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Impact of Talent Management Practices on Employee Retention: Mediating Role of Employee Engagement

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Abstract

This paper investigates the effect of the talent management practices i.e., talent acquisition (TA), training and development (TD) and performance management (PM) to employee retention (ER) in the Pakistani private corporate sector where employee engagement (EE) is taken as the mediating factor and organization culture (OC) as the moderating factor. Using a sample of 300 respondents and partial least squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the issue was addressed and confirmed that the three dimensions of talent management had a positive and significant effect on employee engagement and employee retention. These relationships are mediated completely by employee engagement, and the organizational culture has a high moderating power in the engagement-retention nexus. The model has a high explanatory power with 53.2% variability in retention of employees being explained.

Keywords: Talent Management, Employee Retention, Employee Engagement, Organizational Culture, Pakistan, PLS-SEM.

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Introduction

The strategic management of human capital has become one of the keys defining factors of organizational sustainability in a world that is becoming increasingly competitive on the global scene and in a fast-changing organizational environment. The concept of talent management (TM), which can be described as the process of attracting, identifying, developing, engaging, retaining and deploying high potential individuals (Caligiuri et al., 2024), has moved beyond being a fringe issue in HR practices and become a strategic necessity. When organizations do not establish effective talent management models, chances of losing huge human capital are high, and it is more of a problem in the emerging economies where institutions have failed, and labor market is unpredictable thereby making retention an even greater challenge.

The context of the dynamics is interesting but under-studied in Pakistan, with the private sector of corporations. Even with significant economic growth and expansion of organizations in the banking, telecommunication, manufacturing, and services sectors, Pakistani companies have been struggling with the talent retention crisis caused by the high rate of attrition, ineffective compensation system, fewer career development opportunities, and poor organizational commitment systems (Kanwal et al., 2023). The resultant human capital exodus has both direct costs such as recruitment, onboarding and training costs, as well as indirect costs such as loss of knowledge, and organizational capability. It is not only important academically but operationally urgent to know, therefore, what mediates and moderates the relationship between the talent management practices and retention.

Although existing literature has recognized the positive relationship between talent management and retention, there has been lack of theorization on how this relation is achieved, especially in the South Asian organizational settings. Engagement in employees, which is defined as vigor, commitment, and absorption in work (Achmada et al., 2022), can be a theoretically based mediating mechanism: perceived meaningfulness of talent management practices that are perceived as meaningful investments in employees leads to psychological and behavioral engagement, which subsequently influence the levels of organizational commitment and turnover intention. Moreover, organizational culture, i.e., the common values, beliefs and norms of behavior that constitute the inner world of an organization, might either enhance or weaken the engagement-retention relationship, but its role of setting boundaries is not empirically well studied in the corporate sector of Pakistan.

Scope of the Study

This paper will only consider full-time workers in the Pakistani privatized corporate world in various sectors. The data were gathered in organizations in big cities such as Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad where the concentration of the employment of the private sector is the highest.

Research Objectives

- To investigate the direct impact of talent acquisition, training and development as well as performance management on employee retention.
- To explore how talent acquisition, training and development, and performance management impact on employee engagement.
- To determine the mediating effect of the employee engagement in talent management and retention relationship.

- To evaluate the moderating role of organizational culture between the employee engagement-retention relationship.

Research Questions

- Do the talent management practices (TA, TD, PM) have a direct and considerable influence on employee retention in the Pakistani corporate sector of the country, in the realms of the private sector?
- Is there a mediation between employee retention and talent management practices through employee engagement?
- Does the organizational culture moderate the correlation between employee engagement and employee retention?

Literature Review

The conceptualization of talent management has also been moving towards a set of interdependent HR practices that are aimed at ensuring the acquisition of competitive advantage by optimizing human capital. The last decade of scholarship is united around three pillars that can be considered: talent acquisition, training and development, and performance management (Sabella & Sihalohe, 2025). The concept of talent acquisition involves strategic acquisition, selection and the onboarding of people whose skills are aligned to organizational objectives. Training and development can be defined as the formal investments in the skills development, career advancement and learning nimbleness of the employees. Performance management is a process that entails systematically appraising, giving feedback and rewarding employee contribution in line with strategic goals. The practices constitute the operational architecture of the talent management systems that companies adopt in order to attract, develop and retain high performing employees (Haziazi, 2021).

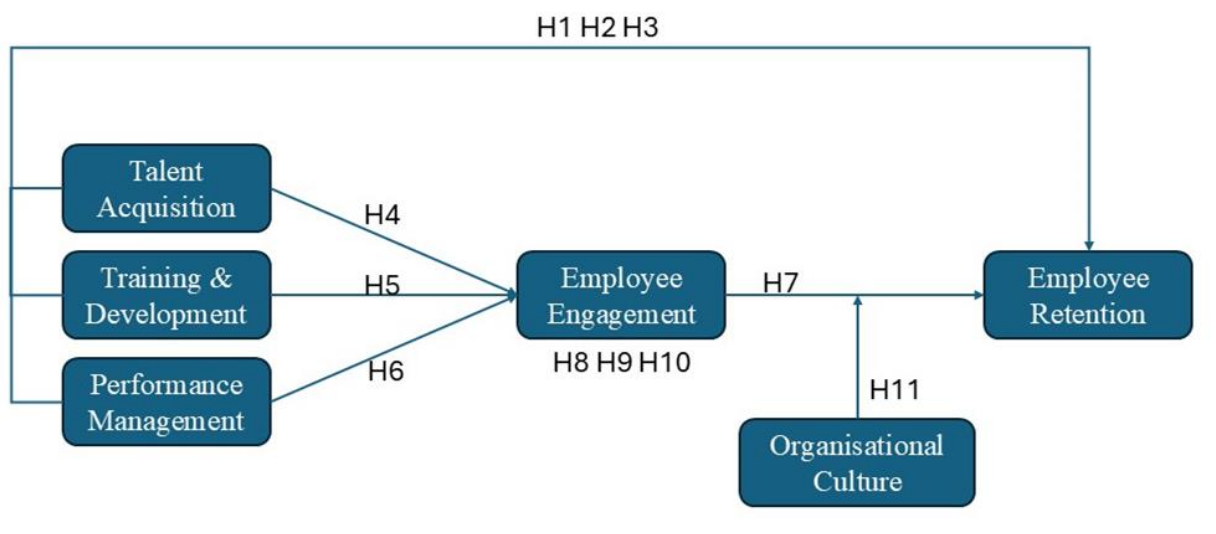
The ability of an organization to retain its employees over a period of time is a complex interplay of intrinsic motivations, organizational factors and relational factors (Dutta & Sawaitul, 2025). The mediating role of psychological state of employee between talent management practices and retention is that one of the most theoretically sound psychological states of employees is engagement. Organizational resources, such as talent management practices based on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory (Kanwal et al., 2023), replenish the motivation resources of the employees and create the engagement in the form of emotional commitment, cognitive absorption, and behavioral commitment. Engaged employees are more associated with the organization, less turnover intention and improved performance outcomes and hence engagement is a significant mediating variable between talent management and retention nexus (Fahad et al., 2026). This is also contextualized by organizational culture. Learning culture, inclusiveness, teamwork, and appreciation culture help establish a facilitative environment where employees who are engaged have higher chances of staying in their organization (Basher et al., 2025).

On the contrary, the benefits of retention of engagement may be neutralized by poisonous or unresponsive cultural environments. The moderating effect of the organizational culture in the context of the Pakistani private sector with its hierarchical authority structures and collectivist cultural norms and the growing meritocratic orientations of the organizational ambitions is an explicit empirical issue that deserves the moderating role of the organizational culture (Shaikh & Soomro, 2023).

Hypotheses Development

- **H1:** There is a positive direct impact of talent acquisition on retention of employees.
- **H2:** Training and development positively directly influence the retention of employees.
- **H3:** There is a positive direct impact on employee retention by performance management.
- **H4:** There is a great positive impact of talent acquisition on employee engagement.
- **H5:** Training and development can impact on employee engagement.
- **H6:** Performance management has a considerable positive influence on employee engagement.
- **H7:** There is a significant impact of employee engagement on employee retention.
- **H8:** One of the mediators of the correlation between talent acquisition and employee retention is employee engagement.
- **H9:** Training and development are also associated with employee retention, through employee engagement.
- **H10:** There is a mediating relationship between performance management and employee retention through employee engagement.
- **H11:** Organizational culture mediates employee engagement and employee retention.

Figure 1. *Research Framework*



Research Methodology

This paper will employ cross-sectional research design based on quantitative methodology to evaluate the hypothesized relationships that exist between talent management practices, employee engagement, organizational culture and employee retention. The target population will include full-time employees in the Pakistani major metropolitan cities such as Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad in the organizations of the private sector. Purposive sampling strategy was utilized in order to make sure that the respondents had enough organizational experience (at least one year)

to be able to assess the constructs being investigated. An end result of N = 300 was obtained, which has the statistical power needed by Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

All constructs were operationalized based on validated five-point Likert scales (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) that were based on literature.

Analysis of data was done in two phases. Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations were done using SPSS v.26. Second, PLS-SEM analysis (evaluation of measurement model, reliability, AVE, HTMT), structural model analysis (path coefficients, R^2 , f^2), mediation analysis with bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples) and moderation analysis with product-indicator approach were conducted with the use of SmartPLS v.4. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was used to measure model fit, and the values of less than 0.08 were deemed to be acceptable (Hair et al., 2021).

Data Analysis and Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics (N = 300)*

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance	Kurtosis
TA	300	1.00	5.00	3.396	0.866	0.749	-0.419
TD	300	1.20	5.00	3.340	0.859	0.739	-0.591
PM	300	1.20	5.00	3.405	0.857	0.735	-0.454
EE	300	1.00	5.00	3.378	0.883	0.779	-0.432
ER	300	1.60	5.00	3.302	0.795	0.631	-0.459
OC	300	1.00	5.00	3.291	0.877	0.770	-0.508

Note. TA = Talent Acquisition; TD = Training & Development; PM = Performance Management; EE = Employee Engagement; ER = Employee Retention; OC = Organizational Culture.

The descriptive statistics show that the mean scores of all constructs are moderate to moderately high (between 3.29 and 3.41), which is why the respondents tended to see their organizations practicing average to above-average talent management practices on average. The negative values of the kurtosis in all the variables confirm the platykurtic distributions, that is, there is more dispersion of the scores when compared to a normal distribution. The fact that standard deviations are around 0.85 -0.88 indicates that there was a reasonable homogeneity of responses patterns in the sample (Shehzadi et al., 2026).

Correlation Analysis

Table 2. *Pearson Correlation Matrix*

Variable	TA	TD	PM	EE	ER	OC
TA	1					
TD	.064	1				
PM	-.001	-.150**	1			
EE	.511**	.412**	.279**	1		
ER	.428**	.376**	.281**	.605**	1	
OC	.355**	.325**	.283**	.589**	.470**	1

Note. ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed). $N = 300$.

The correlation matrix shows that all dimensions of talent management (TA, TD, PM) have significant associations with both employee engagement ($r = .511, .412, .279$ respectively) and employee retention ($r = .428, .376, .281$ respectively) which are significant at $p < .01$. The most significant bivariate correlation is found between EE and ER ($r = .605$), which highlights the centrality of engagement in theory as a retention strategy. It is important to note that TA and TD are not correlated with each other ($r = .064, p = .266$), which indicates that these predictors are discriminately independent (Sarwar et al., 2025).

Construct Reliability

Table 3. *Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity*

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE
TA	0.751	0.501
TD	0.749	0.500
PM	0.749	0.498
EE	0.748	0.498
ER	0.750	0.500
OC	0.751	0.501

Note. AVE = Average Variance Extracted. Threshold: Cronbach's $\alpha \geq .70$; AVE $\geq .50$.

Constructs and internal consistency are satisfactory with Cronbach alpha coefficients of 0.748 to 0.751 which is higher than the traditional level of 0.70. The values of AVE vary between 0.498 and 0.501 and are based on 0.50, which is the recommended level of convergent validation, therefore, ensuring that there is sufficient convergence validity. A combination of these indicators of reliability brings about the assurance of the psychometric integrity of the measurement model (Naeem et al., 2026).

HTMT Test

Table 4. *Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) Matrix*

	EE	ER	OC	PM	TA	TD
EE	—					
ER	0.809	—				
OC	0.785	0.626	—			
PM	0.371	0.375	0.376	—		
TA	0.680	0.572	0.472	0.090	—	
TD	0.551	0.501	0.433	0.224	0.164	—

Note. HTMT values < .90 indicate discriminant validity. 95% confidence intervals for all pairs exclude 1.00.

All the ratios of HTMT are lower than the conservative level of 0.90, with the largest value being between EE and ER (HTMT = 0.809), the upper limit of the 97.5% confidence interval of which is 0.896, which is also less than 1.00. The findings support the discriminant validity of all the pairs of constructs, which means that each construct represents a meaningfully different dimension of the theoretical model, and the construct collinearity does not endanger the structural estimates (Mahmood et al., 2026).

R² and Adjusted R²

Table 5. *Coefficient of Determination (R² and Adjusted R²)*

Endogenous Construct	R ²	Adjusted R ²
Employee Engagement (EE)	0.531	0.526
Employee Retention (ER)	0.532	0.527

Note. Values derived from PLS-SEM bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples).

The structural model illustrates a high degree of explanatory power. Three predictors of talent management (TA, TD, PM) have an overall variance of 53.1% of employee engagement (R² = 0.531, Adjusted R² = 0.526). In the same manner, the entire model predicts 53.2% of the employee retention variance (R² = 0.532, Adjusted R² = 0.527) with the direct effects of EE and OC as the moderator. Hair et al. (2022) states that a model with an R² of greater than 0.50 would be regarded as a strong predictive in social science research, which proves that the model has a strong predictive relevance (Khalid et al., 2026).

Direct Effects

Table 6. *Direct Effects- Path Coefficients*

Hypothesis	Path	β	Mean	STDEV	T-Statistic	p-Value	Decision
H1	TA $\rightarrow$ ER	0.270	0.271	0.034	7.987	0.000	Supported
H2	TD $\rightarrow$ ER	0.235	0.236	0.032	7.311	0.000	Supported
H3	PM $\rightarrow$ ER	0.192	0.193	0.025	7.792	0.000	Supported
H4	TA $\rightarrow$ EE	0.488	0.488	0.037	13.021	0.000	Supported
H5	TD $\rightarrow$ EE	0.424	0.426	0.040	10.556	0.000	Supported
H6	PM $\rightarrow$ EE	0.346	0.349	0.037	9.481	0.000	Supported
H7	EE $\rightarrow$ ER	0.554	0.554	0.048	11.453	0.000	Supported

Note. β = original sample path coefficient; $T > 1.96$ indicates significance at $p < .05$.

The support of all seven direct hypotheses is at $p < .001$. The direct effect of talent acquisition on employee engagement ($= 0.488$, $T = 13.021$) and employee retention ($= 0.270$, $T = 7.987$) is the greatest, and then it is followed by training and development and performance management. The strongest path between employee engagement and retention is the path (0.554 , $T = 11.453$) which supports the main theoretical argument of employee engagement as a proximal predictor of retention. All the paths show these results with all having large T-statistics, and thus high estimation precision (Kamran et al., 2026).

Mediation Analysis

Table 7: *Specific Indirect Effects-Mediation Analysis*

Hypothesis	Indirect Path	β	Mean	STDEV	T-Statistic	p-Value	Decision
H8	TA $\rightarrow$ EE $\rightarrow$ ER	0.270	0.271	0.034	7.987	0.000	Supported
H9	TD $\rightarrow$ EE $\rightarrow$ ER	0.235	0.236	0.032	7.311	0.000	Supported
H10	PM $\rightarrow$ EE $\rightarrow$ ER	0.192	0.193	0.025	7.792	0.000	Supported

Note. Indirect effects estimated via bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples). All confidence intervals exclude zero.

The mediation analysis shows that employee engagement is an important mediator in all three-talent management-retention relationships. The most positive impact of talent acquisition on retention via engagement is the highest ($= 0.270$, $T = 7.987$), then training and development ($= 0.235$, $T = 7.311$) and performance management ($= 0.192$, $T = 7.792$). Since the direct and indirect effects are both meaningful, these findings suggest that the effect of employee engagement is complementary partial in all three directions, i.e., that talent management practices have an effect on retention that is mediated (but not completely absorbed) by employee engagement (Fahad et al., 2026).

Moderation Effect

Table 8: Moderation Effect- Organizational Culture (H11)

Hypothesi	Interaction Path	β	Mean	STDEV	T-Statistic	p-Value	f ²	Decision
H11	OC $\times$ EE $\rightarrow$ ER	0.354	0.352	0.038	9.198	0.000	0.284	Supported

Note. OC = Organizational Culture; EE = Employee Engagement; ER = Employee Retention. $f^2 > 0.15$ indicates a medium effect size; $f^2 > 0.35$ indicates a large effect size.

The moderation analysis is a great support to H11. The relationship between employee engagement and employee retention is moderated by organizational culture ($= 0.354$, $T = 9.198$, $p = 0.001$) with a huge effect size ($= 0.284$). This result shows that the positive effect of employee engagement on retention is significantly enhanced in case organizational culture is conducive and positive. The effect size is close to the medium to large threshold, highlighting the fact that organizational culture is not an insignificant aspect of the situation but a potent magnifier of the engagement-retention mechanism in the Pakistani corporate world of the private sector (Bibi et al., 2026).

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Table 9: Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	T-Statistic	p-Value	Decision
H1	TA $\rightarrow$ ER	0.270	7.987	0.000	Supported
H2	TD $\rightarrow$ ER	0.235	7.311	0.000	Supported
H3	PM $\rightarrow$ ER	0.192	7.792	0.000	Supported
H4	TA $\rightarrow$ EE	0.488	13.021	0.000	Supported
H5	TD $\rightarrow$ EE	0.424	10.556	0.000	Supported
H6	PM $\rightarrow$ EE	0.346	9.481	0.000	Supported
H7	EE $\rightarrow$ ER	0.554	11.453	0.000	Supported
H8	TA $\rightarrow$ EE $\rightarrow$ ER	0.270	7.987	0.000	Supported
H9	TD $\rightarrow$ EE $\rightarrow$ ER	0.235	7.311	0.000	Supported
H10	PM $\rightarrow$ EE $\rightarrow$ ER	0.192	7.792	0.000	Supported
H11	OC $\times$ EE $\rightarrow$ ER	0.354	9.198	0.000	Supported

Note. All hypotheses supported at $p < .001$.

The overall hypothesis testing summary proves that all eleven hypothesized relationships are statistically significant and directionally as envisaged by the theory. The entire model has a high explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.53$ with both of the endogenous variables) as well as a good path estimates and mediation and moderation, which confirm the theoretical framework proposed in the context of the Pakistani private corporate sector.

Discussion

The empirical findings of this research offer a solid argumentation to the fact that talent management practices are not just administrative HR practices but strategic organizational

investments with quantifiable outcomes in terms of employee engagement and retention. It is theoretically important to find that the direct impact of talent acquisition has the greatest influence on engagement ($\beta = 0.488$) and retention ($= 0.270$): when companies are deliberate in their selection and onboarding processes and the values and competencies of the talent hired and recruited align with the organization goals, employees will develop a sense of belonging and commitment that will sustain their organizational stay. This is in line with Person-Organization fit theory and it is also supported by the findings of (Fahad et al., 2026), who found the same trends in the sub-Saharan African situations.

The second strongest predictor of engagement (0.424) is training and development, which can be interpreted as a reaction of employees to the perceived organizational investment in their development a dynamic that can be explained by the Social Exchange Theory (Dutta & Sawaitul, 2025). Although performance management shows the least influence compared to the other two predictors, it still has significant and meaningful influences on the engagement and retention, implying that the transparent appraisal and reward systems have the reciprocating commitment effects on the employees (Shaikh & Soomro, 2023).

The mediation analysis proves that employee engagement is not merely the outcome of talent management but rather a transmission system where practices of talent management are the drivers of retention outcomes. The pattern of complementary partial mediation in the three paths indicates that although engagement is an important conduit, the practices of talent management continue to benefit direct retention benefits, which is more specific and enhances the previous theoretical explanations that viewed mediation as complete. One of the most relevant is the moderation effect of the organizational culture ($\beta = 0.354$, $f^2 = 0.284$): the supportive organizational cultures enhance the engagement-retention relationship, which supports the claims that the effectiveness of HR practices is contextualized (Achmada et al., 2022).

Limitations

The cross-sectional nature of this study does not allow making any causal conclusions since simultaneous measurements of all variables cannot determine time order. Self-reported data is prone to a common method bias, but procedural controls (such as anonymization of the scale, addition of marker variables) were used. The sample size is restricted to urban private sector organizations, and it cannot be generalized to any other organization setting that is either in the public sector or a rural setting.

Future Research Directions

The future studies need to take longitudinal designs to determine causal directions in talent management-engagement-retention chain. The evidence base would be enhanced with comparative studies across the two types of sectors, i.e., public and private, and industries with various levels of HR maturity. Also, the investigation of turnover intention as a proximal result or the incorporation of well-being and psychological safety as other mediators might further advance theoretical knowledge.

Conclusion

The present study adds value to the literature on talent management as it empirically proves the mediating relationships between employee engagement and moderating relationships between organizational culture in a previously underexplored theoretical and practical context. To practitioners in the Pakistani state-owned corporate sector, the results highlight the fact that retaining talent is not done by a single HR initiative but rather through well-integrated talent

management ecosystems which focus on acquisition, development and performance which are embedded in an organizational climate that is conducive to the culture.

Conflict of Interest

The authors showed no conflict of interest.

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