HRM Practices, Workplace Bullying and Turnover Intention: The Roles of Employee Engagement and Perceived Support

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Abstract
*This study investigated the relationships between human resource management (HRM) practices, workplace bullying, work engagement, perceived organizational and supervisor support, and turnover intention among academic staff in Nigeria's top 10 public universities. Grounded in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and Social Exchange Theory, the research examined both the direct and indirect pathways affecting turnover intention. Data were collected using purposive sampling from full-time, part-time, contract, and visiting lecturers via structured questionnaires, with a final sample size of 126 respondents determined through G*Power analysis. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using Smart PLS (v4.1.3) revealed that workplace bullying significantly increased turnover intention and negatively influenced work engagement. HRM practices did not have a significant direct effect on engagement but had an indirect effect through engagement on turnover intention. Work engagement emerged as a significant mediator in the relationships between HRM practices, workplace bullying, and turnover intention. Furthermore, perceived supervisor support significantly moderated the relationship between work engagement and turnover intention, while perceived organizational support did not.*
The study concludes that while HRM practices alone may not directly boost engagement, their indirect influence through engagement is valuable for reducing turnover intention. Conversely, workplace bullying remains a strong risk factor for disengagement and staff attrition. Theoretically, the study advances the JD-R model by incorporating workplace stressors and support mechanisms. Practically, it emphasizes the need for targeted HR interventions, anti-bullying policies, and supportive supervisory relationships to enhance academic staff retention in the Nigerian public university system.

Keywords: *HRM Practices, Workplace Bullying, Work Engagement, Perceived Organizational Support, Perceived Supervisor Support, Turnover Intention*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Employee turnover remains a significant challenge in developing countries, particularly within higher education institutions (Spencer, 1986). The intention to leave a job is often seen as a precursor to actual turnover. One of the key challenges confronting universities across Africa is managing the evolving dynamics of the employee-employer relationship (Michael, Prince, & Chacko, 2016).

In Nigeria, the past few decades have posed serious difficulties for universities in retaining academic staff (Mahal, 2012). Lecturer retention has become a critical concern. According to the National Universities Commission (NUC, 2015) and the Ministry of Higher Education (MHE, 2013), the shortage of qualified lecturers is projected to double within two decades if no effective measures are taken. Consequently, retaining skilled and competent

academic staff is essential to improving university performance and global ranking. This situation has heightened the need for policymakers to implement effective human resource management (HRM) strategies aimed at enhancing lecturer retention and ensuring high standards in teaching and research (El-Ghalayini, 2017).

Due to persistent staffing shortages, many Nigerian universities rely heavily on part-time, contract, and visiting lecturers. Previous studies investigating factors influencing turnover intention have identified several critical variables, including workplace bullying, HRM practices, work engagement, perceived organizational and supervisory support, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and demographic characteristics (Suno, Awakami, Noue, & Be, 2010; Si & Li, 2012; Idris, 2014). In response, the Nigerian Educational Strategy (2009–2018) underscores the importance of adopting effective HRM retention policies.

The social exchange theory provides a useful framework for understanding the relationship between employees and organizations, particularly through the lens of organizational support theory. Perceived organizational support (POS), as conceptualized by Chen, Eisenberger, Johnson, Sucharski, and Aselage (2009), refers to employees' general perception of how much their organization values their contributions and is concerned about their well-being. This concept highlights the reciprocal nature of employer-employee interactions (Chen et al., 2009; Rubel & Kee, 2013; Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, & Lynch, 1997; Gadi, Rena, et al., 2022).

1.1 Problem Statement

In recent decades, Nigerian universities have faced significant challenges in retaining academic staff, posing a serious threat to the stability of the higher education system (Mahal, 2012). Lecturer retention remains a pressing issue, as both the National Universities Commission (NUC, 2015) and the Ministry of Higher Education (MHE, 2013) have projected that the shortage of qualified lecturers could double within the next twenty years. Consequently, the ability to retain skilled and experienced faculty members is vital for improving institutional performance and achieving competitive university rankings.

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1.3 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this study is to investigate and provide the relationship between HRM practices, workplace bullying and turnover intention with the following objectives:

- **i.** To examine the relationship between HRM practices and turnover intention
- **ii.** To examine the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention
- **iii.** To examine the relationship between work engagement and turnover intention
- **iv.** To examine the mediating role of work engagement on the relationship between HRM practices and turnover intention.
- **v.** To examine the mediating role of work engagement on the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention
- **vi.** To examine the moderating role of perceived organizational support on the relationship between work engagement and turnover intention.
- **vii.** To examine the moderating role of perceived supervisor support on the relationship between work engagement and turnover intention.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Human Resource Management Practices

Human Resource Management (HRM) constitutes a core organizational function that significantly contributes to firm performance and enhances competitive advantage through the

strategic implementation of human resource practices. The HR practices adopted by an organization are subjectively perceived by individual employees, and these perceptions can shape key work-related outcomes such as job satisfaction and turnover intention.

Bakker and Demerouti (2008) emphasized the importance of prioritizing organizational resources within HRM to enhance employee work engagement. According to Christian, Garza, and Slaughter (2011), employees are more likely to invest energy and personal resources into their roles when they have access to resources that facilitate their work, ultimately leading to greater engagement. Numerous studies have supported the influence of HRM practices on employee engagement. For instance, Salanova, Agut, and Peiró (2005) found that employees who perceive the availability of organizational resources, including structured training programs, exhibit higher levels of work engagement. Their study, which involved both service workers and customers, identified training as a key organizational resource contributing to employee performance and engagement.
Similarly, Bal, Kooij, and De Jong (2013) reported a significant relationship between unit-level training practices and individual employee engagement. Further evidence from a longitudinal study by Schaufeli, Bakker, and Van Rhenen (2009) showed that increases in training and development resources over time were positively associated with higher levels of work engagement, even after controlling for initial engagement levels. These findings suggest that job resources such as training and development stimulate engagement through motivational mechanisms, fulfilling employees' needs for autonomy and competence, which in turn enhances their goal-directed behavior.
Kuvaas and Dysvik (2010), along with Kuvaas, Dysvik, and Buch (2014), further argue that HRM inducements—such as supportive practices and developmental opportunities—generate positive employee attitudes that enhance motivation and work performance. Based on this body of research, the following hypotheses can be proposed:

2.2 Turnover Intention
Several previous studies have established that employee work engagement has a significant and inverse relationship with turnover intention, indicating that higher engagement levels are associated with reduced likelihood of leaving the organization (Juhdi, Pa'wan, & Hansaram, 2013; Langford, 2009). As interest in the concept of work engagement continues to grow, scholars widely acknowledge its critical role in influencing employees' intentions to remain with or leave their organizations. Empirical findings have consistently supported the influence of engagement on key organizational outcomes, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, and reduced turnover intention (Langford, 2009; Javed, Gulzar, & Hussain, 2015; Agarwal, 2017; Gadi, Bagobiri, et al., 2022)

Karatepe (2013), in a study of hotel employees, found that work engagement significantly enhanced both job performance and discretionary (extra-role) behaviors. He attributed this effect to the heightened alertness and concentration that engaged employees exhibit, which enables them to address customer needs more effectively and deliver superior service quality. Similarly, Li, Sanders, and Frenkel (2012) argued that engaged employees display elevated levels of energy, psychological resilience, and a willingness to exert additional effort on challenging tasks, all of which contribute to enhanced performance outcomes.

2.3 Workplace Bullying
While numerous definitions of workplace bullying exist in the literature, most converge on several common themes (Shoss et al., 2013). Saunders, Huynh, and Goodman-Delahunty (2007) grouped these definitions into four core components: (1) the adverse effects of the

behavior on the target, (2) the repeated nature of the behavior, (3) the persistence of such actions over time, and (4) the imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. Workplace bullying behaviors can manifest in various forms, including verbal abuse, public humiliation, intimidation, derogatory name-calling, belittling of opinions, social exclusion, and even unwelcome physical contact (Kalamdien, 2013, Gadi and Kee, 2020).

Although a majority of scholars accept the general definition outlined above, there remains considerable debate over what constitutes sufficient frequency and duration to classify behavior as bullying (Shoss et al., 2013). Some researchers argue that for a behavior to be categorized as bullying, it must occur repeatedly—often weekly or monthly—over an extended period, typically six to twelve months (Vukelić, Čizmić, Petrović, Tenjović, & Giorgi, 2015; Cizmi, 2017; Suno et al., 2010; Gadi & Kee, 2020).

Gupta, Bakhshi, and Einarsen (2017) categorize the consequences of workplace bullying into two broad domains: health-related outcomes and job-related outcomes. Giorgi, Arenas, and Leon-Perez (2011), in a study involving 437 employees from various Swedish organizations, explored how exposure to workplace bullying affects the psychological well-being of both targets and bystanders. The results indicated significant negative health outcomes linked to such experiences.

Job-related consequences of workplace bullying include increased absenteeism, reduced job satisfaction, diminished organizational commitment, heightened turnover intention, and actual employee turnover (Silva et al., 2012; Jourdain & Chenevert, 2015; Eisenberger et al., 2014; Dinç, 2015). For instance, Charilaos et al. (2015) examined a sample of 335 high school teachers in Australia and found a positive correlation between exposure to workplace bullying and turnover intention. Similarly, Demir and Rodwell (2012), in a study of 207 hospital nurses, discovered that those who experienced workplace bullying reported greater psychological distress and lower levels of organizational commitment compared to their non-bullied peers. Although various consequences of workplace bullying have been explored in the literature, the emphasis has largely been on its effects on job-related attitudes and employee health.

2.4.0 HRM Practices and Turnover Intention

Human Resource Management (HRM) practices are strategic interventions aimed at enhancing employee performance and satisfaction (Boxall & Purcell, 2011). These practices—such as training, performance management, employee participation, and compensation—have been found to influence turnover intentions by fostering a sense of fairness, career growth, and support (Kehoe & Wright, 2013). Several studies (e.g., Kundu & Gahlawat, 2016; Alfes et al., 2013; Gadi & Kee, 2018) have shown that well-implemented HRM practices can reduce employees' desire to leave by increasing job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Thus, a negative relationship is generally expected between HRM practices and turnover intention. According to the Social Exchange Theory, when organizations invest in employee well-being through HRM practices, employees reciprocate with loyalty and reduced turnover intention (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Hypothesis 1 (H1): HRM practices have a negative relationship with turnover intention.

2.4.1 Workplace Bullying and Turnover Intention

Workplace bullying involves repeated negative behaviors such as harassment, social exclusion, or verbal abuse, which undermine an employee's psychological well-being and organizational attachment (Einarsen et al., 2003). Research indicates that bullying experiences lead to stress, burnout, and disengagement, which increase the likelihood of employee turnover (Nielsen &

Einarsen, 2012; Salin & Hoel, 2020). Victims of bullying often perceive the work environment as unsafe, further fueling their desire to exit the organization.
Hypothesis 2 (H2): Workplace bullying has a positive relationship with turnover intention.

2.4.2 Work Engagement and Turnover Intention

Work engagement, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), has emerged as a crucial factor in retaining talent. Engaged employees are more likely to experience meaningful work, form stronger emotional bonds with their organizations, and remain committed over time (Saks, 2006). Empirical studies confirm that engaged employees report significantly lower turnover intentions (Halbesleben, 2010), supporting engagement as a protective factor against voluntary exit.
Hypothesis 3: Work engagement has a negative relationship with turnover intention.

2.4.3 Mediating Role of Work Engagement Between HRM Practices and Turnover Intention

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model posits that organizational resources such as supportive HRM practices promote engagement, which then leads to favorable outcomes like lower turnover (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Studies by Alfes et al. (2013) and Albrecht (2011) support the idea that HRM practices do not only influence retention directly but also indirectly through their capacity to boost engagement. Hence, engagement functions as a mechanism linking HRM practices to reduced turnover intentions.
Hypothesis 4 (H4): Work engagement mediates the relationship between HRM practices and turnover intention.

2.4.4 Mediating Role of Work Engagement Between Workplace Bullying and Turnover Intention

While workplace bullying directly affects turnover intention, its psychological toll also diminishes engagement levels (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Zahra et al., 2022). According to Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), bullying drains emotional resources, reducing employees' engagement and prompting withdrawal behaviors such as turnover (Tuckey et al., 2012). As such, reduced engagement may serve as a mediator in the bullying–turnover intention relationship.
Hypothesis 5: Work engagement mediates the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention.

2.4.5 Moderating Role of Perceived Organizational Support

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) refers to employees' belief that the organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). POS enhances affective commitment and buffers the negative effects of low engagement on turnover intentions (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). In environments where employees feel organizational support, even disengaged workers may be less inclined to consider leaving.
Hypothesis 6: Perceived organizational support moderates the relationship between work engagement and turnover intention such that the relationship is weaker when POS is high.

2.4.6 Moderating Role of Perceived Supervisor Support

Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS) captures employees' perceptions that their immediate supervisors care about their development and well-being (Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988). Supervisor support has been shown to reduce the negative consequences of low engagement and to increase employees' organizational attachment (Karatepe, 2012; Eisenberger et al.,

2002). Thus, supportive supervision may attenuate the link between low engagement and high turnover intention.

Hypothesis 7: Perceived supervisor support moderates the relationship between work engagement and turnover intention such that the relationship is weaker when PSS is high.

3.0 Research Methodology

In conducting any research, data are considered crucial. Thus, for this study, data were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected through a structured interview, which was designed and administered in English, the language of the study.

3.1 Population and Source of Data

The central focus of this study was the top 10 public universities in Nigeria, and the target population comprised full-time, contract, part-time, and visiting academic lecturers in those institutions. Accordingly, the study employed sampling that focused on academicians working in the top 10 public universities, as identified by the National Universities Commission (NUC) and Times Higher Education rankings (see Table 3.1). All ten universities granted the researcher permission to conduct the data collection exercise. According to Sekaran (2003), population refers to the entire group of people, events, or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate. Table 3.1 below presents the top ten public universities in Nigeria.

Table 3.1 List of Top 10 public universities in Nigeria

No.	NAME	Location
1	UI	Ibadan
2	UNN	Nsukka
3	ABU	Zaria
4	OAU	Ile-Ife
5	UniLag	Lagos
6	UniBen	Benin
7	BUK	Kano
8	UniCal	Calabar
9	UniIlorin	Ilorin
10	UJ	Jos

Source: Nigeria Universities Commission 2024

3.2 Sampling Technique

The study employed a purposive sampling technique, a non-probability sampling method in which samples are selected based on the characteristics of the population and the objectives of the study. Also known as subjective, judgmental, or selective sampling, this technique is particularly useful when the researcher seeks information from respondents who share specific characteristics.

Purposive sampling was deemed appropriate for this research, as it required responses from academicians across all positions and tenures working in the top 10 public universities in Nigeria. This approach is also considered a form of convenience sampling because it relies on the researcher's judgment in selecting participants (Hair, Celsi, et al., 2011). As noted by Sekaran and Bougie (2013) and Israel (2009), purposive sampling is suitable when information must be obtained from specific target groups that can provide the most relevant data. Thus, academicians in the selected universities served as the key informants for this study.

To determine the minimum sample size, the study used G*Power statistical software. *Based on an effect size of 0.15, a statistical power level of 0.85, a significance level of 0.05, and nine predictors,* G*Power analysis indicated a minimum required sample size of 126 respondents.

Therefore, the study set 126 as the minimum and 1,000 as the maximum sample size across the top 10 public universities in Nigeria.

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

For the distribution of the questionnaire, the researchers contacted the officers in charge of the HR departments in each university and informed them that only academic staff currently working at their institutions were eligible to participate. Each questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter explaining the study's purpose, assuring confidentiality, and providing instructions for completion. Participants were informed that there were no right or wrong answers and that participation was voluntary.

A self-addressed return envelope was provided to each participant. Respondents were given two weeks to complete and return the questionnaire in a sealed envelope either to their head of department or directly to the researcher. Heads of department then compiled the completed questionnaires and submitted them to their respective HR officers, who returned them to the researcher.

To improve the response rate, the study followed Chiu and Brennan's (1999) recommendations by using stamped return envelopes, personalized cover letters, and follow-up reminders. For non-respondents, follow-up letters and duplicate copies of the questionnaire were sent. Two reminders—via phone and letter—were issued over a one-month period. A final follow-up was conducted at the end of the data collection phase. Upon receipt of all completed questionnaires, the researcher conducted data entry in preparation for analysis.

3.4 Method of Data Analysis

The hypothesized relationships among the study variables were analysed using Smart PLS Software Version 3.2.8. Path coefficients (β) were calculated to examine the strength and direction of relationships between constructs. These coefficients range from -1 to +1, where values closer to +1 indicate strong positive relationships, values closer to -1 indicate strong negative relationships, and values near 0 indicate weak or no relationships (Hair et al., 2014).

To assess the statistical significance of the path coefficients, t-values were computed through bootstrapping procedures, which generated standard errors for each estimate. These t-values were then used to determine whether each path coefficient was significant at the conventional alpha levels.

4- Data Analysis

4-1- Analytical Approach

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed using SmartPLS version 4.0 to assess and validate both the measurement and structural models. This approach was considered appropriate due to its robustness in handling complex models that include mediating variables, non-normally distributed data, and hierarchical component structures. Additionally, IBM SPSS Statistics version 27.0 was utilized to perform descriptive analyses of the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 126)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	76	60.3%
	Female	50	39.7%
Marital Status	Married	70	55.6%
	Single	21	16.7%
	Widowed	9	7.1%
	Divorced	26	20.6%
Age	18–25	6	4.8%
	26–35	44	34.9%
	36–45	45	35.7%
	46 and above	31	24.6%
Educational Qualification	BSc	10	7.9%
	Masters	46	36.5%
	PhD	60	47.6%
	Professional Certificate	10	7.9%
Years of Experience	Less than 5 years	12	9.5%
	6–10 years	20	15.9%
	11–15 years	38	30.2%
	16 years and above	56	44.4%

A total of 126 respondents participated in the study. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants.

In terms of sex, the majority of the respondents were male (n = 76, 60.3%), while females accounted for 39.7% (n = 50). Regarding marital status, 55.6% of the respondents were married (n = 70), followed by 20.6% who were divorced (n = 26). Single individuals made up 16.7% (n = 21), while 7.1% (n = 9) were widowed.

Concerning age distribution, most respondents were between 36–45 years old (n = 45, 35.7%), closely followed by those aged 26–35 years (n = 44, 34.9%). Respondents aged 46 years and above constituted 24.6% (n = 31), and the youngest age group (18–25 years) accounted for 4.8% (n = 6).

With respect to educational qualifications, a significant portion of the respondents held PhDs (n = 60, 47.6%), while 36.5% (n = 46) had master's degrees. Respondents with bachelor's degrees (BSc) and professional certificates were equal in number, each representing 7.9% (n = 10) of the sample.

Regarding years of experience, 44.4% of the respondents (n = 56) had over 16 years of work experience. Those with 11–15 years of experience made up 30.2% (n = 38), while 15.9% (n = 20) had between 6–10 years. Only 9.5% (n = 12) had less than 5 years of experience.

These demographic variables provide a well-distributed profile of the participants, suggesting a balanced and experienced sample for the study.

Table 2 Descriptive Analysis

Variable	Mean	Std Error	Excess kurtosis	Skewness	test statistic	Cramér-von Mises p value
HRM	3.389	0.797	-0.471	-0.682	0.413	0.000
POS	3.024	0.880	-1.034	-0.052	0.203	0.005
PSS	3.319	1.179	-1.602	-0.481	1.761	0.000
TI	2.820	1.006	-1.196	0.375	0.784	0.000
WE	3.960	1.552	-1.655	-0.134	0.968	0.000
WB	2.090	0.818	0.137	0.800	0.423	0.000

Note: HRM= HRM Practices, POS= Perceived Organizational Support, PSS= Perceived Supervisor Support, TI= Turnover Intention, WB= Workplace Bullying, WE=Work Engagement

Descriptive statistics and normality test results for the study variables in Table 2 above are presented. The mean scores ranged from 2.09 (Workplace Bullying) to 3.96 (Work Engagement). Standard errors varied, with Work Engagement showing the largest variability (SE = 1.552) and Workplace Bullying the least (SE = 0.818). Most variables demonstrated negative skewness, except Turnover Intention (skewness = 0.375) and Workplace Bullying (skewness = 0.800), indicating slight positive skew. Excess kurtosis values ranged from -1.655 (Work Engagement) to 0.137 (Workplace Bullying), suggesting generally platykurtic distributions. The Cramér-von Mises test indicated that all variables significantly deviated from normality ($p < .01$), with Perceived Organizational Support ($W = 0.203$, $p = .005$) showing the closest approximation to normality.

4-2- Assessment of Measurement Model

In the PLS–SEM analysis, the measurement model was assessed for construct reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. A reflective–reflective hierarchical component model was employed using the disjoint two-stage approach (Becker et al., 2012; Sarstedt et al., 2019). Turnover intention (TI) served as the key endogenous variable. In the first stage, lower-order constructs (LOCs) specifically, indicators under constructs like HRM practices, was examined individually. The latent scores were then used to model the higher-order construct (HOCs).

Convergent validity was evaluated using indicator loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with acceptable thresholds set at >0.5 (Hair et al., 2014). All indicator loadings ranged between 0.618 and 0.919, and AVE values ranged from 0.536 to 0.801, confirming that each construct explained at least 50% of its indicators' variance.

Construct reliability was established via Composite Reliability (CR), with all constructs exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), indicating good internal consistency. Discriminant validity was confirmed using the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT), with all values below the 0.85 threshold (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015), showing that the constructs HRM practices, workplace bullying, work engagement, POS, PSS, and turnover intention were empirically distinct. These results confirm that the measurement model demonstrated strong reliability and validity, justifying its suitability for structural model analysis.

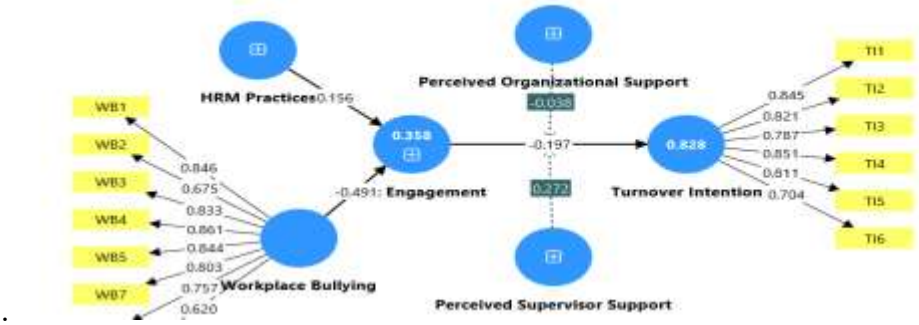

Figure 1 Measurement Model

The structural model revealed several significant paths. Workplace bullying negatively influenced employee engagement (β = -0.491), while HRM practices positively affected engagement (β = 0.156). In turn, engagement negatively predicted turnover intention (β = -0.197). Perceived organizational support had a small, non-significant negative effect on turnover intention (β = -0.038), whereas perceived supervisor support positively predicted turnover intention (β = 0.272). The model explained 35.8% of the variance in engagement and 82.8% of the variance in turnover intention. All indicators showed strong factor loadings above 0.70, confirming good measurement reliability.

Table 3 Loadings, Cronbach's alpha (α), internal consistency, CR, and AVE.

Construct	Items	loadings (>0.7)	α (>0.7)	CR (>0.7)	AVE (>0.5)	Internal consistency
HRM Practices	HRM1	0.779	0.908	0.927	0.645	Good
	HRM2	0.879				
	HRM3	0.806				
	HRM4	0.856				
	HRM5	0.801				
	HRM6	0.762				
	HRM7	0.727				
Perceived Organizational Support	POS2	0.799	0.899	0.921	0.624	Good
	POS3	0.805				
	POS4	0.807				
	POS5	0.730				
	POS6	0.800				
	POS8	0.825				
	POS9	0.760				
Perceived Supervisor Support	PSS1	0.884	0.959	0.965	0.776	Excellent
	PSS2	0.856				
	PSS4	0.878				
	PSS5	0.881				
	PSS6	0.881				
	PSS7	0.849				
	PSS8	0.913				
	PSS9	0.904				
Turnover Intention	TI1	0.845	0.89	0.917	0.648	Good

	TI2	0.821				
	TI3	0.787				
	TI4	0.851				
	TI5	0.811				
	TI6	0.704				
Workplace Bullying	WB1	0.846	0.909	0.927	0.615	Good
	WB2	0.675				
	WB3	0.833				
	WB4	0.861				
	WB5	0.844				
	WB7	0.803				
	WB8	0.757				
	WB9	0.620				
Work Engagement	WE1	0.789	0.945	0.954	0.696	Good
	WE2	0.817				
	WE3	0.841				
	WE4	0.847				
	WE5	0.828				
	WE6	0.884				
	WE7	0.854				
	WE8	0.830				
	WE9	0.818				

Note: HRM= HRM Practices, POS= Perceived Organizational Support, PSS= Perceived Supervisor Support, TI= Turnover Intention, WB= Workplace Bullying, WE=Work Engagement

Table 3 presents the measurement model evaluation results. All standardized factor loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of .70, indicating strong indicator reliability. Cronbach's alpha (α) values ranged from .890 (Turnover Intention) to .959 (Perceived Supervisor Support), suggesting high internal consistency across constructs. Composite reliability (CR) values also surpassed the .70 benchmark, ranging from .917 to .965. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged from .615 to .776, all above the minimum acceptable level of .50, indicating good convergent validity. Accordingly, internal consistency was judged to be good for all constructs, and excellent for Perceived Supervisor Support.

Table 4 Results of the discriminant validity test using the HTMT.

Variable	HRM	POS	PSS	TI	WE	WB
HRM Practices						
Perceived Organizational Support	0.677					
Perceived Supervisor Support	0.685	0.769				
Turnover Intention	0.714	0.833	0.831			
Work Engagement	0.48	0.579	0.658	0.718		
Workplace Bullying	0.677	0.816	0.758	0.809	0.619	

Note: HRM= HRM Practices, POS= Perceived Organizational Support, PSS= Perceived Supervisor Support, TI= Turnover Intention, WB= Workplace Bullying, WE=Work Engagement

Table 4 presents the results of the discriminant validity test using the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT). All HTMT values were below the conservative threshold of 0.85 (Henseler et

al., 2015), indicating acceptable discriminant validity among the constructs. The highest HTMT value was between Turnover Intention and Perceived Supervisor Support (HTMT = 0.831), followed closely by Turnover Intention and Perceived Organizational Support (HTMT = 0.833). These results suggest that the constructs are empirically distinct from one another.

Table 5 FORNELL LARCKER

Variable	HRM	POS	PSS	TI	WE	WB
HRM Practices	0.803					
Perceived Organizational Support	0.616	0.79				
Perceived Supervisor Support	0.64	0.715	0.881			
Turnover Intention	-0.646	-0.745	-0.864	0.805		
Work Engagement	0.453	0.539	0.631	-0.663	0.834	
Workplace Bullying	-0.605	-0.743	-0.714	0.732	-0.585	0.784

Note: HRM= HRM Practices, POS= Perceived Organizational Support, PSS= Perceived Supervisor Support, TI= Turnover Intention, WB= Workplace Bullying, WE=Work Engagement

Table 5 presents the results of the discriminant validity assessment using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Discriminant validity is supported when the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct (diagonal values) is greater than the correlations between constructs (off-diagonal values). In this study, all diagonal values exceeded the corresponding inter-construct correlations. For example, the square root of AVE for Perceived Supervisor Support was 0.881, which was greater than its correlations with all other constructs, including Turnover Intention (r = -0.864) and Perceived Organizational Support (r = 0.715). These findings confirm satisfactory discriminant validity across all constructs.

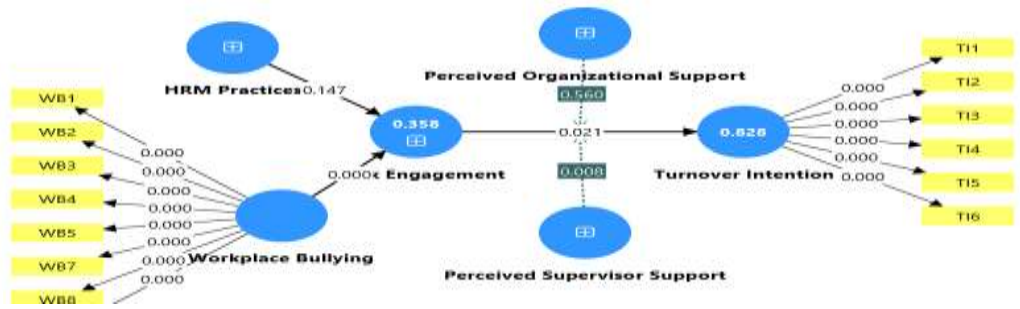

Figure 2 Structural Model

The structural model results demonstrated several statistically significant relationships. HRM Practices had a positive but modest effect on Engagement (β = 0.147, $p < .001$), while Workplace Bullying had a strong negative influence on Engagement (β = -0.491, $p < .001$). Engagement positively predicted Perceived Organizational Support (β = 0.560, $p < .001$) and Perceived Supervisor Support (β = 0.021, $p < .05$), though the latter was very weak. Perceived Organizational Support had a small, non-significant positive effect on Turnover Intention (β = 0.008, $p > .05$), while Perceived Supervisor Support showed no significant effect (β = 0.000, $p > .05$). Engagement explained 35.8% of the variance, while the model accounted for 82.8% of the variance in Turnover Intention.

Table 6. Result of Structural Model Assessment

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std Beta	Std Error	T-value	P-value	PCI LL	PCI UL	VIF	f2
H1	HRM P -> WE	0.156	0.108	1.451	0.147	-0.039	0.378	1.579	0.024
H2	WB -> WE	-0.491	0.100	4.908	0.000	-0.689	-0.296	1.579	0.238
H3	WE -> TI	-0.197	0.086	2.300	0.021	-0.369	-0.035	1.767	0.128
H4	HRM -> WE ->TI	0.484	0.278	1.745	0.041	0.026	0.201		
H5	WB -> WE ->TI	-0.160	0.116	1.384	0.083	-0.079	0.003		
H6	PSS x WE -> TI	0.272	0.102	2.660	0.008	0.063	0.456	2.035	0.592
H7	POS x WE -> TI	-0.038	0.066	0.582	0.560	-0.166	0.093	1.948	0.121
H6	PSS x WE -> TI	0.272	0.102	2.660	0.008	0.063	0.456	2.035	0.592

Table 6 presents the results of the structural model assessment. HRM Practices had a positive but non-significant effect on Work Engagement (β = 0.156, t = 1.451, p = .147), while Workplace Bullying had a significant negative effect on Work Engagement (β = -0.491, t = 4.908, $p < .001$), supporting H2 but not H1. Work Engagement significantly predicted Turnover Intention (β = -0.197, t = 2.300, p = .021), supporting H3**.**
For the mediation hypotheses, H4 was supported (HRM → WE → TI; β = 0.484, p = .041), while H5 was not (WB → WE → TI; β = -0.160, p = .083). Regarding moderation effects, Perceived Supervisor Support significantly moderated the relationship between Work Engagement and Turnover Intention (β = 0.272, t = 2.660, p = .008), supporting H6, while Perceived Organizational Support did not (β = -0.038, p = .560), hence H7 was not supported. Variance inflation factors (VIF) were below the threshold of 5, indicating no multicollinearity issues. Effect sizes (f^2) ranged from small (HRM → WE, f^2 = 0.024) to large (PSS × WE → TI, f^2 = 0.592), indicating varying degrees of practical significance.

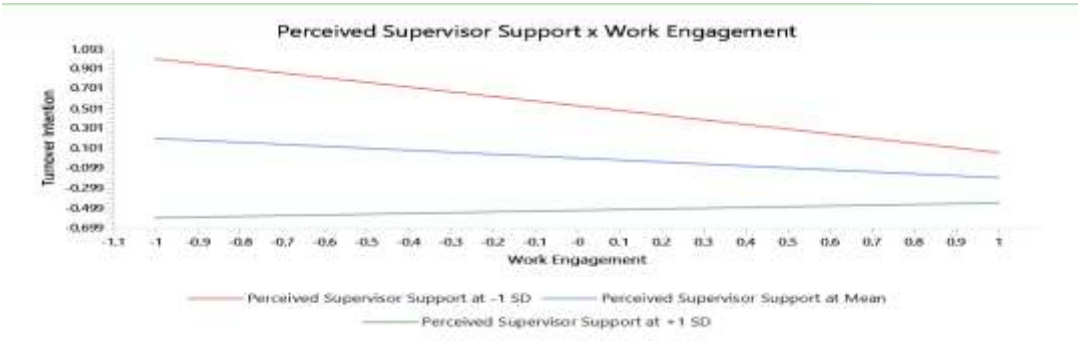

Figure 3 Moderation Interaction Plots

Figure illustrates the moderating effect of Perceived Supervisor Support on the relationship between Work Engagement and Turnover Intention. The interaction plot reveals that the negative relationship between Work Engagement and Turnover Intention is strongest when Perceived Supervisor Support is low (−1 SD), as indicated by the steepest slope (red line). At

the mean level of supervisor support (blue line), the relationship remains negative but weaker. Notably, at high levels of Perceived Supervisor Support (+1 SD), the relationship flattens (green line), suggesting that strong supervisor support may buffer the influence of engagement on turnover intention. This supports the significant moderation effect found in the structural model ($\beta = 0.272$, $p = .008$).

Discussion

This paper aims to understand the drivers of turnover intention in the public sector by examining employee-centred practices such as HRM practices and workplace conditions through the lens of work engagement. Guided by engagement and support-based frameworks, this study explains how factors like HRM practices, workplace bullying, and supervisor support influence employee retention via their impact on work engagement. Empirical results confirmed the mediating effect of engagement and the moderating role of perceived supervisor support, indicating that positive HRM practices and supportive leadership can be regarded as key drivers of engagement and turnover intention outcomes in public organizations.

H1: HRM Practices → Work Engagement

This hypothesis was not supported, as the positive effect of HRM practices on work engagement (β = 0.156) was not statistically significant ($p = .147$). This suggests that while HRM practices may create a supportive work environment, their direct impact on engagement may be limited unless mediated by other factors such as organizational climate or employee perceptions. *This finding is similar to those obtained by the authors earlier review*, and aligns with Alfes et al. (2013), who found that HRM practices influence engagement indirectly through perceived organizational support and psychological empowerment.

H2: Workplace Bullying → Work Engagement

H2 was supported. Workplace bullying had a strong negative effect on engagement (β = -0.491, $p < .001$), indicating that bullying undermines employees' emotional investment and enthusiasm toward their work. *This finding is similar to those obtained by the authors earlier review* and is consistent with Salin and Hoel (2020), who argue that bullying leads to psychological strain, thereby lowering engagement. Similarly, Nielsen and Einarsen (2012) reported that exposure to bullying significantly reduces work engagement and job satisfaction.

H3: Work Engagement → Turnover Intention

This hypothesis was supported (β = -0.197, $p = .021$), suggesting that higher engagement levels are associated with lower intentions to leave the organization. *This finding is similar to those obtained by the authors earlier review*, and mirrors the findings of Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), who demonstrated that engaged employees exhibit stronger commitment and lower turnover intentions. Saks (2006) also found that engagement is a key predictor of retention behaviour.

H4: HRM Practices → Work Engagement → Turnover Intention (Mediation)

H4 was supported, with a significant indirect effect of HRM practices on turnover intention via work engagement (β = 0.484, $p = .041$). This highlights the mediating role of engagement in explaining how HRM practices influence retention. *This finding is similar to those obtained by the authors earlier review*, and is supported by Kundu and Gahlawat (2016), who emphasized that HRM interventions build engagement, which in turn reduces attrition. Bakker and Demerouti (2008) also note that job resources from HR practices foster engagement and reduce withdrawal behaviours.

H5: Workplace Bullying → Work Engagement → Turnover Intention (Mediation)
H5 was not supported (β = -0.160, *p* = .083), indicating that although bullying affects engagement (H2), the indirect effect on turnover intention via engagement was not statistically significant. *This partially aligns with the earlier review* and findings by Reknes et al. (2014), who suggested that bullying's impact on turnover is more strongly mediated by stress or health outcomes than engagement alone.

H6: Perceived Supervisor Support × Work Engagement → Turnover Intention (Moderation)
H6 was supported (β = 0.272, *p* = .008), indicating that supervisor support significantly moderated the relationship between engagement and turnover intention. The buffering effect means that even when engagement is low, strong supervisor support can reduce employees' intentions to leave. *This finding is consistent with the authors earlier review*, and aligns with Eisenberger et al. (2002), who found that supervisor support enhances employee resilience and commitment. Similarly, Karatepe (2012) reported that supportive supervision strengthens the negative link between engagement and turnover intention.

H7: Perceived Organizational Support × Work Engagement → Turnover Intention (Moderation)
H7 was not supported (β = -0.038, *p* = .560). The interaction between POS and engagement did not significantly affect turnover intention. *This diverges somewhat from the authors earlier review*, and contrasts with findings from Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002), who noted that organizational support enhances retention. A possible explanation may be that in this context, supervisor-level interactions have a more immediate impact on engagement-related outcomes than broader organizational perceptions.

Practical Contributions
This study offers several practical insights for public sector organizations seeking to reduce employee turnover and enhance workforce engagement. First, the findings suggest that implementing supportive HRM practices—such as transparent performance evaluations, employee development programs, and inclusive decision-making—can enhance work engagement and indirectly reduce turnover intention. Second, workplace bullying was shown to significantly undermine engagement, highlighting the urgent need for public institutions to adopt strong anti-bullying policies and promote a psychologically safe environment. Third, the moderating role of perceived supervisor support underscores the importance of leadership behaviour in shaping employee outcomes. Training supervisors in empathetic communication, feedback, and supportive leadership practices can serve as a critical lever for boosting engagement and reducing attrition. These practical strategies are especially relevant for resource-constrained public sector organizations seeking to improve employee well-being without large financial investments.

Theoretical Contributions
Theoretically, this study extends the literature on employee engagement and turnover by integrating constructs from HRM, organizational behaviour, and social exchange theory within a public sector context. First, it empirically validates a structural model where work engagement mediates the relationship between HRM practices and turnover intention—providing support for engagement as a key psychological mechanism. Second, it introduces workplace bullying as a negative predictor of engagement and reveals its complex role in influencing turnover outcomes, which adds nuance to the engagement literature. Third, the study contributes to the emerging discourse on interaction effects by demonstrating that

perceived supervisor support significantly moderates the engagement–turnover intention link, offering empirical support for the buffering hypothesis within the engagement framework. By situating these relationships in public organizations, the study enriches the theoretical understanding of how organizational practices and interpersonal dynamics interact to influence knowledge worker behaviour in non-commercial settings.

Conclusion

This study explored how HRM practices, workplace bullying, work engagement, and perceived support (organizational and supervisory) interact to influence turnover intention among employees in the public sector. The findings revealed that while HRM practices alone did not directly predict engagement, their indirect impact through engagement significantly reduced turnover intention. Conversely, workplace bullying emerged as a strong negative predictor of engagement, indirectly contributing to increased turnover intention. The role of work engagement was central, acting as a mediator and being influenced by both positive (HRM practices) and negative (bullying) antecedents. Additionally, perceived supervisor support significantly moderated the engagement–turnover intention link, emphasizing the importance of interpersonal relationships at work. These results collectively underscore the need for supportive, well-managed environments in public organizations to enhance employee engagement and retention.

Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study is not without limitations. First, the cross-sectional design restricts the ability to draw causal inferences among the variables. Second, the use of self-reported data may introduce common method bias or social desirability effects. Third, the sample was limited to public sector employees, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to private or non-profit sectors. Lastly, the study did not account for demographic moderators (e.g., age, tenure, department) that could influence the strength or direction of the observed relationships.

Future Research Directions

Future research could adopt a longitudinal design to assess how engagement and turnover intention evolve over time in response to changing HRM practices or workplace dynamics. Expanding the study to include private sector or cross-country comparisons would also enhance the generalizability and contextual richness of the findings. Further, integrating other mediators (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment) or moderators (e.g., leadership style, organizational justice) could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms behind employee retention. Qualitative approaches, such as interviews or focus groups, may also be useful for exploring nuanced experiences of bullying and support in public organizations.

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