

Gender's Moderating Role in Employee Satisfaction Determinants and Retention in Saudi Arabia's Higher Education Sector

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ABSTRACT

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's higher education system suffers from academicians' retention issues, besides low satisfaction. The employment situation in Saudi universities has shown considerable instability for many years, as shown by the high turnover rates among academic staff. The turnover rate is reported to be high and needs to be addressed with the help of retention strategies. Thus, the objective of this study is to identify and consolidate various relevant factors that have an impact on employee satisfaction and retention in the education sector in KSA, specifically in universities. This study also examines the mediating role of employee satisfaction between three factors: compensation package, perceived organizational support, and supportive work environment with regard to employee retention and the moderating role of gender between employee satisfaction and employee retention. To achieve the objectives, a survey strategy was applied to this study because it is associated with a deductive approach. This study employs the quantitative method, relying on primary data at the cross-sectional horizon. The population of this study comprises the academicians who work within Saudi Arabian universities. The online survey instrument was used to collect the data from the target sample size, which was determined to be 384 academicians. The study used structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the hypotheses developed in the study. The study has found a supportive work environment has a positive, significant relationship with employee satisfaction, as well as with employee retention. However, there were no relationships between (compensation package, perceived organizational support) and both employee satisfaction and employee retention. The study found employee satisfaction significantly mediated the relationship between a supportive work environment on employee retention. This study showed the importance of employee satisfaction in order to assist organizations in achieving employee retention. This study showed that the absence of moderator factors does not affect the relationship between employee satisfaction and employee retention.

Keywords: compensation package, perceived organizational support, supportive work environment, employee satisfaction, employee retention, gender, educational sectors, Saudi Arabia

INTRODUCTION

The Kingdom Saudi Arabia has twenty-nine public universities and eight private universities and institutions spread across the country [1] All the universities in the kingdom are governed by the Ministry of Education. Additionally, because of the rising population, student enrolment has increased, yet moreover, 60,000 students are unable to study at the kingdom's universities. The King Abdullah Scholarship Program was founded in 2005 in response to the expanding population and economic needs [2]. The program's goal is to send Saudi students to pursue their education in order to meet the job market need and the rising demand [1]. Despite the fact that private universities started not a while ago, there is a good number of private institutions that offer excellent higher education.

According to KSA's ministry of education (2019), the KSA education mission is to provide education to all KSA nations to raise the quality of education outcomes, promote the skills and capabilities of students, and encourage creativity, and innovation. Arab News, 2019 has pointed out that The KSA has spent nearly double the world's average gross domestic product on its education. According to The database of World Bank [3], KSA education spending tripled from the year 1970 to 2000. As for numbers of student enrolments, based to the General Authority for Statistics in 2016, KSA received a total of 7.5 million students with 3.8 million in primary, 1.8 in secondary, and 3.6 million students in post-secondary. Since the KSA education program was known for its religious content thus it is not surprising, according to Harris Jr [4] religion studies took up nine periods per week on average at the primary school level in 2016, compared to the remaining 23 periods per week for math, science, social studies, English, Arabic, and physical education.

Saudi universities have been striving to be recognized as world-class institutions. The educational systems of universities, on the other hand, have experienced significant obstacles in becoming World-Class Universities, because of research productivity, accreditation, and improving quality. Numerous educational researchers have confirmed that the research productivity of a university contributed to improving the university's ranking. Furthermore, Almansour [5] presented a contrasting argument regarding the challenges facing Saudi universities in producing research and becoming world-class universities; he stated that if the Saudi higher education system is to achieve its stated goal of having its leading universities recognized internationally as 'world-class,' then it must give urgent priority to its research effort because global university ranking systems are heavily based on the quality and quantity of an institution's research activity and outcomes. On the other hand, the fact making research productivity a challenge to Saudi universities is that there is a low number of articles published and research performed by administrators, academics, and students [6].

According to Alharbi [7], education becomes ahead of the list for the KSA's 2030 vision. The government has made many steps to develop modern KSA education systems in order to achieve Crown Prince Mohammed Salman's new vision of the country becoming one of the world's most sophisticated economies and educational systems.

Several studies have shown that higher education institutions are striving for academic quality to become more international, as well as benchmark accountability to achieve effective outcomes [8]. As a result, in order to reach international and worldwide economic growth, a university's standards must be assessed and maintained by a really quality independent governance authority [9]. Consequently, Saudi universities must realize the importance of international accreditation of institutions in order to be recognized worldwide and worldwide through their quality assurance levels. As a result, accreditation and quality are two additional challenges that the Saudi university education system faces in its mission to become a World-Class University. International accreditation has become an important necessity in order to promote global education in Saudi Arabian universities as a result of the internationalization accreditation position [10]. The dream is to be recognized internationally, but the reality is that many Saudi universities lack quality institutions, standards, efficacy, and efficiency, resulting in a lack of employee commitment to the organization, with the majority of employees being expatriates [11]. Thus, the university should aware the factors that can influence employee to loyal and retain in the organization.

Among demographic factors that impact employee satisfaction, gender factor is found with a significant difference between male and female Saudi higher education [12]. The study of Abalkhail [13] highlighted that there is a gender gap within the KSA higher education, where women academicians receive less opportunity, specifically in occupying high management positions within the higher education institutions. In this regard, the KSA vision 2030 strives to narrow this gap through adopting new strategies that enable the Saudi women from an equal opportunity. Thus, testing the moderation role of gender factor by this study will provide evidence toward strategies perception under the vision 2030. Therefore, taking this factor in consideration by this study helps policy makers in the KSA higher education in drafting education strategies, which commensurate gender diversification into account. As a result, more research into the role of gender as a moderator of employee satisfaction and retention is recommended.

Many studies have examined the relationship between job satisfaction and employee retention, which focused more on either the industrial scope or production business base, with less attention given to the educational services scope. Job satisfaction appears relevant in predicting higher retention intentions across a variety of professions [14]. Compensation package, perceived organizational support, and supportive work environment received less attention as determinants of employee satisfaction, as they did in the internal business environment. However, there exists no symmetric conclusion of the research examining job satisfaction and employee retention from the perspective of educational institutions [15]. This is important because an examination of individual studies suggests that, once again, there are relatively large discrepancies in terms of the size of the effects across studies. Based on internal business environment determinants of employee satisfaction, it is currently unclear to what extent job satisfaction may protect academicians from leaving their jobs.

In conclusion, the research problem revolves around the lack of understanding in practice by human resources, especially in the education sector, to improve the practices in the education public sector, especially in Saudi higher education institutions. The main research question for this study attempts to answer: what are the factors that influence employee retention among

academicians in Saudi universities, which in turn will effectively reduce turnover among academicians in Saudi public universities?

Based on the employee retention issues discussed within the KSA higher education, the study aims to determine factors that impact employee satisfaction and employee retention. To achieve the aim of this study, four objectives are constructed to examine the effect of the compensation package, perceived organizational support, and supportive work environment on employee satisfaction in the KSA higher education sector. Also, to verify the effect of the compensation package, perceived organizational support, and supportive work environment on employee retention in the KSA higher education sector. As well as to identify the mediating role of employee satisfaction in the relationship between compensation package, perceived organizational support, supportive work environment, and employee retention in the KSA higher education sector. And finally, to identify the moderating role of gender in the relationship between employee satisfaction and employee retention in the KSA higher education sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Various studies have been considered to assess the reasons for employees leaving the organization. For instance, Shibiti [16] examined the relationship between employee retention factors, compensation, job characteristics, training and development, supervisor support, career opportunities, work-life balance, and work engagement for public school teachers in the Tshwane. Moreover, using a sample of 278 schoolteachers' responses, the study found that employee retention factors are positively correlated. However, the examination was limited to 278 instructors working in Tshwane Municipality state-funded schools. Accommodation testing was utilized to pick the members. Hence, it is beyond the realm of imagination to expect to sum up the consequences of this examination to all populaces and distinctive workplaces.

Using a sample of 89 employees from the Uganda Telecom service providers in Kampala District, the study of Mugarura and Kaberuka [17] investigated the factors of salary, career development, supervision support, work environment, and employee job satisfaction, they were found to be significant determinants of employee retention in Uganda Telecom industry. However, the sample of the study is very limited which may not generalize the results. Another study found that staff benefits, supportive work environment, training, and development opportunities are negatively associated with employee turnover intention [18]. Moreover, the study used 30 respondents from Steel manufacturing companies in Malaysia. However, the sample of the study was very small which may not represent the actual effect of each variable. Furthermore, in the same year, Naseer, Farooq [19] found that job satisfaction, supervisor support, and organizational commitment have a positive relationship with employee retention within the organization. Moreover, this study illustrates that employee retention and job satisfaction of employees can be better with strong organizational commitment. In addition, the study of Njoroge and Nzulwa [20] found that leadership, rewards, job satisfaction, and work environment are positively associated with employee retention. The study used 92 respondents from organizations that aren't governmental (NGOs) in Kenya. The target population was all the executive directors and the human resource directors.

In another study from the banking sector in Pakistan, Shah and Asad [21] utilized a sample size of 342 employees in the business banks of Lahore, Pakistan. The discoveries uncovered that

inborn and extraneous inspiration has a noteworthy effect on employee retention and saw hierarchical help intervenes in the connection between outward, natural inspiration, and employee retention. After one year, the findings of the study by Kundu Subhash and Lata [22] recommended that a stable workplace environment is one of the employee retention determinants. The management intervention toward improving the workplace environment leads to higher employee retention. The aftereffect of the examination is dependent on 211 respondents from 67 companies in the private and public sector.

COMPENSATION PACKAGE AND EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

Within the value perceived by the employee and that affects their job satisfaction, is the aspect of compensation. Mabaso and Dlamini [23] their findings indicated there is positive associations between compensation package and employee satisfaction. In this regards, the compensation package includes extrinsic and intrinsic rewards; these rewards come in non-monetary and monetary types, which are received by the employee. Ling Florence Yean, Ning [24] discovered that extrinsic rewards influence the employee satisfaction significantly and positively, which refers to base pay or salary, incentives or bonuses, and benefits distributed directly by the organization. Yap Peng Lok, Lai Chuen [25] demonstrated a significant relationship between compensation package and employee satisfaction, this confirmed that intrinsic rewards work to satisfy employees' needs.

Stamolampros, Korfiatis [26] the findings indicated relationships positively between compensation package and employee satisfaction. The result clarified that total compensation is made up of three main elements: base remuneration, incentives and benefits. The base remuneration is the platform of the total compensation and considers the legal aspects of the market [27].

According to Chan and Ao [28] The results demonstrated a significant relations between compensation package and employee satisfaction. In this regard, compensation processes indicate whether employees are motivated and rewarded by the organization, it helps the organization decide who should receive compensation (salary increases or promotions) or who should be separated from the organization. In this context, it should stimulate initiative, develop a sense of responsibility, and support the desire to work better. Based on the above arguments and the findings from past literature, it can be hypothesized:

H1: Compensation package has a significant and positive effect on employee satisfaction in education sector in Saudi Arabia.

PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AND EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

According to Maan, Abid [29] perceived organizational support means valuing the employee in the organization, not feeling lonely in good or bad days and seeing the support of the organization and establishes a bond of affection with the employee organization, whose expectations are met. Maan, Abid [29] confirmed the significant and positive effect of perceived organizational support on the employee satisfaction. employees tend to personify the organization they work for, the managers' representational behaviors that include legal, moral and financial responsibilities within the organization, and their influence on the organizational culture, policies, and the organization's authority over others is provided by the organization [30].

According to Cook, Cheshire [31] social change theory, there are unspoken mutual relationships between employees and their employers that have negative consequences that might be considered significant if they are violated. Côté, Lauzier [32] confirmed the significant and positive relationship between perceived organizational support and employee satisfaction. The social change continues as long as the work done by the organizations for the well-being of the employees is perceived by the employees in accordance with their purpose, this will lead to high level of employee satisfaction.

Employee-organization relationships are built on reciprocal trust, which allows individuals and organizations to fulfil not just their tasks, but also their needs. Wen, Huang [33] confirmed the positive significant association between perceived organizational support and employee satisfaction. Similarly, Feng, Su [34] affirmed that perceived organizational support is a crucial determinant of the employee satisfaction, and has a significant and positive relationship between perceived organizational support and employee satisfaction. Based on the above arguments and the findings from past literature, it can be hypothesized:

H2: Perceived organizational support has a significant and positive effect on employee satisfaction in education sector in Saudi Arabia.

SUPPORTIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT AND EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

Agbozo, Owusu [35] reveal the impact of demographic, supportive work environment and administrative control determinants on job satisfaction, the results demonstrated a significant relationship between supportive work environment and employee satisfaction. The organizational purpose behind the public sectors is to serve society; data were collected in order to reveal the determinants of job satisfaction of public sector officials. In their study, it revealed that variables such as demographics, supportive working environment and management control were explained as the level of job satisfaction.

Sikowo, Namusonge [36] examined 350 employee satisfactions within the framework of organizational performance. The results demonstrated a significant relation between supportive work environment and employee satisfaction. Concepts like supportive work environment, employee motivation and job security are related to employee satisfaction. In addition, it suggested that the Trans-Nizozwa government should promote and create conducive supportive work environment, by providing appropriate job support tools to ensure the job satisfaction.

According to Razak, Ma'amor [37] found positive associations between supportive work environment and employee satisfaction. The workplace must provide healthy work environment to ensure favorable working conditions for employees, to improve their satisfaction level their quality of work. Hassard, Teoh [38] argue that if employees felt less satisfied due to their supportive work environment, it may result in the feeling of separation from the organizations.

AbuAlRub, El-Jardali [39] studied the factors of employee satisfaction, supportive work environment found positively impact on the employee satisfaction. The study recommended that it is necessary to strengthen the competencies within the supportive work environment for the employees to increase employee satisfaction.

Goh and Lopez [40] discussed the factors affecting the satisfaction of employees in private funded tertiary hospital. They found that factors such as supportive working environment, job assignment suitable for their interests, regular payments, opportunities for assistance and encouragement, good co-workers, good communication with colleagues, and teamwork are among the factors that impact employee satisfaction. Based on the above arguments and the findings from past literature, it can be hypothesized:

H3: Supportive work environment has a significant and positive effect on employee satisfaction in education sector in Saudi Arabia

COMPENSATION PACKAGE AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION

The compensation package factor has received high concern from the previous literature as one of the employee retention, which is supported by several theories such as the pyramid of needs theory. Dolores, Hurtado-Torres [41] The results demonstrated a significant relationship between compensation package and employee retention, if employees are happy with how the organization works and conveys their remuneration strategies; they stayed focused on the company.

Kigo and Gachunga [42] findings indicated there is a positive significant relationship between compensation package and employee retention, this shows that an organization with no remuneration planning brings about a vulnerable workplace. Arora and Kumar [43] state that for 27 percent of employees, the pay was the essential purpose behind leaving the organization [44].

Besides, as indicated by Maina and Kwasira [45] outward rewards (a measure of pay and different advantages) are benefactors of employee retention. The results demonstrated a significant relationship between compensation package and employee retention [46]. This confirmed that compensation is an indicator of employee turnover. McGowin, Xi [47] were explicit about the class of the workforce that prize influences most. They found a significant and positive relationship between compensation package and employee retention, noticing that pay diminishes turnover and builds duty among employees.

Mugarura and Kaberuka [17] findings indicated relationship between compensation package and employee retention. Rewards must be given to staff who ready to apply the aptitude gain from the preparation to the work. Staff turnover aim can be profoundly inconvenient to business associations. In light of the examination staff benefits, working conditions and preparing and improvement openings between related and brought about a domino impact which adversely sways on association staff turnover aim which in line to the literature reviewed. Based on the above arguments and the findings from past literature, it can be hypothesized:

H4: Compensation package has a significant and positive effect on employee retention in education sector in Saudi Arabia.

PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION

According to Langton, Robbins [48], the intention to act in a certain way towards a person or thing must consider elements such as perception, influence and behavior, the corresponding development of models, theory, and tools as each structure and its relationships are constructed, explained, measured, and questioned as well. According to Akgunduz and Sanli

[49] the results demonstrated a significant relationship between perceived organizational support and employee retention. In higher education institutions, the process assumes learning curve costs for new collaborators in the organization, including their holders where rotation can occur due to voluntary or involuntary separation from position or due to expiry of appointment periods. KimKim, Tam [50] found that perceived organizational support is one of the most important factors of employee retention. In this sense, it goes to the extreme of asserting that they are working with or without the owner or in spite of that, thus forming a manifestation of commitment to the organization and the existence of organized work processes and with specific deadlines. However, situations may arise that show weaknesses in the moral climate and in turn weaken the trust and credibility of their actions and results.

The perceived organizational support concept had its beginnings in observations and studies carried out to corroborate the effect of business practices of an organization on the degree of employees commitment toward retention, which allowed them to develop the theory of organizational support that conceptualized as the belief of employees regarding the degree to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being [51]. Another study found that perceived organizational support has a large and favorable impact on employee retention, and that it contributes to the explanation of affective organizational commitment, demonstrates the identification emphases available to people at work, and influences the outcomes [52]. According to the reciprocity norm, the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee retention serves as a feedback mechanism between employee and employer, based on the assumption that if a worker feels supported by his employer, he will respond by committing to it, hence the perceived organizational support and employee retention is positively correlated [53]. Based on the above arguments and the findings from past literature, it can be hypothesized:

H5: Perceived organizational support has a significant and positive effect on employee retention in education sector in Saudi Arabia.

SUPPORTIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION

Supportive work environment considers as a decisive factor when workers question whether to continue or leave an organization, since human beings look for a suitable environment, where they can socialize, creating bonds of friendship, and achieve not only personal but also professional goals. In this regard, Lancaster and Di Milia [54] have found that 80% of employees search for a better workplace. In this manner, it gets indispensable to make a favorable workplace in the light of hierarchical help to hold the expert employees [55]. A strong workplace develops normal retention [22], where work associations need to keep up the learning and work environment for encouraging the skilled workforce [22]. Supportive work environment requires associations to support feasible development and execution. Arslan and Roudaki [56] have shown that a steady work environment identified with employee results such as work fulfilment and responsibility.

According to Kundu Subhash and Lata [22] supportive work environment is fundamental for anticipating the employee retention, the ability to share information through associations that relies upon how the workplace is intended to improve association to use workplace. Supportive work environment and employees are interrelated that exists inside the worker and the place wherein they work. The improved state of the workplace will empower employee profitability

[57]. Additionally, the workplace contributes as a central point that impacts the laborer in the dynamic climate to remain or leave the association [40].

Jiang and Shen [58] investigated the effect of supportive work environment on the employee retention of the Public Relations Society of America; the result confirmed a relationship positively impact of the supportive work environment with the employee retention. Also, Li, Li [59] conducted a study to Investigate the association between supportive work environment and employee retention in Chinese healthcare industry, the result confirmed the significant and positive impact of supportive work environment and employee retention.

Several previous researches have been conducted, such as [22, 40, 60-62] confirmed the significant and positive role of supportive work environment on the employee retention. As evidenced, a positive supportive work environment favors the fulfilment of the general objectives perceived by the company, indicates a feeling of belonging to it. On the contrary, a negative work environment supposes a lack of identification with the objectives and destroys the work environment, which causes conflict situations that in turn is translated into poor performance and staff turnover. Therefore, the above literature provides support for the following hypothesis.

H6: Supportive work environment has a significant and positive effect on employee retention in education sector in Saudi Arabia.

EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION AS A MEDIATOR IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMPENSATION PACKAGE, SUPPORTIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT, PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT, AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION

For the expectancy theory by Lawler and Suttle [63] employee satisfaction is obtained by the discrepancy between what the worker thinks he should get and what he really receives. What the employee should receive is estimated by perceptions associated with their individual contributions, their results compared to their peers, and the characteristics of their work; while what he really receives results from the comparison of the result of his peers and that obtained by the employee. Consequently, there are three scenarios: a) there is satisfaction in being equal what employee should receive from what other employee receive; b) there is dissatisfaction with being greater what employee should receive than what employee actually receives; and c) there is a feeling of guilt when being less what employee should receive than what employee receives.

The employee satisfaction level allowed the management to discover the employees' retention intention prior to be declined. The employee satisfaction be determined based on several factors such as compensation package [23, 28], supportive work environment [22, 40], and perceived organizational support [29, 33]. These authors establish that each of the independent variables of the model (compensation package, supportive work environment, and perceived organizational support), treated individually, predicts employee retention significantly and positively; but by adding any of the independent variables to employee satisfaction, the prediction of employee retention improves significantly and positively. Therefore, they indicate that the best predictor of employee retention model is the one that combines these independent variables. Likewise, given that employee satisfaction is an internal condition expressed in emotional situations, a person who has a state of higher satisfaction with a more or less

permanent job can influence the creation of other variables with a higher emotional or enjoyable personality such as joy or enthusiasm for work.

Based on the discussion above, the possible triangulation between the independent variables (compensation package, supportive work environment, and perceived organizational support) and employee retention mediated by employee satisfaction is empirically proven. Hence, employee satisfaction will be considered as a mediating variable between compensation package, perceived organizational support, supportive work environment, and the employee retention. Therefore, the above literature provides support for the following hypothesis.

H7: Employee satisfaction has a significant and positive effect on employee retention in education sector in Saudi Arabia.

H8: Employee satisfaction mediate the relationships between compensation package and employee retention in education sector in Saudi Arabia.

H9: Employee satisfaction mediate the relationships between supportive work environment and employee retention in education sector in Saudi Arabia.

H10: Employee satisfaction mediate the relationships between perceived organizational support and employee retention in education sector in Saudi Arabia.

THE MODERATION ROLE OF GENDER

Few research carried about gender role in employee retention [64], among these studies, Nasir, Ashraf [65] found no association differences between male and female toward retention factor. in this regard, it has been shown that women feel happy with their work and others show the opposite [66]. Some research such as Mehmood, Li [67] indicate that female are more satisfied than men, also more effective in managerial functions. Female are known to be interested in aspects of work in which the man shows no interest at all [67]. For example, disadvantaged women needed more to like their work and have a good manager; in contrast, disadvantaged men were more concerned with the opportunity to prove their usefulness and have a secure job. On the other hand, they were more interested in the quality of interpersonal relationships and working conditions.

For work purposes, when it comes to gender, it refers to the division into men and women members of a society. on the study of job satisfaction and life satisfaction, Erdamar and Demirel [68] found that gender seems to be relevant when evaluating the above variables. Some research indicates that there are significant differences in satisfaction levels for men and women. In a study by Aydintan and Koç [69] they found that levels of job satisfaction and life satisfaction were higher in men than women. This can be the consequence that socially, women, in addition to focusing on their work, must take care of their home and family. However, in a study carried out by Lee, Park [70], found that women scored higher levels of satisfaction than men, with having a better perception of the quality of work life. Hence, it can be the consequence that the expectations of women in a job tend to be lower than those of men. Similarly, for reasons such as that: they have different activities outside of being at home and taking care of the activities necessary for their care, they feel useful and with a more recognized role and it is a way of growing as a person and professional [71]. According to what has been reviewed, the results of the investigations differ from each other, so the findings cannot be universalized. However, it is reflected that there may be significant differences in terms of gender that may be influencing the levels of satisfaction with life and work. The above may be due, as mentioned in the conceptualization section, to the socio-historical context of the roles.

Several previous studies such as Froese, Peltokorpi [72], Xoxakos [73], and Stirpe and Zárraga-Oberty [74] addressed that employees of different gender attach different meanings to and have different level of satisfaction within the organization. Despite there is no evidence within the literature conducted on gender as moderator between employee satisfaction and employee retention, several studies have been conducted on gender separately. The study conducted by Dhamija, Gupta [75] found that gender as a moderator factor has a significant role in determining the employee satisfaction levels. Also, the study by Hsiao, Ma [76] support the significance moderating role of gender between employee satisfaction and employee retention. Meanwhile, the study of Iqbal and Ahmad [77] found that gender has no significance moderation for the employee satisfaction, which revealed no difference between male and female in term of satisfaction. In the context of Saudi higher education, there is a rapid growth of in the number of women participating in the Saudi higher education. According to Al-Ghazali and Sohail [78] the women employees have different needs compared to the men employees, which must be taken into consideration to achieve the required result in term of high satisfaction level and desire to stay. Therefore, the above literature provides support for the following hypothesis.

H11: Gender moderates the relationship between employee satisfaction and the employee retention.

METHODS

According to Abdulsamad, Ali [79], a research design is a set of data collection and analysis settings that attempt to balance relevance to the study goal with procedure economy. This research design is referred to as a blueprint for data collection, measurement, and analysis, as well as a conceptual framework for conducting the entire study [80]. Research design basically denotes the strategy or plan of shaping the study that might involve the whole procedure of study from conceptualizing a research problem and research gap, formulating research questions, the collection of data, data analysis, interpreting the result, writing the report, and finally to indicate which research methods are appropriate [81, 82]. In order to solve the research problem, a research design provides a specific framework of process or steps to be followed to execute the research [83, 84]. According to Ghauri and Gronhaug [85] basically, there are mainly three kinds of study design adopted by scholars, classify as confirmatory, exploratory, and descriptive.

The confirmatory research study normally causes and effect relationship-based research where data is gathered, and analyzed and the findings can be verified by experiment and observation [43]. The confirmatory type of research is suitable when the proof is sought for certain variables which affect different other variables in the same way [86, 87]. The descriptive research study is very often designed for collecting data after analyzing those data to explain the characteristics. Saunders, Lewis [88] stated that descriptive research is useful when there is a lack of answers to research questions, and the researcher must conduct a study to obtain those answers. When there is a lack of information and little knowledge about how similar issues or problems have been solved previously, an exploratory research study is conducted [89]. The goal of these types of investigations is to generate new ideas and take a fresh look at things. Exploratory investigations, according to Saunders, Lewis [88], are effective in learning about and understanding the problem.

Since confirmatory research reveals a causal relationship between variables and focuses on a learning problem or a situation in order to clarify the relationships among the variables, the confirmatory research design has established the research questions and objectives [88]. The purpose of the suggested research is to test the relationship links between supportive work environments, compensation packages, perceived organizational support, and employee retention and intends to collect data for hypothesis testing. It also intends to evaluate the mediating effect of employee satisfaction in the relationship amongst supportive work environment, compensation package, perceived organizational support, and employee retention. The research is confirmatory in nature because the study stands on gathering data from the target sample by using survey instruments, then, under the underlying theoretical framework, applying statistical tests to determine the reliability and validity of links between dependent, independent, and mediating variables.

Figure 1 depicts a research methodology flowchart that explains how the research methodology is progressing toward the study's objectives. The methodology progress of this research was designed based on the onion model by Saunders, Lewis [88], which comprises six steps that start with the philosophy of the study, the positivism philosophy is adopted by this research. The second step is to identify the research approach, where the deductive approach is assigned for this study. In the third step, identifying the research strategy, the survey strategy is adopted for this study. The fourth step is to verify the research choice; the quantitative choice is adopted for this study. The fifth step identifies the time horizon, which is the cross-sectional, the sixth step is the data collection technique, and the end step is the data analysis technique, where the structural equation modelling will be used for this study as in **Figure 1**.

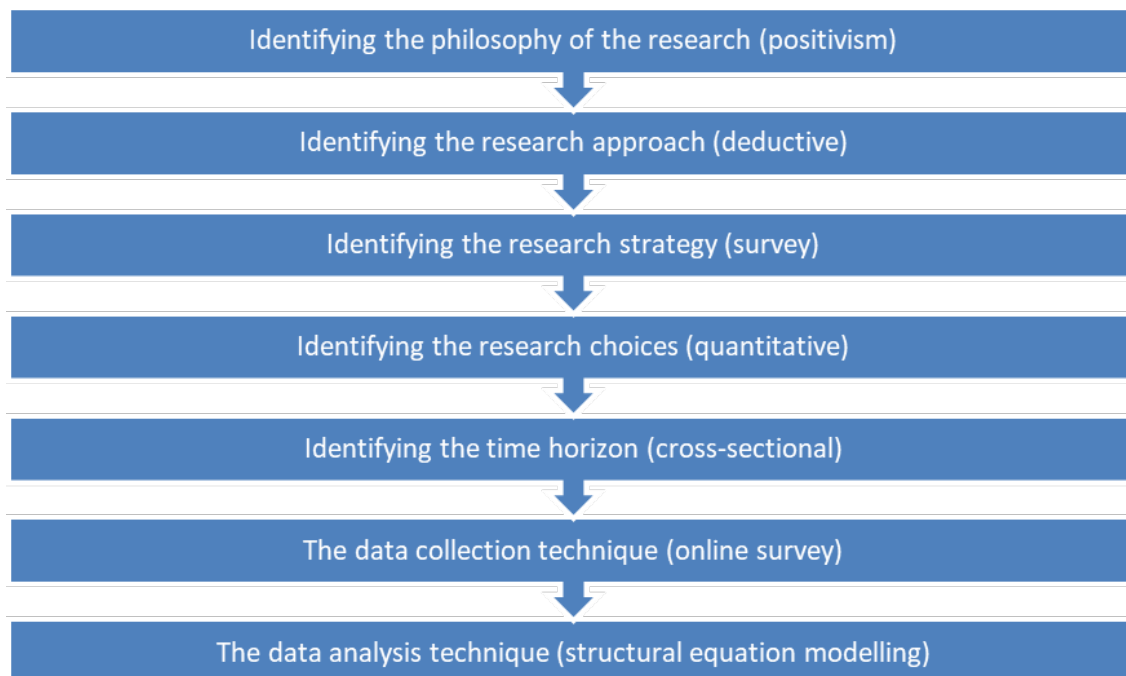


Figure 1: Research methodology flowchart

The proposed research has used a nominal, ordinal, and interval Likert scale in the development of the study questionnaire. The nominal scale and ordinal scale are used in the

questionnaire in section-A where the questions are related to the demographic information of the respondent. All questions in section B, is to be used to measure the five-point Likert scale. For the proposed research, a five-point Likert scale range begins from "strongly disagree" (value of 1) to "strongly agree" (value of 5) was used for all the variables that are dependent, independent, and mediating variables. For expressing the feeling of the respondents, choices are given to them at the rate of agreed upon with the statement [90]. Instead of a seven-point Likert scale, a five-point Likert Scale is to be used because a five-point Likert scale minimizes the level of frustration amongst respondent and increase the quality level of the responses [79, 80, 91]. The usage of this five-point scale increases the reliability of the research [92]. Not only that, it is easier to administer, construct, and establish more reliable grading in the case of a five-point itemized rating scale [87, 92, 93].

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Profile of Respondents

The profile of respondents' test was applied in the study for two main reasons, which are to identify the backgrounds of respondents and to ensure that the random sampling method was used in the questionnaire distribution process. This test has included 5 main categories to be identified about the respondents, which are gender, age, educational level, tenure, and income level.

The following **Table 1** shows that the sample who participated in the study were 384 respondents. The majority of the respondents were males with 56.3% and (n=216). Regarding the age of the respondents, most of them were in the age category of 31-40 years old with 43.5% and (n=167), followed by the age category of 41-50 years old with 36.2% and (n=139), these results make sense because these ages fit the job description of the higher education in Saudi Arabia. The results revealed that the majority of respondents have PhD certificates as their qualifications with 78.9% and (n=303), this ensure that almost the respondents were well educated. In regard of the tenure, it was found that most of the respondents had been in the same position from 4-7 years with 44% and (n=169), followed by other respondents who had a tenure of 8-10 years with 35.7% and (n=137), which show that the respondents had good working experience. Finally, the income level showed that the respondents were very well paid, where 52.9% of the respondents has income in the range of SR15,001-SR20,000 and (n=203), followed by 29.2% of the respondents has income in the range of SR20,001 and above and (n=112).

Table 1: Profile of Respondents (N = 384)

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Tenure	Frequency	Percent
Male	216	56.3	1-3 years	12	3.1
Female	168	43.8	4-7 years	169	44.0
Total	384	100.0	8-10 years	137	35.7
Age	Frequency	Percent	11 years and above	66	17.2
22-30 years old	9	2.3	Total	384	100.0
31-40 years old	167	43.5	Income levels	Frequency	Percent
41-50 years old	139	36.2	SR7,501-SR10,000	9	2.3
Above 50 years old	69	18.0	SR10,001-SR15,000	60	15.6

Total	384	100.0	SR15,001-SR20,000	203	52.9
Educational level	Frequency	Percent	SR20,001 and above	112	29.2
Degree	9	2.3	Total	384	100.0
Master	72	18.8			
PhD	303	78.9			
Total	384	100.0			

Descriptive statistics

For the current research, the descriptive statistics test was employed for the purpose of finding out the opinion and perception of respondents regarding the items stated in the questionnaire. The following Table 2, shows that the variables (compensation package, perceived organizational support, supportive work environment, employee satisfaction, and employee retention) have got mean score = 3.901, 2.680, 2.257, 3.802, and 2.335 respectively. These results show that most of the respondents were on average agreement on the items stated in the questionnaire. Low mean scores were found for the variables perceived organizational support, supportive work environment, and employee retention caused due to the disagreement with the respondents to some of the items. The overall results showed that the impact and effect that compensation package, perceived organizational support, supportive work environment, and employee satisfaction have on the employee retention. Furthermore, the subscale variables had standard deviations = 0.846, 0.965, 0.874, 0.788, and 0.936 respectively.

In the same process of descriptive statistics analysis, it is important to analyze the normal distribution of the data. For that purpose, the current study has employed the normality test. The current study used the Skewness and Kurtosis values to find out if the data had normal distribution or not. According to Hair, Ringle [94], the Skewness values should be ranged between -3 and +3, while the Kurtosis values should be ranged between -5 and +5. The following **Table 2** shows that the variables (compensation package, perceived organizational support, supportive work environment, employee satisfaction, and employee retention), have got Skewness values ranging between -1.378 and 0.833, in the same line, the variables have got Kurtosis values ranged between -1.076 and 2.664. The found results show that all the construct's normality is within the accepted range.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis

Construct	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Compensation package	3.901	0.846	-1.378	2.664
Perceived organizational support	2.680	0.965	-0.173	-1.073
Supportive work environment	2.257	0.874	0.833	0.017
Employee satisfaction	3.802	0.788	-0.912	0.442
Employee retention	2.335	0.936	0.271	-1.076

Reliability Test

The reliability of the research results means that the margin of error is close to zero. While calculating reliability in the research, a comparison is made between the data and the concrete results. The research closest to concrete results is considered reliable [95]. For the current research, the construct reliability was employed for the purpose of ensuring that there is

internal consistency among the variables' items. This test has used the Cronbach alpha values and the composite reliability values to be 0.7 or greater [96].

According to the following **Table 3**, the variables (compensation package, perceived organizational support, supportive work environment, employee satisfaction, and employee retention) have got accepted internal consistencies, where the variables' Cronbach alpha values ranged between 0.917 and 0.935, while the composite reliability values were ranged between 0.923 and 0.947. The AVE values ranged between 0.588 and 0.701, which indicates to an acceptance convergent validity of the model.

Table 3: Reliability Test			
Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
	>0.7	>0.7	>0.5
Compensation package	0.917	0.935	0.611
Perceived organizational support	0.919	0.937	0.592
Supportive work environment	0.922	0.923	0.701
Employee satisfaction	0.915	0.931	0.633
Employee retention	0.932	0.947	0.588

Path Coefficients

The path coefficients are employed in the study for the purpose of analyzing the direct effect between the research variables [79, 80]. This test is used to examine the significance of the direct effect hypotheses. This test has been applied to 7 hypotheses of the study with potential direct effect. The following conclusions were drawn based on the results shown in the following

Table 4:

- There is no relationship between compensation packages and employee retention (H1).
- There is a positive and significant relationship between perceived organizational support and employee retention (H2: $\beta = 0.395$, $t = 8.771$, and $P\text{-value} = 0.000$).
- There is a positive and significant relationship between a supportive work environment and employee retention (H3: $\beta = 0.183$, $t = 2.335$, and $P\text{-value} = 0.028$).
- There is no relationship between compensation packages and employee satisfaction (H4).
- There is no relationship between perceived organizational support and employee satisfaction (H5).
- There is a positive and significant relationship between a supportive work environment and employee satisfaction (H6: $\beta = 0.430$, $t = 8.749$, and $P\text{-value} = 0.000$).
- There is a positive and significant relationship between employee satisfaction and employee retention (H7: $\beta = 0.304$, $t = 5.873$, and $P\text{-value} = 0.000$).

Table 4: Summary of The Direct Effect

Hypothesis	Path Relationship	Std. Beta	Standard Deviation	T-value	P Values
				>1.96	<0.05
H1	CP -> ER	-0.099	0.071	1.398	0.162
H2	POS -> ER	0.395	0.045	8.771	0.000
H3	SWE -> ER	0.183	0.078	2.335	0.028
H4	CP -> ES	-0.081	0.057	1.42	0.171
H5	POS -> ES	-0.043	0.053	0.819	0.387
H6	SWE -> ES	0.430	0.049	8.749	0.000

H7	ES -> ER	0.304	0.052	5.873	0.000
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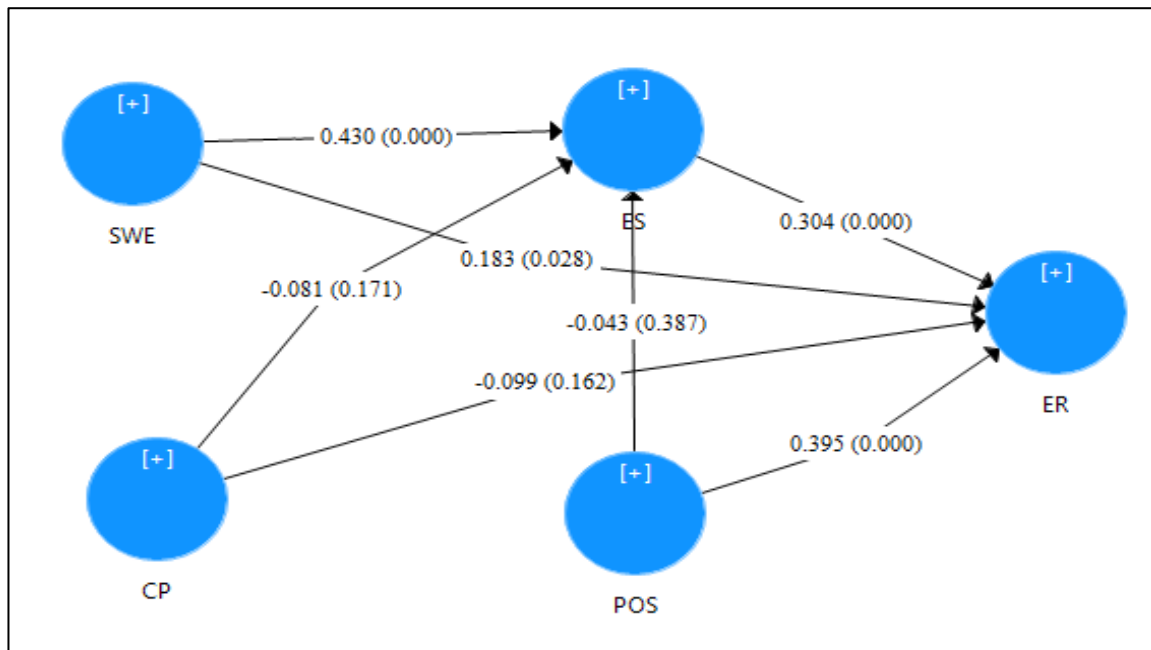


Figure 2:Structural model

Mediation Effect Analysis

For the current study, mediation test was employed to test the mediating effect of employee satisfaction for the relationships between (compensation package, perceived organizational support, and supportive work environment) and employee retention in Saudi Arabia's higher education. The mediation test was employed in the study using the Smart PLS program. The following conclusions are drawn based on the results from the following **Table 5**:

- Employee satisfaction doesn't mediate the relationship between compensation package and employee retention (H8).
- Employee satisfaction doesn't mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee retention (H9).
- Employee satisfaction mediates the relationship between supportive work environment and employee retention (H10: $\beta = 0.127$, $t = 4.459$, and $P\text{-value} = 0.000$).

Table 5: Mediation Analysis

Hypotheses	Path Relationship	Std. Beta	Standard Deviation	T-value >1.96	P Values >0.05
H 8	CP-> ES -> ER	-0.025	0.019	1.33	0.184
H 9	POS-> ES -> ER	-0.009	0.017	0.499	0.618
H 10	SWE-> ES -> ER	0.127	0.029	4.459	0.000

Moderation Analysis

Moderation occurs when the relationship between two variables depends on a third variable. The third variable is the moderator variable, or just moderator. The effect of a moderator variable is statistically an interaction; a categorical (e.g., Gender, ethnicity, class) or quantitative

variable aspect of the relationship between and / or affecting power dependent and independent variables [96].

For the current research, the Smart PLS program was used to analyse the moderation effect of gender for the relationship between employee satisfaction and employee retention. The following **Table 6** reveals that gender does not moderate the relationship between employee satisfaction and employee retention in Saudi Arabia's higher education.

Table 6: Moderation Analysis

Hypothesis	Path	Std Beta	Std Error	t-values	p-values
H11	Gender * ES -> ER	0.109	0.111	0.983	0.326

DISCUSSIONS

The study conducted several tests and analysis for the purpose of testing the reliability, validity, and respondents' profiles of the respondents. There were also very important tests conducted related to the research hypotheses, which are the direct effect, the mediation effect and the moderation impact.

This study employed the direct effect test and it found there is no relationship between compensation packages and employee retention (H1). Also, there is a positive and significant relationship between perceived organizational support and employee retention (H2: $\beta = 0.395$, $t = 8.771$, and $P\text{-value} = 0.000$). AS well, there is a positive and significant relationship between a supportive work environment and employee retention (H3: $\beta = 0.183$, $t = 2.335$, and $P\text{-value} = 0.028$). There is no relationship between compensation packages and employee satisfaction (H4). There is no relationship between perceived organizational support and employee satisfaction (H5). There is a positive and significant relationship between a supportive work environment and employee satisfaction (H6: $\beta = 0.430$, $t = 8.749$, and $P\text{-value} = 0.000$). And finally, there is a positive and significant relationship between employee satisfaction and employee retention (H7: $\beta = 0.304$, $t = 5.873$, and $P\text{-value} = 0.000$).

The mediation effect analysis was employed and it found that employee satisfaction doesn't mediate the relationship between compensation package and employee retention (H8). Also, employee satisfaction doesn't mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee retention (H9). And, employee satisfaction mediates the relationship between a supportive work environment and employee retention (H10: $\beta = 0.127$, $t = 4.459$, and $P\text{-value} = 0.000$). Finally, the moderation analysis was employed and it found that gender does not moderate the relationship between employee satisfaction and employee retention in Saudi Arabia's higher education.

As mentioned above, the results of the present study were mixed (positive and negative). The direct effect of independent variables, namely perceived organization, supportive work environment, and Employee Satisfaction, on employee retention, were positive. These results are in line with previous studies such as [22, 23, 28, 29, 33, 40]. These findings indicate that if a supportive work environment was more positive, and the employees felt secure in their job, the possibility of employees staying in their job is higher. Moreover, the employees put in more effort when there is a clear sign that their contributions will be recognized by the institution. In

contrast, this study found that compensation packages have no significant relationship with employee retention in the education sector in Saudi Arabia. Kossivi, Xu [97], in his study, argued that compensation does not have a direct influence on retention.

Furthermore, the effect of both the compensation package and perceived organizational support on employee satisfaction was not significant. This means that reward and organizational support on their own do not constitute an important satisfaction factor for employees in the education sector in Saudi Arabia. These results are similar to the finding of Davies, Taylor [98], Iqbal and Hashmi [99]. On the other hand, this study suggests that In order to be respected by the employees, the institution must pay attention to the requirements of workers, maintain a pleasant and safe working environment for employees, and enhance and sustain relationships among employees at work. Therefore, the more positively supportive the work environment, the more employee satisfaction will be gained by the institution.

In addition, the results have indicated that employee satisfaction has not a mediating role in the relationship between independent variables (the compensation package and perceived organizational support) and employee retention as the dependent variable. These results are in line with Davies, Taylor [98], whereby pointed out that the existence of job satisfaction will not contribute to the extent of the retention of employees within the institution. on the other side, the study found that if employees' job satisfaction is improved, it helps extend the positive effects of a supportive work environment on employee retention in the education sector.

Even though Hsiao, Ma [100] argued the importance of the moderating role of gender employee satisfaction and employee retention, Iqbal and Ahmad [77] found that gender has no significant moderation on employee satisfaction, which revealed no difference between males and females in terms of satisfaction. The result of the current study went with Iqbal and Ahmad [77], whereby gender had no effect as the moderator in the relationship between employee satisfaction and employee retention. However, once the organization experiences employee satisfaction, employee retention will exist in their organization. Hence, if the organization has an inconsistent number of genders (number of employees); this does not provide any effect in order to achieve employee retention. This revealed that the organization has to achieve employee satisfaction prior to achieving employee retention. Employee satisfaction is viewed as the ability of the organization to acquire employees' needs and wants in the organization in order to gain employee retention.

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

This researcher addressed to determine the relationship between perceived organizational support, compensation package, and a supportive work environment on employee satisfaction and retention. The study has found a supportive work environment has a positive, significant relationship with employee satisfaction. However, perceptions of organizational support and compensation packages have not been found to be significant in determining employee satisfaction. Thus, this study suggests the importance of a supportive work environment in order to benefit employee satisfaction.

The study also has found that perceived organizational support and a supportive work environment have a positive, significant relationship with employee retention. However, perceived organizational support and compensation packages have been found to have no

significant impact on employee retention. Thus, this study suggests the importance of perceived organizational support, and a supportive work environment in order to benefit employee retention.

The study found employee satisfaction significantly mediated the relationship between a supportive work environment on employee retention. This study showed the importance of employee satisfaction in order to assist organizations in achieving employee retention. The study found gender does not moderate the relationship between employee satisfaction and employee retention. This study showed that the absence of moderator factors does not affect the relationship between employee satisfaction and employee retention. This study indicated that the manager should focus on creating employee satisfaction in order to gain employee retention.

As stated in the findings, the manager should ensure that their employees are satisfied with their jobs in order to achieve employee retention. Based on this study, the education sector in KSA should secure job satisfaction because increased job satisfaction could lead to reduced turnover in their organizations. The manager should be aware of the organization's employee retention policies that focus on identifying and retaining committed employees for as long as this is mutually profitable to the organization and the employees. The need for organizations to retain their talented employees is crucial because their ability to remain in organizations depends on it. Thus, human resources policies and procedures that influence employee satisfaction are important for retaining staff.

Future research is needed to cross-validate the variables under the different settings. For example, the educational sector is a broad context that can be further subdivided into government and private sectors. It might be different results if the study also involves these in future studies. The study suggests clustering the type of data based on different sectors to empirically compare the results. It might be useful for future reference, specifically in this sector.

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