ORGANIZATIONAL FIT AND TURNOVER INTENTION AMONG UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC STAFF IN KANO STATE: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF JOB SATISFACTION

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Abstract

This study examines the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between organizational fit and turnover intention among academic staff in Kano State public universities. Drawing on job embeddedness theory, the study investigated whether organizational fit influences turnover intention directly or indirectly through job satisfaction. Using a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 341 academic staff across six institutions using goggle form quuestionnaire. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed for analysis. Results confirmed that organizational fit significantly and positively predicts job satisfaction ($\beta = .62$, $p < .001$), while job satisfaction significantly and negatively predicts turnover intention ($\beta = -.48$, $p < .001$). Mediation analysis revealed that job satisfaction partially mediates the organizational fit-turnover intention relationship, accounting for approximately 59% of the total effect (indirect effect $\beta = -.30$, $p < .001$). The model explained 38% of variance in job satisfaction and 52% of variance in turnover intention. These findings extend job embeddedness theory by clarifying the mechanisms through which organizational fit influences retention among University academic staff. The study recommends that university administrators adopt multifaceted retention strategies addressing both job satisfaction through improved working conditions and organizational fit through value-based recruitment and institutional culture management. Future research should employ longitudinal designs and examine other embeddedness dimensions.

Keywords: *Organizational Fit, Job Satisfaction, Turnover Intention, Job Embeddedness Theory, PLS-SEM.*

1.0 Introduction

Across Nigeria, experienced professors are leaving some for private universities that pay better, others for positions in the Gulf, Europe, or North America where their skills command genuine respect. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) documented 309 professor departed between the end of the 2022 strikes and October 2025 alone. In Kano specifically, the State Ministry of Higher Education found that 31% of academic staff expressed strong intentions to leave their institutions within the near future.

Scholars (Banjo et al (2023), Yusuf et al (2023).) have proposed many explanations for this crisis. Some point to salaries that have been eroded by naira devaluation to levels that make dignity impossible. Others blame deteriorating infrastructure, political interference in university governance, or the endless cycle of strikes that has made academic life unpredictable. While these factors are real and important, this paper pursues a different angle. The study focused on finding out why do some lecturers stay even when conditions are poor? And what makes others leave despite seemingly adequate provisions?

The theoretical lens the study adopt is job embeddedness theory, developed by Mitchell et al. (2001). Their insight was simple but powerful. People do not simply leave jobs because they are dissatisfied. They leave because the forces keeping them their "embeddedness" have the weakened. Mitchell and colleagues identified three dimensions of embeddedness: links (connections to people and institutions), fit (compatibility with job and community), and sacrifice (what would be lost by leaving). The focus in this study is on fit, specifically organizational fit the perceived alignment between a lecturer's values, goals, and capabilities and those of their employing institution.
Organizational fit has attracted considerable research attention. Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) demonstrated that person-organization fit predicts job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention across diverse occupational contexts. Yet the mechanism through which fit influences turnover intention remains debated. Does fit operate directly, creating psychological attachment that resists departure regardless of satisfaction? Or does it work indirectly, shaping job satisfaction which then influences turnover intention? This question of mediation is not merely academic. If satisfaction transmits fit's effect on turnover, then interventions targeting satisfaction improving working conditions, recognition, and autonomy may be effective even when institutional values cannot be quickly changed. If fit operates primarily directly, then recruitment and socialization strategies that build value alignment become paramount. The study examines these questions among academic staff in Kano State public universities. By testing whether job satisfaction mediates the organizational fit-turnover intention relationship in this context, the study aim to contribute both to theory development and to practical retention strategies.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite the obvious urgency of retaining qualified academic staff, empirical research on turnover intention among university faculty in northern Nigeria remains surprisingly thin. Esomonu (2021)

pointed out this gap, noting that most studies on Nigerian academics have focused on southern institutions, leaving the north which faces arguably more severe challenges understudied.

Existing studies have predominantly focused on organizational culture and job satisfaction as independent predictors of turnover. Banjo et al. (2023) exemplified this approach, examining how organizational culture shapes employee commitment. While valuable, such studies treat turnover predictors as direct and unmediated. Chingono (2023) argued that less attention has been paid to the mediating mechanisms through which organizational factors influence employees' departure intentions.

The specific mechanism the current study examine is organizational fit. Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, and Johnson (2005) identified organizational fit the compatibility between individuals and their work environment as a significant predictor of employee attitudes and behaviors across various industries. Their meta-analysis established fit as important, but left questions about how it works. Does fit influence turnover intention directly, by creating psychological attachment that resists departure regardless of other factors? Or does it operate indirectly, shaping job satisfaction which then influences turnover intention? This distinction is not merely academic. If fit works directly, then universities should invest heavily in recruiting staff whose values align with institutional culture. If fit works through satisfaction, then improving working conditions and recognition may be equally or more important.

Furthermore, while job satisfaction has been extensively studied as an antecedent of turnover intention Tett and Meyer (1993) established this relationship decades ago its mediating role in the organizational fit-turnover intention relationship has received insufficient empirical attention in the higher education sector. Mishra et al, (2025) recently examined this question among management institute faculty in India, but their findings may not transfer directly to Nigerian contexts given different institutional structures, labor market conditions, and cultural dynamics. This study addresses this gap by examining whether job satisfaction serves as a mechanism through which organizational fit affects academic staff's intentions to leave their institutions.

This study addresses these gaps by examining the mediating role of job satisfaction in the organizational fit-turnover intention relationship among academic staff in Kano State. The specific research questions are:

- *Does organizational fit significantly predict job satisfaction among academic staff in Kano State?*
- *Does job satisfaction significantly predict turnover intention among academic staff in Kano State?*
- *Does job satisfaction mediate the relationship between organizational fit and turnover intention?*

Based on job embeddedness theory and previous empirical findings, the study hypothesize that; organizational fit positively predicts job satisfaction *(H1), that job satisfaction negatively predicts turnover intention (H2), and that job satisfaction partially mediates the organizational fit-turnover intention relationship (H3) Job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between organizational fit and turnover intention among university academic staff in Kano State.*

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 Theoretical Foundations: Job Embeddedness Theory

Mitchell et al. (2001) developed job embeddedness theory to explain why people stay in organizations, rather than focusing exclusively on why they leave. Their critique of traditional turnover models was that these models overemphasized job dissatisfaction as the primary driver of departure, neglecting the various forces that embed individuals in their positions. The theory identifies three dimensions: links (formal and informal connections to people and activities), fit (compatibility with job and community), and sacrifice (what would be forfeited by leaving). Each dimension operates across organizational and community domains, yielding six sub-dimensions.

This study focuses on organizational fit the perceived alignment between individual and organizational characteristics. Mitchell et al. (2001) argued that fit creates psychological comfort and reduces the cognitive availability of alternatives. When individuals feel their values match organizational values, their skills match job requirements, and their goals align with institutional direction, they experience what Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) called "person-organization fit."

Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis of person-environment fit literature, finding that person-organization fit demonstrated consistent relationships with job satisfaction ($\rho = .44$), organizational commitment ($\rho = .51$), and turnover intention ($\rho = -.32$). These effect sizes suggest fit is a meaningful predictor, though not deterministic. More recent work has explored whether fit's effects are direct or mediated. Cable and DeRue (2002) found that different types of fit (person-job, person-organization and person-group) predict different outcomes, with person-organization fit particularly predicting organizational identification and citizenship behaviors.

In higher education specifically, Park (2015) examined determinants of turnover intent among international and U.S. faculty, finding that perceived fit with institutional culture significantly predicted both satisfaction and retention intentions. Banjo et al. (2023) studied organizational culture and employee commitment among academic staff, confirming that value congruence enhanced affective commitment. However, neither study explicitly tested mediation, leaving the mechanism question unresolved.

1.2.2 Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intention

Locke (1976) defined job satisfaction as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences." This definition emphasizes the evaluative and affective nature of satisfaction it is not merely a cognitive assessment but an emotional response to work experiences.

The relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention is among the most robust findings in organizational psychology. Tett and Meyer (1993) meta-analyzed 178 studies, reporting a corrected correlation of -.53 between satisfaction and turnover intention, and -.19 between satisfaction and actual turnover. They noted that intention is the strongest proximal predictor of behavior, though other factors (labor market conditions, family constraints) moderate the intention-behavior link.

More recent research has examined satisfaction's role as mediator. Mishra et al. (2025) found that job satisfaction partially mediated the relationship between various job characteristics and turnover intention among Indian management faculty, with organizational commitment serving as an additional mediator. Zhong and Zhang (2024) reported similar partial mediation among Chinese college counselors. These studies suggest satisfaction is an important transmission mechanism but not the only one.

1.2.3 The Mediation Question

Whether job satisfaction mediates organizational fit's effect on turnover intention has been addressed in limited prior research. Researchers such as Li, Na, et al. (2022), have advocated for a deeper exploration of mediating mechanisms that explain the *OF–TI* relationship. QiuTing and Razak (2025) studied Chinese ceramic enterprise employees, finding that job satisfaction partially mediated person-environment fit's effect on turnover intention, with variance accounted for (VAF) of 56.3%. Djaganata and Pusparini (2024) examined startup company employees in Indonesia, reporting full mediation of organizational fit effects through satisfaction. These contradictory findings partial versus full mediation may reflect contextual differences, measurement variations, or sample characteristics.

In Nigerian higher education, Esomonu (2021) found that organizational climate significantly influenced job satisfaction among academic staff in private universities, but did not test turnover outcomes. Chingono (2023) investigated job embeddedness and turnover intention among South African academics, but focused on work engagement rather than satisfaction as mediator. No study to the researcher's knowledge has tested the organizational fit-job satisfaction-turnover intention mediation chain among Nigerian academic staff.

This literature review leads us to expect that organizational fit will positively predict job satisfaction, that satisfaction will negatively predict turnover intention, and that satisfaction will partially mediate fit's effect on turnover. Partial rather than full mediation is anticipated because job embeddedness theory proposes direct effects of fit on embeddedness and retention, independent of affective responses.

Fig. 1 Conceptual Model



Source: Researcher 2026.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, which is appropriate for testing theoretically derived hypotheses about relationships among variables at a single point in time. The study

mitigated common method bias through procedural remedies including anonymous responding, varying scale anchors, and separating measurement of predictor and criterion variables within the questionnaire.

1.3.2 Population and Sample

The total population of academic staff across these institutions was approximately 3,291 at the time of data collection. The study determined sample size using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970)

Table 1. *Population Frame and Sampling Frame*

S/No.	Institution	Population Frame	Sampling Frame
1.	Bayero University, Kano	1714	180 (52%)
2.	Nigerian Police Academy, Wudil	214	22(7%)
3.	Yusuf Maitama Sule Federal University of Education, Kano	526	55 (16%)
4.	Federal University of Science and Technology, Kabo	118	12 (4%)
5.	Norththe studyst University, Kano	243	25 (7%)
6.	Aliko Dangote University of Science and Technology, Wudil	476	49 (14%)
TOTAL		**3291**	**341**

Source: Researcher, 2026.

1.3.3 Measures

Organizational fit was measured using six items adapted from Mitchell et al. (2001) and Cable and DeRue (2002) and Job satisfaction was measured using three items from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann et al., 1983). Turnover intention was measured using four items adapted from Tett and Meyer (1993).

1.3.4 Technique of Data Analysis

The study used Smart PLS 4.0 for analysis, following Hair et al.'s (2022) guidelines. PLS-SEM was chosen because it handles complex models with multiple constructs, does not require multivariate normality, and is appropriate for prediction-oriented research. The study assessed measurement model quality through composite reliability (CR > .70), average variance extracted (AVE > .50), and discriminant validity (HTMT < .85). Structural model evaluation examined path coefficients, significance (bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples), coefficient of determination (R^2), and effect sizes (f^2). Mediation was tested using bias-corrected confidence intervals.

1.4 Findings

1.4.1. Measurement Model Assessment

Table 2 presents convergent validity and reliability results. All factor loadings exceeded .70, ranging from .734 to .862. Composite reliability values were .875 (organizational fit), .891 (job satisfaction), and .906 (turnover intention), all well above the .70 threshold. AVE values were .612, .623, and .689 respectively, exceeding the .50 criterion. These results indicate that the measures reliably capture their intended constructs.

Table 2. Convergent Validity and Reliability

Construct	Indicator	Loading	CR	AVE
Organizational Fit	OF1	.745	.875	.612
	OF2	.782		
	OF3	.801		
	OF4	.768		
	OF5	.795		
	OF6	.812		
	OF7	.734		
	OF8	.776		

Construct	Indicator	Loading	CR	AVE
	OF9	.789		
Job Satisfaction	JS1	.856	.891	.623
	JS2	.843		
	JS3	.823		
Turnover Intention	TI1	.845	.906	.689
	TI2	.862		
	TI3	.823		
	TI4	.801		

Source: Researcher, 2026.

Discriminant validity was confirmed using the HTMT criterion. All HTMT values were below .85, ranging from .423 to .728, indicating that the study constructs are empirically distinct.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

	1	2	3
1. Organizational Fit			
2. Job Satisfaction	.728		
3. Turnover Intention	.512	.423	

1.4.2 Structural Model Results

The structural model explained 38% of variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = .38$) and 52% of variance in turnover intention ($R^2 = .52$), indicating moderate to substantial predictive power. Table 3 presents direct effect results. Organizational fit significantly predicted job satisfaction ($\beta = .62$, $t = 9.84$, $p < .001$), supporting H1. Job satisfaction significantly and negatively predicted turnover intention ($\beta = -.48$, $t = 7.15$, $p < .001$), supporting H2. Organizational fit also demonstrated a significant direct negative effect on turnover intention ($\beta = -.21$, $t = 3.42$, $p < .01$).

Table 4. Direct Effect

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	SE	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	OF → JS	.62	.063	9.84***	<.001	Supported
H2	JS → TI	-.48	.067	7.15***	<.001	Supported

Source: Researcher, 2026.

1.4.3 Mediation Analysis

Table 4 presents mediation results. The indirect effect of organizational fit on turnover intention through job satisfaction was negative and significant (β = -.30, t = 6.02, p < .001; 95% CI: -.399 to -.208). Since the confidence interval excludes zero, mediation is established. The direct effect remained significant after including the mediator (β = -.21, p < .01), indicating partial rather than full mediation. The variance accounted for (VAF) was 58.8% (indirect effect -.30 divided by total effect -.51), meaning approximately 59% of organizational fit's total effect on turnover intention operates through job satisfaction.

Table. 5 Mediation Effect

Path	β	SE	t-value	p-value	95% CI
Direct Effect (OF → TI)	-.21	.061	3.42	<.01	-.334 to -.086
Indirect Effect (OF → JS → TI)	-.30	.050	6.02	<.001	-.399 to -.208
Total Effect (OF → TI)	-.51	.055	9.35	<.001	-.620 to -.406

Source: Researcher 2026.

1.5 Discussion

The study findings confirm that organizational fit matters for retention among Kano's academic staff, and that much of its influence flows through job satisfaction. The strong positive relationship between fit and satisfaction (β = .62) suggests that when lecturers perceive alignment between their personal values and institutional values, when they feel their skills match job requirements,

and when they sense compatibility with organizational culture, they experience genuine contentment with their work. This is not surprising, but its magnitude is noteworthy. Fit alone explains over one-third of satisfaction variance, indicating that value alignment is not merely a peripheral concern but central to how academics evaluate their jobs.

The satisfaction-turnover link ($\beta = -.48$) reaffirms decades of research while grounding it in a specific Nigerian context. Satisfied lecturers are less likely to contemplate departure. Yet satisfaction is not deterministic 52% of turnover intention variance remains unexplained, pointing to other influences including economic necessity, family pressures, alternative opportunities, and non-satisfaction aspects of embeddedness (links, sacrifice).

The study's core contribution lies in the mediation finding. That 59% of fit's effect transmits through satisfaction while 41% operates directly has important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it supports job embeddedness theory's proposition that fit influences retention through multiple pathways, not solely affective ones. The direct effect may reflect cognitive processes perceived fit reducing the subjective probability of finding superior alternatives or social processes fit enhancing identification that resists turnover independent of momentary satisfaction. Practically, it means administrators cannot rely exclusively on satisfaction-enhancing interventions. While improving conditions, recognition, and autonomy will strengthen retention, building genuine value alignment through recruitment, socialization, and culture management remains essential.

Comparing this study results with prior research reveals both convergence and divergence. QiuTing and Razak (2025) reported 56.3% VAF in Chinese ceramic enterprises remarkably close to the study 58.8% despite vastly different contexts. This suggests the fit-satisfaction-turnover chain may operate similarly across cultures and sectors, supporting job embeddedness theory's generalizability. However, Djaganata and Pusparini (2024) found full mediation among Indonesian startup employees. The discrepancy may reflect sector differences startups may lack the institutional depth to create direct fit effects or measurement variations. The study partial mediation finding for established universities aligns better with Mitchell et al.'s (2001) original formulation.

Several limitations constrain the conclusions. Cross-sectional design prevents causal inference; reverse causality (turnover intention reducing perceived fit) or reciprocal effects are possible. Common method variance, despite the study procedural remedies, may inflate relationships. The Kano-specific sample limits generalizability to other Nigerian regions or sectors. Future research

should employ longitudinal designs, experimental interventions, and multi-source data to strengthen inference.

1.6 Conclusion

This study set out to understand how organizational fit influences turnover intention among academic staff in Kano State's universities, and whether job satisfaction transmits this influence. The findings, based on survey data from 341 academics analyzed through PLS-SEM, provide clear answers. Organizational fit strongly predicts job satisfaction. Job satisfaction significantly reduces turnover intention. And job satisfaction partially mediates fit's effect on turnover, accounting for approximately 59% of the total effect while leaving a meaningful direct effect.

These results extend job embeddedness theory by clarifying its mechanisms in a developing country higher education context. They confirm that fit is not merely a distal antecedent but operates through both affective and non-affective pathways. For Kano's universities, the message is that retention strategies must be multifaceted addressing satisfaction through working conditions while simultaneously building value alignment through recruitment and culture. The alternative—continuing hemorrhage of academic talent threatens not merely institutional rankings but the educational futures of millions of young Nigerians.

1.7 Recommendations

Based on the findings, this study recommend that, university administrators in Kano State should adopt a dual-pathway retention strategy that actively targets both organizational fit and job satisfaction. First, management must integrate value-alignment and realistic job previews into recruitment and onboarding protocols to capitalize on the direct effect of fit on retention ($\beta=-.21$). Second, because job satisfaction mediates a substantial 58.8% of fit's total impact on turnover intention, universities must safeguard the baseline contentment of lecturers by improving physical working conditions, expanding research autonomy, and offering robust institutional support to curb high turnover tendencies ($\beta=-.48$).

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