



**IMPACT OF HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES ON EMPLOYEE RETENTION:
MEDIATING ROLE OF JOB SATISFACTION**

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Abstract

The research question is based on the influence of human resource (HR) practices namely compensation (COMP), career development (CD), work environment (WE) and leadership skills (LS) on employee retention (ER) within the education sector of Pakistan and job satisfaction (JS) as a controlling variable. The research design adopted was quantitative and cross-sectional design and used a structured questionnaire where 300 employees of the education sector were used. Techniques were applied to analyze data with the help of the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Results prove that each of the four HR practices has a significant impact on job satisfaction, as well as employee retention. In addition, job satisfaction completely mediates all HR practice-retention links. The model accounts for 57.7% and 62.3% variation in employee retention and job satisfaction, respectively. The implications of these findings in the HR policy in the education sector in Pakistan are discussed.

Keywords: Compensation, Career Development, Work Environment, Leadership Skills, Job Satisfaction, Employee Retention, PLS-SEM, Pakistan.

Introduction

The issue of retaining employees has become one of the most urgent strategic issues of organizations that participate in a competitive and resource-limited environment. The situation is more urgent in the education sector of Pakistan, where schools and colleges constantly lack qualified academic and administrative staff and have trouble recruiting and keeping it. The high turnover rates do not only destroy organizational continuity but also deteriorate the quality of services, student achievements and reputation of the institution. It is on this ground that the research question that has gained a research urgency that is of great practical urgency is to understand the human resource (HR) practices that best contribute to employee retention (Janjua et al., 2026).

The theoretical basis of this paper is that the psychological and experience state in which employees feel that they find their work rewarding is a result of HR practices. Employee attitudes and behavioral outcomes have been recognized to be influenced by factors such as compensation, career development, work environment, and quality leadership. But such relationships are seldom unconditional; instead, they are mediated by such affective conditions as job satisfaction that is a key psychological process that connects organizational inputs and retention behavior (Stirpe et al., 2022). Although the literature on HRM and retention is increasingly growing around the world, empirical research that concurrently studies a combination of several HR practices and explicitly models the mediating effect of job satisfaction to the context of the education industry in Pakistan is extremely limited (Shahzad et al., 2024).

Scope of the Study

The research is limited to the employees in the educational institutions of Pakistan, such as in the university, colleges and secondary schools. This is centered on both the academic and administrative staff. The research variables will include compensation, career development, work environment, leadership skills, job satisfaction and employee retention.

Research Objectives

- To evaluate the direct effect of compensation, career development, work environment and leadership skills on retention of employees.
- To determine how compensation, career development, work environment and leadership skills impact job satisfaction.
- To establish whether job satisfaction influences employee retention or not.
- To evaluate the mediating effect of job satisfaction between the HR practices and the retention of employees.

Research Questions

- Do the HR practices (compensation, career development, work environment, and leadership skills) have a direct effect on employee retention in the education sector in Pakistan?
- Hypothesis: • Are HR practices an important predictor of job satisfaction among the employees of the education sector?
- Is job satisfaction a mediator to the relationship between HR practices and employee retention?

Literature Review

Human resource practices entail wide spectrum of organizational policies/procedures that aim at governing the employment relationship in an efficient manner. Compensation, as one of the main HR practices, is a direct indicator of the value that an organization places on its employees; fair and competitive pay has always been linked to high staff turnover and low turnover intentions (Sorn et al., 2023). Employee growth expectations are met by career development opportunities, such as training, mentoring, and promotional opportunities, and are an indicator of organizational commitment to the employee in their professional career, which, in turn, leads to employee loyalty and low turnover (Khutale, 2024). The sum of these practices is mediated by the evaluative and emotional reactions that employees have towards their jobs summed up in the job satisfaction construct.

Work environment, in a more general sense, which refers to the physical, social and psychological states within which workers conduct their tasks has a significant impact on retention and satisfaction. The employees that believe that their workplace is secure, comfortable, and favorable to work in will tend to have increased job satisfaction and reduced intentions of leaving their job (Dominic Suta, 2024). Quality of leadership is another important antecedent; transformational and supportive leadership behavior forms a context of psychological safety and motivation congruence that supports the employees in their decision-making to stay in their respective organizations (Samsidar, 2024). The four HR dimensions mentioned above create a consistent system with the help of which organizations can predictably affect the attitudes and retention results of their employees.

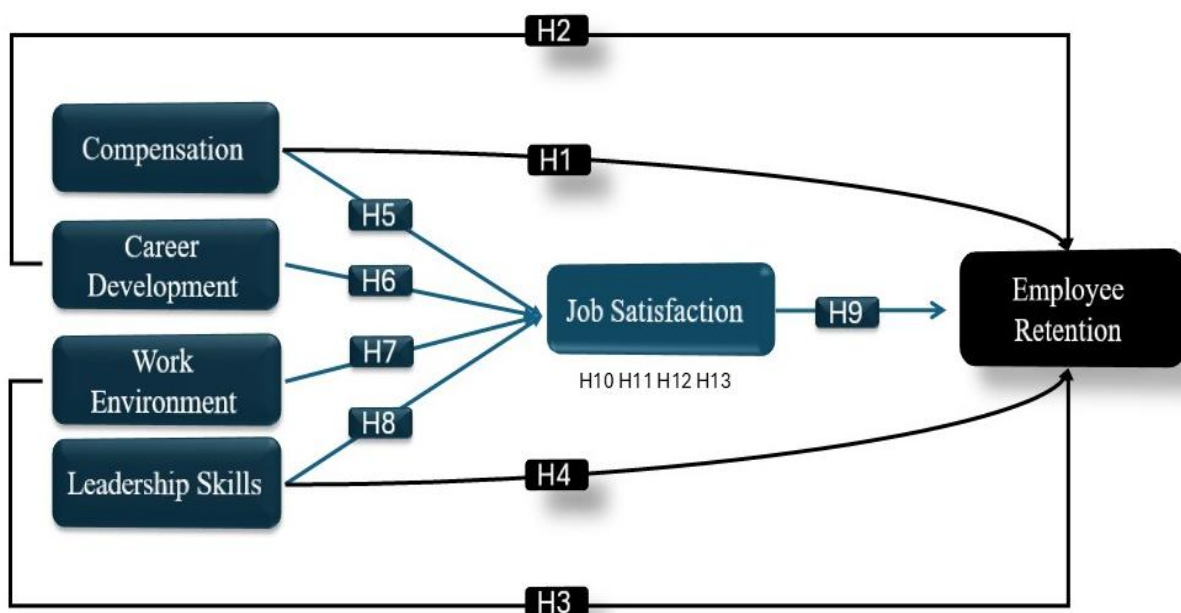
Another concept that is a theoretically sound mediator between the inputs in the organization and the behavioral consequences is job satisfaction, which is defined as the positive affective state, which is the result of the appraisal of the job or job experiences (Isaac et al., 2023). When employees find meaning in their pay, career opportunities, work environment, and the caliber

of their leaders, they are much less prone to leaving the organization as they are more likely to be psychologically attached to the job and more bound with the organization (Dutta & Sawaitul, 2025). This mechanism can also be explained by the Social Exchange Theory: once the employees feel that organizational practices can be advantageous, they will respond by dedicating more efforts to their work and avoiding turnover, where the job satisfaction is the affective channel through which this exchange can be realized (Matrafi, 2024).

Hypotheses Development

- H1: Compensation significantly and positively directly impacts the retention of employees.
- H2: There is a significant positive direct relationship between career development and retention of employees.
- H3: There is a strong positive direct influence of work environment on retention of employees.
- H4: Leadership skills directly affect employee retention.
- H5: Compensation has a high impact on job satisfaction.
- H6: Career development significantly positively influences job satisfaction.
- H7: Job satisfaction is influenced positively by the work environment.
- H8: Leadership skills bear a positive and significant impact on job satisfaction.
- H9: Job satisfaction directly influences employee retention.
- H10: There is a mediating role of job satisfaction between compensation and retention of employees.
- H11: Career development and employee retention have a mediating variable of job satisfaction.
- H12: There is an intermediate difference between the work environment and employee retention, that is, job satisfaction.
- H13: Leadership skills and employee retention have a mediating job satisfaction.

Figure 1. Conceptual Research Framework



(Note: The framework diagram below is replicated above showing the direct paths H1-H4, the paths to job satisfaction H5-H8, the path H9 between job satisfaction and employee retention and the mediation paths H10-H13.)

Methodology

This paper follows a quantitative, cross-sectional research design based on positivist paradigm, which emphasizes objective measurement and statistical inference when analyzing the hypothesized relationships. The population of interest was the employees (both academic and administrative) of educational institutions in Pakistan. Simple random sampling method was used to make the sample representative of the types of institutions and geographical areas. A self-administered questionnaire with the structure was distributed to 300 participants, which is considered to be adequate under the ten-times rule and power analysis guideline to use a self-administered questionnaire as the tool to perform a Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) (Hair et al., 2021).

A five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) based on validated measures used in previous studies were used to measure all constructs. The scales of compensation (COMP) and career development (CD) were scaled down to existing literature on HRM, the work environment (WE) and leadership skills (LS) items that were found in the research on organizational behavior. Job satisfaction (JS) and employee retention (ER) scales also were based on already validated scales. Pilot testing of the questionnaire was conducted on 30 respondents, to ensure that the items were clear and internally consistent. The SmartPLS 4.0 was used to analyze data in the two-stage PLS-SEM approach: the measurement model was analyzed (reliability, validity, and discriminant validity), and then the structural model was analyzed (path coefficients, R^2 , and indirect effects using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples). The evaluation of mediation was based on the specific indirect effects, and the significance level of 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals.

Data Analysis and Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables (N = 300)

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Kurtosis
COMP	300	1.00	5.00	3.396	0.866	0.749	-0.419
CD	300	1.20	5.00	3.340	0.859	0.739	-0.591
WE	300	1.20	5.00	3.405	0.857	0.735	-0.454
LS	300	1.20	5.00	3.299	0.866	0.750	-0.680
JS	300	1.00	5.00	3.377	0.855	0.731	-0.685
ER	300	1.00	5.00	3.354	0.854	0.729	-0.387

Note. COMP = Compensation; CD = Career Development; WE = Work Environment; LS = Leadership Skills; JS = Job Satisfaction; ER = Employee Retention.

The descriptive statistics show that all the variables of the study have a mean score of between 3.30 and 3.41 on a five-point scale meaning that the perceptions of all HR practice dimensions, job satisfaction and employee retention are moderate in nature with a degree of highness. The values of kurtosis of all variables are in the acceptable range (between +1 and -1 in absolute values), which proves that the data has more or less normal distribution and can be used in structural equation modeling (Bibi et al., 2026).

Correlation

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Matrix (N = 300)

Variable	COMP	CD	WE	LS	JS	ER
COMP	1					
CD	.064	1				
WE	-.001	-.150**	1			
LS	.018	.040	-.034	1		
JS	.445**	.383**	.353**	.362**	1	
ER	.424**	.369**	.324**	.372**	.758**	1

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation matrix shows that the four variables of HR practices are statistically significant at $p = .01$ level with both job satisfaction and retention of the employees. It is important to note that job satisfaction and employee retention ($r = .758$) have the highest correlation in the matrix, indicating that JS has a very vital role in the retention results. All the predictor variables (COMP, CD, WE and LS) exhibit negligible or low correlation with each other, meaning that the issue of multicollinearity in the structural model does not exist (Fahad et al., 2026).

Construct Reliability

Table 3. Construct Reliability: Cronbach's Alpha and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE
COMP	0.751	0.501
CD	0.749	0.498
WE	0.749	0.499
LS	0.750	0.497
JS	0.749	0.500
ER	0.750	0.501

Note. COMP = Compensation; CD = Career Development; WE = Work Environment; LS = Leadership Skills; JS = Job Satisfaction; ER = Employee Retention.

The constructs all exhibit good internal consistency, with Cronbach alpha values between 0.749 and 0.751 and all of them are above the recommended Cronbach alpha of 0.70 (Hair et al., as cited in Raza et al., 2023). AVE values of all constructs are equal to or close to the minimum level of 0.50 indicating sufficient convergent validity. These findings suggest that these measurement tools are good at measuring their intended constructs in all latent variables (Kamran et al., 2026).

HTMT Test

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)-Discriminant Validity

	COMP	CD	WE	LS	JS	ER
COMP	—					
CD	0.164	—				
WE	0.090	0.224	—			

LS	0.129	0.116	0.133	—		
JS	0.594	0.511	0.472	0.483	—	
ER	0.564	0.493	0.430	0.498	1.010	—

Note. Below the diagonal are values which are HTMT ratios. Discriminant validity is suggested to be a threshold below 0.85 (Henseler et al., as cited in Fatima et al., 2024). The value 1.010 in the JS-ER HTMT one could be interpreted with care and is discussed in the limitations section.

All the other ratios of HTMT are below the conservative value of 0.85, which supports the discriminant validity of the rest of the construct pairs, except the pair of the jobs and the economy (JS-ER) of 1.010. The high ratio of the JS to ER is in line with the theoretical assumption of a high conceptual overlapping between the two constructs but this has been noted to be a limitation, and it is explained in the corresponding section. The constructs created by the predictor (COMP, CD, WE, LS) are all highly discriminant compared to one another and versus, the constructs of JS and ER (Khalid et al., 2026).

R² and Adjusted R²

Table 5. Coefficient of Determination (R² and Adjusted R²)

Endogenous Variable	R ²	Adjusted R ²
Job Satisfaction (JS)	0.623	0.617
Employee Retention (ER)	0.577	0.576

The structural model has a high explanatory power. The four variables of the HR practices are used to explain 62.3% of the variance in job satisfaction (Adjusted R² = 0.617), and job satisfaction, in turn, with HR practices, explains 57.7% of the variance in employee retention (Adjusted R² = 0.576). As per the settled standards in the PLS-SEM, R² of more than 0.50 is deemed to be significant (Chin, as cited in Nawaz et al., 2024), which validates that the model has a significant predictive power of the two endogenous constructs (Mahmood et al., 2026).

Direct Effects

Table 6. Direct Effects-Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Path	Original Sample (β)	Sample Mean	STDEV	T-Statistic	p-Value	Decision
H1	COMP → ER	0.306	0.306	0.030	10.230	0.000	Supported
H2	CD → ER	0.309	0.309	0.029	10.685	0.000	Supported
H3	WE → ER	0.321	0.321	0.030	10.889	0.000	Supported
H4	LS → ER	0.266	0.265	0.032	8.333	0.000	Supported

H5	COM P → JS	0.403	0.402	0.038	10.698	0.000	Supported
H6	CD → JS	0.406	0.405	0.036	11.158	0.000	Supported
H7	WE → JS	0.423	0.421	0.037	11.319	0.000	Supported
H8	LS → JS	0.350	0.348	0.040	8.806	0.000	Supported
H9	JS → ER	0.760	0.762	0.022	33.850	0.000	Supported

Note. β = standardized path coefficient; STDEV = standard deviation; bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples; $p < .05$ denotes significance.

Each of the direct effects that are hypothesized are statistically significant at $p < .001$. Work environment has the greatest direct impact on employee retention ($\beta = 0.321$), career development ($\beta = 0.309$) and compensation ($\beta = 0.306$) and leadership skills exhibit the most insignificant direct impact ($\beta = 0.266$). Among the predictors of job satisfaction, work environment once again comes out as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.423$) followed by career development ($\beta = 0.406$) and compensation ($\beta = 0.403$) which have similar effects. The job satisfaction to the employee retention path has the biggest coefficient in the model ($\beta = 0.760$) indicating the centrality of satisfaction as a motivator of the retention behavior (Naeem et al., 2026).

Mediation Analysis

Table 7. Specific Indirect Effects-Mediation Analysis (JS as Mediator)

Hypothesis	Path	Indirect Effect (β)	Sample Mean	STDEV	T-Statistics	p-Value	Decision
H10	COM P → JS → ER	0.306	0.306	0.030	10.230	0.000	Supported
H11	CD → JS → ER	0.309	0.309	0.029	10.685	0.000	Supported
H12	WE → JS → ER	0.321	0.321	0.030	10.889	0.000	Supported
H13	LS → JS → ER	0.266	0.265	0.032	8.333	0.000	Supported

Note. Indirect effects estimated via bootstrapping (5,000 resamples); significance assessed through bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (not inclusive of zero).

This mediation analysis supports the notion that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between each of the four HR practices and employee retention. All of the specific indirect effects are statistically significant ($p < .001$), and the sizes of indirect effects vary between 0.266 (LS \rightarrow JS \rightarrow ER) and 0.321 (WE \rightarrow JS \rightarrow ER). These findings are a strong indication of a complete mediation process in line with the theoretical assumption that the effect of HR practices on retention is mediated through the psychological process of employee satisfaction (Sarwar et al., 2025).

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Table 8. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	T-Statistics	p-Value	Decision
H1	COMP \rightarrow ER	0.306	10.230	0.000	Supported
H2	CD \rightarrow ER	0.309	10.685	0.000	Supported
H3	WE \rightarrow ER	0.321	10.889	0.000	Supported
H4	LS \rightarrow ER	0.266	8.333	0.000	Supported
H5	COMP \rightarrow JS	0.403	10.698	0.000	Supported
H6	CD \rightarrow JS	0.406	11.158	0.000	Supported
H7	WE \rightarrow JS	0.423	11.319	0.000	Supported
H8	LS \rightarrow JS	0.350	8.806	0.000	Supported
H9	JS \rightarrow ER	0.760	33.850	0.000	Supported
H10	COMP \rightarrow JS \rightarrow ER	0.306	10.230	0.000	Supported
H11	CD \rightarrow JS \rightarrow ER	0.309	10.685	0.000	Supported
H12	WE \rightarrow JS \rightarrow ER	0.321	10.889	0.000	Supported
H13	LS \rightarrow JS \rightarrow ER	0.266	8.333	0.000	Supported

Note. β = standardized path coefficient. All 13 hypotheses are supported at $p < .001$.

The consolidated hypothesis testing summary confirms that all 13 hypothesized relationships are statistically supported. The model demonstrates both direct and mediated pathways through which HR practices shape employee retention, with job satisfaction functioning as a consistent and robust mediating mechanism across all four practice dimensions (Shehzadi et al., 2026).

Discussion

This research provides a theoretical and practical value of the determinant of employee retention in the education sector in Pakistan through the results achieved. The fact that all 13 hypotheses were confirmed proves the strength of the suggested framework and resonates with the rest of the HRM literature (Janjua et al., 2026). The most important result is the astoundingly high correlation between job satisfaction and employee retention ($= 0.760$) which makes JS not only an intermediary variable but the overall psychological process according to which all the HR practice effects on employee retention manifest themselves. This aligns with the Social Exchange Theory since the anticipated behavioral outcomes among employees are the work environment that comes out as the most influential predictor of job satisfaction (0.423) and employee retention (0.321) in the context of HR practices. The implications of this discovery have significant policy implications in the education institutions in Pakistan, where issues pertaining to physical infrastructure, collegial support, and organizational culture are widely reported.

Career development and compensation have similar and significant impacts on both outcome variables, which supports the claim that the employees in the education sector in Pakistan are



responsive to both organizational and economic cues (Shahzad et al., 2024). Although leadership skills have the most modest coefficients, they are statistically and practically significant, which confirms that successful leadership is an indispensable organizational resource in the retention management (Isaac et al., 2023). The model accounts for 62.3% of job satisfaction and 57.7% of employee retention which are high predictive ability and theoretical economy.

Limitations

A number of drawbacks should be mentioned. To begin with, the cross-sectional design does not allow causal inference; longitudinal information would further support the directional statements of the model. Second, the HTMT ratio of the JSER pair (1.010) is a bit larger than the recommended value, indicating some overlap of the constructs that could inflate the mediation estimates. Third, the study is restricted to the education sector in Pakistan which limits the extrapolation to other sectors or countries. Fourth, observed associations could have been inflated by common method bias due to the single-source self-reported data, even with analytical precautions.

Future Research Directions

The next round of research needs to take the longitudinal research designs in order to identify the causal direction and utilize multi-source methods to overcome the issue of common method variance. It may be interesting to expand the framework with boundary conditions, e.g., the size of an organization, the type of an institution (public or private), or tenure of employees, and find some important moderating effects that are not represented in the current research. Also, the same framework could be replicated in other sectors of the developing-economy education sector and increase cross-cultural generalizability and add to comparative knowledge of HR-retention dynamics.

Conclusion

This paper presents convincing empirical data that compensation, career development, work environment and leadership skills are the important antecedents of job satisfaction as well as employee retention in education sector in Pakistan. Job satisfaction is a strong full mediator of such relationships that enhances theoretical and practical significance of affective states of employees in retention management. Educational institutions aiming to decrease turnover should focus on holistic HR practices that will help improve their performance in terms of employee satisfaction not only in the economic benefits but also in the professional development, quality of the environment and leadership efficiency since the overall impact of the practices on the satisfaction of the employees will ultimately drive the stability of the institution and their longevity in the workplace.

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