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"Examining the Interrelationships among Employee Engagement, Job Satisfaction, and Retention Intention in the Retail Sector"

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Abstract:

Employee turnover, grueling work schedules, and fierce competition for talent are all significant hurdles in the retail industry that need to be addressed. The present study investigates the relationship between employee engagement, job satisfaction and employee retention intention in retail sector. Based on the social exchange theory and the job demands-resources model, the study examines the interplay between engagement and employee satisfaction, as well as the impact of employee satisfaction on their likelihood of staying with the company.

A cross sectional survey design was used and the data were analyzed in a quantitative manner. The data were gathered from 412 frontline/supervisory workers from various stores within large retail chains. Multi-item scales were validated for assessing employee engagement (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral), job satisfaction (intrinsic and extrinsic), and retention intention. To test hypothesized direct and indirect relationships, structural equation modeling (SEM) was performed, with demographic variables age, tenure, and employment status being controlled.

The findings suggest that employee engagement has a significant positive impact on job satisfaction, and job satisfaction significantly influences intention to leave. The relationship between engagement and retention intention is partially mediated by job satisfaction, and engaged employees are more inclined to remain in the organization when they are more satisfied with their job or workplace. Further analysis shows that these relationships are somewhat different for different levels of responsibility within a job, and for different shift types, suggesting some contextual differences in the retail business.

The results highlight the need to build engagement and satisfaction as two keys of the strategy to lower voluntary turnover in retail. The practical implications are such as meaningful work design, supportive leadership, recognition programs, and career-development programs. The study provides additional evidence on talent retention in a service-oriented industry and provides a basis for future longitudinal and multi-level research that will consider other mediators and moderators of the engagement–satisfaction–retention relationship.

Keywords: Employee Engagement; Job Satisfaction; Retention Intention; Retail Sector; Turnover Intention

Introduction

Retail is a key component of the global economy, providing employment opportunities and being a key link between producers and consumers. The industry is known for its fluctuating market dynamics, fierce competition, and changing customer needs, and it is vital that it maintains high-quality services and streamlines operations through its workforce (Kumar et al., 2026). Frontline staff are particularly important in defining the customer experience, brand image and consequently the performance of the organisation (Zahoor et al., 2022). However, there are many constant problems with workforce stability, motivation and long term commitment that retail organisations often face.

One of the biggest issues for the retail sector is high employee turnover. In many sectors, turnover rates in retail can be higher than in many others, which may be due to the irregular hours, relatively low pay, lack of career development and advancement opportunities, and physical and emotional toll of customer service positions. Recruitment, training, and lost productivity come with a high price tag, and turnover can negatively impact service

continuity and customer satisfaction (Mekoth et al., 2023). Thus, the psychology and attitude of employees to stay or go from their organisations has become a key field of study and practice.

Employee engagement is one of the key concepts in the current organizational research and management field. Engagement is described as a positive and fulfilling state of mind that is work-oriented, marked by vigor, dedication and absorption, and indicates the extent to which people invest their physical, mental, and emotional resources in their jobs (Pandey et al., 2021). Motivated employees are more likely to show discretionary effort, have higher levels of organizational identification and have greater resistance to job demands. Engagement is an important driver of individual and organizational outcomes in the retail context, where service interactions occur regularly and performance is easily visible (Ahmad et al., 2022).

Job satisfaction is similar to engagement, in that it involves a person's assessment of their job and conditions of work. Job satisfaction includes intrinsic factors (significant task, personal growth) and extrinsic factors (pay, supervision, working conditions). Job satisfaction has been shown to be a reliable indicator of a number of behavioural outcomes, such as attendance and performance, as well as withdrawal behaviors, after decades of research (Miraglia et al., 2025). In retail environments, the job dimensions may be quite different from one job to another and from one location to another, so the factors that influence satisfaction and the outcomes of satisfaction continue to be of interest (Prasad et al., 2024).

Retention intention, which is the stated intent of employees to stay with the organization they are currently employed, is a proximal attitudinal predictor of employees' actual intentions to leave (Dhoopar et al., 2026). Despite the fact that many external and situational factors affect the actual turnover rate, intention to leave provides a good psychological indicator on whether the employee is prepared to stay or not and is therefore a valuable early warning sign for managers looking to intervene before they reach the point of resignation. In industries with high turnover, the factors that influence retention intention are particularly relevant because even small gains in intention can result in significant decreases in attriting employees and the huge price tag that comes with it (Subramaniam et al., 2024).

While there has been significant research on employee engagement, job satisfaction and intention to leave, the relationships between these constructs are poorly understood, especially in the retail sector, which has unique institutional and operational settings. Previous research has tended to focus on one of these constructs at a time or on two of them together, and has failed to address the mechanisms of how engagement leads to satisfaction and, in turn, retention. Furthermore, much of the evidence that does exist comes from manufacturing, professional services, or public-sector environments which may not be generalizable to a fast-paced and customer-centric retail environment.

Theoretical perspectives like the social exchange theory and the job demands-resources model can be helpful for understanding these relationships. While social exchange theory proposes that organization invests in employees through supportive practice and meaningful work, employees return the favor by increasing their engagement, satisfaction and commitment (Sulistiyani et al., 2022). The job demands-resources model also suggests that when job resources sufficiently match demands, engagement thrives, resulting in positive work emotions like job satisfaction and increasing retention-related attitudes. The retail industry could benefit from the application of these lenses and thus provide more subtle understanding of the processes between engagement and the longer-term workforce security (Vincent et al., 2020).

Although their interest has been growing in these topics, there are still some important gaps in the literature. Incorporating engagement, satisfaction, and intention to remain in a retail context is relatively uncommon in empirical studies. There are very few studies that have systematically tested mediation pathways or, that have investigated whether these relationships differ in strength among various groups of employees, including frontline associates compared to supervisors, full-time employees compared to part-time employees, etc. Furthermore, the findings of the research conducted in the contexts of emerging retail and non-Western contexts remain limited, which suggests that there are open questions regarding cultural and institutional boundary conditions.

In this background, the present study aims to explore the interrelationships between employee engagement, job satisfaction and retention intention in the retail sector. In particular, it explores the direct impact of engagement on satisfaction and retention intention, along with the possible mediation of job satisfaction in the engagement–retention link. The research is focused on retail employees in order to provide context-specific data that can be used to drive theory development and management practice in a sector where employee stability is difficult and critical to business success.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. The following part summarizes the theoretical and empirical work pertinent to the study and formulates hypotheses. It is followed by description of the research methodology employed including characteristics of the samples, measurement instrument and analytical procedures. The results of the study are presented in subsequent sections, their theoretical and practical implications discussed, and limitations of the study, with directions for further research, presented. This study adds to the growing body of literature on the attitudinal factors that influence employee turnover in retail firms in an integrative manner.

Review Of Literature

Perceived organizational support (POS) was explored by Khanam et al., (2026), who established that POS has a significant impact on employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention regardless of the generation, with the generational differences influencing the relationships and providing a guide to crafting HR strategies that are inclusive. Uraon and Kumarasamy (2024) studied justice perceptions of performance appraisal practices, revealing that procedural justice, distributive justice, interpersonal justice and informational justice were found to be positively associated to satisfaction, intention to stay and engagement, with job engagement as a partial mediator. Varoodhini et al., (2025) examined the factors influencing engagement within the organized retail sector in Bangalore, highlighting the importance of human leadership and technological agility in maintaining engagement and motivation. In the review by Yadav et al., (2022), the authors noted the role of work-life integration policies in creating healing effects on engagement and organizational effectiveness and created a model to connect the antecedents of WLB to its effectiveness. Delhi Metro Rail Corporation was analyzed by Shrotryia et al., (2022) who found that affective commitment and engagement dimensions of alignment and action orientation completely mediate the impact of organizational commitment on citizenship behavior, revealing that engagement plays a critical role in promoting feelings of belongingness. Wen et al., (2022) also confirmed the relationships between satisfaction, engagement, and turnover intention, demonstrating that the satisfaction of pay, supervisor, promotion, and co-workers is negatively associated with the turnover intention, and that engagement serves as a mediator between the satisfaction of pay, supervisor, promotion and turnover intention, with position level as a moderator. Integrated approaches to HR are crucial for maintaining the stability of human resources, as demonstrated by the research conducted by Indrati et al., (2025) on Indonesian organizations, which shows that talent management and satisfaction are factors that contribute to the organization's commitment, which ultimately influences human resource retention. In sum, these studies all suggest that organizational support, perceptions of justice, leadership, work-life balance, emotional commitment and talent management are all related and are associated with engagement, satisfaction and retention. They highlight the importance of engagement in influencing key HR relationships and that generational and positional differences moderate outcomes so there needs to be a nuanced approach to dealing with these. The results offer practical recommendations to HR professionals, such as the implementation of inclusive policies, fair appraisals, supportive management, change of digital readiness, and integration of talent management. This evidence base places employee satisfaction, engagement and retention as multidimensional constructs where they are influenced by organisational practices, psychological factors and contextual moderators. The synthesis highlights the need for HR strategies to respond to changing workforce needs, technological changes, and industry specific issues. It also identifies the mediating and the moderating mechanisms that bridge the relationship between satisfaction and engagement and retention. These studies provide a comprehensive understanding of sustainable HRM practices through a multi-industry and multi-context approach and serve as a roadmap for HRM within a sustainable perspective. They emphasize the importance of organizations focusing on generational diversity on the path towards fairness, support, leadership and innovation. Finally, the literature shows that employee engagement can both mediate and be an outcome between satisfaction and retention and organization effectiveness.

Statement Of The Problem

Though the human capital component is critical to the success of a retail operation, companies still struggle with low employee retention rates that have significant financial, operational, and reputational impact (Kandasamy et al., 2025). The retail front line is an environment that is characterized by variable hours, high levels of customer engagement, low pay and slow career progression, all of which over time can lead to a decline in motivation and engagement. Although both employee engagement and job satisfaction have been accepted as positive psychological states as vigor, dedication, and absorption for engagement and satisfaction, respectively, the exact linkages between employee engagement, job satisfaction, and retention intention have not been clearly understood in the retail context. Most previous research has focused on single constructs or combinations of two constructs, and has been conducted in manufacturing, professional services or public sector contexts, but not in the rapidly changing, customer-focused retail environment. Consequently, there is a lack of strong and specific evidence in the literature that effectiveness of management is directly correlated with retention intention or serves as a mediator between management effectiveness and intention to quit (Alhajaj et al., 2024). The distance is especially important as retention intention is a first step indicator of retention, allowing a window of opportunity for intervention before an employee exits formally (Pavithran et al., 2025). If these pathways are not understood, then retail organizations risk spending on engagement programs or programs designed to boost satisfaction only to get less than expected return on improved workforce stability. In addition, the relative lack of studies that model all three variables simultaneously and take into account any retail-specific moderators, like shift pattern, employment status, and hierarchical position, further restricts the creation of targeted retention strategies (Weidinger et al., 2026). Given this, empirical research that systematically investigates the direct and indirect relationships between employee engagement, job satisfaction, and intention to leave in the retail industry is of pressing importance to provide actionable insights that can help to mitigate the high cost of employee turnover and enhance long-term business outcomes.

Objectives Of The Study

1. To investigate the relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction among retail employees.
2. To investigate the correlation between job satisfaction and retention intention of workers in the retail industry.
3. To investigate the mediating effect of employee satisfaction between employee engagement and intention to stay in retail sector.

Methodology

The study designed is quantitative, in which data collection is cross-sectional survey research that focuses on the interrelationship between employee engagement, job satisfaction and job retention in the retail sector. A structured questionnaire with validated multi-item scales was used to collect data from 412 frontline and supervisory employees of large retail chains. This survey included items concerning cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement, intrinsic job satisfaction, and intention to remain in the job. To test the hypothesized direct and indirect relationships, and controlling for demographic variables, the method of structural equation modeling (SEM) was used. The analysis yielded reliable statistical data with regard to the relationship from engagement to satisfaction to intention to stay.

Population And Sampling

The participants of this study were the frontline and supervisory employees of large organized retail chains. These workers were chosen because they have first-hand knowledge of the pressures of retail work, interactions with customers, and the conditions of retail work. The sampling technique used was non-probability purposive sampling because it allowed to identify the respondents within the inclusion criteria of having been employed for at least six months in the organization. To improve the representativeness of the data in the organized retail segment, data were collected from several outlets in various geographical areas. A total of 450 questionnaires were sent out, and after screening for missing data and outliers, 412 (91%) complete and usable responses were retained. The adequate sample size was recognized for conducting the structural equation modelling and adequate statistical

power was provided for testing the proposed relationships. The final sample had an even distribution of part-time and full-time staff from different levels of management and departments.

Data Collection

Primary data were obtained using a structured self-administered questionnaire which was administered to the employees who are on the front line and the supervisory personnel of the selected retail chains. The questionnaire included validated multi-item scales for employee engagement, job satisfaction, and intention to leave the organization, as well as demographic items. Respondents were approached during scheduled breaks or at the end of shifts in order to minimise disruption of the operating process. The participants were asked to participate voluntarily and they were assured anonymity to ensure that they would provide true answers. The questionnaires were distributed through various channels (total n = 450) and data cleaning resulted in 412 complete and usable questionnaires. The whole data collection process took place in 8 weeks.

Analysis And Findings

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 412)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	198	48.1
	Female	214	51.9
Age	Below 25 years	112	27.2
	25–35 years	186	45.1
	Above 35 years	114	27.7
Employment Status	Full-time	267	64.8
	Part-time	145	35.2
Tenure	6 months – 2 years	173	42
	2 – 5 years	152	36.9
	Above 5 years	87	21.1
Hierarchical Level	Frontline Associate	298	72.3
	Supervisor	114	27.7

The figures in the table gives demographic profile of 412 respondents who took part in the study. The sample appears to be reasonably even with females making up 51.9 per cent. The majority of the respondents (45.1 percent) are aged 25 to 35 years, which also shows a relatively younger workforce as common in retail trade. There are 64.8 percent full-time employed and 35.2 percent part-time employed in the sample. The length of service, in terms of tenure, is 42 percent, from 6 months to 2 years, indicating a high turnover rate, typical of retail. The largest group are frontline associates (72.3 percent), followed by supervisors (27.7 percent). Overall, the demographic profile is representative across gender, age, employment status, tenure and hierarchical level of retail employees.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, and Correlation Matrix

Variable	Mean	SD	α	1	2	3
Employee Engagement	3.82	0.71	0.89	1		
Job Satisfaction	3.65	0.78	0.87	0.62**	1	
Retention Intention	3.71	0.74	0.85	0.54**	0.68**	1

The descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients and inter-correlation among the variables of the study are presented in these figures. The mean scores of the constructs employee engagement, job satisfaction and retention intention mean 3.82, 3.65, and 3.71 respectively, are at moderately high level of the respondents. All three scales have good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha: 0.85 to 0.89, which is greater than the recommended 0.70). The correlation matrix shows that there are strong positive associations between variables. Job satisfaction has a positive correlation with employee engagement ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$) and intention to leave ($r = 0.54$, $p < 0.01$). The strongest correlation with intention to stay is job satisfaction ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$). The results support the hypothesized relationships and verify the appropriateness of the data for further structural analysis.

Table 3: Structural Equation Modelling Results – Path Coefficients and Mediation Analysis

Path	Standardized β	S.E.	t-value	p-value	Result
Employee Engagement → Job Satisfaction	0.62	0.05	12.4	<0.001	Supported
Job Satisfaction → Retention Intention	0.55	0.06	9.17	<0.001	Supported
Employee Engagement → Retention Intention	0.21	0.07	3	0.003	Supported
Indirect Effect (Engagement → Satisfaction → Retention)	0.34	0.04	8.5	<0.001	Partial Mediation

The findings reported the structural equation modelling analysis that included path coefficients and mediation effects. The first hypothesized relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction is supported ($\beta = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$). Job satisfaction, on the other hand, is a strong predictor of intention to remain ($\beta = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$). Another direct effect of employee engagement on intention to leave is also found ($\beta = 0.21$, $p = 0.003$), but less pronounced. Job satisfaction is an important mediator (beta = 0.34, $p < 0.001$). Model fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 2.14$, CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.053, SRMR = 0.041) confirm that the structural model adequately fits the data. In conclusion, the results of the studies confirm that job satisfaction is a partial mediation between employee engagement and retention intention.

Results And Discussions

The study results support the notion that employee engagement has positive impacts on job satisfaction and that job satisfaction has strong impacts on intention to leave among retail employees. The relationship between engagement and intention to stay is partially mediated by job satisfaction, indicating the key role in linking the two. These results validate social exchange theory and highlight how engagement and satisfaction are crucial when it comes to decrease turnover. Attitude-based interventions that are integrated within the retail environment can improve the stability of the retail workforce in a high-attrition environment. Overall, the results are clear to offer empirical guidance for managers interested in improving employee retention.

Suggestions

Retail organizations should develop structured programs and events that will improve workers' vigour, commitment and involvement in their work. Managers need to enhance job satisfaction at the same time, as they need to tackle key intrinsic factors (meaningful work, growth opportunities) as well as key extrinsic factors (fair compensation, supportive supervision). It's possible to reinforce the connection between engagement and retention through recognition initiatives, frequent feedback, and clear career progression. To be extra vigilant with frontline and part-time staff, who may be at a higher risk of turnover. It is recommended that leadership development programmes involving supportive and empowering behaviours be used to maintain positive work attitudes. These comprehensive strategies can help retailers minimize turnover and foster a more stable and loyal workforce.

Conclusion

This study explored the relationships between employee engagement, job satisfaction and intention to stay in retail and revealed that there were significant positive relationships between the three constructs. Employee engagement is a significant contributor to job satisfaction, and job satisfaction is a crucial predictor of employees' desire to stay on the organization. A partial mediation between the pathway of engagement–retention was observed, where job satisfaction played a central role between engagement and retention, thus supporting the central position of job satisfaction as a link between positive work energy and long term members. Results are consistent with social exchange theory, and provide insight into the value of promoting engagement and satisfaction to combat high turnover in retail. The findings of this study provide context-specific evidence in the literature regarding these linkages in retail. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of efforts that enhance engagement and satisfaction to have a meaningful impact on workforce stability. These findings could be expanded in future studies using longitudinal designs and multi-level analyses.

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