there are organizational circumstances which, when experienced over a long period of time, can push individuals towards workaholism as a form of deviant behaviour. From this perspective, the proportion and distribution of workload is a particularly important aspect of working conditions. If the workload in an organization is excessive and persistent, or if organizational expectations are characterized by unrealistically high work demands and high pressure on employees, this can increase the frequency of workaholic behaviour (Falco et al., 2020, An et al., 2021, Schaufeli, 2016).

Accountability – i.e. when employees take responsibility for their own work and are required to report on their results in line with managerial or organizational expectations – plays a dual role in the development of work addiction. A moderate level of accountability can motivate effective work, help achieve goals, and increase a sense of responsibility. However, if accountability is excessive or continuous and coupled with strong external pressure, it can increase the tendency towards workaholism, especially among those with a high sense of conscience or perfectionism (Babalhavaei, Taghvaei & Soleimani, 2016).

Employees' sense of security also plays a significant role in work addiction. Psychosocial safety at work, i.e. how employees feel about their workplace from a psychological and social point of view — in other words, how safe they consider it to be, where they are not threatened, abused or exposed to excessive stress — has a significant impact on the development of work addiction. Psychosocial safety at work was interpreted by employees as a combination of factors such as workplace support, workplace stress levels and workplace conflicts. The results of the study showed that higher levels of psychosocial safety at work reduced the likelihood of developing work addiction (Gillet et al., 2017).

Feedback is also important within the organization, especially for employees with an external locus of control, who are more likely to become workaholics if they work in an organizational environment where feedback is rare or inconsistent (Razzaghian, Shah, 2018). People with external control tend to try to compensate for their lack of control over their own destiny by working compulsively, which is why external feedback is crucial for them (Gillet et al., 2017, Razzaghian, Shah, 2018).

Salary was also linked to work addiction, and an inverse relationship was found between the two phenomena: it was determined that individuals with low salaries tend to have higher work addiction, perhaps out of fear of losing their jobs (Sharma, Sharma, 2011). This is mainly due to existential fear, the need to prove oneself, and a lack of organizational support – these factors make people prone to working compulsively, as if they wanted to 'buy' job security with their overtime (Clark et al., 2016).

Remote working and flexible working arrangements are now considered completely normal in today's working environment, but they can easily lead to work addiction. This is because they blur the boundaries between work and private life, and the expectation of availability can become constant, leading to frequent voluntary overtime. It is very important to establish clear rules regarding availability expectations, to provide managerial support for not working, and to provide technological tools. If there is no clear communication about these working conditions, work addiction will increase rather than healthy productivity (Mcilveene, Davis & O'Sullivan, 2024).

It is also worth paying close attention to the emergence of work addiction within organizational frameworks for preventive purposes, because according to social learning theory, organizational actors can pass on this deviant behaviour to each other through role modelling, like a social contagion (Razzaghian, Shah, 2018).

4.3. Organizational consequences dimension

Work addiction is as much an organizational problem as it is an individual one, as its manifestation within an organization can trigger a number of undesirable consequences. Workaholism – which is not just about working long hours, but also involves compulsive behaviour – is harmful to employees' mental and physical health in the long term, as well as to their relationships at work and in their private lives (Clark et al., 2016). Workaholism has a negative impact on individual mental well-being (Burke, Ronald, Koyuncu & Fiksenbaum, 2009) and often causes health problems on both a psychological level (e.g. anxiety, depression, etc.) and a physical level (e.g. sleep disorders, cardiovascular problems, etc.) (Therthani et al., 2022). It also has a detrimental effect on social life, as workaholism negatively affects family and friend relationships due to a lack of balance (Clark et al., 2016). At the organizational level, there is no advantage to workaholism, as it does not necessarily lead to better work performance. Although workaholics may appear to perform well in the short term, in the long term, excessive work can actually reduce productivity due to stress and burnout (Hung, 2020, Clark et al., 2016). In addition, the stressful environment generated by workaholic employees also affects their colleagues, who often feel pressured to work harder in order to meet expectations or keep up. The 'workplace norms' created by workaholic behaviour can create an atmosphere that reinforces a work-centric culture, thereby increasing tension and undermining workplace well-being (Porter, 2001). In advanced cases, counterproductive behaviour – i.e. any intentional behaviour that is contrary to the organization's goals and that impairs workplace efficiency, the organizational atmosphere or the well-being of colleagues – is considered one of the consequences of workaholism. This also has a long-term negative impact on employee well-being and leads to burnout (Razzaghian, Shah, 2018, Sharma, Singh & Sharma, 2017).

Given that workaholic behaviour patterns are not necessarily always accompanied by negative feelings about work, it is conceivable that workaholics experience a sense of flow when immersed in their work, especially if they have a positive attitude towards their activities. However, this state only provides temporary protection from harmful consequences, and in the long term, they are also at risk of burnout (Rouxel et al., 2023).

Overall, organizational culture and management style also have a significant impact on the development and persistence of workaholism: if the workplace environment conveys excessive performance expectations and does not place sufficient emphasis on recreational activities, this reinforces workaholic behaviour within the organization. Workplaces where there is no support, or where managers also exhibit workaholic patterns, produce higher rates of workaholism among those affected (Burke, Ronald J., Berge Matthiesen & Pallesen, 2006).

5. Conclusions

Work addiction is becoming an increasingly serious problem in the workplace, damaging not only individual health but also team and organizational performance.

Research shows that this is not primarily influenced by salary or financial rewards, but rather by how much control people feel they have and what their working environment is like. Working from home and flexible working have many advantages, but without clear rules and boundaries, they can easily lead to overwork and exhaustion. This overwork often becomes counterproductive: efficiency decreases, stress increases, and working relationships deteriorate. It is therefore important for managers to pay attention to how they support their employees in finding a balance between work and private life and to help them not only survive but also feel good about their work. It is worth ensuring that employees with different personality traits have the opportunity to use different strategies in their work, even if the work process is similar.

Some solve the same task through creativity, others through a more thorough analysis of the situation (Hung, 2020). In the future, it will be worthwhile to examine work addiction not only among those already in employment, but also among those who are over the age of 18, continuing their studies, but not yet in employment. Our research results confirmed that, as stated in the literature (Gillet et al., 2017), work addiction is not only contextual but also has a significant personality-determined aspect. As a result, work addiction may already be reflected in the attitude towards studies, the motivation behind them, and especially in the importance of performance and control (Hajdu, Barizsné & Kotsis, 2022), which may be important when they later enter the labour market, both for the host organization and human resources professionals, as well as for those involved and their future managers. In today's world of intense digitalization and technological development, work addiction should also be included among the challenges facing leaders (Török-Kmoskó, Dajnoki, 2024, Sivilca et al., 2024). If you can prevent even one instance of deviant behaviour in your organization, you will have already done a lot to achieve your organizational goals efficiently and effectively while retaining valuable employees.

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