

Exploring the Perceptions of Private Sector Nursing Educators on Long-Term Retention in a Single Institution: A Qualitative Phenomenological Inquiry

-  **Kiran Riaz**¹ (corresponding author)
Indus College of Nursing & Midwifery
Indus University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan
-  **Irfan Ali**²
Indus College of Nursing & Midwifery
Indus University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan
-  **Kashaf Kali**³
Indus College of Nursing & Midwifery
Indus University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan
-  **Irsa Abid**⁴
Indus College of Nursing & Midwifery
Indus University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan
-  **Komal Ramzan**⁵
Indus College of Nursing & Midwifery
Indus University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan
-  **Kazia Ishaq**⁶
Indus College of Nursing & Midwifery
Indus University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan

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Abstract

This study aims to explore nurse educators' perceptions of their long-term commitment to teaching and the factors influencing their retention within a private nursing institution. Turnover among nurse educators has become a pressing concern globally, as it threatens the quality of nursing education, the stability of academic programs, and the future preparation of competent nurses. This issue is particularly critical in private institutions, where challenges in retaining experienced faculty are more pronounced. A qualitative research design was deployed. Eight nurse educators participated in two-hour, in-depth semi-structured interviews, which allowed for rich data collection. The data were analysed using thematic analysis, a method to capture participants' nuanced experiences and insights. The findings highlighted five central influences on retention: maintaining work-life balance, receiving effective leadership support, overall job satisfaction, cultural alignment within the institution, and opportunities for professional and career growth. These themes reflected the complex interplay of personal, organisational, and professional factors that shape educators' intentions to remain in or leave their positions. Based on these findings, the study recommends that institutions adopt sustainable retention strategies, including supportive leadership practices, flexible work arrangements, and transparent pathways for professional development to ensure workforce stability.

Keywords

Career commitment
Faculty retention
Nurse educators
Private institutions
Workforce sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Losing good nurses is a dilemma for hospitals and clinics in all corners of the globe. It ruins patients' care, keeps the work schedule unstable, and even threatens the future of the institutions. Even though hospital management considers it an unmanageable obstacle, maintaining nurses' satisfaction on the job is tougher. To fix this, we must understand what makes experienced nurses want to stay. Przenyczka et al., (2012) believe it important to look at how much freedom nurses have to make decisions, if they feel their work matters and how well they get along with their colleagues. It is not just about the paycheck, either. Nurses often feel good about their jobs when their beliefs match what the hospital or clinic stands for. Because the reasons why nurses leave their jobs are closely tied to the local economy, society, and customs, the issue of nurse turnover is different in different places. A study in Bangalore, India (Kannan et al., 2024) found that age, job stability, chances to move up in their career, and feeling appreciated affect nurses' decision to stay. The nurses claim they are happy when they have a reasonable workload, can easily talk to their superiors, and get support from their managers. While this happens in Bangalore, it also mirrors what is happening worldwide. For instance, Butler (2023) suggests that helpful bosses, a manageable workload, and opportunities to learn and grow professionally are key to keeping experienced nurses working efficiently.

When nurses think about their long-term stay, they often weigh where they see themselves in the long run, how they feel about themselves as nurses, and the emotional toll the job takes on them. Globally, keeping nurses longer is connected to efforts that give them more power and create workplaces where everyone feels part of the close-knit family. Mangold et al., highlight that feeling empowered, having a voice in how things are run, and knowing exactly what is expected of them are important to keep nurses happy. The research found that when nurses feel they genuinely influence decisions about planning, policies, and how patients are cared for, they are more likely to stick around. Zarei et al., (2025) remind us that keeping nurses happy is not just about what happens at their current job. Things like getting more training and having options to move around in the job market also play a big role. Building a workplace that supports ongoing learning and offers chances to specialise can make a big difference in whether nurses choose to stay.

Roth et al., (2022) studied the German healthcare system and found that nurses are more likely to stay back when they feel emotionally connected to their work. Their research showed that nurses who see their job as a true "calling" are more willing to tough it out and stay, even when things at work are not perfect. This feeling of purpose, which comes from strong professionals, helping new nurses, and caring about patients, often means more than just a good paycheck or benefits. Liu and Leeniwa (2024) found

similar results in Chinese hospitals: having a good work-life balance, feeling respected by coworkers, and knowing their work mattered and made a big difference in their length of stay. Chua et al., (2014) studied what makes nurses want to stay in Malaysian hospitals. Their research showed that when nurses are happy with their jobs, the organisation supports them, and they have good relationships with patients, they are much more likely to stay. Nurses need to be valued and respected as part of the team. When nurses feel psychologically safe, they feel comfortable asking for help, learning from their mistakes, and speaking their minds without fear, which makes them feel more loyal to the organisation.

Banaszak-Holl et al., (2015) study findings illustrated how well nurses fit in with the organizations' culture and the positive roles they played at work. Their research indicated that nurses were more likely to stay when their job matched their personal and professional goals and shared the same values as the organisation. Besides, how a company feels about its culture, the environment where people work, and their individual qualities play a prominent role in whether they stay or quit. Force (2005) dug deep into how managers lead, which team someone is on, how long they have been members, and even if they are married. Their research suggests that who someone is has less of a direct impact on sticking around than aspects of the job itself, particularly how much freedom they have and how well they work with others. Nurses are happy and dedicated when their boss involves them in decision-making, encourages teamwork, and are generally honest. Moreover, nurses feel more motivated and secure when they know what is expected of them and get regular, well-structured feedback on their performance.

Good leadership is important for keeping nurses happy and sticking around, based on what all the research says. Leaders who are good listeners, jump into action quickly, understand where nurses come from, create trust, and make nurses want to stay. A study by Spence Laschinger et al., (2009) showed that leaders who can inspire and motivate their teams are especially good at this. They create a "feel-good" effect where nurses feel more loyal, enjoy their jobs, and are less likely to leave. Furthermore, Ellis (2025) found that when nurse managers involve their team in making decisions, everyone feels better, more responsible, and as if they truly belong. In those situations, nurses do not just do their jobs; they care about making the hospital a great place to work and get care. It is also vital to show nurses that they are valued. Regular praise and rewards, both big and small, keep nurses motivated and show them that the hospital appreciates them. Promotions, shout-outs, and celebrating successes can help keep people around. Roth et al., (2022) also point out that if nurses feel their hard work is truly recognised, they might be less likely to think about quitting, even when other things at the hospital are challenging.

When trying to keep staff happy, it is important to remember that different age groups have other priorities. Al-Harazneh et al., (2024) pointed out that more experienced nurses often value job security and sticking to tried-and-true methods. On the other hand, new nurses usually look for adaptable schedules, opportunities to move up, and environments that embrace the latest technology. To make everyone feel included and supported, hospitals should develop policies that reflect these differences and offer mentorship programs tailored to specific needs. Bringing different generations together through mentorship is not just about sharing knowledge; it also builds teamwork and mutual respect, which are key to having a strong and dependable team for the long haul. All ten studies show that good leadership is important for holding onto the nurses. Leaders who are good listeners, quick to respond, and understand their team's feelings are key to building trust and getting nurses to care about their jobs. Waltz et al., (2020) found that inspiring leaders who encourage and support their teams create a cycle where nurses are more loyal, happier at work, and less likely to leave. Force (2005) believes that nurse leaders include staff in making decisions, giving them a sense of ownership and connection. In such environments, nurses are active and dedicated, but help make the organisation better and more well-respected.

These ten studies also paint a full picture of what keeps nurses around. It is like a complex puzzle with pieces that include how the workplace is run, their relationships with colleagues, and their personal feelings. It is hardly one aspect that makes a nurse stay or leave. Instead, it is a mix of having bosses who support them, sharing the same values as the workplace, getting paid fairly, feeling good about their work, and seeing chances to grow in their careers. When hospitals address these needs, they are more likely to keep experienced nurses, spend less on replacing them, and provide better care to patients. In

addition, holding on to such experienced nurses brings many hidden benefits. They create consistency for patients, help new nurses get their feet wet, and hold valuable knowledge about the way things work. These advantages are hard to replace and often overlooked when planning staffing. Roth et al., (2022) opine that veteran nurses, such as professional and caring nurses, are the keepers of what makes a healthcare environment special. This is especially important in tough places like emergency rooms and ICUs, where these nurses often step up as informal leaders and make critical calls. Their presence brings a sense of calm and strength when things get hectic, boosting how well the whole team works together. Nurse educator turnover endangers the stability and quality of nursing education. This study, therefore, investigates perceptions of nursing educators at a private institution, emphasising determinants of long-term retention and professional commitment - a subject gaining increasing scholarly focus in recent research (Arian et al., 2018).

Problem Statement

Keeping good nursing teachers is a big problem, but it is especially tough in Pakistan's private nursing schools, which deteriorates patient care and worsens the education of students. Being overloaded, feeling pulled in multiple directions, and not getting enough help from supervisors are some of the biggest reasons teachers are unsatisfied and fail to work consistently in healthcare education (Riyasat et al., 2017; Hong & Lee, 2016). Private nursing schools have their own set of problems. They often do not offer as many chances for teachers to grow professionally or give them enough support, and the job can be emotionally draining, forcing them to give up their jobs (Karamaliani et al., 2016; Abbas et al., 2019). While many studies illustrate that not getting paid enough is a common reason for nurse teachers to quit, we need to explore how nursing teachers in Pakistan's private sector 'feel' about this through in-depth conversations. Due to limited resources, the money spent on constantly hiring, training, and getting new teachers settled is cumbersome (Khan et al., 2020). We need to find solutions that are proven to work and fit the specific situation to make teachers feel more loyal, keep nursing programs strong, and ensure students get the clinical guidance they need.

Objective of the Study

- To investigate the views of nursing educators regarding long-term retention in a private sector institution.

Research Question

- What are the perceptions of nursing educators in the private sector regarding long-term retention within a single institution?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Keeping nurses on staff is a tricky issue in many ways, involving their workplace, careers, and personal lives. This overview of recent research looks at what makes seasoned nurses want to stick around. Having the backing of the hospital or clinic is extremely important. For instance, Abualrub and Alghamdi (2012) found that leaders who communicate well, offer support, and help nurses feel like their work matters can improve their work life. This is because they are satisfied at work and gives them a good sense of what is expected. Similarly, Wallis and Kennedy (2013) demonstrate that giving leaders special training helps them build loyalty to the organisation, which then helps prevent nurses from leaving. Moschovopoulou & Papavassiliou-Alexiou (2025) emphasize that nurses are more likely to become strong and dedicated employees when leaders empower nurses and the organization is supportive. Nurses are more likely to stick around when they have chances to keep learning and grow in their careers. Fontaine (2018) emphasize specialised training, further education, or even just taking time to think about their practice. Rose et al. (2023) found that when nurses see opportunities to move up and access learning resources, they feel more dedicated and want to stay in their jobs longer.

Research shows that nurses are more likely to stick around and contribute when they feel supported

by open and honest leaders, when they have a say in decision-making, and when they can keep learning and growing. However, it is not just about the job. Nurses also stay because they feel a connection to their work. They believe in what they do for the sick and society, giving them a real purpose. The study conducted by Chang et al. (2023) shows that when nurses feel safe, appreciated, and satisfied by helping patients and working with their team, they see nursing as more than just a job – a calling. Hunt (2014) spotlights the importance of emotional satisfaction and shared values when nurses decide to stay in their positions. It also matters when nurses' personal values match those of the hospital or clinic they work for. Dunning et al., (2021) found that nurses are more likely to stay at places that feel right to them, where they have some independence, can do meaningful work, and feel psychologically safe. Things like how much work they have, whether they feel in control, and if they get recognised also play an important role. Hewko et al., (2015) emphasise that when nurses have a reasonable workload, supportive managers, and are appreciated for their efforts, they are more likely to stay. Seitovirta et al. (2017) add that tangible rewards, like bonuses, and intangible ones, like a simple “thank you” or opportunities for advancement, make nurses feel valued and encourage them to continue with their present job.

Ultimately, a strong relationship with fellow nurses is very important. A study by Madhavanprabhakaran et al., (2022) found that nurses who feel supported by their team are less likely to get burned out, making the workplace a better playground. This is particularly true for more seasoned nurses who often guide and teach newer staff. When you have a team with different backgrounds and perspectives, those connections can improve communication and create a feeling of shared responsibility. A healthy work-life balance and feeling safe and comfortable at work are crucial for keeping nurses around. Roth et al. (2022) found that flexible schedules and caring bosses reduce burnout and build loyalty, especially for nurses juggling personal responsibilities. A workplace where people feel valued and heard keeps nurses happy, loyal, and performing well. Al-Harazneh et al., (2024) also note that age and retention are closely related. Younger nurses often want flexible hours, chances to move up, and to work with the latest technology. Older nurses tend to value job security and stability more. Meeting these different needs with personalised plans is important to build a strong, lasting nursing team.

Work-Life Balance

Maintaining a healthy balance between work and personal life is essential for keeping nursing teachers around for the long haul. Many teachers talk about the struggle of managing their responsibilities at home alongside their jobs. They cite long work hours and strict time frames, which do not give them the freedom to attend to themselves or their families. The feeling of emotional exhaustion is an issue when their career and personal lives conflict with each other (Rashmi & Kataria, 2023). This causes burnout and diminishes their drive to continue in their positions. Another major concern is the lack of university policies or support programs that are meant to assist them in making a balance between their work and life, such as flexible licensing or leaves. Others indicated that when such changes are not involved, the stresses accompanying their teaching profession would leave them feeling unappreciated. In cases when teachers believe that the university does not care about their well-being, there are few odds that teachers would remain committed in the long term. In this case, it is important to establish organised support systems that enhance work-life balance so nursing teachers can be satisfied and continue their work (Schluter et al., 2011). Addressing this problem may result in better employee morale, reduced turnover, and a stable teaching environment for nursing faculty.

Teachers often refer to the necessity of management support as a significant factor contributing to their choice to stay employed. They further detailed that there should be an easy-to-approach and listen to leaders who can encourage an open communication channel and appreciate suggestions. The management support should be related directly to their satisfaction with their job and how committed they are towards the organisation. The sense of trust and community results from positive experiences with evident effective communication, fair treatment, and a cooperative decision-making process by the top management. Conversely, the perception of being unheard or witnessing preferential treatment and more distant leaders would frequently result in less engagement. Teachers highly praise the leaders who play an intimate role in alleviating the workload, especially in hard times, and those who provide

continued guidance and mentoring (Schluter et al., 2011). Encouraging managers is also important as they reward personal accomplishments and give valuable feedback, increasing morale and the willingness to continue their job. Engagement and leadership behaviours are associated with retention of employees to a great extent. Developing an inclusive, appreciative, and responsive leadership style is critical to growing workforce sustainability in private nursing education (Aamir et al., 2016).

Job Satisfaction

Keeping faculty happy is crucial to keep them around. Teachers feel more satisfied at work when they align with what they care about and want to achieve in their careers, like training the next generation of nurses or pushing their field forward. Also, letting teachers decide how they want to teach and giving them the freedom to make choices satisfies them, because it allows them to be creative and manage their work well (Liu et al., 2016). However, many teachers are worried about the mismatch in their workload. They see situations where some people have too much to do, leading to stress and unhappiness. Having access to the right teaching materials, modern technology, and enough help from the administration also impacts how their day-to-day routine goes. In addition, a good relationship with coworkers is essential for a good working atmosphere. When teachers work together and support each other, it boosts their morale, but arguments and bad relationships hurt job satisfaction. Teachers' feelings about their work environment, what they are expected to do, and how they interact with others play a big role.

Cultural Alignment

Educators will likely stay at schools when their beliefs and what the school stands for are matched. Knowing their background, faith, or identity is valued, making them feel more involved. Things like open and welcoming communication, treating everyone fairly, and creating an understood and respected workplace are important. On the other hand, teachers who felt like they were not on the same page as the school were confused and often felt ignored or pretended it did not matter. Fair consideration to move upwards, how much work they had to do, and getting time off, impacted the quality of work. Teachers felt empowered when they were included in important decision-making for the school and their departments (Broussard, 2007). Schools that focus on fairness, openness, and make everyone feel included are more likely to keep their great teachers around for their extended stay. Also, being able to grow and learn professionally mattered. They valued being able to keep learning and improving their skills to stay updated. Many appreciated the school supporting them to attend conferences, workshops, and training and reflected positively. Encouragement to get advanced degrees, certifications, or do research was seen as a sign that the school cared about their future. However, some were unhappy because it was not always clear how to move up in their career ladder, as the requirements were vague. Insufficient support for research or publishing papers was another factor that held them back. When schools invest in helping teachers grow, they feel more valued, confident, and dedicated. Supporting teachers' growth makes them happier at work and allows the school to maintain a strong, high-quality program.

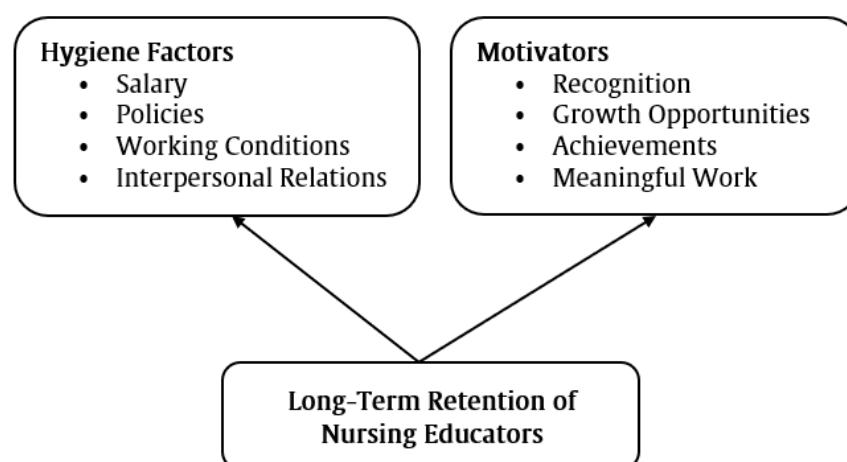


Fig.1. The visual conceptual framework based on Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study took a deep dive into the experiences of nursing teachers at a private college to understand what helps them stay in their jobs for an extended period. Since the researchers were interested in collecting the participants' in-depth ideas, opinions, and feelings, qualitative research was preferred through interviews by selecting eight teachers who each had at least five years of experience. The interviews were focused, with ample time for participants to share their personal stories. This flexible approach helped us thoroughly explore different aspects that the teachers valued to continue their work. Eight experienced nursing teachers with five years of experience at Quaid-e-Azam College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences in Karachi were selected to give their insights. We specifically identified these teachers because they could share their best insights to enable us to understand the different aspects that influenced them to continue with their jobs. We critically identified eight nurses with five years of experience in a particular hospital. These nurses were honest in opening themselves and sharing personal stories and their perspectives on what can make people persevere in nursing school in the long run.

Data Collection

To comprehend faculty retention, we conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with eight nursing educators having more than years of practice experience. Having five or more years of experience serving as educators, these educators provided valuable insights based on their long-term dedication to the college. We held these talks in quiet and private spots at the school to ensure everyone felt comfortable. Each interview took about 30 to 45 minutes, giving the instructors plenty of time to explain their thoughts, stories, and ideas on how to keep good teachers in the college for a long time. Research ethics were strictly followed, including taking consent from the participants to participate in the study and leaving between the data collection phases, if required. We made sure everyone was comfortable while recording the interviews. Our conversations with them were conducted using a digital recorder so that we could capture their narratives accurately. Observation notes were also taken regarding the body language to better understand what was being said. All the information was stored safely, following the college's research policy.

RESULTS & FINDINGS

Extracted Theme and Subthemes were extracted, which were then converted to codes and illustrative quotes

Table 1
Extracted Theme and Subthemes

Themes	Subthemes	Codes	Illustrative Quotes	Frequency
Work-Life Balance	Inflexible schedules Emotional exhaustion Lack of institutional support	Extended working hours No time for family No flexible leave options	The workload leaves me drained. I barely have time for my kids, and there's no support from management either.	7
Leadership Support	Responsive leadership Recognition and fairness Mentorship	Open communication Lack of recognition Support during crises	When our HOD listens and values our input, I feel more motivated to stay in the role.	6
Job Satisfaction	Role alignment Collegial relationships Workload imbalance	I enjoy teaching Unfair distribution Supportive colleagues	I love teaching, but when I'm given more work than others without reason, it affects my motivation.	7
Cultural Alignment	Value congruence Institutional inclusivity Fair practices	Shared values Respect for diversity Policy transparency	I feel at ease when the institution respects my religious and cultural beliefs.	5
Professional Development	Training and workshops Promotion and growth Research support	Lack of promotion policy No support for higher education Missed conference chances	I wish we had a proper promotion system or even research encouragement—it would push me to stay and grow here.	6

Results indicated that five key factors impacted whether they chose to stay or leave their job: i) how well they could juggle their personal and professional lives; ii) encouragement and backing they received from their supervisors; iii) how fulfilling they found their work; iv) whether they were best fit in line with the college's values and environment; and v) the opportunities they had to grow and learn in their profession. Many participants talked about how tough it was to juggle responsibilities outside school with the heavy workload. It sounds like not having wiggle room in their schedules and a lack of support from the university for their overall well-being are leading to burnout and unhappiness. Feelings supported by leaders were super important for keeping educators around. Educators appreciated their leaders who were approachable and easy to talk to, created an environment where everyone was heard, good work was recognized and appreciated, and guidance and support were always available. This caring leadership motivated the educators, thus impacting their retention period.

Discussion

The findings of this study are consistent with the existing literature, highlighting the multifaceted nature of nurse retention. Participants identified supportive leadership as a decisive factor influencing their decision to remain in their roles. This observation correlates with the research conducted by Rose et al. (2023), which underscores that leaders who engage in open communication, empower their staff, and provide recognition contribute significantly to enhanced job satisfaction and loyalty among nursing professionals. Furthermore, participants emphasised the importance of career advancement and professional development, reinforcing the conclusions drawn by Rose et al. (2023). These studies indicate that nurses are more likely to remain in their positions when afforded opportunities for continued education and clear pathways for professional growth.

The emotional connection to the nursing profession was also evident from the participants' responses, with many expressing that their work represents a calling rather than merely a job. This sentiment is supported by the research of Hong and Lee (2016) and Al-Harazneh et al. (2024). In addition, this study highlights the significance of value alignment and psychological safety, as noted by Chang et al. (2023). It suggests that nurses exhibit greater commitment when their personal values are congruent with their organisations. Work-life balance emerged as another critical theme, with flexible scheduling and manageable workloads identified as strategies to mitigate burnout, aligning with findings by Roth et al. (2022). Finally, participants underscored the importance of team relationships and peer support as essential components of job satisfaction, particularly for experienced nurses, corroborating the findings of Abualrub and Alghamdi (2012). In conclusion, the findings of this study suggest that fostering a supportive, growth-oriented, and emotionally fulfilling work environment is vital for the retention of nursing staff, particularly within the private sector.

CONCLUSION

Feeling clear about the job, getting along well with coworkers, and having a manageable amount of work were all important for teachers' well-being. Even though many found teaching rewarding, they got stressed when things felt unfair or they did not get enough help with their day-to-day tasks. Teachers felt much better when they knew what was expected of them, enjoyed being around their colleagues, and were not overwhelmed with tasks. Nonetheless, things got tough when they perceived injustice or lacked sufficient support in handling their daily responsibilities. It turns out that supporting teachers' ongoing learning and growth is extremely important. They stressed the need for access to training, the chance to return to school for more education, and the need for help with research projects. When the direction is blurred to move up in their careers with limited opportunities to learn and advance, it can lead to catastrophe when the employees are forced to leave their jobs. We learned that keeping good teachers around depends on their careers, the way the school is run, and their personal lives. To keep teachers happy and committed in the long term, you have got to think about all these different aspects. Keeping nurses happy and content on the job depends on many things, like the overall feel of the workplace, how content they are in their roles, how connected they feel to their work, the support they get from the

higher-ups, feeling valued for their contributions, and finding personal fulfilment. Fewer nurses are likely to leave if hospitals and clinics focus on improving these linked areas. This, in turn, leads to a more stable team, resulting in better care for patients.

Recommendations

To retain talented teachers in private nursing schools, it is important to prioritise helpful leadership, opportunities to grow professionally, and ways to show appreciation. Creating a team-oriented atmosphere at work can make instructors happy, and clearly defined roles and responsibilities can make their experience more organised and satisfying. In addition, checking on workloads regularly and providing guidance programs can help avoid exhaustion and build stronger loyalty over time. Future studies should examine retention strategies across private institutions to confirm and expand the findings. Longitudinal research that follows educators over an extended period could provide valuable insights into how retention trends develop and which factors impact retention most. Furthermore, combining qualitative interviews with quantitative data through a mixed-methods approach would offer a more holistic understanding of the retention models and the factors that predict faculty retention.

Limitations

Our study focused on just one private school, so it is tough to say if the results would be the same for different groups of people or in other places. Also, we were still gathering and looking at the data when we wrote this, so the results are preliminary and might change. Plus, because we asked people directly about their experiences, their answers might be slightly slanted or inconsistent.

Competing Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authors' Biography

- ¹ **Kiran Riaz** is a Lecturer at the Indus College of Nursing & Midwifery, Indus University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan. She completed her Masters in Business Administration from Jinnah Sindh Medical University, Karachi, Pakistan.
- ² **Irfan Ali Soomro** is a Lecturer at the Indus College of Nursing & Midwifery, Indus University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan. He completed his M.Phil. in English literature from Hamdard University, Karachi, Pakistan.
- ³ **Kashaf Kali** is a Lecturer at the Indus College of Nursing & Midwifery, Indus University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan. She completed her Bachelors in nursing from Indus University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan.
- ⁴ **Irsa Abid** is a Lecturer at the Indus College of Nursing & Midwifery, Indus University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan. She completed her Bachelors in nursing from Dow University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan.
- ⁵ **Komal Ramzan** is a Lecturer at the Indus College of Nursing & Midwifery, Indus University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan. She completed her Bachelors in nursing from Dow University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan.
- ⁶ **Kazia Ishaq** is a Lecturer at the Indus College of Nursing & Midwifery, Indus University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan. She completed her Bachelors in nursing from Dow University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan.

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