

# THE IMPACT OF PAY SATISFACTION ON JOB SATISFACTION, ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT, LOYALTY, AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION – APPLICATION OF SEM APPROACH

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**Abstract** – *This study examines the impact of pay satisfaction, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and loyalty on employee retention at preschools in Vietnam, an emerging economy in Southeast Asia. Survey data were collected from 289 early childhood teachers in public preschools in Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam. Findings from the structure equation model (SEM) using the AMOS 20 software indicated that pay satisfaction, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and loyalty directly affect employee retention in Hanoi’s public preschools. The results also showed that pay satisfaction indirectly impacts employee retention through the mediating role of job satisfaction, employee loyalty, and organisational commitment. Additionally, job satisfaction and organisational commitment indirectly influence employee retention through employee loyalty. As a result, the study offers several implications for public preschool principals to improve pay satisfaction, loyalty, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment to retain teachers in public preschools.*

**Keywords:** *employee retention, job satisfaction, loyalty, organisational commitment, pay satisfaction.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Employees are vital resources and the lifeblood of any organization. The development of science and technology has made most organizations increasingly technology-driven. However, it does not detract from the value of employees in an organization because technology requires human

resources to operate. With globalization issues, competition is becoming more and more intense, affecting the labour market. To remain more competitive, organizations need to attract the best employees and keep them working for a long time with great enthusiasm for their work. This study focused on early childhood teacher retention in Vietnam.

Access to early childhood education can benefit children by improving their school readiness and lifelong developmental outcomes. The effectiveness of early childhood education programs depends on the quality of teachers [1]. As a result, governments have tried to improve the quality of early childhood teachers by promoting training and other professional activities. Nevertheless, the high teacher turnover rate will directly affect the quality of early childhood education.

Vietnam is an emerging economy in Southeast Asia. Around five million children each year participate in early childhood education programs, with 90 percent being from public schools and 10 percent from private schools [2]. Therefore, over the past decade, the Vietnamese government has increased public investment in improving the quality of early childhood teachers. However, high teacher turnover rates hamper efforts to improve the quality of early childhood teachers in Vietnam. According to statistics from the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam [3], between August 2023 and April 2024, 7,215 teachers resigned from their positions. Preschool teachers represented the highest percentage at 1,600 individuals, 22.2 percent. Most of these resignations came from teachers under 35, particularly in socio-economically developed regions with numerous opportunities to pursue higher-income careers [3]. It is essential to identify the

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Received date: 22 November 2024; Revised date: 26 December 2024; Accepted date: 15 January 2025

factors that influence early childhood teachers' decisions to remain in their positions and reduce their intention to quit. Previous studies explored the relationship between pay satisfaction and intention to stay at work [4, 5], and compensation was identified as one of the most crucial factors contributing to the decision of early childhood teachers to leave or remain [6]. However, the researchers mainly focused on the pay level rather than teachers' subjective perceptions of dimensions of pay satisfaction, which can significantly influence their work behavior and attitude. There is very little research on pay satisfaction and the intention to stay among early childhood teachers in Vietnam. Moreover, the importance of pay satisfaction may vary based on cultural changes, and the predicted impact of pay satisfaction on early childhood teacher retention may also differ from the impact of other professions because teachers are driven by internal factors rather than external factors [7, 8]. Therefore, to fill the above research gap, this study builds a model to investigate the impact of pay satisfaction on early childhood teacher retention in Vietnam in a mediated relationship of job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and loyalty.

This study consists of five sections. In addition to the introduction, the second section is a literature review. Section 3 is the research methodology. Section 4 is the research results and discussion. Finally, the conclusion presents the study's limitations and further research directions.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The two foundation theories used to build the research model are Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Equity Theory (ET). SET refers to a mutually beneficial voluntary exchange between two parties, usually between an employee and an employer [9]. Job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and loyalty are key components of SET. Moreover, they serve as indicators for evaluating the relationship quality between employees and employers [10]. According to SET, organizations can foster job satisfaction, commitment, and

loyalty by paying their employees a decent salary. If employees are well-paid, they will respond by being satisfied, engaged, and loyal to their organization. In contrast, employees are unlikely to exhibit satisfaction, commitment, or loyalty if the organization is not generous in its rewards.

Complementing the SET in this study is the ET. ET refers to a situation in which an employee compares their output (reward) and input (contribution) with that of a colleague and even with other employees outside their organization [11]. A person's satisfaction with salary depends on how much they earn compared to others [12]. An employee aware of a fair will be satisfied with their salary. Based on ET, organizations that conduct improved employee pay satisfaction will be more likely to see their employees have higher commitment, loyalty, and retention [13]. Therefore, organizations must demonstrate fair salaries paid to employees to create overall positive outcomes, including job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and loyalty.

Pay satisfaction refers to the expression of positive or negative emotions by employees regarding the salary paid by the organization [14]. Job satisfaction is the positive emotions that employees experience toward their current jobs [15]. Most employees achieve job satisfaction because they feel satisfied with their salary [16]. According to Suma et al. [17], pay satisfaction will be the premise to motivate employees to commit to the organization more and more and devote themselves wholeheartedly to the organization. With employees who tend to be loyal and stay in the organization for a long time, there is always a tendency to pay attention to the salary aspect [18, 19]. Accordingly, higher pay satisfaction will boost loyalty and motivate them to voluntarily stay with the organization, get on with their work, and be willing to devote themselves to the organization [20]. Previously, Liu et al. [4] also revealed that pay satisfaction positively affects early childhood teachers' attitudes in public schools. Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses could be started:

H1: Pay satisfaction has a positive effect on job satisfaction.

H2: Pay satisfaction has a positive effect on organisational commitment.

H3: Pay satisfaction has a positive effect on employee loyalty.

H4: Pay satisfaction has a positive effect on employee retention.

Reichheld [21] defined loyalty as an employee's desire to devote all their time or willingness to sacrifice personal interests to develop a long-term relationship with the organisation. In previous studies, the scholars also identified loyalty as derived from job satisfaction and organisational commitment [22]. If job satisfaction and organisational commitment decline, employee loyalty diminishes, leading to unstable morale and fluctuations in human resources [23, 24]. Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5: Job satisfaction has a positive impact on employee loyalty.

H6: Organisational commitment has a positive effect on employee loyalty.

Employee retention plays a crucial role in improving the quality of education in preschools [25]. According to Braham [26], Naz et al. [27], Chong et al. [28], employee retention depends entirely on job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and employee loyalty, which entails their behaviour. Additionally, Soenanta et al. [29] showed organisational commitment and job satisfaction directly impact employee retention, but organisational commitment has a stronger impact coefficient than job satisfaction. Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses could be proposed:

H7: Job satisfaction has a positive impact on employee retention.

H8: Organisational commitment has a positive effect on employee retention.

H9: Employee loyalty has a positive effect on employee retention.

The research model is described in Figure 1.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Participants

Early childhood teachers in public schools in 17 suburban districts of Hanoi, Vietnam were surveyed using a convenient non-probability sampling method for this study. Questionnaires were sent online to early childhood teachers through the 'QuestionStar' app. The minimum required sample size for the survey was 240. However, to avoid a low response rate, 306 samples were distributed. After data cleaning, the final sample size for analysis was 289. Of the respondents, 97 percent were female, and 3 percent were male. Teachers under 30 years old accounted for 38.7 percent of the participants. Most respondents (65.7 percent) had been working as early childhood teachers for over ten years. Additionally, all the surveyed teachers held either a college or an intermediate degree in early childhood education.

#### B. Scale

This study inherited and revised the original pay satisfaction scale by Heneman et al. [30]. This study measures overall pay satisfaction based on four dimensions: pay level, benefits, pay raise, and pay structure. First, this study used questionnaires developed initially by Agho et al. [31], including four items to assess job satisfaction. A higher score indicates higher job satisfaction for a teacher. Next, the organizational commitment scale was revised from the original scale by Meyer et al. [32]. The scale consists of six items with a higher score indicating that teachers are likelier to stay on the job. Regarding loyalty, this study employed three items from the scale inherited and modified from Peloso [33]. On this scale, a higher score indicates a greater level of the teacher's loyalty to the preschool. Finally, six items developed by Mbugua et al. [34] were employed to measure the retention. The higher the score, the more the teacher has no intention of leaving. The scales use a 5-degree Likert scale (1 – Strongly disagree to 5 – Strongly agree).



Fig. 1: Study framework

C. Data analysis

The study used a structure equation model (SEM) to analyse the data using SPSS 26 and AMOS 20. This study employed the SEM approach as it is widely used to test and validate theoretical frameworks [35]. Furthermore, the SEM model is well-suited for managing complex models involving multiple structural relationships. The steps for data analysis include descriptive statistics, reliability tests, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and SEM.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

CFA was conducted to evaluate the measurement model, ensuring the reliability and validity of the scale. The study assessed item reliability, internal consistency reliability, discriminant validity, and convergent validity.

Item reliability was assessed using their standardized factor loadings. According to Hair et al. [35], the recommended standard factor loadings estimate for each item is 0.5 or higher. All items in this study had factor loading values exceeding 0.5. Thus, the item reliability was deemed acceptable (see Table 1).

Internal consistency reliability was assessed in this study using Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient and composite reliability (CR). Hair et al. [35] recommended a Cronbach’s Alpha value and composite

reliability of 0.7 or higher. Table 1 shows that the internal consistency of the reliability of scales in the study model is accepted.

Table 1: Results of measurement of scale reliability, convergent, and discriminant validity

Construct	Items	Loadings	CR	Cronbach’s Alpha	AVE
Pay satisfaction	PS1	0.567	0.755	0.781	0.673
	PS2	0.674			
	PS3	0.784			
	PS4	0.792			
Job satisfaction	JS1	0.802	0.784	0.707	0.581
	JS2	0.893			
	JS3	0.561			
	JS4	0.741			
Organisational commitment	OC1	0.783	0.813	0.812	0.666
	OC2	0.521			
	OC3	0.754			
	OC4	0.780			
	OC5	0.810			
	OC6	0.839			
Employee loyalty	EL1	0.788	0.829	0.808	0.564
	EL2	0.813			
	EL3	0.821			
Employee retention	ER1	0.562	0.703	0.821	0.691
	ER2	0.789			
	ER3	0.801			
	ER4	0.815			
	ER5	0.792			
	ER6	0.746			
	ER7	0.713			

Note: AVE = Average Variance Extracted, CR = Composite Reliability

The convergent validity of the scales was assessed through factor loadings exceeding the threshold of 0.5. At the same time, when using CFA, an average variance extracted (AVE) greater than 0.5 indicates satisfactory convergent validity [35]. The results in Table 1 indicate that the AVE values of the scales meet the required threshold.

CB-SEM typically relies on Fornell-Larcker criteria to assess discriminant validity [36]. Nevertheless, this study employed the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) developed by Henseler et al. [37] to measure the discriminant validity of scales. This choice was made because convincing evidence suggests that the Fornell-Larcker method does not reliably assess the discriminant validity of a scale [36]. The analysis results from Table 2 showed that the HTMT correlation index of the constructs did not exceed 0.85, confirming discriminant validity.

Table 2: The correlation between constructs

Construct	PS	JS	OC	EL	ER
PS	0.783				
JS	0.679	0.703			
OC	0.704	0.801	0.274		
EL	0.781	0.710	0.583	0.670	
ER	0.714	0.562	0.471	0.551	0.739

The R<sup>2</sup> values for job satisfaction, organisational commitment, employee loyalty, and employee retention are considered acceptable, with 0.673, 0.635, 0.619, and 0.665 respectively. These values reveal that the research model has good predictive power and is suitable for predicting employee retention [38].

The structural equation modelling demonstrates a good fit ( $\chi^2 = 674.502$ ;  $df = 402$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.677$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $GFI = 0.904$ ,  $NFI = 0.913$ ,  $TLI = 0.918$ ,  $CFI = 0.920$  and  $RMSEA = 0.067$ ). Pay satisfaction was directly and indirectly impacted employee retention among early childhood teachers in Hanoi, Vietnam) within the serial mediation model, as illustrated in Figure 2. Table 3 confirmed the direct and indirect correlations between constructs assumed in this study.

Table 3: Decompositions of path coefficient

Effect	$\beta$	t-statistics	P
<i>Direct effect</i>			
Pay satisfaction → Job satisfaction	0.346	2.356	0.000
Pay satisfaction → Organisational commitment	0.321	2.673	0.001
Pay satisfaction → Employee loyalty	0.344	2.891	0.000
Pay satisfaction → Employee retention	0.453	1.983	0.002
Job satisfaction → Employee loyalty	0.214	3.562	0.043
Organisational commitment → Employee loyalty	0.309	4.503	0.004
Job satisfaction → Employee retention	0.311	5.402	0.000
Organisational commitment → Employee retention	0.349	10.793	0.034
Employee loyalty → Employee retention	0.404	4.092	0.003
<i>Indirect effect</i>			
Pay satisfaction → Job satisfaction → Employee retention	0.328	4.590	0.004
Pay satisfaction → Employee loyalty → Employee retention	0.374	7.490	0.000
Pay satisfaction → Organisational commitment → Employee retention	0.335	5.093	0.002
Job satisfaction → Employee loyalty → Employee retention	0.309	6.028	0.001
Organisational commitment → Employee loyalty → Employee retention	0.357	3.902	0.003

*B. Discussion*

Pay satisfaction positively impacts early childhood teachers’ retention in Hanoi. In this study, with a 1-unit increase in pay satisfaction, early childhood teachers’ retention in Hanoi rose by 0.453 units. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Iqbal et al. [20], which demonstrates that pay satisfaction significantly influences employees’ motivation to remain in their jobs.

Loyalty significantly impacts early childhood teachers’ retention in Hanoi. In this study, an increase of 1 unit in loyalty resulted in a 0.404 unit increase in teachers’ retention. This finding aligns with Chong et al. [28], which demonstrates that loyalty is a prerequisite for employee retention in educational institutions.

The study found that organizational commitment positively impacts the retention of early childhood teachers in Hanoi. In this study, when commitment to the organization increased by one

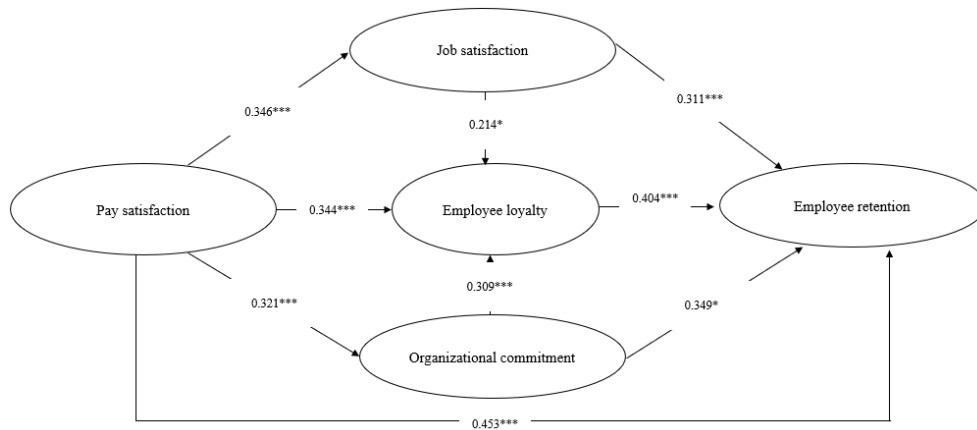


Fig. 2: Research results in the direct-effect relationship coefficients

Note: \*, \*\*\* significant at 0.1, 0.01

unit, the retention of early childhood teachers in Hanoi rose by 0.349 units. This finding aligns with Braham’s research [26], which concluded that the more committed a teacher is to their school, the more likely they are to remain employed there.

Job satisfaction significantly positively impacts early childhood teachers’ retention in Hanoi. In this study, a 1-unit increase in wage satisfaction led to a 0.311-unit increase in early childhood teachers’ retention. This finding aligns with Naz et al. [27], which demonstrates that higher job satisfaction among employees correlates with higher retention within an organization.

Pay satisfaction was found to have the most significant effect on employee retention at the capital Hanoi’s preschools. This result demonstrates that early childhood teachers expect to have adequate income. However, in the context of Vietnam – a country in the lower middle-income group – the salary of early childhood teachers in rural areas averages about 3.5 million VND, equivalent to about 150 USD – a very low income [2]. More importantly, the pay level of public preschools must comply with the Government’s regulations. Therefore, public preschools should have a plan to submit to the Vietnamese Government for autonomy in terms of pay structure and reward so that early childhood teachers can

be assured of contribution. At the same time, the public preschools also need to propose to the Vietnamese Government to diversify benefits regimes so that teachers have the desire to make long-term contributions to schools.

Employee loyalty is the second factor that significantly impacts employee retention in preschools in Hanoi. Loyal teachers tend to perform their duties more diligently, including providing better care for children and are less likely to leave their positions. Hence, public preschools need incentives to encourage hard work and foster teacher loyalty. Incentive policies should motivate teachers to perform their duties with the highest quality and commitment. Thus, if teachers are encouraged to put in more significant effort, their performance outcomes will improve, and employees will feel more satisfied with their work, which fosters increased loyalty.

Organisational commitment and job satisfaction positively impact motivation, which increases early childhood teachers’ intention to stay on the job. It can be asserted that these factors are distinct in the study of human resource retention in the early childhood education sector, particularly when compared to human resource retention in other sectors. The work of early childhood teachers is closely related to the formation and comprehensive development of human person-

ality. Educating children in preschool is family education, and the relationship between teacher and children is teacher-student and mother-son. Therefore, early childhood teachers are the first ones of the child, caring for and teaching the child. So, it is required that early childhood teachers love the job, be passionate about work, be interested in work, and keep a calm mind in all situations of caring and educating children. Therefore, public preschools in the Hanoi capital should pay attention to attracting and retaining qualified teachers to work with young children, recognize their dedication, and build policies to support and create conditions for them to do their jobs well.

## V. CONCLUSION

The study results showed the specific difference when researching human resource retention in the preschool education sector, including the love of the profession, the love of children, and the passion for work, the excitement of caring for and educating children will increase the desire to make long-term contributions to the education sector in general and preschools in particular. However, the study would have been more convincing if the number of samples investigated had been more significant. The study also failed to examine differences in early childhood teacher retention across demographic factors. Therefore, future studies should expand the sample size and explore demographic variations in retention patterns.

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