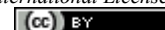


Explaining Employee Loyalty in Higher Education: The Roles of Workload, Career Development, and Job Satisfaction

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A B S T R A C T

This study examines the effects of Workload and Career Development on Job Satisfaction and Employee Loyalty among lecturers and staff in a higher education context. Using the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) perspective, the study employed a quantitative explanatory research design with a cross-sectional survey approach. Data were collected through an online structured questionnaire from 70 lecturers and educational staff employed at one university in Indonesia, selected using purposive sampling. The proposed model was analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to assess the relationships among the latent constructs and examine mediation effects. The findings indicate that Career Development has a significant positive effect on both Job Satisfaction and Employee Loyalty, with its effect on Employee Loyalty emerging as the strongest relationship in the model. In contrast, Workload does not significantly affect either Job Satisfaction or Employee Loyalty. Job Satisfaction also does not have a significant direct effect on Employee Loyalty. Furthermore, the mediation analysis shows that Job Satisfaction does not significantly mediate the relationships between Workload and Employee Loyalty or between Career Development and Employee Loyalty. These findings highlight the central role of Career Development in strengthening employee satisfaction and loyalty in higher education institutions. The study contributes to the JD-R perspective by emphasizing the importance of career-related job resources in shaping favorable employee outcomes.

A B S T R A K

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh Workload dan Career Development terhadap Job Satisfaction dan Employee Loyalty pada dosen dan tenaga kependidikan dalam konteks pendidikan tinggi. Dengan menggunakan perspektif Job Demands–Resources (JD-R), penelitian ini menerapkan desain penelitian kuantitatif eksplanatori dengan pendekatan survei cross-sectional. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner terstruktur secara daring kepada 70 dosen dan tenaga kependidikan yang bekerja pada salah satu universitas di Indonesia dan dipilih menggunakan teknik purposive sampling. Model penelitian dianalisis menggunakan Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) untuk menguji hubungan antar konstruk laten serta efek mediasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Career Development berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap Job Satisfaction dan Employee Loyalty, dengan pengaruh terhadap Employee Loyalty sebagai hubungan terkuat dalam model. Sebaliknya, Workload tidak berpengaruh signifikan terhadap Job Satisfaction maupun Employee Loyalty. Job Satisfaction juga tidak memiliki pengaruh langsung yang signifikan terhadap Employee Loyalty. Selain itu, hasil analisis mediasi menunjukkan bahwa Job Satisfaction tidak memediasi secara signifikan hubungan antara Workload dan Employee Loyalty maupun hubungan antara Career Development dan Employee Loyalty. Temuan ini menegaskan peran penting Career Development dalam meningkatkan kepuasan dan loyalitas karyawan di institusi pendidikan tinggi serta memberikan dukungan terhadap perspektif JD-R, khususnya mengenai pentingnya sumber daya kerja yang berkaitan dengan pengembangan karier dalam membentuk outcome karyawan yang positif.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Employee retention has become an increasingly important organizational challenge for higher education institutions as universities face simultaneous pressures

to improve service quality, respond to digital transformation, and operate under increasingly demanding administrative and performance requirements. Although academic staff are often positioned at the center of higher education research, the sustainability of university operations also depends

heavily on non-academic employees who manage academic administration, student services, finance, human resources, information technology, libraries, and other critical support functions. Their work is therefore not peripheral to institutional performance; rather, it constitutes an essential infrastructure through which universities deliver educational and administrative services. Yet, research on employee attitudes and retention in higher education has historically paid greater attention to academic personnel, leaving the experiences of non-academic staff comparatively underexplored. Existing evidence from higher education also suggests that employee satisfaction and retention-related outcomes among non-academic staff deserve greater empirical attention

This issue is particularly salient when employee retention is considered not merely as an outcome of compensation or turnover intentions, but as the result of how employees experience the demands and resources embedded in their work. The empirical context of the present study illustrates this concern. According to the focal university's internal audit records, the turnover rate among educational staff increased from 27.37% in 2024 to 29.82% in 2025. Internal records further indicate that employees' decisions to leave were associated with several factors, including organizational policies and administration, compensation and workload, leadership, personal considerations, and, more recently, organizational culture and career opportunities. These patterns suggest that employee retention cannot be adequately understood through a single organizational factor. Instead, it raises a more fundamental question concerning how employees' experiences of work demands, developmental resources, and psychological engagement are translated into their willingness to remain attached to the organization.

1.2. Literature Review

1.2.1. Job Demands–Resources Theory

The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory provides a useful theoretical lens for addressing this question. The theory proposes that virtually every occupation can be characterized by job demands that require sustained physical or psychological effort and job resources that facilitate goal attainment, reduce the costs associated with demands, and stimulate motivation. The framework distinguishes between a health-impairment process, in which excessive demands can deplete employees' resources, and a motivational process, in which job resources foster positive work-related states and organizational outcomes. Empirical research has further demonstrated the relevance of the JD-R perspective for explaining employee engagement and burnout across occupational contexts.

1.2.2. Workload

Workload refers to an individual's perception of the job demands that must be completed within a specific

timeframe. Workload can be assessed based on work volume, time pressure, and the number of tasks an employee must complete. In a higher education context, workload may stem from a high volume of administrative tasks, demands to complete work within specific timeframes, and the need to manage multiple responsibilities simultaneously.

From the perspective of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, workload is a form of job demand that requires physical and psychological effort from employees. Prior studies show that workload has a negative impact on job satisfaction [1], [2], [3]. When job demands are excessive and not balanced by adequate resources, this situation can affect employees' well-being and work experience [4], [5]. Prior studies show that workload has a negative impact on employee loyalty [6], [7], [8].

H1: Workload has a negative effect on job satisfaction.

H3: Workload has a negative effect on the loyalty

H6: Job Satisfaction as a mediator between Workload and Employee Loyalty.

1.2.3. Career Development

Career development refers to an individual's perception of the extent to which the organization he or she works for provides an environment that allows for the achievement of career goals, the development of professional skills, and advancement and compensation in accordance with those skills, which includes advancement of career goals, development of professional skills, speed of promotion, and growth in remuneration [9]. This concept is both individual and specific to the organization because career growth is the result of a combination of individual perceptions and organizational actions, thus referred to as organizational career growth [10]. Furthermore, career development is also influenced by the extent to which employees perceive organizational support for their development, which interacts with perceptions of career opportunities to influence employee performance and retention [11]. Recent studies have shown that career development has a positive and significant impact on job satisfaction [12], [13], [14]. Prior studies have shown that career development has a positive impact on employee loyalty [15], [16], [17].

H2: Career development has a positive effect on job satisfaction

H4: Career development has a positive effect on loyalty

H7: Job Satisfaction as a mediator between Career Development and Employee Loyalty.

1.2.4. Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to a positive emotional state that arises from a person's evaluation of their job. Job satisfaction indicates how much a person likes or

dislikes the job they are doing. Job satisfaction is measured based on the dimensions of pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating procedures, coworkers, nature of work, and communication developed in the Job Satisfaction Survey [18].

Job satisfaction is seen as a key element in forming favorable views about the job and the organization. Previous research indicates that job satisfaction has a positive effect on employee loyalty [19], [20], [21]. Therefore, greater job satisfaction is likely to lead to higher employee loyalty.

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

1.2.5. Employee Loyalty

Employee loyalty refers to the emotional and behavioral attachment employees develop toward their organization, reflected in their willingness to remain as organizational members and contribute to its interests over the long term [20]. Loyalty is closely related to organizational commitment, particularly employees' belief in organizational values and their willingness to exert effort for the benefit of the organization [22]. In this study, employee loyalty reflects employees' intention to remain with the organization, intention not to leave, and intention to continue working for the organization in the future. Prior studies indicate that employee loyalty is influenced by various work-related factors, including job satisfaction, career development, and employee engagement. Therefore, employee loyalty is expected to represent employees' willingness to maintain their relationship with the organization and contribute to its sustainability.



Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

2. Research Method

2.1. Research Design

This study employs a quantitative explanatory research design to examine the causal relationships among workload, career development, job satisfaction, and Loyalty. A cross-sectional survey was chosen because the study gathered staff opinions at a single point in time. The empirical model was studied using Structural Equation Modeling, which is suitable for looking at how hidden variables are connected and for checking if one variable affects another through a third variable.

2.2. Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of lecturers and educational staff employed at one university in Indonesia. The final sample consisted of 70 respondents, which was considered adequate for the SEM approach employed in this study and provided an empirical basis for testing the proposed research model.

2.3. Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed online through digital channels. The questionnaire measured lecturer and educational staff

perceptions of workload, career development, job satisfaction, and loyalty. All constructs were measured using indicators that were taken from previous studies to make sure they fit with the idea of the model being proposed [4], [5], [9].

2.4. Measurement Model Specification

The measurement model was specified to examine how well the observed indicators represent the latent constructs of Workload, Career Development, Job Satisfaction, and Employee Loyalty. Indicator quality and construct consistency were examined through standardized outer loadings, Cronbach's alpha (α), composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE).

2.5. Measurement and Structural Model Evaluation

The adequacy of the measurement model was determined based on indicator reliability, internal consistency, and convergent validity. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was used to verify convergent validity, whereas the structural model was analyzed through path coefficients and p-values to test the hypothesized relationships among the constructs. In addition, mediation was examined through the specific indirect

effects of Workload and Career Development on Employee Loyalty through Job Satisfaction. This procedure is consistent with commonly applied SEM assessment practices for latent variable models.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Respondent Profile

The demographic profile provides contextual information regarding the lecturers and staff involved in this study. The study sample comprises 70 respondents with diverse characteristics in terms of gender, age, education level, organizational tenure, employment status, total work experience, and participation in recent development activities. Based on Table 1, the majority of respondents are male, aged 25–34 years, hold a bachelor's degree, have worked in the organization for 1–3 years, are permanent employees, possess more than 10 years of total work experience, and have participated in 1–2 development activities.

Table 1. Respondent Demographic Characteristic

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	41	58.6
	Female	29	41.4
Age	<25 years	3	4.3
	25–34 Years	33	47.1
	35–44 Years	17	24.3
	45–54 Years	14	20.0
	≥55 Years	3	4.3
Education	High school/equivalent	1	1.4
	Diploma	1	1.4
	Bachelor's	35	50.0
	Master's	25	35.7
	Doctoral	8	11.4
Organizational Tenure	<1 year	13	18.6
	1–3 years	31	44.3
	>3–5 years	11	15.7
	>5–10 years	11	15.7
	>10 years	4	5.7
Employment Status	Permanent employee	60	85.7
	Fixed-term contract	4	5.7
	Probationary employee	6	8.6
Total Work Experience	<1 year	1	1.4
	1–3 years	18	25.7
	>3–5 years	9	12.9
	>5–10 years	15	21.4
	>10 years	27	38.6
Recent Development Participation	No	24	34.3
	Yes, 1–2 activities	39	55.7
	Yes, 3–5 activities	7	10.0
	Yes, >5 activities	0	0.0

This profile is relevant because respondents' demographic and employment characteristics may influence how they perceive workload, career development opportunities, job satisfaction, and loyalty. In particular, organizational tenure, employment status, work experience, and participation in development activities provide important contextual information for interpreting employees' perceptions of their current

work environment and future career opportunities within the university.

3.2. Measurement Model Evaluation

The assessment of the measurement model on Table 2 confirms that all constructs demonstrate adequate convergent validity. AVE scores across the constructs fall between 0.686 and 0.916, surpassing the recommended minimum of 0.50. These results indicate that each construct accounts for over half of the variance in its associated indicators. Job Satisfaction achieved the highest AVE value (0.916), followed by Employee Loyalty (0.911), suggesting particularly strong convergence among the indicators measuring these constructs. These findings demonstrate that convergent validity has been established for every construct.

Table 2. Convergent Validity

Variable	Category	Frequency
Workload (W)	0.686	Adequate convergent validity
Career Development (CD)	0.704	Adequate convergent validity
Job Satisfaction (JS)	0.916	Adequate convergent validity
Employee Loyalty (EL)	0.911	Adequate convergent validity

The results on Table 3 demonstrate satisfactory measurement properties across all constructs. All standardized outer loadings exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.711 to 0.970, indicating adequate indicator reliability. CD1 recorded the lowest loading at 0.711, but remained above the acceptable threshold and was therefore retained. These findings suggest that all retained indicators adequately represent their respective latent constructs.

Table 3. Standardized Factor Loading

Construct	Indicator	Standardized Loading	p-value
Workload (W)	W1	0.858	< 0.001
	W2	0.891	< 0.001
	W3	0.810	< 0.001
	W4	0.776	< 0.001
	W5	0.800	< 0.001
Career Development (CD)	CD1	0.711	< 0.001
	CD2	0.836	< 0.001
	CD3	0.793	< 0.001
	CD4	0.871	< 0.001
	CD5	0.804	< 0.001
	CD6	0.886	< 0.001
	CD7	0.888	< 0.001
	CD8	0.850	< 0.001
	CD9	0.895	< 0.001
Job Satisfaction (JS)	JS1	0.945	< 0.001
	JS2	0.970	< 0.001
	JS3	0.969	< 0.001
	JS4	0.945	< 0.001
Employee Loyalty (EL)	EL1	0.954	< 0.001
	EL2	0.969	< 0.001
	EL3	0.940	< 0.001

Discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT), with a threshold of 0.90. The HTMT values ranged from 0.871 to 1.007, which can be seen on Table 4. Workload–Career

Development (0.871) and Job Satisfaction–Loyalty (0.890) met this criterion. However, Workload–Job Satisfaction (0.923), Workload–Loyalty (0.933), Career Development–Job Satisfaction (0.961), and Career Development–Loyalty (1.007) exceeded the threshold. Therefore, discriminant validity was not established for all construct pair.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity

Construct	WL	CD	JS	L
WL	—	0.871	0.923	0.933
CD		—	0.961	1.007
JS			—	0.890
L				—

3.3. Structural Model and Direct Hypothesis Testing

The structural model evaluation on Table 5 indicates that Career Development significantly influences both Job Satisfaction and Employee Loyalty, highlighting the importance of career-related resources in shaping favorable employee outcomes. This finding supports the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework, which emphasizes the motivational role of job resources in enhancing positive employee attitudes and organizational outcomes. In contrast, Workload does not significantly influence either Job Satisfaction or Employee Loyalty, suggesting that job demands alone may not directly determine employees' attitudes and organizational attachment. Job Satisfaction also does not significantly influence Employee Loyalty, indicating that satisfaction with current work conditions does not necessarily translate into a stronger intention to remain with the organization.

Table 5. Direct Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient	p-value	Decision
H1	W → JS	0.098	0.500	Not Supported
H2	W → EL	−0.144	0.229	Not Supported
H3	CD → JS	0.437	0.003	Supported
H4	CD → EL	0.646	<0.001	Supported
H5	JS → EL	0.054	0.719	Not Supported

The findings indicate that Workload does not significantly influence Job Satisfaction. This suggests that the level of workload experienced by employees is not sufficient to explain variations in their job satisfaction. The result implies that job satisfaction may be shaped by other organizational or individual factors beyond workload.

Table 6. Indirect Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Indirect Relationship	Indirect Effect	p-value	Decision
H1	W → JS → EL	0.005	> 0.001	Not Supported
H2	CD → JS → EL	0.024	> 0.001	Not Supported

3.5. Discussion

The findings indicate that Workload does not significantly influence either Job Satisfaction or Employee Loyalty. Although workload is conceptually

Workload also does not significantly affect Employee Loyalty. This finding indicates that workload is not a direct determinant of employees' intention to remain with the organization. The relationship between workload and loyalty may therefore depend on other intervening conditions within the organizational context.

In contrast, Career Development exerts a significant positive effect on Job Satisfaction. This finding suggests that employees who perceive greater opportunities for professional growth, capability development, and career advancement are more likely to experience higher job satisfaction. Career Development can therefore be regarded as an important organizational factor in fostering positive employee attitudes toward their work.

Career Development also has a significant positive effect on Employee Loyalty and emerges as the strongest direct relationship in the model. This finding indicates that perceived opportunities for career growth and advancement play an important role in strengthening employees' willingness to remain with the organization. In the higher education context, career development may therefore serve as a key mechanism for enhancing employee loyalty.

Job Satisfaction, however, does not significantly influence Employee Loyalty. This finding suggests that positive evaluations of one's job do not necessarily translate directly into stronger intentions to remain with the organization. Employee loyalty may consequently be influenced by broader employment and organizational considerations beyond job satisfaction.

3.4. Mediation Effect

The mediation analysis on Table 6 indicates that Job Satisfaction does not significantly mediate the effects of either Workload or Career Development on Employee Loyalty. These findings suggest that the influence of Workload and Career Development on Employee Loyalty does not operate through Job Satisfaction in the present study. In particular, the significant direct effect of Career Development on Employee Loyalty implies that career development may influence employee loyalty more directly rather than through employees' level of job satisfaction. The results therefore indicate that Job Satisfaction does not function as a mediating mechanism in the proposed relationships.

positioned as a job demand within the Job Demands–Resources framework, the present results suggest that workload alone is insufficient to explain employees' satisfaction or loyalty in the higher education context.

Employees may evaluate work demands together with other organizational conditions, such as leadership, organizational support, compensation, career opportunities, and the meaningfulness of their work. This implies that high workload does not necessarily reduce satisfaction or loyalty when employees perceive that adequate resources and organizational support are available.

In contrast, Career Development emerges as the most influential factor in the model, demonstrating significant positive effects on both Job Satisfaction and Employee Loyalty. This finding supports the role of Career Development as an important job resource that facilitates professional growth, competency development, career advancement, and the achievement of long-term career goals. Employees who perceive greater opportunities for development are more likely to evaluate their work positively and to see a future within the organization. The particularly strong relationship between Career Development and Employee Loyalty further suggests that employees' perceptions of future growth may play a more important role in strengthening organizational attachment than their immediate work demands.

Job Satisfaction, however, does not significantly influence Employee Loyalty, indicating that satisfaction with current employment conditions does not necessarily translate into an intention to remain with the organization. Employees may be satisfied with their present responsibilities, colleagues, supervision, or working environment while still considering alternative employment when future career opportunities are perceived as limited. Taken together, the findings suggest that Employee Loyalty in higher education is shaped more strongly by employees' perceptions of long-term development opportunities than by workload or current job satisfaction. This highlights the importance of structured career development systems, including competency development, transparent career pathways, promotion opportunities, mentoring, and professional training, as part of employee retention strategies.

The elevated HTMT values indicate limited empirical distinctiveness among several constructs, particularly Career Development and Loyalty. One possible explanation is that respondents evaluated opportunities for career advancement and professional growth in close connection with their intention to remain at the university. Similarly, their assessments of workload and career development may have been closely connected with their overall job satisfaction. These interpretations remain tentative, as the HTMT results alone cannot establish the source of the overlap. Although the constructs represent different theoretical concepts, this distinction was not fully supported by the measurement results. Consequently, the structural coefficients and indirect effects should be interpreted cautiously because

the overlap limits confidence in attributing the observed relationships to distinct constructs.

This study has a measurement limitation concerning discriminant validity, as four of the six HTMT values exceeded 0.90. This limits the extent to which the structural findings can be interpreted as relationships between empirically distinct constructs. Future research should examine potentially overlapping item wording and construct coverage, refine the measures while preserving their theoretical meaning, and revalidate the instrument using an independent sample.

4. Conclusion

Drawing on the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework, this study investigated how workload and career development influence job satisfaction and employee loyalty among lecturers and staff in higher education. The findings show that Career Development is the most influential factor in the proposed model, as it has a significant positive effect on both Job Satisfaction and Employee Loyalty. In contrast, Workload does not significantly influence either Job Satisfaction or Employee Loyalty, indicating that workload alone is insufficient to explain variations in employees' attitudes and loyalty. Job satisfaction was not significantly associated with employee Loyalty, suggesting that employees' satisfaction with their current employment conditions may not be reflected in their willingness to continue working for the organization. These findings highlight the central role of Career Development in strengthening positive employee outcomes, particularly Employee Loyalty. From a managerial perspective, higher education institutions should place greater emphasis on transparent career pathways, professional development opportunities, promotion mechanisms, mentoring, and organizational support for employee growth. The findings also provide partial support for the JD-R perspective by emphasizing the importance of job resources in producing favorable employee outcomes, while the non-significant effects of Workload suggest that the influence of job demands may depend on broader organizational and individual conditions.

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