

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

Umair Zahid¹, Muhammad Adnan², Syed Muhammad Anas¹, Hafiza Syeda Maryam¹

Abstract

Employee retention is a pressing challenge for healthcare organizations facing nurse shortages and high turnover costs. This study examines the influence of perceived organizational support (POS) and work environment (WE) on employee retention (ER), with organizational commitment (OC) as a mediator, among nurses in private hospitals in Punjab, Pakistan. Guided by social exchange theory, data were collected from 413 nurses using a structured survey and analyzed through regression and mediation techniques. Findings show that POS and WE significantly enhance retention, with OC partially mediating the WE–ER link but not the POS–ER relationship. These results suggest that while supportive environments foster commitment and retention, organizational support directly drives retention. The study contributes to employee retention literature in the healthcare context of Pakistan and offers practical insights for hospital administrators and policymakers to promote workforce sustainability.

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

Introduction

Employee retention is increasingly acknowledged as a fundamental driver of organizational sustainability and long-term success, particularly in sectors where human capital forms the backbone of service delivery. Nowhere is this more evident than in healthcare, where the shortage of qualified nurses poses persistent challenges for hospital management and policymakers alike (Dhanpat et al., 2018). Retaining skilled nursing staff is not only essential for ensuring continuity and quality of patient care but also critical for maintaining organizational stability, reducing the financial and administrative costs of recruitment and training, and strengthening institutional reputation (Haider et al., 2015; Johara et al., 2019). Conversely, high turnover rates among nurses disrupt service delivery, exacerbate workforce shortages, and place considerable financial and managerial strain on healthcare organizations (Masibigiri & Nienaber, 2011). These issues are particularly acute in developing countries, such as Pakistan, where healthcare systems already operate under resource constraints.

Among the various determinants of employee retention, perceived organizational support (POS) has emerged as a central construct. POS reflects the

¹ M.Phil. Scholar

² Independent Researcher

extent to which employees believe their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Extensive empirical research suggests that higher levels of POS are positively associated with loyalty, job satisfaction, and performance, while simultaneously reducing turnover intentions (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). In the healthcare sector, where demanding work schedules and emotional pressures are common, organizational support in the form of fair treatment, recognition, mentorship, and professional development opportunities can substantially influence nurses' decisions to remain with their employers (Al-Omar, 2019).

Similarly, the work environment (WE) plays a critical role in shaping employee attitudes and retention outcomes. The concept of work environment encompasses physical conditions, interpersonal relationships, managerial practices, and the broader organizational culture (Steaventinus Tarigan et al., 2020). A positive and supportive environment enhances job satisfaction, fosters collaboration, and motivates employees to stay committed to their institutions (Wong et al., 2014; Prayoga et al., 2020). Conversely, inadequate staffing levels, poor supervisory support, excessive workloads, and limited resources create stress and dissatisfaction, leading to increased turnover rates among nurses (Umamaheswari & Krishnan, 2016; Zhang et al., 2014).

Another important predictor of retention is organizational commitment (OC), which reflects the psychological bond employees develop with their organization. Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model—*affective*, *continuance*, and *normative* commitment—provides a framework to understand this bond. Employees with higher levels of organizational commitment are more willing to remain in their roles, invest discretionary effort, and contribute positively to organizational objectives (Sari & Gustiayumanuatidewi, 2020; Lambert, 2019). Within the healthcare context, organizational commitment has been shown to buffer the adverse effects of work pressures and strengthen nurses' willingness to continue their service despite demanding conditions (Chhabra, 2015).

Given these dynamics, examining the interrelationships among POS, WE, OC, and employee retention offers valuable insights into workforce management in healthcare organizations. Understanding these factors is particularly critical in the Pakistani context, where the healthcare sector faces both growing demand for services and persistent shortages of qualified professionals. By focusing on nurses in private hospitals, this study aims to highlight the organizational practices that can effectively enhance retention, thereby contributing to both theory and practice in human resource management within healthcare.

Literature Review

Perceived organizational support (POS) reflects employees' beliefs about the degree to which their organization values their contributions and prioritizes their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Employees who perceive high levels of support are more likely to reciprocate with loyalty, commitment, and reduced turnover intentions

(Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019). POS is also linked to greater trust in the organization, enhanced job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behaviors that reinforce the employer–employee relationship (Lamm et al., 2015; Wang, 2020). Within the healthcare sector, supportive organizational practices are particularly crucial, as nurses who feel valued and cared for are more likely to remain with their employers, thereby mitigating the workforce shortages that threaten service quality and patient care (Al-Omar, 2019).

Equally important is the work environment (WE), which shapes employees' daily job experiences and influences their long-term commitment. WE comprises both physical aspects, such as workplace safety, adequate resources, and manageable workloads, and psychosocial factors, including teamwork, supervisor support, and open communication (Steaventinus Tarigan et al., 2020). Evidence consistently shows that supportive work environments improve job satisfaction and retention, while unfavorable conditions lead to burnout and turnover (Zhang et al., 2014; Prayoga et al., 2020). For nurses, factors such as understaffing, excessive workloads, and inadequate managerial support exacerbate stress and are strongly associated with attrition (Umamaheswari & Krishnan, 2016; Mousa, 2019).

Another critical construct is organizational commitment (OC), defined as employees' psychological attachment to and identification with their organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). OC encompasses affective, continuance, and normative dimensions, each of which influences employees' likelihood of staying with their organizations and investing in its success (Chhabra, 2015; Lambert, 2019). Prior research suggests that OC acts as a mediating mechanism, strengthening the links between POS, WE, and employee retention by aligning individual goals with organizational objectives (Rehman, 2012; Sari & Gustiayumanuatidewi, 2020). In particular, when nurses perceive supportive practices and a healthy work environment, their organizational commitment deepens, which in turn enhances retention outcomes (Curado, 2019; Ekhsan, 2019).

Despite extensive evidence in international contexts, empirical research in Pakistan remains limited. The literature highlights persistent challenges such as high turnover among nurses, inadequate working conditions, and the migration of skilled healthcare professionals abroad (Parveen, 2016; Karamaliani et al., 2016). However, few studies have systematically explored how POS, WE, and OC jointly influence employee retention in the Pakistani healthcare system. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates these relationships among nurses in private hospitals in Punjab, Pakistan, thereby contributing to the theoretical discourse on employee retention while offering practical insights for strengthening workforce sustainability in developing country contexts.

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative, descriptive research design, deemed appropriate for investigating relationships among organizational variables and testing hypothesized associations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Grounded in the

hypothetico-deductive approach, the research empirically examined the proposed conceptual framework using statistical analysis. Data were collected through a structured, self-administered questionnaire, a widely recognized method for efficiently obtaining standardized responses from large populations (Bryman, 2016).

The target population comprised 64,846 registered nurses employed in private hospitals across Punjab, as reported by the Pakistan Nursing Council (PNC). Nurses were selected as the focal group given their critical role in healthcare delivery, where retention directly affects service efficiency and sustainability (Haider et al., 2015). Due to time and resource constraints, a convenience sampling strategy was employed, yielding a target sample of 500 respondents. This approach, frequently used in exploratory and relational studies, is particularly effective when access to participants is limited (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Of the distributed questionnaires, 413 were returned fully completed and valid, representing an effective response rate of 82.6%. The final sample size was considered adequate for multivariate analyses, including regression and mediation, consistent with Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) guidelines.

Validated instruments adapted from prior research were employed to measure the study variables. Perceived organizational support (POS) was assessed using the scale developed by Rhoades et al. (2001), which captures employees' perceptions of organizational care and recognition. Work environment (WE) was measured using items from Msengeti and Obwogi (2014), covering both physical and psychosocial workplace dimensions. Organizational commitment (OC) was evaluated through Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model, encompassing affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Finally, employee retention (ER) was measured using Kyndt et al.'s (2009) scale, which reflects employees' intentions to remain with their 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 results of this study demonstrate that both perceived organizational support (POS) and the work environment (WE) exert significant positive effects on employee retention (ER) among nurses in private hospitals in Punjab, Pakistan. These findings reinforce prior research underscoring the importance of supportive organizational practices and favorable workplace conditions in mitigating turnover (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019; Zhang et al., 2014). Nurses who perceive that their organizations value their contributions and well-being are more likely to remain committed to their roles, while a positive work environment characterized by fairness, teamwork, and adequate resources similarly enhances retention (Wong, 2014; Prayoga et al., 2020).

A notable finding is that organizational commitment (OC) mediated the relationship between WE and ER, but not between POS and ER. This suggests that while POS directly influences retention, the impact of the work environment operates indirectly through the enhancement of organizational commitment. In practical terms,

supportive environments strengthen nurses' psychological attachment to their organizations, which subsequently fosters retention. These results are consistent with Sari and Gustiayumanatidewi (2020), who found that organizational commitment mediates workplace factors and retention outcomes, whereas POS often exerts a more direct effect (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

These dynamics can be explained through Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964). POS functions as a direct exchange mechanism: when nurses feel adequately supported, they reciprocate with loyalty and stronger retention intentions. In contrast, the work environment influences daily experiences, which gradually foster commitment before translating into retention behaviors. This dual pathway highlights the nuanced interplay between organizational practices and employee outcomes.

In the Pakistani context, these findings hold particular significance. The nursing workforce continues to face persistent shortages due to high turnover and international migration (Parveen, 2016; Karamaliani et al., 2016). Poor working conditions, limited managerial support, and scarce professional growth opportunities remain key drivers of attrition (Mousa, 2019). By empirically validating these concerns, this study emphasizes the urgent need for healthcare administrators to strengthen supportive policies and improve workplace conditions in order to retain skilled nurses and ensure workforce sustainability.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by contextualizing POS, WE, OC, and ER within Pakistan's healthcare system, where empirical research remains scarce. By demonstrating that organizational commitment mediates the WE–ER relationship but not the POS–ER relationship, the study offers a nuanced understanding of how organizational practices shape retention. These insights advance scholarship on employee retention in developing countries and provide practical implications for hospital administrators and policymakers seeking to address workforce challenges.

Conclusion

This study concludes that perceived organizational support (POS) and work environment (WE) are key predictors of employee retention (ER) among nurses in private hospitals in Punjab. While POS exerts a direct influence on retention, WE enhances retention indirectly through organizational commitment (OC). These findings highlight the need for healthcare organizations to foster supportive practices and create positive work environments that cultivate commitment and reduce turnover. Strengthening these organizational factors is essential not only for ensuring workforce stability but also for improving the overall quality and sustainability of healthcare service delivery in Pakistan.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, several practical measures are proposed to enhance nurse retention in private hospitals. First, hospital managers should strengthen perceived organizational support by recognizing nurses' contributions, offering fair and transparent reward systems, and providing opportunities for

professional growth and career advancement. Second, improving the work environment is essential and can be achieved through adequate staffing, open and effective communication channels, and supportive supervisory practices that reduce workload pressures and foster collaboration.

At the policy level, greater investment in healthcare human resources is necessary. Policymakers should address systemic workplace challenges, enforce fair labor practices, and develop retention-oriented policies tailored to the needs of the nursing profession. Collectively, these strategies can reduce turnover, build stronger organizational commitment, and promote the long-term sustainability of Pakistan's nursing workforce.

References

- Allen, N. J., & Meyer, J. P. (1990). The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organization. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 63(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8325.1990.tb00506.x>
- Arasanmi, C. N., & Krishna, A. (2019). Employer branding: Perceived organizational support and employee retention – The mediating role of organizational commitment. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 51(3), 174–183. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ICT-10-2018-0086>
- Eisenberger, R., Huntington, R., Hutchison, S., & Sowa, D. (1986). Perceived organizational support. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 71(3), 500–507. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.71.3.500>
- Karamaliani, R., Niaz, U., Saleem, S., & Gul, A. (2016). Challenges faced by Pakistani nurses due to migration. *Journal of the College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan*, 26(9), 791–793. Retrieved from <https://www.jcpsp.pk/>
- Kyndt, E., Dochy, F., Michielsens, M., & Moeyaert, B. (2009). Employee retention: Organizational and personal perspectives. *Vocations and Learning*, 2(3), 195–215. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12186-009-9024-7>
- Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (1991). A three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment. *Human Resource Management Review*, 1(1), 61–89. [https://doi.org/10.1016/1053-4822\(91\)90011-Z](https://doi.org/10.1016/1053-4822(91)90011-Z)
- Mousa, M. (2019). Nurses' turnover in the health care sector: A literature review. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 94, 21–31. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2019.02.012>
- Msengeti, D. M., & Obwogi, J. (2014). Effects of pay and work environment on employee retention: A study of hotel industry in Mombasa County. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 4(4), 1–10. Retrieved from <http://www.ijsrp.org/research-paper-0414.php?rp=P282567>
- Parveen, K. (2016). Nursing workforce crisis in Pakistan: A policy perspective. *Pakistan Journal of Public Health*, 6(1), 12–16. Retrieved from <http://pjph.org/>