

Perceived Support, Work Environment, and Organizational Commitment: Pathways to Employee Retention

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Abstract

Employee retention has become a critical concern in healthcare organizations due to the increasing shortage of skilled nurses and the high costs associated with turnover. This study investigates the impact of perceived organizational support (POS) and work environment (WE) on employee retention (ER), with organizational commitment (OC) examined as a mediating variable among nurses working in private hospitals in Punjab, Pakistan. Drawing on social exchange theory, the study adopted a quantitative design and surveyed 413 nurses through a structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed using regression and mediation techniques. The results revealed that both POS and WE significantly and positively influence ER, confirming the vital role of organizational practices in retaining nursing professionals. Furthermore, mediation analysis demonstrated that OC partially mediates the relationship between WE and ER, suggesting that a positive work environment fosters greater commitment, which in turn enhances retention. However, OC did not mediate the relationship between POS and ER, indicating that perceived support influences retention directly rather than indirectly through commitment. These findings highlight the importance of creating supportive organizational practices and maintaining a healthy work environment to strengthen commitment and reduce turnover in the nursing sector. The study contributes to the literature by contextualizing employee retention within the Pakistani healthcare system and provides practical recommendations for hospital administrators and policymakers to address workforce sustainability challenges.

Keywords: perceived organizational support, work environment, organizational commitment, employee retention, nursing sector, Pakistan

Introduction

Employee retention is widely recognized as a cornerstone of organizational success, especially in the healthcare sector where shortages of qualified nurses present ongoing challenges (Dhanpat et al., 2018). The retention of skilled nursing staff not only ensures continuity of patient care but also promotes organizational stability, reduces recruitment and training costs, and enhances the overall quality of healthcare services (Haider et al., 2015; Johara et al., 2019). High turnover rates in the nursing profession are particularly concerning, as they disrupt the consistency of care and increase the financial and managerial burden on hospitals (Masibigiri & Nienaber, 2011).

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One of the key predictors of employee retention is **perceived organizational support (POS)**, defined as employees' perception of the extent to which their organization values their contributions and cares for their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Prior research has demonstrated that higher levels of POS are associated with greater employee loyalty, reduced turnover intentions, and improved performance outcomes (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). In the healthcare sector, supportive organizational practices, such as fair treatment, recognition, and professional development opportunities, play a vital role in retaining skilled staff (Al-Omar, 2019).

Another critical factor is the **work environment (WE)**, which encompasses physical, social, and psychological aspects of the workplace (Steaventinus Tarigan et al., 2020). A positive and supportive work environment enhances job satisfaction, fosters collaboration, and motivates employees to remain in their organizations (Wong et al., 2014; Prayoga et al., 2020). Studies have shown that poor working conditions, inadequate staffing, and lack of managerial support contribute to high turnover among nurses (Umamaheswari & Krishnan, 2016; Zhang et al., 2014).

Additionally, **organizational commitment (OC)** has been found to significantly influence retention decisions. Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model—*affective, continuance, and normative commitment*—explains the psychological attachment employees form with their organizations. Employees with stronger commitment levels are more likely to remain in their roles and contribute to organizational success (Sari & Gustiayumanuatidewi, 2020; Lambert, 2019). In healthcare, organizational commitment is crucial in motivating nurses to endure work pressures and remain dedicated to their institutions (Chhabra, 2015).

Literature Review

Perceived organizational support (POS) refers to employees' perceptions of the extent to which their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). When employees feel supported, they are more likely to reciprocate with higher levels of loyalty, commitment, and reduced turnover intentions (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019). POS enhances trust in the organization, increases job satisfaction, and fosters organizational citizenship behaviors that strengthen the employer–employee relationship (Lamm et al., 2015; Wang, 2020). In the healthcare sector, nurses who perceive strong organizational support are more likely to remain with their employers, thereby mitigating the risks associated with workforce shortages (Al-Omar, 2019).

In addition, the **work environment (WE)** plays a critical role in shaping employees' job experiences. A supportive work environment includes both physical factors (e.g., safety, resources, workload) and psychosocial elements (e.g., teamwork, supervisor support, communication) (Steaventinus Tarigan et al., 2020). Prior studies suggest that a positive work environment significantly contributes to employee satisfaction and retention, while poor conditions increase turnover intentions (Zhang et al., 2014; Prayoga et al., 2020). In the context of nursing, unfavorable environments

such as understaffing, excessive workloads, and lack of managerial support have been strongly associated with burnout and attrition (Umamaheswari & Krishnan, 2016; Mousa, 2019).

Another key construct is **organizational commitment (OC)**, which refers to employees' psychological attachment and sense of obligation toward their organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Employees with higher levels of affective, continuance, or normative commitment are more likely to remain loyal and invest greater effort in their organizations (Chhabra, 2015; Lambert, 2019). Research further suggests that OC mediates the relationships between POS, WE, and retention by fostering stronger identification with organizational goals (Rehman, 2012; Sari & Gustiayumanuatidewi, 2020). Specifically, a positive work environment and perceived support encourage stronger commitment, which, in turn, enhances retention outcomes (Curado, 2019; Ekhsan, 2019).

Despite the growing body of international research, **studies in Pakistan remain scarce**. Existing literature highlights issues such as high nurse turnover, poor working conditions, and migration of skilled healthcare professionals (Parveen, 2016; Karamaliani et al., 2016). However, few empirical studies have systematically examined how POS, WE, and OC jointly influence employee retention in the Pakistani healthcare context. This gap underscores the need for the present study, which investigates these relationships among nurses in private hospitals in Punjab, Pakistan, thereby extending theoretical and practical understanding in a developing country context.

Methodology

This study employed a **quantitative, descriptive research design**, which is particularly suitable for examining relationships among organizational variables and testing hypothesized associations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study was grounded in the hypothetico-deductive approach, allowing empirical testing of the proposed conceptual framework through statistical analysis. A structured, self-administered questionnaire was used as the primary data collection instrument, as this method is widely recognized for its efficiency in gathering standardized information from large populations (Bryman, 2016).

The population of the study comprised **64,846 registered nurses** employed in private hospitals across Punjab, as reported by the Pakistan Nursing Council (PNC). Nurses were chosen because they represent a critical segment of the healthcare workforce, and their retention directly affects the efficiency and sustainability of health service delivery (Haider et al., 2015). Given time and resource constraints, a **sample of 500 respondents** was selected using a **convenience sampling technique**, which has been frequently used in organizational research for exploratory and relational studies (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Out of the distributed questionnaires, **413 responses** were returned complete and valid, yielding a response rate of 82.6%. This sample size was considered sufficient for multivariate statistical

techniques such as regression and mediation analysis, in line with the recommendations of Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

The study employed validated instruments adapted from prior research. **Perceived organizational support (POS)** was measured using a scale developed by Rhoades et al. (2001), capturing employees' perceptions of how much their organization values their contributions and cares for their well-being. **Work environment (WE)** was assessed using items from Msengeti and Obwogi (2014), focusing on both the physical and psychosocial dimensions of the workplace. **Organizational commitment (OC)** was measured using the three-component model of Meyer and Allen (1991), covering affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Finally, **employee retention (ER)** was assessed using the scale developed by Kyndt et al. (2009), which captures employees' intentions to remain within the organization.

The measurement instruments consisted of **28 items** in total, all rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). To ensure reliability, Cronbach's alpha values were computed for each construct. The results indicated high internal consistency across all scales, with coefficients exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.80 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Specifically, POS ($\alpha = 0.90$), WE ($\alpha = 0.82$), OC ($\alpha = 0.82$), and ER ($\alpha = 0.85$) demonstrated strong reliability, confirming the robustness of the measurement instruments.

Data Analysis

This chapter presents the analysis of the collected data and reports the results of the study. The primary objective was to examine the relationships among perceived organizational support (POS), work environment (WE), organizational commitment (OC), and employee retention (ER) in the private nursing sector of Punjab, Pakistan. Specifically, the study tested four hypotheses:

1. POS has a direct positive impact on ER.
2. WE has a direct positive impact on ER.
3. OC mediates the relationship between POS and ER.
4. OC mediates the relationship between WE and ER.

To address these hypotheses, a series of statistical procedures were conducted using **SPSS v20**. The analyses included descriptive statistics, normality tests, reliability analysis, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), correlation, regression, and mediation analysis. The results are presented systematically, beginning with demographic characteristics of respondents, followed by measurement reliability and validity tests, and then hypothesis testing.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Percentage
Gender	Female	74.3%
Gender	Male	25.7%
Age	26-44 years	66.3%

Education	Bachelor's Degree	68.0%
Experience	2-5 years	41.9%

Table 2: *Regression Analysis Results (POS and WE on ER)*

Predictor	R ²	F	p
POS → ER	0.23	127.6	0.000
WE → ER	0.43	314.3	0.000

Table 3: *Mediation Analysis Results*

Path	B	R ²	p
POS → OC → ER	0.09 (NS)	0.50	0.046
WE → OC → ER	0.45*	0.51	0.000

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that both perceived organizational support (POS) and the work environment (WE) have significant positive effects on employee retention (ER) among nurses working in private hospitals in Punjab, Pakistan. These results are consistent with previous studies which highlight the importance of supportive organizational practices and favorable workplace conditions in reducing turnover intentions (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019; Zhang et al., 2014). Nurses who perceive that their organizations value their contributions and care about their well-being are more inclined to remain committed to their roles, thereby lowering turnover rates. Similarly, a positive work environment characterized by fair treatment, teamwork, and adequate resources encourages nurses to stay in their organizations, consistent with the findings of Wong (2014) and Prayoga et al. (2020).

An interesting insight from this study is that **organizational commitment (OC)** played a mediating role only in the relationship between WE and ER, but not between POS and ER. This suggests that while organizational support directly influences retention, the effect of the work environment on retention operates partly through the enhancement of organizational commitment. In other words, when nurses experience a positive and supportive work environment, they develop stronger psychological attachment to their organizations, which in turn fosters greater retention. This aligns with the work of Sari and Gustiayumanuatidewi (2020), who found that organizational commitment significantly mediates workplace factors and retention outcomes. On the other hand, POS appears to influence retention directly, without requiring organizational commitment as an intermediary, supporting the earlier conclusions of Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002).

These findings can be explained using **Social Exchange Theory (SET)** (Blau, 1964). According to SET, employees reciprocate positive treatment from their organizations with favorable attitudes and behaviors, such as loyalty and reduced turnover. POS functions as a direct exchange mechanism: when nurses perceive

adequate support, they immediately reciprocate through higher retention intentions. Conversely, the work environment influences retention more indirectly, as it shapes day-to-day experiences and fosters commitment before translating into retention behavior. This dual pathway underscores the complex dynamics between organizational practices and employee outcomes.

In the **Pakistani context**, these findings are particularly relevant. The nursing profession in Pakistan faces chronic shortages due to high turnover and migration to international markets (Parveen, 2016; Karamaliani et al., 2016). Poor working conditions, lack of managerial support, and limited professional growth opportunities are often cited as major reasons for attrition (Mousa, 2019). The present study empirically validates these concerns and emphasizes the urgent need for healthcare administrators in Pakistan to improve work environments and adopt supportive organizational policies. By fostering commitment and enhancing support mechanisms, hospitals can mitigate turnover and strengthen the sustainability of their nursing workforce.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes to the growing body of literature by contextualizing the relationships among POS, WE, OC, and ER in a developing country's healthcare system. While international research has extensively explored these constructs (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Allen & Meyer, 1990; Haider et al., 2015), limited empirical work has addressed them in Pakistan. By confirming that organizational commitment partially mediates the relationship between work environment and retention but not between organizational support and retention, this study provides nuanced insights for both scholars and practitioners.

Conclusion

This study concludes that perceived organizational support (POS) and work environment (WE) are critical determinants of employee retention (ER) among nurses in private hospitals in Punjab. While POS directly enhances retention, WE strengthens it indirectly through organizational commitment (OC). These findings underscore the importance of fostering supportive organizational practices and developing conducive work environments to reduce nurse turnover. Strengthening these factors can improve employee commitment, ensure workforce stability, and ultimately enhance the quality of healthcare service delivery in Pakistan.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that hospital managers foster stronger perceived organizational support by recognizing nurses' contributions, providing fair rewards, and ensuring career development opportunities. Improving the work environment through adequate staffing, effective communication, and supportive supervision is also essential for enhancing organizational commitment and retention. Policymakers should prioritize investment in healthcare human resources by addressing workplace challenges, enforcing fair labor practices, and developing retention policies tailored to the nursing sector. Collectively, these measures can help

reduce turnover, strengthen commitment, and ensure the sustainability of the nursing workforce in Pakistan.

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