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(IJEMP)**www.gaexcellence.com/ijemp**A REVIEW OF MOONLIGHTING LITERATURE:
ANTECEDENTS, CONSEQUENCES, AND MEDIATING
MECHANISMS IN POST-PANDEMIC WORKPLACES**

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Abstract:

Moonlighting, the practice of holding secondary employment alongside a primary job, has emerged as a significant phenomenon reshaping contemporary employment relationships. This systematic review synthesizes peer-reviewed literature published between 2020 and 2026, examining antecedents, consequences, and mediating mechanisms of moonlighting behavior. Following PRISMA guidelines (Page et al., 2021), the review analyzed empirical studies from major academic databases. The findings reveal that job dissatisfaction, financial need, and work-life imbalance consistently predict moonlighting intentions, while organizational commitment and employee engagement serve as key mediating variables. Consequences include dual effects on organizational performance and employee well-being. Methodological limitations, including a regional bias towards South Asian contexts and a predominance of cross-sectional designs, are critically examined. The review proposes a dual-pathway conceptual framework to guide future research and offers practical implications for human resource management in hybrid work environments.

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Keyword:Job Satisfaction, Moonlighting, Organizational Commitment,
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Introduction

The transformation of work arrangements following the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated moonlighting prevalence across multiple sectors globally (Patrick et al., 2025). Moonlighting refers to employees engaging in secondary employment while maintaining primary organizational roles, encompassing both formal part-time positions and informal gig economy participation (Sisodia & Jan 2025). Contemporary evidence indicates that remote work flexibility, economic pressures from stagnant wages, and career development needs have contributed to increased moonlighting behavior among professionals worldwide (Wahyuningsih et al., 2025).

Industry data demonstrates the scale of this phenomenon. In the Indian information technology sector alone, over 2,900 moonlighting cases were flagged in the first half of 2025, representing a 32 percent increase compared to 2024 (Nair, 2025). Major corporations have responded divergently: Wipro dismissed 300 employees for undisclosed secondary employment, while other organizations have adopted conditional acceptance policies (Bhattacharya, 2025). This heterogeneity in organizational responses reflects broader theoretical tensions regarding moonlighting's effects on productivity, loyalty, and employee well-being.

Despite growing scholarly attention, systematic reviews examining the relationship between moonlighting and employee outcomes remain limited. Existing research presents fragmented findings regarding whether moonlighting produces beneficial or detrimental effects across organizational and individual levels. This review addresses three research questions: (1) What antecedents predict employee moonlighting intentions and behaviors? (2) What consequences are associated with moonlighting across organizational and individual levels? (3) What mediating variables explain the relationship between moonlighting predictors and outcomes?

Empirical evidence supporting the integration of SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) demonstrates that providing "decent work" characterized by fair compensation, safe conditions, and work-life balance directly improves psychological well-being and job satisfaction by fulfilling fundamental survival and self-determination needs (Wan & Cao, 2022).

Methodology

Review Design and PRISMA Framework

This study employed a systematic literature review approach following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 guidelines to ensure methodological rigor and transparency (Page et al., 2021). The review protocol was structured around four phases: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. A matrix table methodology enabled structured extraction of key information including authorship, publication year, research design, variables, sampling methods, and key findings (Snyder, 2019). The review focused on peer-reviewed journal articles examining moonlighting in organizational contexts.

Search Strategy and Source Selection

Articles were identified through academic databases including Emerald Insight, Sage Publications, ScienceDirect, Inderscience, and institutional journal repositories. Search terms included "moonlighting," "secondary employment," "side hustle," "multiple job holding," "concurrent employment," combined with "job satisfaction," "work-life balance," "organizational commitment," and "employee engagement."

Inclusion criteria were: (a) publication between 2020 and 2026, (b) direct focus on moonlighting in organizational contexts, (c) peer-reviewed status, (d) availability of full-text access, (e) English language publication. Exclusion criteria included non-peer-reviewed sources, conference proceedings without full-text availability, and studies focusing exclusively on informal economy moonlighting without organizational context. The search was conducted in January 2026.

Data Extraction and Synthesis

Information was extracted using standardized categories including author(s), year, research design, sample characteristics, key variables, theoretical framework, and main findings. Quantitative studies comprised the majority of the sample, with sample sizes ranging from 54 to 1,082 participants. Qualitative literature reviews and conceptual studies were included for theoretical synthesis. A narrative

Findings

Antecedents of Moonlighting

Job Satisfaction and Career Dissatisfaction

Consistent evidence establishes negative relationships between job satisfaction and moonlighting intentions. Wahyuningsih, Widyantini, and Kusuma (2025) found that career dissatisfaction directly increases moonlighting intention among lecturers, with dissatisfaction regarding career advancement, inadequate compensation, and lack of recognition serving as significant predictors. The study further identified work-life balance as both a negative predictor and a mediating factor between career dissatisfaction and moonlighting.

Afandi, Nilasari, and Berliyanti (2025) examined private company employees in Jakarta, finding that moonlighting intention has a positive and significant impact on both job satisfaction and organizational commitment, challenging conventional assumptions that secondary employment necessarily reduces workplace attitudes. This finding suggests a reciprocal relationship where moonlighting intention may paradoxically enhance primary job attitudes through financial security mechanisms.

Workplace Attitudes and Withdrawal Cognitions

A study examining tech professionals through the attitudes and alternatives model of withdrawal cognitions found that organizational commitment, turnover intentions, financial strain, entrepreneurial motivation, and job strain positively and significantly impact moonlighting intentions (Patrick et al., 2025). This theoretical framing positions moonlighting as a form of withdrawal cognition or a psychological distancing behavior preceding actual turnover rather than merely opportunistic behavior.

Financial and Economic Factors

Financial need emerges as a consistently cited antecedent across studies. Economic pressures from stagnant wages, inflation, and financial insecurity drive moonlighting intentions, particularly among early-career professionals and those in sectors with limited advancement opportunities (Sisodia & Jan 2025). Financial need and stagnant wages are consistently identified as primary economic antecedents driving secondary employment. Within the broader Malaysian organizational context, Azeez et al. (2021) demonstrate that core HR dimensions, particularly structured compensation packages and supportive work environments are essential determinants of employee retention and job satisfaction. When primary employers fail to provide competitive compensation or clear career growth, employees experience heightened dissatisfaction, prompting them to seek supplementary income streams through moonlighting. Survey data indicates that 61 percent of moonlighters are motivated primarily by skill development rather than financial necessity, suggesting developmental motivations as distinct from purely economic drivers (Deloitte, 2024).

Consequences of Moonlighting

Employee Well-Being and Burnout

The relationship between moonlighting and employee well-being demonstrates complexity. Sisodia and Jan (2025) examined the mediating role of employee engagement between wellbeing and moonlighting intentions, finding that wellbeing significantly impacts both moonlighting behavior and intentions to quit. This suggests that organizations addressing employee wellbeing may simultaneously reduce undesirable moonlighting and turnover.

Industry reports corroborate academic findings regarding burnout risks. The case of Soham Parekh, a software engineer maintaining multiple concurrent roles with reported 140-hour work weeks, illustrates extreme manifestations of moonlighting's potential for physical and mental health consequences (Sharma, 2025). Organizations have raised concerns regarding burnout, declining performance, conflicting interests, intellectual property breaches, and erosion of trust and loyalty (KPMG India, 2025). The interplay between secondary employment and employee well-being remains complex, as excessive work hours can severely compromise work-life

balance and accelerate burnout. As Tham et al. (2022) emphasize in their study on Malaysian enterprises, maintaining manageable work-life boundaries and providing organizational support are vital for fostering long-term commitment and sustaining productivity. When employees engage in concurrent jobs without adequate boundary management, the resulting strain degrades job satisfaction in both primary and secondary roles.

Organizational Performance and Commitment

Moonlighting produces both positive and negative organizational impacts. Positive effects include skill development, innovation, and employee financial security (Patrick et al., 2025). Negative effects include reduced productivity, conflicts of interest, trust issues, and data security risks. Organizational responses vary considerably, with some companies implementing stricter measures while others embrace conditional acceptance frameworks (Nair, 2025).

Mediating Variables

Organizational Commitment as Mediator

Afandi, Nilasari, and Berliyanti (2025) specifically tested whether organizational commitment functions as a mediating variable between moonlighting intention and job satisfaction. Results indicated that organizational commitment shows a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction but does not function as a mediating variable between moonlighting intention or personal reasons and job satisfaction. This finding suggests that the relationship between moonlighting and job attitudes operates through direct pathways rather than commitment-mediated mechanisms.

Employee Engagement

Sisodia and Jan (2025) identified employee engagement as a mediating mechanism between wellbeing and moonlighting intentions. Employees with higher engagement demonstrate lower moonlighting intentions, suggesting that engagement serves as a protective factor against secondary employment seeking.

Workplace Attitudes

The attitudes and alternatives model positions workplace attitudes as central mediators between organizational conditions and moonlighting behaviors (Patrick et al., 2025). Under this framework, negative workplace attitudes generate withdrawal cognitions that manifest as either turnover intentions or moonlighting intentions as alternative coping mechanisms.

Discussion

Theoretical Implications

The synthesized findings support a dual-pathway model of moonlighting outcomes. The negative pathway operates through reduced organizational commitment, increased burnout, and work-life conflict. The positive pathway operates through financial security, skill development, and career growth. This duality explains inconsistent findings across studies and

suggests that moonlighting effects depend on contextual factors including sector, individual characteristics, and organizational policies.

The application of withdrawal cognition theory to moonlighting represents a significant theoretical contribution (Patrick et al., 2025). Framing moonlighting as an alternative to turnover—rather than a distinct behavior which integrates moonlighting research with established organizational behavior literature on employee withdrawal.

Generational and Post-Pandemic Dynamics

Survey data indicates that 71 percent of Generation Z workers believe moonlighting enhances skill acquisition and income, suggesting generational differences in moonlighting attitudes (Deloitte, 2024). This finding has implications for talent management as younger cohorts enter the workforce with different expectations regarding work arrangements and employer loyalty. Remote work has fundamentally altered moonlighting feasibility. The elimination of commuting time, increased schedule flexibility, and reduced workplace monitoring have lowered barriers to secondary employment (Patrick et al., 2025). Organizations must therefore develop policies acknowledging that moonlighting, regardless of formal permissibility, has become practically achievable for remote workers.

Practical Implications for Human Resource Management

The reviewed literature supports several practical recommendations for organizations. First, addressing antecedents may reduce undesirable moonlighting. Improving job satisfaction through compensation, recognition, and career development opportunities emerges as a primary intervention point (Afandi et al., 2025). Second, flexible policies that acknowledge rather than prohibit secondary employment may enable organizations to capture benefits while mitigating risks through disclosure requirements and conflict-of-interest provisions (KPMG India, 2025). To manage the prevalence of moonlighting in post-pandemic workplaces, organizations must move beyond rigid prohibitions and address underlying workplace attitudes. Research by Azam et al. (2021) highlights that leadership styles significantly influence overall workforce performance through the key mediating variable of job satisfaction. Organizational leaders who adopt supportive, communicative leadership practices can cultivate higher engagement and job satisfaction, thereby mitigating the withdrawal behaviors and dissatisfaction that typically precede secondary job seeking.

Third, organizations should implement robust verification mechanisms including provident fund checks and continuous monitoring tools while balancing surveillance with trust-based career conversations (Nair, 2025). Fourth, internal gig platforms offering short-term, cross-functional projects can satisfy employees' desire for autonomy and skill-building without external moonlighting (Patrick et al., 2025).

Methodological Observations and Limitations

The reviewed literature reveals several methodological patterns requiring consideration. Quantitative studies employing convenience sampling predominate, limiting generalizability. Regional concentration is evident, with Indonesian, Indian, and East African samples comprising the majority of empirical studies (Afandi et al., 2025; Patrick et al., 2025;

Wahyuningsih et al., 2025). Cross-sectional designs prevent causal inference regarding moonlighting antecedents and consequences.

Self-report measures introduce common method bias concerns, particularly for subjective outcomes including job satisfaction and work-life balance. Future research should incorporate objective measures of moonlighting behavior, organizational data on productivity, and longitudinal designs tracking moonlighting antecedents and consequences over time.

Conclusion

This systematic review synthesized peer-reviewed literature examining moonlighting antecedents, consequences, and mediating mechanisms. Job dissatisfaction, financial need, and work-life imbalance consistently predict moonlighting intentions. Consequences include both positive outcomes (skill development, financial security, career growth) and negative outcomes (burnout, reduced commitment, productivity concerns). Organizational commitment, employee engagement, and workplace attitudes serve as mediating variables, though the mediating role of commitment requires further empirical testing.

The review concludes that moonlighting represents a persistent feature of contemporary employment relationships rather than a temporary pandemic-era phenomenon. Organizations must therefore develop nuanced policies acknowledging moonlighting's complex effects rather than pursuing blanket prohibitions that may drive behaviour underground. Future research employing longitudinal designs, diverse samples across cultural contexts, and objective outcome measures will advance understanding of moonlighting as an enduring dimension of modern work.

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