



RESEARCH PAPER

Interplay among Abusive Supervision, Employee Engagement and Turnover Intentions: Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

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DOI

[http://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2022\(6-II\)45](http://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2022(6-II)45)

PAPER INFO

ABSTRACT

Received:

February 11, 2022

Accepted:

May 13, 2022

Online:

May 16, 2022

Keywords:

Abusive
Supervision,
Higher Education,
Job Satisfaction,
Pakistan,
Turnover
Intentions

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Turnover intentions are referred to as a proximal antecedent, which shows the perceptions and understanding of employees in relation to alternatives for the possibility of jobs. Previous studies have focused on the determinants of turnover intentions. However, less is known about the mechanisms of turnover intentions in the higher education institutions (HEIs), especially in a developing state like Pakistan. Using data from a sample of 656 Ph.D. faculty members from private HEIs of Pakistan derived through multistage cluster sampling, this paper examines the empirical relationship between employee engagement, abusive supervision and turnover intentions of faculty members. This study advances the knowledge by revealing partial mediation between job satisfaction and the said study variables. Along with the addition to the literature on behavioural and social sciences, this study also has substantial implications for managers and leaders by suggesting improvements in the existing retention strategies to promote a viable culture within HEIs.

Objective of the Study

Turnover intentions are referred to as a proximal antecedent, which shows the perceptions and understanding of employees in relation to alternatives for the possibility of jobs (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). Oh and Chhinzer (2020) stressed upon the need to take measures to reduce turnover intentions of employees as the empirical evidence supports that turnover intentions may lead to actual turnover with time.

The higher education institutions (HEIs) are considered important building blocks for career and professional improvement of faculty members and students. HEIs are considered human capital-intensive organisations, therefore retaining their qualified and skilled faculty members is a major concern for them. HEIs can achieve this objective by determining the root cause of the problem and working on employee retention strategies and human resource practices consequently (Kang & Sung, 2019), this paper aims to serve this purpose.

Faculty retention has become one of the crucial issues in HEIs of Pakistan. The increase in the number of HEIs and their characterisation into public and private sectors have increased the competition. According to estimates by Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform (MDPR) (2016) the number of students to be catered by HEIs of Pakistan will increase to 4 million by the year 2025. Despite increase in the public and private HEIs in Pakistan, the implementation of strict regulations by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) to ensure global teaching and research standards has increased the challenges for HEIs (HEC, 2016).

Pakistani higher education sector is facing the issue of unusual state of turnover intentions in the faculty members due to abusive supervision (De Clercq, Haq & Azeem 2020; Khalid, Bashir, Khan & Abbas, 2018; Khan, 2017), lack of work engagement and job dissatisfaction (Ćulibrk, Delić, Mitrović, & Ćulibrk, 2018). Hofmann and Strobel (2020) studied the turnover intentions of faculty members of HEIs of Germany and Australia respectively and stressed upon the need to conduct such studies in other economies. The rationale of this research stems from the importance of this topic and the research gap highlighted by the previous studies as none of these studies used the combination of the said variables to identify the root cause of turnover intentions.

Various theories and models have been proposed by different researchers in order to understand the phenomenon of employee turnover intentions. Theory of Met Expectations by Porter and Steers (1973) posits that when individuals are employed by an organisation, they have certain expectations with their employers regarding various elements of workplace such as social support, learning and growth opportunities, remuneration and workload. These expectations are originated from factors like previous work experience, work codes, standards and the commitments that employer made explicitly or implicitly while hiring (Ababneh, 2016). Taking reference from the research on withdrawal intentions (Porter & Steers, 1973; Steers & Mowday, 1981) clarifies the idea of the connection between expectation of employees (such as supportive leadership, organisational commitment and work involvement) determining turnover intentions of employees. It is also noted that job satisfaction serves as an antecedent to turnover (Porter et al., 1974) and the extent of job satisfaction reflected by an employee is the cumulative result of his met expectations (Mashile et al., 2021; Porter and Steers (1973) which also supports the underpinning of this study.

The arguments for the study are developed by taking lead from loss principle of Conservation of Resource Theory (COR) (Hobfoll, 1989). COR theory provides evidence to clarify the connection between abusive supervision, employee engagement and turnover intentions. COR theory proposes that when employees get fulfillment of resources, they remain loyal to their employers. The theory suggests that there are three reasons for turnover intention of employee; when an employee sees that his resources are not valued enough and are under threat, when the employee has already gone through the loss of a resource like trust from colleagues or confidence in job, when he invests enough resources and does not receive any resources in return like incentives and encouragement etc. This has been a matter of research that when there is lack of any of the above resources it leads employees towards turnover because when demands of resources are higher than their supply the workers start frustrating (Lee & Ashforth, 1996).

In the light of above discussion and theoretical support, a conceptual framework has been proposed to depict the hypothesized relationship chosen for analysis in this research as depicted in Figure 1.

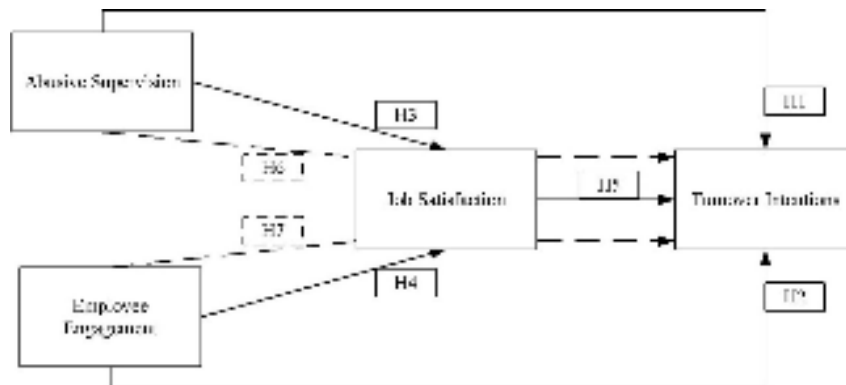


Figure 1
Conceptual Framework

- H1: There is a positive relationship between Abusive supervision and Turnover Intentions
- H2: There is a negative relationship between Employee Engagement and Turnover Intentions
- H3: There is a negative relationship between Abusive Supervision and Job Satisfaction
- H4: There is a positive relationship between Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction
- H5: There is a negative relationship between Job satisfaction and Turnover Intentions
- H6: Job Satisfaction mediates the relationship between Abusive Supervision and Turnover Intentions
- H7: Job Satisfaction mediates the relationship between Employee Engagement and Turnover Intentions

Material and Methods

The quantitative methodology was employed for collecting and interpreting data to generate results. This study has focused on the private HEIs because there are significant differences in the HRM practices and management between public and private HEIs (Khan, Aajiz & Ali, 2018). The data was collected from four regions/provinces of Pakistan including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Sindh and Islamabad Capital Territory, the study excluded Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Balochistan as there was only one private HEI in these respective regions/provinces which means that there were no available choices for the faculty members of these HEIs to compare. The study has focused on Ph.D. faculty members only because of change in criteria by HEC that has made Ph.D. degree compulsory for the level of Assistant Professor and above (HEC, 2016). The sample size of 656 was derived out of population of 3724 Ph.D. faculty members employed in 74 private HEIs.

Among 656 distributed questionnaires, 507 were returned and 488 questionnaires were used for analysis after data cleaning as 19 questionnaires were rejected due to unengaged or incomplete responses. After eliminating missing responses, the final response rate was 77.28%. The demographic analyses showed that most of the HEIs were based in Punjab (60.7%) because out of all provinces, Punjab has the highest population (110,012,442) (Qureshi, Fatima, Afzal, Khattak, & Nawaz, 2019) so relatively more number of HEIs that were based in Punjab. Furthermore, it was indicated that the majority of the respondents were male (65.8%).

Structured questionnaires were used to collect data. Abusive supervision was measured with the help of seven items which are adapted from Tepper (2000) and engagement was measured with the help of seven items which are adapted from Harter, Schmidt and Hayes (2002) on a 5-point Likert scale i.e. 1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree. Job Satisfaction was measured with the help of six items which are adapted from Bettencourt, Gwinner and Meuter (2001) where 1= extremely dissatisfied and 5= extremely satisfied. Turnover Intentions were measured with the help of six items ranging from 1= not accurate at all, to 5= extremely accurate which are adapted from the widely recognised instrument developed by Mitchel (1981).

An instrument is considered reliable when the value of Cronbach's alpha is between 0.70 and 0.95 (Creswell & Poht, 2016). The pilot test conducted by the researcher in this study showed the alpha value between 0.70 to 0.95 for all variables. The results of the Cronbach's alpha as exhibited in the Table 2 below met the threshold suggested by researchers which demonstrates that the questionnaire used in this study is reliable.

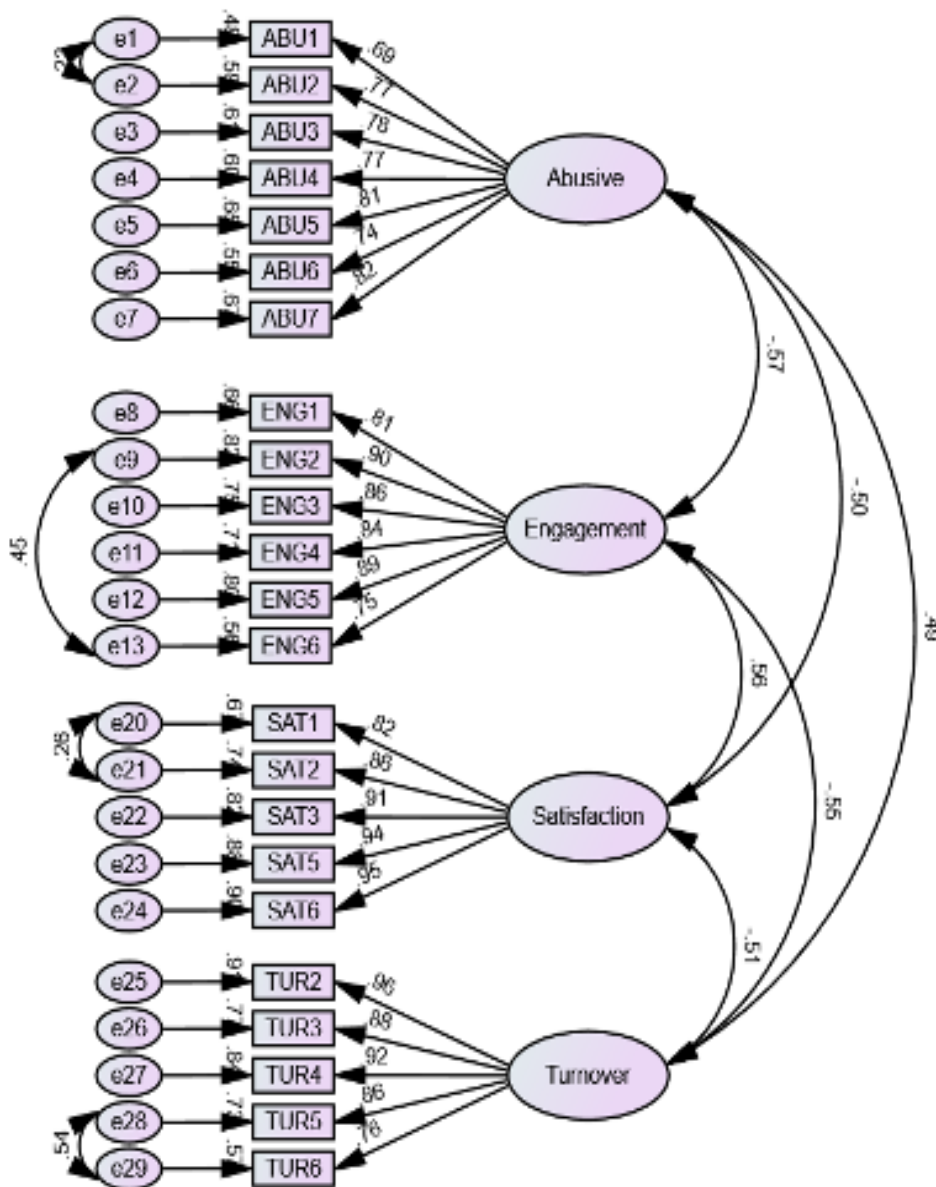
Table 2
Cronbach's alpha, Convergent and Discriminant Validity

	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	Turnover	Abusive	Engagement	Satisfaction
Turnover	0.949	0.942	0.766	0.298	0.266	0.875			
Abusive	0.886	0.91	0.592	0.32	0.272	0.493	0.77		
Engagement	0.914	0.937	0.715	0.32	0.31	-0.546	-0.566	0.845	
Satisfaction	0.919	0.953	0.803	0.312	0.275	-0.508	-0.504	0.559	0.896

Results and Discussion

The data was analysed using SPSS and AMOS (version 26) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) approach was used. The two stage SEM approach was used in the first step confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to evaluate the construct validity of the measurement instrument. In the second stage, path coefficients and significance of structural model were analysed to test the hypothesis. The mediation effect of job satisfaction was tested using 95% bias corrected bootstrap confidence interval.

The results of the measurement model showed in figure 2 below revealed that the most indices such as the relative Chi-square with a value of 2.299 (which was less than the recommended value of five), and CFI with values of more than 0.90 (0.973), RMSEA with a value of 0.052, which was less than the recommended value of 0.08. The modified model fitted the data perfectly.



Chi-square (df) = 505.812 (220); P value (≥ 0.05) = .000
 Relative Chi-Sq (≤ 5) = 2.299; CFI (≥ 0.9) = .973
 IFI (≥ 0.9) = .973; TLI (≥ 0.9) = .969
 RMSEA (≤ 0.08) = .052
 ;(Standardized estimates)

Figure 2 Measurement Model

The model fit was also checked using convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was tested using average variance extracted (AVE). The AVE for all the constructs exceeded the recommended value of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), ranging between 0.691 and 0.956 as exhibited in the Table 3 given below.

Table 3
Factor Loading

Items		Constructs	Estimate
ABU1	<---	Abusive	0.691
ABU2	<---	Abusive	0.77
ABU3	<---	Abusive	0.781
ABU4	<---	Abusive	0.772
ABU5	<---	Abusive	0.808
ABU6	<---	Abusive	0.741
ABU7	<---	Abusive	0.818
ENG1	<---	Engagement	0.811
ENG2	<---	Engagement	0.904
ENG3	<---	Engagement	0.864
ENG4	<---	Engagement	0.843
ENG5	<---	Engagement	0.893
ENG6	<---	Engagement	0.748
SAT1	<---	Satisfaction	0.82
SAT2	<---	Satisfaction	0.862
SAT3	<---	Satisfaction	0.905
SAT5	<---	Satisfaction	0.937
SAT6	<---	Satisfaction	0.95
TUR2	<---	Turnover	0.956
TUR3	<---	Turnover	0.878
TUR4	<---	Turnover	0.917
TUR5	<---	Turnover	0.855
TUR6	<---	Turnover	0.758

Furthermore, discriminant validity measures the distinctness of constructs from each other, validity will be met if the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for two factors is higher than the squared correlation (R²) (Byrne, 2010). Table 2 reveals that the values of AVE in each of the two constructs are higher than their squared correlation. This result shows that all of the constructs are not similar which depicted acceptable discriminant validity. Additionally, for discriminant validity, the relationships are to be AVE > MSV > ASV of all constructs. The results shown in Table 2 shows that all constructs have AVE > MSV > ASV, respectively.

Taken together, the above results conveys that the convergent and discriminant validities of the measures used in this research are statistically adequate.

This research employed structural model to analyse the proposed hypotheses. The structural model demonstrates the relationships among the independent and dependent factors with standardized estimates. Figure 3 below illustrates structural models for all variables.

According to the results obtained from the structural model, the fit indices like chi-square (X²) was 505.812, df was 220, relative Chi-square was 2.299, and p-value was 0.000. In addition, the CFI was 0.973; TLI was 0.969; IFI was 0.973; RMSEA was .052 (less than 0.08). Importantly it was also observed that as relative Chi-square (2.299) was less than 5; the CFI, IFI and ITL values were above 0.90 and RMSEA (0.052) is less than 0.08, so the model was rated as good fit.

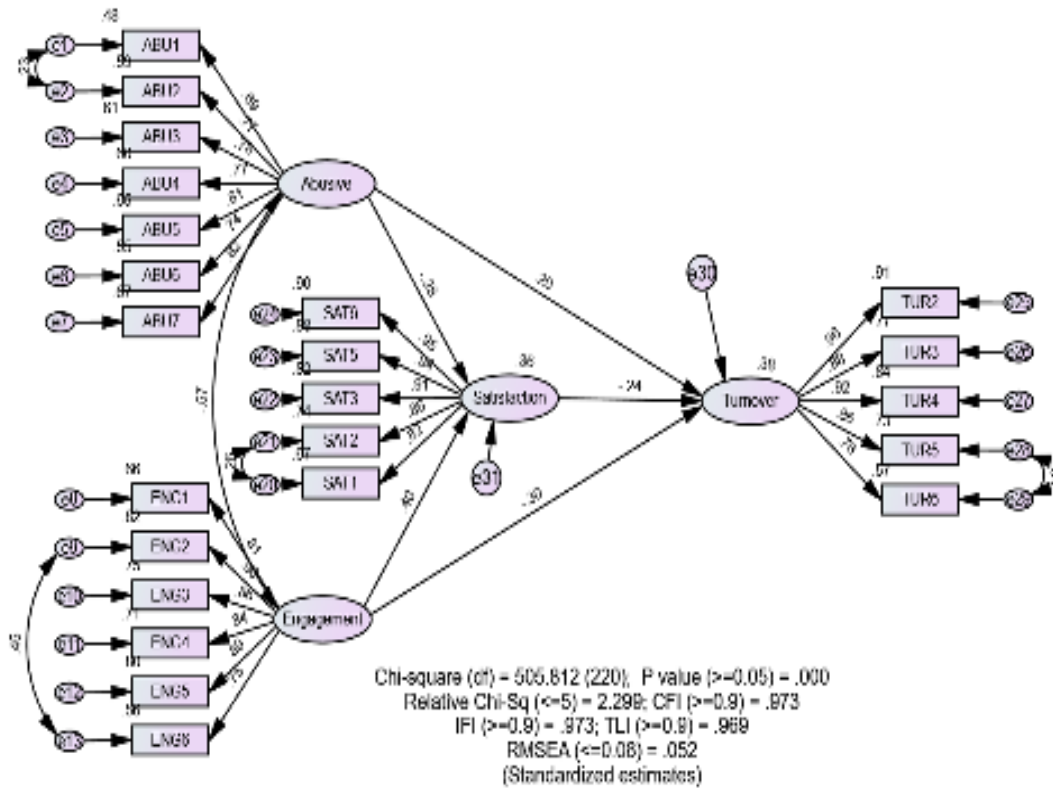


Figure 3
Structural Model

The inferential analysis exhibited that the relationship between abusive supervision and job satisfaction was negative and significant having the estimate of -0.438 and C.R. of -5.310 (>1.96). Contrary to this, employee engagement with estimate = 0.430 and C.R. = 7.733 (>1.96) had significant positive impact on job satisfaction. In general, it can be concluded from these findings that increase in abusive supervision decreases the level of job satisfaction in Ph.D. faculty members of private HEIs of Pakistan.

Moreover, Abusive supervision with estimate = 0.339 (positive) and C.R. = 3.926 (>1.96), engagement with estimate = -0.334 (negative) and C.R. = -5.586 (>1.96), and job satisfaction with estimate = -0.251 (negative), and C.R. = -4.844 (>1.96) were statistically significant and hypotheses were validated as shown in Table 5. These findings revealed that abusive supervision had a positive significant impact on turnover intentions of the faculty members. Contrary to this, engagement and job satisfaction had direct negative effects on turnover intentions of the Ph.D. faculty members as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4
Regression Weights in the Structural Model

	Hypotheses	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
Satisfaction	<--- Abusive	-0.438	0.082	-5.31	***	par_27
Satisfaction	<--- Engagement	0.43	0.056	7.733	***	par_28
Turnover	<--- Abusive	0.339	0.086	3.926	***	par_24
Turnover	<--- Engagement	-0.334	0.06	-5.586	***	par_25

Turnover	<---	Satisfaction	-0.251	0.052	-4.844	***	par_26
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C. R.= Critical Ratio, and S. E.= Standard Error.

This research conducted a multi-model analysis to test the mediating effect of job satisfaction in the given relationships. The model to analyse the mediation effect of job satisfaction between abusive supervision and turnover intentions showed that direct model and mediation model both were significant and standardized indirect effect was also significant (beta = 0.110, p-value = 0.001; lower bound= 0.054 and upper bound = 0.195) with p-value less than 0.05 and lower bound and upper bound had no zero value as given in Table 5. Thus, job satisfaction partially mediated the relationship between abusive supervision and turnover intentions of the Ph.D. faculty members.

Table 5
Mediation Effect of Job Satisfaction between Abusive Supervision and Turnover Intentions

	Abusive - Satisfaction - Turnover			Mediation of Brand Trust
	Casual Path	Effect Value	LLB/ULB	P value
Direct Model	0.449	0.251/0.669	0.001	Partial Mediation
Mediation Model	0.339	0.132/0.556	0.001	
St. Indirect effect	0.11	0.054/0.195	0.001	

Furthermore, direct model and mediation model both were significant and standardized indirect effect was also significant (beta = -0.108, p-value = 0.001; lower bound= -0.178 and upper bound = -0.056) with p-value less than 0.05 and lower bound and upper bound had no zero value as given in Table 6. Thus, job satisfaction partially mediated the relationship between employee engagement and turnover intentions.

Table 6
Mediation Effect of Job Satisfaction between Employee Engagement and Turnover Intentions

	Engagement - Satisfaction - Turnover			Mediation of Brand Trust
	Casual Path	Effect value	LLB/ULB	P value
Direct Model	-0.442	1.725308642	0.001	Partial Mediation
Mediation Model	-0.334	2.287804878	0.001	
St. Indirect effect	-0.108	3.178571429	0.001	

The results indicated that all direct hypotheses were supported in this study. Besides, job satisfaction had the partial mediating effects in the relationships: Abusive supervision → Job Satisfaction → Turnover intentions and Employee Engagement → Job Satisfaction → Turnover Intentions. The findings on mediating effect of job satisfaction added to the literature on behavioural sciences.

Discussion

Higher education is an important pillar for any society. Pakistani higher education sector is evolving, and the increase in number of HEIs has increased the importance of qualified faculty members (Butt, Lodhi, & Shahzad, 2020). Since, high turnover intentions are becoming a challenge for educational institutions in Pakistan, this research sought to demonstrate the issue of turnover intentions in Ph.D. faculty members of private HEIs of Pakistan by investigating the impacts of abusive supervision and employee engagement on turnover intentions of faculty members. The findings of the present study have made several contributions to existing literature by analysing the role of job satisfaction as a mediator between dependent and independent variables. To the best of researcher's knowledge this study is the first one to examine the impact of these variables collectively in the context of Ph.D. faculty members of private HEIs of Pakistan.

The outcome of this study can be supported in the context of institutions where faculty members exhibit decreased level of employee engagement, job dissatisfaction, and are exposed to abusive supervision which brings out increased turnover intentions in them. The analysis revealed that employee engagement has significant negative effect on turnover intentions of the faculty members. This exploration finding is steady with findings (Das, Byadwal and Singh, 2017; Kasekende, 2017) conducted globally as well as in the context of higher education sector of Pakistan that decreased level of involvement of faculty members leads to higher turnover intentions in them. The results of this study are also supported by the Conservation of Resource (COR) theory which proposes that when employees experience loss of resources such as physical health, self-esteem, social support and time at workplace this ignites turnover intentions in them Likewise, the inferential analysis exhibited the presence of negative significant relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions of employees. This study also serves as a linkage for bridging the previous literature on job satisfaction and turnover intentions of employees in the corporate sector (De Clercq, Haq & Azeem, 2020; Tett & Meyer, 1993) as well as educational sector (Shah & Khan, 2015).

Contrary to this, abusive supervision has a significant positive relationship with turnover intentions of the faculty members. These findings on relationship between abusive supervision and turnover intentions provided an additional voice to debates regarding this relationship by adding to the existing literature (Aabdeen et al., 2016; Elçi et al., 2012; Schleh, 1977) on determinants of turnover intentions of employees. The mediation model indicated that job satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between employee engagement, abusive supervision and turnover intentions of Ph.D. faculty members. This study affirmed the importance of job satisfaction as a mediator between workplace behaviours and outcomes. These findings are also supported by Porter and Steers' (1973) Theory of Met Expectations which proposes that elements like nature of job, job autonomy, compensation and rewards and leadership styles trigger turnover intentions.

The findings of this research extend previous studies on withdrawal intentions of Ph.D. faculty members of the private HEIs of Pakistan by identifying the relationships discussed above. The results suggest that faculty members who have high level of involvement at workplace, have social support in the form of effective

leadership have high job satisfaction and are less likely to develop turnover intentions.

Recommendations

The results devised from this study have some significant practical and theoretical implications. This study highlights that HEIs should focus on developing proper performance management systems and should arrange development and training programs for managers and subordinates to make them feel that their mental health and wellbeing is important for their employers. Practically this study serves as a roadmap for HR practitioners and policy makers to formulate strategies and work on HR practices that can reduce withdrawal intentions faculty members of HEIs in the current competitive environment. This study also assists policy makers not only in formulating policy guidelines concerning this issue but also guides the regulatory bodies such as Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) to add faculty members related criteria to the annual key performance indicators of the HEIs and give instructions to the accreditation councils and committees to scrutinise the HEIs and evaluate them on these matters which will help ensure that HEIs consider the matter of employee engagement, abusive supervision, job satisfaction and turnover intentions of faculty members seriously that will eventually uplift the quality of education services in the country. Due to the increasing population, it is important not only to increase the number of HEIs but also to take care of needs of their faculty members in other to avoid their turnover intentions and ensure quality education. HEIs should emphasise on faculty compatible policies and provision of adequate resources instead of just focusing on the financial targets in order to uplift the standard of education and building a conducive work environment.

Though this study has various theoretical and practical implications, the research is subject to few limitations such as the data was collected from Ph.D. faculty members of private HEIs of Pakistan therefore, the results cannot be generalised to the entire education sector and other sectors. To improve external validity of the constructs, future research needs to replicate the findings derived from this research using samples from all levels of educational institutions and different industries and countries. Secondly, the research design used for this study was cross sectional, in order to have more definitive causal conclusion in future researchers should extend the study by using longitudinal research design.

Furthermore, this study has not employed different frameworks for data analysis. In future, researchers can analyse the relationship between the variables used by examining individual-level interactions, for example, people's intentions, feelings and beliefs (micro level analysis), they can monitor the attitudes group and team wise in HEIs (meso level analysis) and they can assess the political-administrative environment, such as regulatory authorities and national systems (macro level analysis).

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