

Human Resource Management and Job Retention: Qualitative Research on University Teachers with Job Satisfaction as Mediator

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the impact of human resource management (HRM) practices on job retention among faculty in public undergraduate universities in China, with a particular focus on the mediating role of job satisfaction. Employing qualitative research methods, including in-depth interviews with HR professionals, this research provides valuable insights into how HRM practices influence faculty retention. The results indicate that job satisfaction plays a crucial role in enhancing faculty retention rates. Positive HR practices, such as transparent communication and professional development opportunities, significantly improve teachers' job satisfaction, thereby increasing retention rates. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of leadership satisfaction, career development opportunities, and work-life balance in HRM strategies for faculty retention. A major contribution of this study is the detailed perspective it offers on how HRM practices influence job satisfaction, thereby enhancing the willingness of faculty to remain at public undergraduate universities in China. These insights are of practical significance for administrators in higher education institutions, as they identify specific ways to improve faculty retention rates through the enhancement of HRM practices. The study also acknowledges limitations in sample diversity and size, methodological constraints, and temporal limitations, addresses the limitations by approaching HR professionals, and suggests directions for future research.

Keywords: human resource management; job retention; job satisfaction; qualitative research

Introduction

The phenomenon of teacher turnover in Chinese higher education institutions, particularly in public universities, has garnered significant attention from the academic community and administrative bodies. Public universities play a pivotal role in education, scientific advancement, and socio-economic development. As emphasized by Haibo (2005), these institutions are integral components of the educational landscape. They receive state funding and are committed to meeting broader educational needs under government supervision (Haibo, 2005). The significance of these universities extends beyond education to encompass public services, research, talent cultivation, and technological progress, as highlighted by Qifan (2020) and Rashidin et al. (2020). (QiFan, 2020; Rashidin et al., 2020) However, the challenge of high teacher turnover in these universities poses a threat to their stability and growth, as observed by Wenxuan (2007).

Traditionally, HRM was regarded merely as an administrative function and is now recognized as a critical contributor to organizational success. However, to meet organizational needs, HRM must play a direct and strategic role in addressing employee retention issues (Gharleghi et al., 2011). The ability of HRM to understand and adapt to employee challenges is crucial in retaining these employees (Russell, 2016). Furthermore, the capacity of human resource management to communicate with employees and identify their needs is essential for retaining employees (Mandhanya, 2015). Therefore, increasing knowledge about retention is significant for HRM as it enables them to better understand what attracts employees to stay in their organizations (Fishman, 2016).

This study is dedicated to exploring the factors influencing job retention among teachers in Chinese public undergraduate universities. Seeking the perspectives of the HR professionals because HR professionals often have the expertise and experience and can provide more professional advice and guidance. They also have a deeper understanding of the latest trends and best practices in the field of human resource management, which can help enterprises better solve problems in human resource management. Focusing on the impact of HRM practices on the job retention of university teachers, as well as the mediating role of job satisfaction within this context, will assist educational management departments and university administrators in taking practical actions to enhance teacher retention rates. Ensuring reduced turnover among teachers in public undergraduate

universities is essential for elevating their educational standards and enabling them to contribute more effectively to societal development.

Research objective

1. To provide an impartial examination of HRM's influence on university teachers' job satisfaction and retention by enhancing the professional experience of public university faculty members in China.
2. To explore the mediating role of job satisfaction and the moderating role of teacher type.

Scope of Research

This study explores the relationship between human resource management (HRM) practices and faculty job retention in public undergraduate universities in China, with a particular focus on the mediating role of job satisfaction. The research scope includes: analyzing the impact of HRM practices such as recruitment, onboarding, professional development, and performance management on faculty retention; examining how job satisfaction serves as a mediating variable affecting faculty's intention to stay; using qualitative research methods, through in-depth interviews and content analysis, to gather faculty perceptions on HRM practices and job satisfaction; and providing practical strategies for university administrators and HR professionals to optimize HRM practices, thereby enhancing faculty job satisfaction and retention rates. The study aims to offer new insights into HR management in higher education and outlines future research directions to address limitations in sample diversity and methodological approaches. Through this research, the aim is to highlight the critical role of HRM practices in improving faculty retention in public undergraduate universities in China.

Literature Review

Human Resource Management Overview

HRM is a vital organizational function that ensures employee performance aligns with the organization's objectives. Extensive research has consistently shown the significant impact of HRM practices on overall organizational performance (Friedman, 2007; Khilji & Wang, 2006; Ostroff,

1992). HRM encompasses various functions, including job analysis, workforce planning, recruitment, training, performance management, compensation, and legal compliance (Buettner, 2015).

At its core, HRM aims to create a work environment aligned with employee values, driving organizational strategies through motivation and education (Salampasis et al., 2015). This alignment not only fosters an organizational culture consistent with strategic goals but also enhances overall organizational development. Managing interpersonal relationships within the organization is, therefore, crucial, constituting a fundamental element in achieving organizational objectives (Salampasis et al., 2015). Understanding HRM structures can be challenging. However, HRM systems are seen as collections of practices designed to achieve organizational objectives through HRM procedures (Jiang et al., 2012; White, 2019). To adapt to a constantly changing environment, organizations must align their HRM needs with long-term strategies (Pynes, 2008). Consequently, adopting HRM practices aimed at enhancing performance is considered a 'best practice' (Pynes, 2008).

One of HRM's primary responsibilities is formulating and implementing employee retention strategies (Buettner, 2015; White, 2019). To become strategic partners, HRM professionals must possess a high level of professional and business knowledge to ensure that HR activities significantly impact organizational effectiveness (Pynes, 2008).

In summary, HRM is a vital management approach encompassing various activities aimed at effectively recruiting, training, managing, and retaining an organization's human resources to achieve strategic goals while prioritizing employee well-being (Boselie et al., 2001). The research underscores the influence of HRM practices on employee job satisfaction in educational institutions, emphasizing factors like promotional opportunities, interpersonal relationships, managerial support, the work environment, and employee benefits (Mohiuddin et al., 2023).

Job retention overview

Job retention is defined as the capacity to foster employees' inclination to remain in their current positions rather than seeking opportunities elsewhere, thereby increasing their commitment to the organization. The primary goal of job retention is to encourage employees to stay with the organization for longer periods (Deeba et al., 2015). Achieving this objective requires organizations to develop and implement job retention strategies that address employee needs and bolster their commitment (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020).

Job retention is one of the significant challenges encountered by human resource managers (Joo et al., 2015). Consequently, organizations must comprehend the factors influencing employees' decisions to either leave or remain within the organization (Long et al., 2016). In today's ever-evolving competitive landscape, every organization endeavors to retain its employees to fulfill its organizational objectives and mission. The literature widely acknowledges that organizations gain a competitive advantage by investing in their employees and prioritizing their well-being (Anand, 1997; Walker, 2001; Gharleghi et al., 2011). High employee turnover not only damages employee morale, leading to an increased workload for the remaining staff, but also impacts service quality, thereby affecting customer/client relationships. Employees dedicated to the organization can contribute to an increase in "team efficiency, reduced absenteeism, and diminished turnover intentions" (Prakash, 2022). Nevertheless, high employee turnover may negatively affect employee morale, resulting in an increased workload for the remaining employees and potentially harming the organization's reputation. The loss of experienced employees also signifies a depletion of the organization's knowledge base (Selden & Sowa, 2015). Failure to retain experienced employees can impact the organization's accumulation of specialized knowledge and diminish organizational productivity. Employee turnover can lead to a decrease in employee morale and potentially affect the organization's business reputation.

Therefore, the formulation and implementation of job retention strategies constitute one of the primary responsibilities of human resource management to ensure organizational stability and sustained growth (Buettner, 2015; Selden & Sowa, 2015).

Job satisfaction overview

Job satisfaction is typically defined as the aggregate of various factors within an employee's work environment, including working conditions, job responsibilities, development opportunities, and the nature of the work itself. It encompasses employees' contentment levels with various aspects of their job, including satisfaction with the nature of the work, salary, promotional prospects, working conditions, and interpersonal relationships with colleagues (Bai et al., 2023; Gregory, 2011; Locke, 1976). HR professionals must gain insights into employees' loyalty and contentment levels. HR is closely linked to employees' commitment to their work and their sense of belonging within the organization. Measuring job satisfaction is one of the most crucial aspects of effective HRM. Numerous studies have indicated that job satisfaction correlates with employee motivation, goal

attainment, and fostering a positive workplace morale (Sageer et al., 2012). Therefore, within the scope of this study, job satisfaction refers to whether teachers are content and happy, and their work meets their needs and desires.

In summary, these studies have provided valuable insights into gaining a deeper understanding of how HRM practices within public undergraduate universities in China impact teacher job satisfaction and retention. They illuminate how various factors interact to shape teachers' career trajectories and retention decisions. A thorough analysis of these factors can offer effective strategies and recommendations for enhancing teacher job satisfaction and retention rates. Zakarija, Skočir, and Žubrinčić (2021) introduced a specialized Human Resource Management System model tailored to the needs of higher education institutions. This model particularly emphasizes the systemic components that support research and higher education-specific processes. This research underscores the pivotal role of HRM in improving operational efficiency in an educational context (Zakarija et al., 2021).

Methodology

Study population and sample

This study utilizes a qualitative research approach and conducts an in-depth exploration of the role of talent management in Chinese public undergraduate universities through semi-structured interviews. Qualitative research aims to elucidate the context behind decision-making processes and individual or group behaviors and to explain the reasons behind observed phenomena. Two-way communication during interviews aids in obtaining additional data and requires a profound understanding of the interviewees. In this study, the research population is specifically defined as the teaching staff of public undergraduate universities in Sichuan Province, China. This population includes both non-established and established teachers, encompassing a diverse range of academic disciplines and teaching experiences. This population provides a representative sample for examining the impact of organizational management, human resource management, and the moderating role of teacher type on job retention in the context of Chinese higher education. Bryman (2006) and Siripipatthanakul & Bhandar (2021) have noted that despite the widespread use of semi-structured interviews in research, there is often insufficient attention given to their heterogeneity, inherent structure, and extensive application in the field of qualitative research (Agarwal, 1990; Bryman,

2006). This approach allows researchers to pose questions that go beyond the scope of the semi-structured questionnaire, facilitating more effective data collection and subsequent follow-ups (Limna, 2021).

The tools employed in this study have been validated for content accuracy by three experts in the academic and business domains. Considering that it is based on the personnel of the personnel management departments of 27 public undergraduate universities and the university's semester work schedule, it will be relatively less busy during this period in Sichuan Province. The interviews will be conducted by nine interviewees, who have 10 years of management experience and a professor title, consequently. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with nine staff members in the HRM department of public universities in China.

Data Collection

The researchers conducted a comprehensive secondary data analysis, also known as a literature review, to extract pertinent information related to the research questions. Following the approach outlined in Blandford's (2013) study, the interview questions were formulated based on credible and validated sources. Below is a compilation of the survey's interview inquiries.

The interview questions are:

Q1. From your perspective, what potential improvement measures or innovative strategies can be implemented in the field of HRM to further enhance teacher job satisfaction and job retention rates?

Q2. In your experience, what is the relationship between teacher retention and the leadership style within universities? Specifically, how does this relationship in HRM practices affect teacher job satisfaction and job retention?

Q3. How do you view the impact of job satisfaction, career development opportunities, and work-life balance on teacher job retention in HRM strategies?

Q4. What additional insights or recommendations do you have regarding effective methods to enhance teacher job satisfaction and job retention in HRM practices?

Data Analysis

The participants in this study were from the HRM departments of nine Chinese public universities. According to Limna (2021) and others, content analysis is the qualitative technology of the system and extracts effective description and quantification through effective inference from

words and visual or written data (Limna et al., 2022; Limna, 2021). Based on the content analysis of this study, qualitative data was collected through in-depth online interviews.

Results

Content Analysis

Due to the excessive length of the interview transcripts, this article primarily employs a summarized analysis of the responses provided by the interviewees, consolidating similar viewpoints. To provide an impartial examination of HRM's influence on university teachers' job satisfaction and retention by enhancing the professional experience of public university faculty members in China. The Impact of HRM on University Teachers' Job Retention HRM predominantly encompasses aspects such as facilitating career development, assigning reasonable workloads to maintain a work-life balance for teachers, creating pathways for professional title advancements, and providing competitive salary and benefits packages. For instance, offering comprehensive career development support plays a pivotal role in retaining teachers within the institution. These initiatives not only enable teachers to continue their professional growth but also foster a sense of loyalty towards their respective educational institutions. Additionally, cultivating a supportive and inclusive work environment, coupled with a culture that promotes innovation and academic freedom, is recognized as a fundamental factor in retaining teachers. The university places a significant focus on the career development of its teacher, acknowledging their high regard for career prospects. Simultaneously, it recognizes the necessity of balancing professional duties with personal lives. In response, the university provides skill training opportunities designed to enhance the teacher's work capabilities and establish a robust foundation for their career progression.

-Respondent A, Respondent F

Salary and benefits are undeniably important factors in both attracting and retaining teachers, given that full-time educators place significant emphasis on this aspect. Nevertheless, equally, if not more critical, is the provision of a supportive work environment. Our school not only offers competitive salaries but also actively endeavors to foster an environment that promotes innovation and academic freedom. This approach contributes to an increased sense of satisfaction and respect among teachers.

-Respondent B, Respondent E

The school maintains very clear criteria for recruiting full-time teachers, ensuring that candidates have a clear understanding of the work tasks they will encounter. A well-defined path for support and promotion is provided, effectively motivating teachers to concentrate on their career development.

-Respondent C, Respondent I

Professional development opportunities, work-life balance, reasonable compensation, benefits, and a supportive work environment constitute key elements of the university's HRM strategy. This holistic approach effectively enhances teacher satisfaction and successfully boosts retention rates. Furthermore, the university ensures that teachers have opportunities to participate in decision-making processes, reinforcing their sense of belonging and loyalty to the institution, which in turn increases their inclination to remain.

-Respondent A, Respondent B, Respondent C, Respondent D, Respondent E, Respondent F, Respondent G, Respondent H, and Respondent I

At their university, a key aspect of HRM is ensuring that teachers feel their work is valued and respected. This is achieved through regular performance evaluations and feedback meetings, which ensure that teachers' efforts and achievements are recognized. Additionally, the university offers diverse career development paths, including research funding and academic exchange opportunities, to motivate teachers to continually progress in their careers. These measures not only increase teachers' satisfaction but also strengthen their loyalty to the school, effectively enhancing teacher retention.

-Respondent D, Respondent H

The Role of Job Satisfaction in Mediating HRM's Impact on University Teachers' Job Retention. It highlights the significance of HRM in fostering teachers' job satisfaction, encompassing the provision of reasonable working conditions, opportunities for development, and occupational support. The human resources department maintains close communication with teachers, comprehends their needs, and implements measures to enhance the working environment. These initiatives serve to elevate teachers' job satisfaction, consequently increasing their inclination to remain within the academic institution. Leadership satisfaction emerges as a critical factor influencing teacher satisfaction and retention. Interviewees underscored the leadership's integral role in cultivating a supportive work environment and inspiring teacher development. Effective leaders not

only offer guidance but also serve as role models, encouraging continuous self-improvement among teachers. Leadership satisfaction has a direct impact on teachers' job satisfaction and their willingness to stay.

To explore the mediating role of job satisfaction and the moderating role of teacher-type

These respondents' reports underscore the mediating role of job satisfaction between HRM and college teachers' retention. Through the provision of a supportive work environment, developmental opportunities, and incentivizing measures, the HRM department can enhance teachers' job satisfaction, thereby bolstering their commitment to the academic institution and diminishing teacher attrition rates. Leadership satisfaction assumes a key role in this dynamic, as the conduct and role modeling of leaders significantly influence teacher satisfaction and their desire to stay.

As a member of the HRM department, enhancing teachers' job satisfaction is considered crucial for their retention. Teachers' feedback is highly valued, and adjustments are made to the work environment and policies based on their needs. For instance, recent initiatives have been implemented, including more flexible work schedules and increased opportunities for professional development, addressing teachers' demands for improved work-life balance and career growth. These initiatives have yielded positive results, leading to a noticeable improvement in teacher retention rates.

-Respondent F

Based on my extensive experience in HRM, it has been observed that supporting career development, offering competitive compensation and benefits, and conducting regular performance evaluations are essential factors in enhancing teachers' job satisfaction. The department is dedicated to providing these necessary supports to teachers, as they directly influence their commitment to the school or the public university. Through consistent performance evaluations and feedback meetings, the efforts and achievements of teachers are duly acknowledged. This not only contributes to the enhancement of their job satisfaction but also reinforces their inclination to continue working at the school. These practices have provided evidence that job satisfaction indeed plays a mediating role in the relationship between human resource management and teacher retention.

-Respondent G

The HRM department is committed to providing teachers with diverse career development opportunities, such as research funding and academic exchange programs, which are key to motivating continuous progress. These opportunities not only enhance teachers' job satisfaction but also strengthen their loyalty to the school. They emphasized the importance of regularly conducting employee satisfaction surveys, which help to understand teachers' needs and expectations and accordingly improve HRM practices. They believe that these practices further highlight the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between HRM and job retention in higher education institutions.

-Respondent E, Respondent F, Respondent G

HRM plays a significant role in influencing job satisfaction and retention among university teachers. In our department, during the recruitment process, we prioritize the attraction and retention of outstanding teachers through effective recruitment and training programs, along with competitive compensation and benefits. A robust recruitment process is essential for ensuring the right talent is hired. Training and development programs contribute significantly to enhancing teachers' professional satisfaction. Additionally, we have implemented motivational measures, including reward programs and opportunities for promotion, to encourage teacher development within the institution. I believe my experience can offer valuable insights for your research, emphasizing the crucial role of these factors in maintaining job retention.

-Respondent A, Respondent E, Respondent G

In enhancing teachers' job satisfaction, training plays a crucial role. The departments of HRM and academic administration are dedicated to providing diverse training and development opportunities aimed at helping teachers enhance their educational skills and professional knowledge. They have also introduced a mentorship program where new teachers collaborate with experienced mentors to better adapt to the university environment. These training initiatives not only contribute to improving teachers' educational proficiency but also bolster their career prospects, thereby increasing their job satisfaction. Furthermore, performance assessment is considered another pivotal factor influencing job satisfaction and retention. Regular performance evaluations assist teachers in understanding their job performance and provide opportunities for improvement. The school actively encourages feedback and open dialogues to ensure that teachers' needs are adequately met.

-Respondent B, Respondent C

Our leadership team plays a crucial role in supporting teacher job satisfaction. We prioritize creating a positive work environment and culture that encourages teachers to maximize their potential. Regular interactions with teachers help us understand their needs and concerns, ensuring they feel well-supported. Leadership is instrumental in fostering a positive work atmosphere and providing professional development opportunities. Our leadership team aims to lead by example, inspiring team members to strive for excellence.

-Respondent A, Respondent E, Respondent G

Emphasis was placed on the importance of providing good working conditions and development opportunities to meet the needs of teachers. Regular communication with teachers, listening to their feedback, and making improvements as needed were highlighted. Leadership satisfaction plays a crucial role in maintaining teacher retention, as teachers strive to lead by example and encourage team members to continuously improve themselves.

Discussion

This study aimed to provide an impartial examination of HRM's influence on university teachers' job satisfaction and retention, with a specific focus on the mediating role of job satisfaction. Through an extensive investigation that included an analysis of HRM practices within universities and interviews with HRM industry professionals, several noteworthy findings emerged.

Firstly, the research aligns with prior studies by Mahmud and Idrish (2011), Pirzada et al. (2013), Mudqaddas (2023), and others, confirming the pivotal role of career development in enhancing teachers' job satisfaction. The provision of diverse opportunities for career advancement was found to significantly enhance teachers' prospects for career growth, fostering personal development and loyalty to the institution, ultimately promoting job satisfaction and retention (Eisenberger, 2002; Mahmud & Idrish, 2011; Mudqaddas, 2023; Pirzada et al., 2013; Vu, 2020).

Secondly, compensation packages and effective performance evaluations were identified as critical factors influencing job satisfaction and retention among teachers. Regular performance assessments enable teachers to assess and improve their work performance, ensuring that their needs are met. The findings underscore that effective HRM practices, including competitive compensation and benefits, are vital for retaining teachers.

Furthermore, the research highlights the essential role of leadership satisfaction in maintaining job satisfaction and retention among teachers. Positive leadership contributions, such as establishing a conducive work environment and culture, inspire teachers to realize their potential and provide opportunities for professional development, directly impacting teachers' job satisfaction and retention intentions.

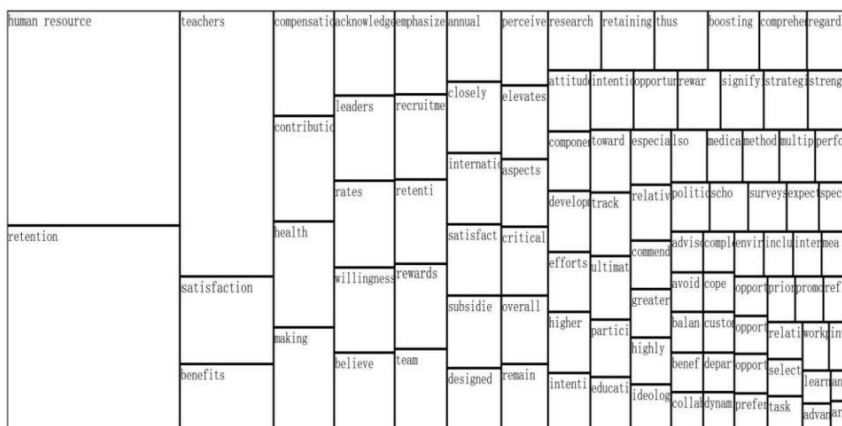
In essence, the study reveals a robust link between effective HRM practices and job satisfaction among university teachers. Enhanced HRM practices lead to higher job satisfaction, subsequently increasing teachers' loyalty to the university. This heightened loyalty significantly bolsters teachers' intent to remain in their positions, emphasizing the pivotal role of HRM in fostering a stable academic workforce."(Eisenberger, 2002; Mahmud & Idrish, 2011; muqaddas, 2023; Pirzada et al., 2013; Vu, 2020).

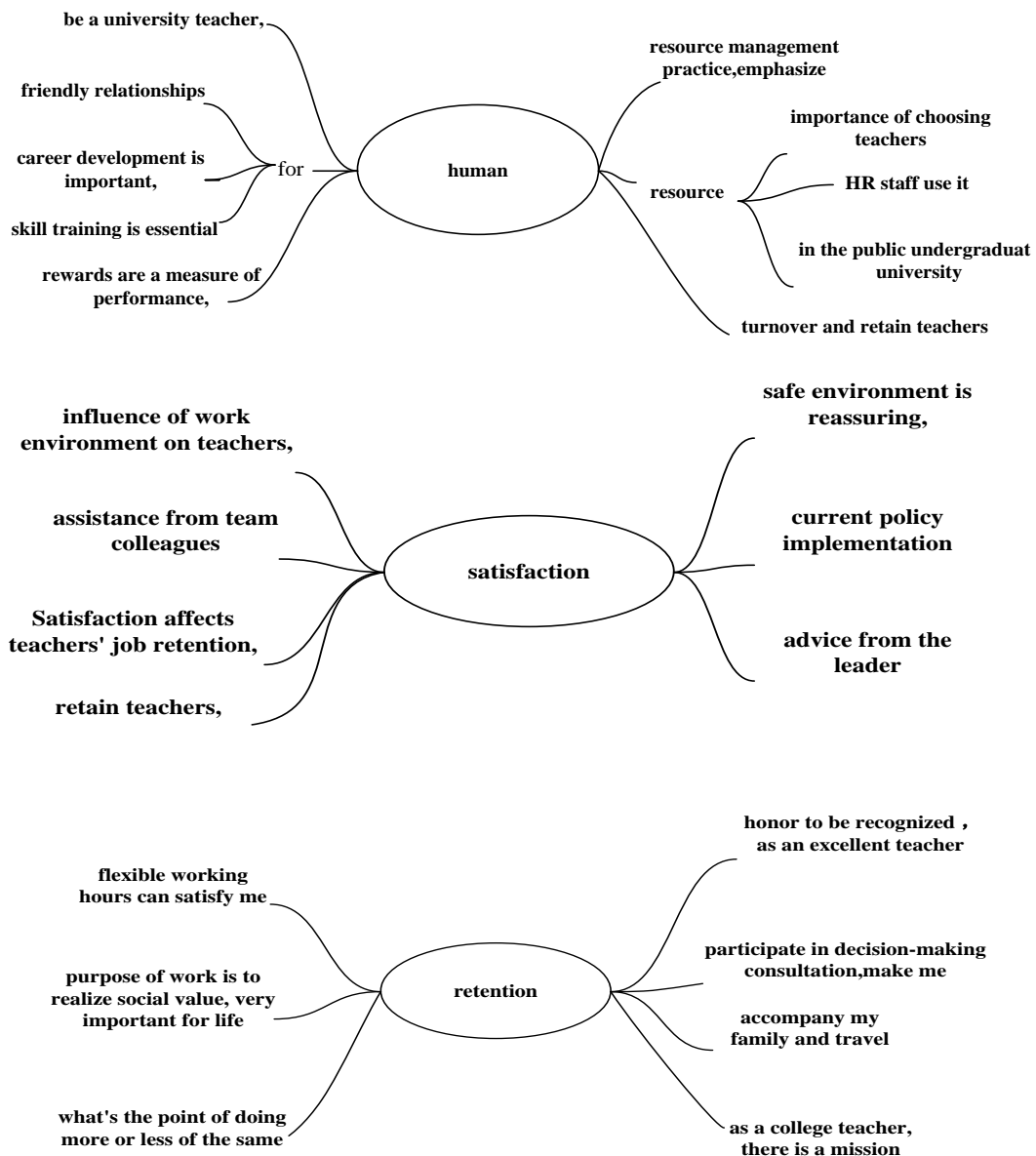
Word Cloud



Figure 1 Word Cloud

Tree Map





Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the higher education field by thoroughly examining the influence of HRM on university teachers' job satisfaction and retention, with a particular focus on the mediating role of job satisfaction.

The findings underscore the significance of HRM practices, such as career development, compensation and benefits, effective performance evaluation, and leadership satisfaction, in boosting teachers' job satisfaction and retention.

The findings also indicated that the specific strategy of human resource management consisted of increasing teachers' job satisfaction; enhancing the professional development of

teachers; establishing a good working atmosphere; and enhancing teachers' sense of participation and belonging.

These results not only confirm the mediating role of job satisfaction in job retention but also underscore the pivotal role of HRM practices in establishing a stable academic workforce. A noteworthy contribution of this study lies in its detailed exploration of how HRM practices impact job satisfaction, thereby increasing teachers' commitment to staying. These insights hold practical implications for university administrators, offering specific avenues to enhance job retention rates through improved HRM practices.

Suggestions

There are restrictions on sample diversity and scale because research mainly focuses on university teachers focusing on specific regions, which may limit the generality of the results. The relatively small sample scale and the lack of diversity in the type of mechanism and geographical location may also affect the applicability of the results in other situations. In addition, there are constraints on the methodology. Although the qualitative method provides in-depth insights, it may not be able to comprehensively capture the entire scope of experience and viewpoints, and its subjective nature may introduce prejudice. Finally, the research is limited by time and may not fully reflect the long-term trend and change in human resource management practice on work satisfaction and retention.

Future research should consider a more diversified sample, including institutions of various types and teachers from different geographical areas, to enhance the universality of discovery. In future research, the mixed method can be adopted by combining the depth of qualitative insights with the breadth of quantitative data to provide a more comprehensive understanding. Carrying out vertical research can provide valuable insights for human resource management practice and work satisfaction with the passage of time and their long-term impact on retaining teachers.

New Knowledge

This study delves into the profound influence of human resource management (HRM) practices on job retention among faculty members in public undergraduate universities in China, emphasizing the mediating role of job satisfaction. The investigation unveils the following insights:

HRM Practices: Comprehensive HRM practices, encompassing career development, workload management, opportunities for professional advancement, competitive compensation, and benefits, are crucial in augmenting faculty retention. The focus on professional growth and work-life balance is particularly instrumental in fostering a sense of loyalty and commitment among the faculty.

Job Satisfaction: The study highlights job satisfaction as a pivotal mediator, illustrating how satisfaction with working conditions, career development opportunities, and organizational support significantly influences faculty members' decisions to remain with an institution. Leadership satisfaction, along with a supportive and innovative work environment, emerges as a key determinant of job satisfaction and, consequently, retention. Practical Implications: The findings provide actionable insights for university administrators and HR professionals, suggesting that enhancing HRM practices can lead to improved job satisfaction and retention rates among faculty. Specific recommendations include developing clear career pathways, ensuring competitive remuneration, and fostering an inclusive and supportive work culture.

Contribution to HRM and Educational Management: By offering a nuanced understanding of the interplay between HRM practices and job satisfaction in the context of faculty retention, this research contributes to the academic discourse on HRM in higher education settings, providing a framework for future research and practical applications in university contexts.

This study not only deepens our comprehension of the role of HRM in educational institutions but also presents a model for strategic HRM implementation aimed at enhancing job satisfaction and retention among university faculty, thereby supporting the stability and growth of higher education institutions in China.

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