

Institutional Support and Faculty Retention in Pakistani Universities: An Islamic Educational Framework Based on Qur’anic Principles and Translation

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Abstract

Faculty retention is a critical determinant of academic quality, institutional sustainability, and intellectual capital in higher education systems. While conventional higher education literature relies predominantly on Western paradigms—such as Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Perceived Organizational Support (POS)—these frameworks often reduce institutional governance to transactional dynamics. This study presents an integrated, Islamic educational framework that harmonizes POS with foundational Qur’anic principles of governance, justice, and human development. Specifically, it integrates the principles of *`Adl* (Justice), *Ihsān* (Benevolence), *Amānah* (Trust and Responsibility), *Shūrā* (Mutual Consultation), and *Ukhuwwah* (Fraternal Solidarity) into institutional administration. Utilizing a quantitative, cross-sectional design, empirical data were gathered from faculty members across public and private universities in Pakistan ($N = 315$). Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was conducted to examine the relationships among POS, organizational commitment, and faculty retention, framed alongside divine ethical mandates. The findings reveal that administrative practices grounded in justice and benevolence significantly enhance organizational commitment and mitigate turnover intentions. This paper offers a comprehensive, ethically grounded model for university administrators seeking to align modern human resource strategies with Islamic values.

Keywords: Perceived Organizational Support, Faculty Retention, Islamic Educational Governance, Qur’anic Principles, Higher Education in Pakistan, Social Exchange Theory, *`Adl*, *Ihsān*, *Amānah*.

1. Introduction

Institutions of higher education serve as the primary engine for human capital development, knowledge creation, scientific innovation, and socioeconomic transformation. Within this ecosystem, university faculty constitute the essential core of intellectual and institutional

capability. Their contributions across teaching, scholarly research, postgraduate supervision, and academic leadership directly govern national educational standards and international institutional rankings. Consequently, the recruitment and retention of highly qualified academic personnel remain paramount strategic priorities for university governance globally.

Faculty turnover generates severe organizational disruptions, including the loss of institutional memory, inflated recruitment and training costs, fragmented academic programs, and increased workloads for remaining staff. In developing higher education contexts like Pakistan, these challenges are exacerbated by structural pressures, including rapid institutional expansion, evolving accreditation standards, stringent research benchmarks, and resource constraints. Faculty members frequently encounter workplace stressors such as compensation disparities, heavy administrative workloads, promotional bottlenecks, job insecurity, and bureaucratic opacity.

While contemporary organizational literature relies extensively on Western theoretical frameworks—most notably Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and Social Exchange Theory (SET)—these models primarily operate on transactional assumptions of reciprocity. In Muslim-majority societies, particularly within Pakistani higher education, secular transactional frameworks alone often fail to capture the ethical, spiritual, and moral drivers of organizational behavior.

This study bridges this critical contextual and theoretical gap by synthesizing modern Organizational Support Theory with an Islamic Educational Framework grounded in Qur’anic directives. By conceptualizing institutional support not merely as a managerial tool for economic retention, but as a divine trust (*Amānah*) executed through justice (*`Adl*) and administrative benevolence (*Ihsān*), this research redefines faculty retention in Pakistani universities through a holistic, ethically aligned paradigm.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1 Conventional Foundations: POS and Social Exchange Theory

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) refers to employees' global belief regarding the extent to which their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Rooted in Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), conventional literature posits that when organizations provide fair treatment, supervisory support, competitive rewards, and development opportunities, employees feel an obligation to reciprocate through heightened affective commitment, improved performance, and reduced turnover intentions (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Meyer et al., 2002).

In the context of Pakistani higher education, empirical studies corroborate the inverse relationship between POS and faculty turnover (Ashraf et al., 2016; Bibi et al., 2018; Iqbal & Hashmi, 2015; Islam et al., 2019; Malik & Khan, 2023). However, these studies overwhelmingly treat employment relationships as purely socio-emotional or material exchanges.

2.2 The Qur’anic Paradigm of Educational Governance

The Islamic worldview elevates academic and organizational interactions from transactional contracts to moral and spiritual obligations. Governance within an educational institution is framed by divine imperatives that regulate human authority, administrative equity, and institutional care.

1. Equity and Administrative Justice (*`Adl*)

Justice in institutional governance requires absolute impartiality, objective evaluation, transparent promotion protocols, and equitable workload distribution. Allah commands in the Holy Qur'an:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ ۚ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَذَكَّرُونَ

"Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded."

(Surah An-Nahl, 16:90)

Applied to faculty management, *`Adl* dictates that academic rewards, compensations, and promotions must strictly reflect merit and contribution, eliminating nepotism and arbitrary administrative bias.

2. Institutional Benevolence and Care (*Ihsān*)

While *`Adl* establishes the baseline of procedural and distributive justice, *Ihsān* goes beyond legal minimums to embody compassion, supportive leadership, mentorship, and concern for faculty well-being. Modern POS scales capture *Ihsān* through measures of organizational care, flexibility, and empathetic supervisory response.

3. Administrative Responsibility as a Sacred Trust (*Amānah*)

University leaders and administrators hold their positions not as absolute authorities, but as trustees accountable to both the public and the Divine:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَعْلَمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ

"Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice."

(Surah An-Nisa, 4:58)

Evaluating faculty fairly, providing necessary research infrastructure, and maintaining job security are components of fulfilling *Amānah*.

4. Participatory Governance and Collegiality (*Shūrā*)

Academic autonomy and shared governance are deeply rooted in the Qur'anic injunction of consultative decision-making:

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ

"And those who have responded to their lord and established prayer and whose affair is [conducted by] counsel among themselves..."

(Surah Ash-Shura, 42:38)

When university administrators involve faculty in departmental decisions, curriculum design, and strategic policy through *Shūrā*, faculty members experience higher psychological empowerment and institutional ownership.

5. Fraternal Solidarity and Mutual Support (*Ukhuwwah*)

Academic environments thrive when individualistic competition is tempered by mutual support, moral solidarity, and collective growth:

"وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ"

"And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression."

(Surah Al-Ma'idah, 5:2)

2.3 Hypothesis Development

Grounded in this dual theoretical integration, the study formulates the following hypotheses:

- **\$H_1\$:** Perceived organizational support, aligned with Qur'anic principles of justice (*`Adl*) and benevolence (*Ihsān*), has a significant positive effect on organizational commitment among Pakistani university faculty.
- **\$H_2\$:** Organizational commitment has a significant positive effect on faculty retention among Pakistani university faculty.
- **\$H_3\$:** Perceived organizational support has a direct, significant positive effect on faculty retention among Pakistani university faculty.
- **\$H_4\$:** Organizational commitment significantly mediates the relationship between perceived organizational support and faculty retention.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Sampling

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional design to test the proposed direct and mediated structural relationships. The target population comprised full-time academic faculty members (Lecturers, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and Professors) across public and private universities in Pakistan.

Using a hybrid sampling approach combining stratified random and purposive sampling across major administrative regions, a structured survey was distributed to 350 faculty members. A

total of 315 complete, usable responses were retrieved, yielding an effective response rate of 90.0%.

3.2 Measurement Instruments

All constructs were evaluated using established, multi-item scales adapted to the higher education context and measured on a 5-point Likert Scale (\$1 = \text{Strongly Disagree} \$ to \$5 = \text{Strongly Agree} \$):

- **Perceived Organizational Support (POS):** Measured using an 8-item adapted version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986), capturing institutional care, resource allocation, and supervisory fairness.
- **Organizational Commitment (OC):** Measured using a 6-item affective commitment scale adapted from Meyer and Allen (1991).
- **Faculty Retention (FR):** Evaluated using a 5-item scale adapted from standard retention and turnover-intention instruments (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), measuring intent to remain and long-term institutional loyalty.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic distribution of the sample (\$N = 315\$) captures a representative cross-section of the higher education sector in Pakistan.

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	198	62.9%
	Female	117	37.1%
Institution Type	Public University Sector	182	57.8%
	Private University Sector	133	42.2%
Academic Rank	Lecturer	112	35.6%
	Assistant Professor	135	42.9%
	Associate Professor	48	15.2%

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
	Professor	20	\$6.3\%\$
Experience	\$1 - 5\$ Years	98	\$31.1\%\$
	\$6 - 10\$ Years	124	\$39.4\%\$
	\$> 10\$ Years	93	\$29.5\%\$

4.2 Measurement Model Assessment (Reliability & Validity)

To evaluate the measurement model, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was utilized via SmartPLS 4. Standard criteria were applied: Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha > 0.70$), Composite Reliability ($CR > 0.70$), Average Variance Extracted ($AVE > 0.50$), and factor loadings (> 0.70).

Construct	Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Perceived Organizational Support (POS)	POS1	\$0.812\$	\$0.891\$	\$0.915\$	\$0.643\$
	POS2	\$0.798\$			
	POS3	\$0.824\$			
	POS4	\$0.785\$			
	POS5	\$0.791\$			
Organizational Commitment (OC)	OC1	\$0.835\$	\$0.874\$	\$0.908\$	\$0.664\$
	OC2	\$0.811\$			
	OC3	\$0.829\$			
	OC4	\$0.784\$			

Construct	Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Faculty Retention (FR)	FR1	\$0.852\$	\$0.885\$	\$0.916\$	\$0.686\$
	FR2	\$0.838\$			
	FR3	\$0.814\$			
	FR4	\$0.809\$			

Discriminant validity was verified using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, where the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeded its highest correlation with any other construct.

4.3 Structural Model Assessment and Hypothesis Testing

Path coefficients (β), t -statistics, p -values, and confidence intervals were calculated using a 5,000-bootstrap resampling procedure.

Hypothesis	Path / Relationship	Direct Effect (β)	t-value	p-value	Decision
H ₁	POS $\rightarrow$ Organizational Commitment	\$0.584\$	\$12.415\$	< 0.001	Supported
H ₂	Organizational Commitment $\rightarrow$ Faculty Retention	\$0.412\$	\$7.892\$	< 0.001	Supported
H ₃	POS $\rightarrow$ Faculty Retention	\$0.326\$	\$5.941\$	< 0.001	Supported

Mediation Analysis (H₄)

Path	Indirect Effect (β)	Boot SE	t-value	p-value	95% CI	Decision
$\text{POS} \rightarrow \text{OC} \rightarrow \text{FR}$	\$0.241\$	\$0.038\$	\$6.342\$	\$< 0.001\$	\$[0.169, 0.318]\$	Supported (Partial Mediation)

The total effect of POS on Faculty Retention is $\beta_{\text{total}} = 0.567$ ($p < 0.001$). The model accounts for 34.1% of the variance in Organizational Commitment ($R^2 = 0.341$) and 46.8% of the variance in Faculty Retention ($R^2 = 0.468$).

5. Discussion

The empirical findings validate the structural model, proving that Perceived Organizational Support significantly enhances faculty commitment ($\beta = 0.584$) and retention ($\beta = 0.326$) in Pakistani universities, both directly and indirectly through organizational commitment ($\beta_{\text{indirect}} = 0.241$).

When interpreted through the proposed Islamic Educational Framework, these empirical dynamics acquire deeper socio-cultural resonance:

1. **Procedural Justice as *Adl***: The strong link between POS and retention underscores that faculty members closely monitor administrative fairness. When promotional schemas, research grants, and teaching workloads are administered with absolute equity, institutions fulfill the Qur’anic mandate of *Adl* (16:90), mitigating feelings of alienation and injustice that drive turnover.
2. **Supervisory Care as *Ihsān***: Academic support going beyond contractual baselines—such as health care benefits, professional development funding, and flexible research sabbatical arrangements—reflects institutional *Ihsān*. This generates profound moral loyalty and emotional attachment ($R^2 = 0.468$).
3. **Governance as *Amānah* and *Shūrā***: University leadership that views office as a divine trust (*Amānah*) operates through participatory consultation (*Shūrā*). Involving faculty in decision-making reinforces their professional identity, making them less prone to seeking employment elsewhere.

6. Recommendations and Policy Implications

Based on the synthesis of empirical data and Qur’anic governance principles, university leaders and policy makers in Pakistan (including the Higher Education Commission) should implement the following strategic measures:

1. institutionalize Ethical Governance Audits

Establish administrative review boards tasked with ensuring that promotional practices, tenure tracks, and resource allocations strictly adhere to principles of administrative justice (*`Adl*) and transparency (*Amānah*).

2. Formulate Participatory Governance Frameworks

Formalize departmental advisory councils operating under the spirit of *Shūrā* (Surah 42:38), ensuring faculty representation in policy, curriculum, and operational decisions.

3. Expand Holistic Faculty Support Programs

Move beyond basic salary compliance by embedding institutional benevolence (*Ihsān*). University management should implement mental health support, institutional research seed grants, clear mentorship models, and equitable family care policies.

4. Cultivate Collaborative Academic Culture

Promote inter-departmental research networks and peer mentorship schemes grounded in fraternal cooperation (*Ukhuwwah*) to build an inclusive academic community.

7. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that addressing faculty turnover in Pakistani higher education requires expanding beyond purely secular exchange models. By integrating Perceived Organizational Support with Qur'anic principles of *`Adl*, *Ihsān*, *Amānah*, *Shūrā*, and *Ukhuwwah*, universities can construct an ethically resilient institutional framework. Empirical evidence confirms that when higher education institutions care for their faculty and govern with unyielding justice, faculty commitment and institutional retention rise significantly. Aligning modern administrative practices with divine ethical directives offers a sustainable path toward academic excellence, stability, and intellectual growth in Pakistani universities.

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