EPH-International Journal of Business & Management Science

EXAMINING THE INFLUENCE OF CAREER PROGRESSION AND WORKPLACE SATISFACTION ON EMPLOYEE ATTRITION

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Article History
Received: *2026-02-28*
Revised: *2026-05-25*
Accepted: *2026-08-20*
Published: *2026-10-31*

Abstract
Employee attrition presents persistent challenges for workforce planning and the continuity of organizational capabilities. This study examined associations between career progression indicators, workplace satisfaction, and employee attrition using 1,470 fictional employee records from an IBM human resource analytics dataset. Attrition was coded as a binary outcome, and career characteristics, satisfaction ratings, and organizational covariates were examined through descriptive comparisons, chi-square tests, and multivariable logistic regression. Of the employees, 237 (16.12%) were classified as having left. Attrition varied across job levels and satisfaction ratings. In the adjusted model, longer time since the last promotion was associated with greater attrition odds (adjusted odds ratio [aOR] 1.137, 95% CI 1.060–1.221), whereas higher job satisfaction (aOR 0.726, 95% CI 0.633–0.832) and environment satisfaction (aOR 0.699, 95% CI 0.607–0.805) were associated with lower odds. Overtime showed a pronounced positive association with attrition (aOR 4.726, 95% CI 3.446–6.482). Cross-validated discrimination was moderate (area under the curve 0.774). These findings illustrate the potential value of jointly examining career and satisfaction indicators for employee retention analytics. However, the synthetic, cross-sectional data prohibit causal interpretation or direct generalization to real organizations.

Keywords: *Career Progression, Workplace Satisfaction, Employee Attrition, Human Resource Management, Employee Retention*

Vol. 12 Issue 10 (October, 2026)
ISSN: 2208-2190 Pages- 139-148
DOI: https://doi.org/10.69980/qg8rwy19

1. Introduction

Employee turnover is a major issue in HRM, as it can result in a loss of continuity, higher replacement expenses, and a loss of organizational knowledge. The intersections of perceptions of employment quality and turnover intention are demonstrated in research about young employees (Chen et al., 2023). Therefore, a retention analysis is most meaningful when it separates an employee's attributes from what he or she does at work. Assumptions of dissatisfaction with each student exiting should not be made, but rather a thorough study should be conducted to look at multiple potential explanatory factors.

A very significant aspect of work experience is career progression. Transitions with promotions, seniority, professional development and/or an opportunity to do more challenging work can impact how employees perceive their future in an organization. Career satisfaction was also found to be related with turnover intentions, which indicates the importance of attachment to their career path (Nae & Choi, 2022). Even if current working conditions are acceptable, workers who see little opportunity for growth might turn to other jobs. This relationship can be further changed by aspirations and formal career-management practices (Wang et al., 2024). The relationship between competence development and organizational attachment and intention to leave has also been explored (Moreira et al., 2024).

However, the title of a person's job does not necessarily indicate career progress. Occupational level, years in a job, time since promotion, and recent training are all various facets of career history and opportunity. The studies on career and job satisfaction have affirmed the importance of context-dependency in interpreting these indicators, as it is not necessarily equated with subjective perceptions (Boamah et al., 2023). Therefore, available career variables are considered as proxies in the present analysis, rather than as good indicators of perceived career advancement.

The addition of workplace satisfaction adds a unique but possible complementary explanation for employee turnover. Decisions to stay can be related to satisfaction with job tasks, work environment, colleagues, and the work–life balance. A recent synthesis reports on the various factors that are common to job satisfaction and turnover intention (Jogi et al., 2025). Furthermore, family support is found to be pertinent to the association among satisfaction and planned exit (Le et al., 2023). Based on these findings, it is suggested that employee experiences are multidimensional and that use of the single satisfaction rating might mask the impact of specific workplace conditions.

There could be differences in the relationship between the two across occupations and institutional settings. The results found in the construction industry are relevant to the job satisfaction and turnover intention in challenging work environments (Zhang et al., 2024). A bibliometric review linked satisfaction and intended quitting to work–family conflict in a broader context of the work environment (Mumu et al., 2021). Apart from satisfaction in a narrow sense, meaningful work and happiness in the workplace have been studied along with the intention to quit (Charles-Leija et al., 2023). The perspectives suggest that satisfaction measures should be considered in conjunction with career progression indicators and employment conditions and not as a stand-alone predictor.

One respondent can report that they want to quit and to quit without ever recording the respondent's reason for quitting, while another attrition record can record the category of the respondent's departure, but it does not necessarily capture the reason for the departure. Educators have been studied with regards to work-related enrichment and intentions of leaving (Annamalai, 2022), and age-related work characteristics and turnover intentions have been studied longitudinally (Christensen & Knardahl, 2022). Therefore, the current study is based on the recorded binary attrition status and does not attempt to consider the results as direct evidence of psychological intention.

Experience of employees can be further shaped by work–life arrangements. Flexible working has been examined regarding satisfaction and turnover intentions (Berber et al., 2022); and work–family policies have also been found to be related to turnover intentions (Medina-Garrido et al., 2021). More recent studies have explored the mediating effects between job satisfaction, life satisfaction and the relationship between work–family conflict (Poulose & Sharma, 2024). There is a need for an integrated statistical framework that will evaluate simultaneous assessment of career, satisfaction, and employment related characteristics.

This study helps to fill in that analytical void by examining a uniform set of employee level indicators and a binary outcome of attrition. The fictional and cross-sectional nature of the records limits conclusions to patterns in this data set and to evidence of intervention effects in the real world.

Research objectives:

- To examine associations between career progression indicators and recorded employee attrition after considering relevant organizational characteristics.

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- To evaluate relationships between workplace satisfaction dimensions and employee attrition within an adjusted explanatory framework.
- To identify prominent attrition-related indicators and discuss their implications for evidence-informed employee retention planning.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

A quantitative and cross-sectional explanatory design was used to estimate the association between the career progression indicators, workplace satisfaction ratings and employee attrition. The unit of observation was the employee. The attrition was considered rather as an observed binary variable, not as a turnover intention. Descriptive comparisons were followed by an adjusted logistic regression to explain differences that are not just descriptive but association that is adjusted for selected employee and organizational characteristics. The data was not repeated or exposure assigned, making it not possible to do longitudinal or causal analysis.

2.2. Data Source and Study Population

The analysis is carried out using the data set of IBM HR Analytics Employee Attrition & Performance, which is available in Kaggle (pavansubhasht, 2017). A single file was uploaded that contained 1470 rows and 35 source variables and was comma separated. Demographic characteristics, employment tenure, job level, promotion time, satisfaction ratings, income and attrition status was included in the records. The records were not real employees from a real company, but were a simulated organizational workforce that is, fictional. In the descriptive analysis, all the records were kept, since there were no missing values in the selected fields.

2.3. Variables and Operational Definitions

The dependent variable was recoded as 1 (Yes) for Attrition and 0 (No) for the remaining employees. To serve as a proxy for career, the following variables were recoded: JobLevel (1 = Yes and 0 = No); YearsSinceLastPromotion (1 = Yes and 0 = No); and TrainingTimesLastYear (1 = Yes and 0 = No). Satisfaction dimensions included: JobSatisfaction, EnvironmentSatisfaction, RelationshipSatisfaction, WorkLifeBalance, which were all ordinal four-point scales. In the adjusted model, the variables Age, YearsAtCompany, MonthlyIncome and OverTime were added as control variables. Rating and job level were coded as ordered numerical variables, and thus the estimated odds ratios were for a one-unit change in a variable under a linear log-odds assumption. These variables were used as proxies instead of being validated constructs of Latent variables.

2.4. Data Preparation and Quality Assessment

Variable names, ranges of values, missing values, duplicated rows and outcome categories were checked in the CSV file that was simply extracted from the provided archive. This original file did not have any empty cells or duplicate complete records. Target Label was consistently coded and OverTime was changed to a binary indicator. Predictors did not include constant source fields. The source data were not modified and an explicit list of predictors was used in all analyses. Data, descriptive summaries, regression estimates and plotted values were produced using a reproducible python code for transparency. Data inspection was also carried out to ensure that the data was not lost during the data transformation process. EmployeeNumber was used as an identifier, and EmployeeCount, StandardHours, and Over18 had little variation within the files to be of any use. The numbers of each category were verified with the total number of the sample to avoid the omission of the category in the tables.

2.5. Descriptive and Comparative Analyses

Frequencies / percentages were used for categorical variables and means / standard deviations were used for continuous variables. A Mann–Whitney U test was used to compare selected continuous employee characteristics between retained and attrited employees and a Pearson chi-square test was used to compare categorical indicators. The percentages of attrition were calculated for each job level, promotion interval, training and satisfaction group. The chi-square results were overall comparisons of all categories of a variable – not significance tests for each category shown. The data were analyzed with caution if the number of small subgroups was low, particularly for longer promotion intervals.

2.6. Multivariable Logistic Regression

The single prespecified multivariable logistic regression included the following variables: JobLevel, YearsSinceLastPromotion, TrainingTimesLastYear, four satisfaction ratings, Age, YearsAtCompany, MonthlyIncome and OverTime. There were 11 explanatory terms and an intercept in the model. Exponentiation of the adjusted coefficients was used to get odds ratios, with their corresponding Wald 95% confidence intervals and 2-sided p-values. The specification was designed to be minimal compared to the 237 attrition events recorded, but there were still correlations that could be made between the different levels of seniority,

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experience and income. P-values < .05 were considered as an indication of statistical association and not necessarily as a substantial or cause-effect relationship. This interpretation was under the assumption that all the other variables in the model were included and that the numeric predictors were linear. The measure of monthly income was in the original units so the per-unit odds ratio was close to one and should be interpreted with caution. Coefficients were not interpreted as measures of the likelihood that a variable will affect the likelihood that an employee will leave a company if they changed.

2.7. Model Assessment and Reproducibility

A stratified five-fold cross validation was performed on a standardized logistic regression specification for out-of-fold performance, with the same predictors. To prevent leakage of information, scaling was done within each training fold. The held-out folds were predicted and the resulting prediction for each fold was combined to obtain receiver operating characteristic (ROC) area under the curve (AUC) and Brier score. The in-sample McFadden pseudo-R^2 was also reported as a descriptive measure of the model fit and not as a proportion of variance explained. The same code was used to export statistical graphics and tables, to facilitate independent replication. A random seed of 42 was used for the cross-validation. The held-out prediction vector consisted of one prediction for each employee and the AUC was calculated from these out-of-fold prediction probabilities. All graphics were exported in PNG format, all numerical tabulations were written in CSV and in EXCEL format so that they can be easily verified and integrated in the manuscript.

3. Results

3.1. Employee Characteristics and Attrition

Of the 1,470 employee records, 1,233 (83.88%) were classified as retained and 237 (16.12%) as attrited. Selected demographic and employment characteristics by outcome status are included in Table 1. The prespecified group-comparison tests were used to compare differences in age, organizational tenure, income, and overtime. Figure 1 illustrates the outcome imbalance, which should be considered when interpreting the discrimination and probability accuracy of the model. These observations are the internal distribution of the simulated workforce, and are not an attrition rate of population.

Table 1. Employee characteristics by attrition status

Characteristic	Retained (n=1233)	Attrited (n=237)	Group p-value
Age	37.56 (8.89)	33.61 (9.69)	0.000
MonthlyIncome	6832.74 (4818.21)	4787.09 (3640.21)	0.000
YearsAtCompany	7.37 (6.10)	5.13 (5.95)	0.000
Gender: Female	501 (40.6%)	87 (36.7%)	0.291
Gender: Male	732 (59.4%)	150 (63.3%)	0.291
Department: Human Resources	51 (4.1%)	12 (5.1%)	0.005
Department: Research & Development	828 (67.2%)	133 (56.1%)	0.005
Department: Sales	354 (28.7%)	92 (38.8%)	0.005
OverTime: No	944 (76.6%)	110 (46.4%)	0.000
OverTime: Yes	289 (23.4%)	127 (53.6%)	0.000

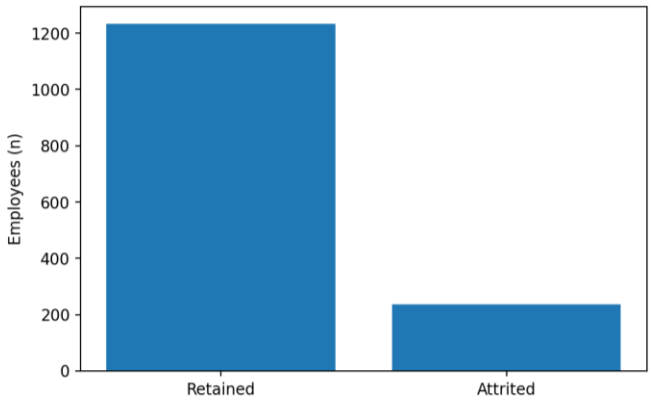

Figure 1. Distribution of retained and attrited employee records

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3.2. Career Progression and Attrition

Attrition varied substantially across current job levels: 26.3% at Level 1, 9.7% at Level 2, 14.7% at Level 3, 4.7% at Level 4, and 7.2% at Level 5. The overall association with job level was statistically significant (chi-square $p < .001$). The comparison across the categories of training frequency was also significant ($p = .019$) but the overall comparison across the years-since-promotion categories was not ($p = .112$). The full category counts are provided in Table 2, and the job level and promotion interval attrition rates are shown in Figure 2. There were very small numbers of employees in some of the longer promotion intervals, which caused the promotion rates in these intervals to be unstable.

Table 2. Career progression indicators and attrition

Indicator	Category	Employees n	Attrited n	Attrition rate (%)	Overall chi-square p
JobLevel	1	543	143	26.3	0.000
JobLevel	2	534	52	9.7	0.000
JobLevel	3	218	32	14.7	0.000
JobLevel	4	106	5	4.7	0.000
JobLevel	5	69	5	7.2	0.000
YearsSinceLastPromotion	0	581	110	18.9	0.112
YearsSinceLastPromotion	1	357	49	13.7	0.112
YearsSinceLastPromotion	2	159	27	17.0	0.112
YearsSinceLastPromotion	3	52	9	17.3	0.112
YearsSinceLastPromotion	4	61	5	8.2	0.112
YearsSinceLastPromotion	5	45	2	4.4	0.112
YearsSinceLastPromotion	6	32	6	18.8	0.112
YearsSinceLastPromotion	7	76	16	21.1	0.112
YearsSinceLastPromotion	8	18	0	0.0	0.112
YearsSinceLastPromotion	9	17	4	23.5	0.112
YearsSinceLastPromotion	10	6	1	16.7	0.112
YearsSinceLastPromotion	11	24	2	8.3	0.112
YearsSinceLastPromotion	12	10	0	0.0	0.112
YearsSinceLastPromotion	13	10	2	20.0	0.112
YearsSinceLastPromotion	14	9	1	11.1	0.112
YearsSinceLastPromotion	15	13	3	23.1	0.112
TrainingTimesLastYear	0	54	15	27.8	0.019
TrainingTimesLastYear	1	71	9	12.7	0.019
TrainingTimesLastYear	2	547	98	17.9	0.019
TrainingTimesLastYear	3	491	69	14.1	0.019
TrainingTimesLastYear	4	123	26	21.1	0.019
TrainingTimesLastYear	5	119	14	11.8	0.019
TrainingTimesLastYear	6	65	6	9.2	0.019

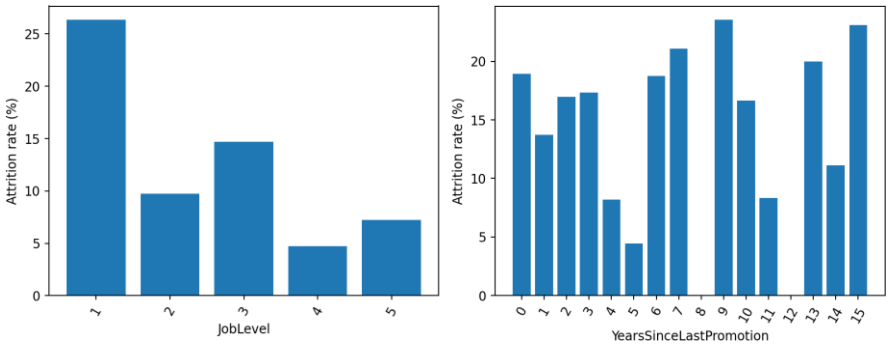

Figure 2. Attrition rates by job level and years since promotion

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3.3. Workplace Satisfaction and Attrition

Job satisfaction was related to attrition in the unadjusted categorical analysis ($p < .001$). The highest level of job satisfaction (11.3%) was associated with the lowest level of attrition (22.8%). Overall associations with environment satisfaction ($p < .001$) and work–life balance ($p < .001$) were also found. Unadjusted relationship satisfaction was not significant at the conventional level ($p = .155$). The number in each group and the percentage of attrition are shown in Table 3. These associations varied across the four rating scales and not all series was monotonic, as can be seen from Figure 3.

Table 3. Workplace satisfaction indicators and attrition

Indicator	Category	Employees n	Attrited n	Attrition rate (%)	Overall chi-square p
JobSatisfaction	1	289	66	22.8	0.001
JobSatisfaction	2	280	46	16.4	0.001
JobSatisfaction	3	442	73	16.5	0.001
JobSatisfaction	4	459	52	11.3	0.001
EnvironmentSatisfaction	1	284	72	25.4	0.000
EnvironmentSatisfaction	2	287	43	15.0	0.000
EnvironmentSatisfaction	3	453	62	13.7	0.000
EnvironmentSatisfaction	4	446	60	13.5	0.000
RelationshipSatisfaction	1	276	57	20.7	0.155
RelationshipSatisfaction	2	303	45	14.9	0.155
RelationshipSatisfaction	3	459	71	15.5	0.155
RelationshipSatisfaction	4	432	64	14.8	0.155
WorkLifeBalance	1	80	25	31.2	0.001
WorkLifeBalance	2	344	58	16.9	0.001
WorkLifeBalance	3	893	127	14.2	0.001
WorkLifeBalance	4	153	27	17.6	0.001

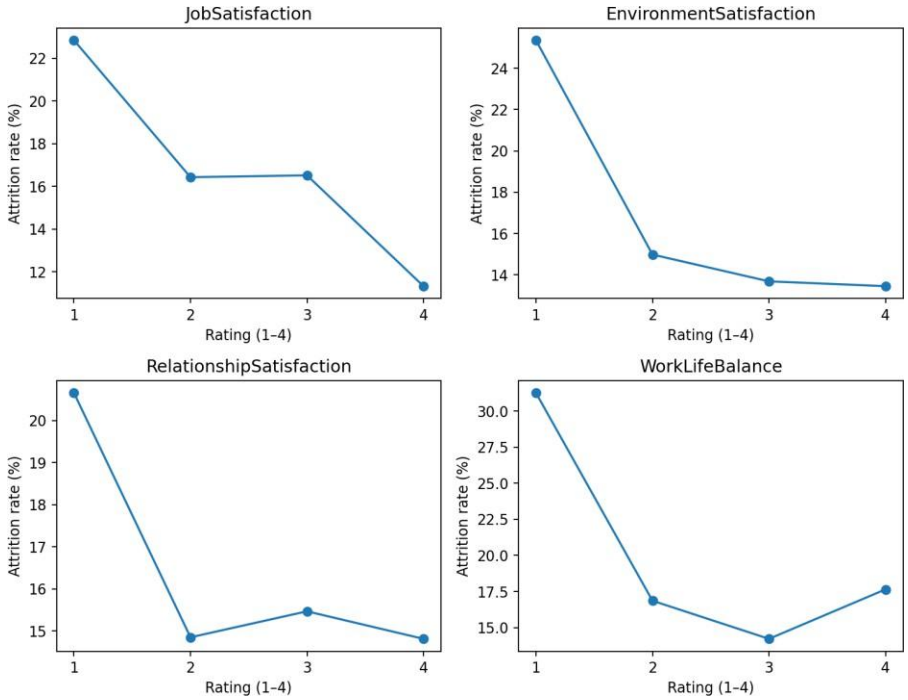

Figure 3. Attrition rates across four satisfaction measures

3.4. Adjusted Relationships and Model Assessment

For every year since last promotion, the odds of attrition increased (aOR 1.137, 95% CI 1.060 to 1.221; $p < .001$) in the combined logistic model. Job satisfaction (aOR 0.726, 95% CI 0.633–0.832) and environment

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satisfaction (aOR 0.699, 95% CI 0.607–0.805) were inversely associated with attrition. Smaller negative associations occurred between relationship satisfaction (aOR 0.859; p = .033) and work–life balance (aOR 0.785; p = .024). Overtime was associated with markedly higher odds (aOR 4.726, 95% CI 3.446–6.482). Bivariate but not multivariable findings showed that job level was not significant after adjustment (p = .633). These estimates have been adjusted and reported in Table 4 and Figure 4. Five-fold out of fold AUC was 0.774, Brier score was 0.111 and in-sample McFadden pseudo-R^2 was 0.170.

Table 4. Adjusted logistic regression estimates

Predictor	Adjusted OR	CI lower	CI upper	p-value
JobLevel	0.892	0.558	1.426	0.633
YearsSinceLastPromotion	1.137	1.059	1.221	0.000
TrainingTimesLastYear	0.892	0.789	1.008	0.066
JobSatisfaction	0.725	0.633	0.832	0.000
EnvironmentSatisfaction	0.699	0.607	0.805	0.000
RelationshipSatisfaction	0.859	0.747	0.987	0.032
WorkLifeBalance	0.785	0.636	0.969	0.024
Age	0.964	0.945	0.984	0.000
YearsAtCompany	0.920	0.877	0.966	0.001
MonthlyIncome	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.302
OverTime_Yes	4.726	3.446	6.482	0.000

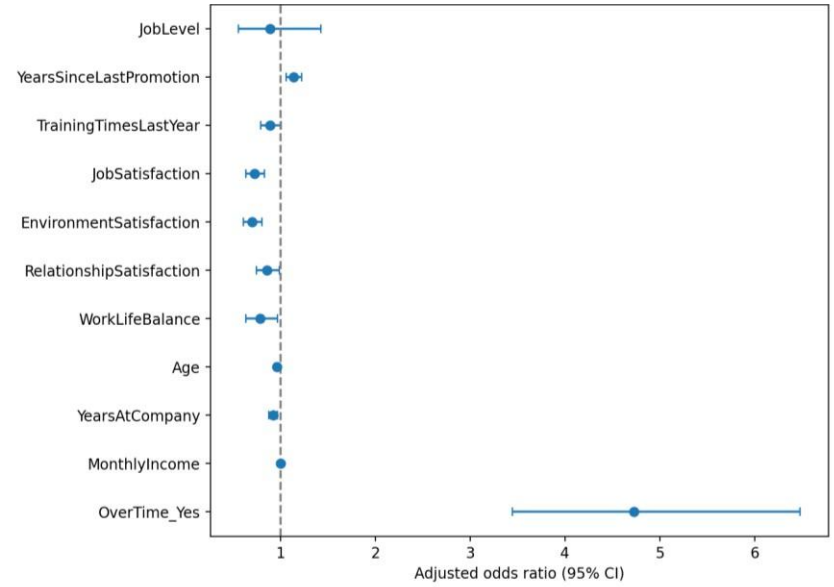

Figure 4. Adjusted odds ratios with 95% confidence intervals

4. Discussion

Analysis revealed relationships between recorded employee resignations and career related measures and satisfaction measures. Adjusted analysis showed time since the last promotion was still associated positively with attrition, while multiple satisfaction measures were inversely associated with attrition. These patterns can be used as a starting point in discussing how various human resource dimensions could be assessed as a group, but not as observable relationships that explain any individual decision.

Job level was seen to be a strong unadjusted predictor of attrition but was not independently significant when the aforementioned controls were added. Job embeddedness and turnover intentions also provide an alternative view of the relevance of employees' relationships with their job and organizations for retention (Nguyen et al., 2023). However, the analysis of job level should be kept to a minimum as no actual job changes between levels are recorded in the data set.

The positive adjusted association for time since promotion is compatible with the potential that more time since promotion is associated with less favorable employee retention outcomes. However, at the same time the

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categorical chi-square test was not significant when its results were not adjusted, which suggests that model specification and possible confounding are important. Previous studies on psychological and formal employment contracts suggest that turnover intentions could be influenced by expectations of employment relationships (Manolopoulos et al., 2022). Such mechanisms are not necessarily mechanisms tested here but are plausible explanations of the context.

Four different ratings were used to represent workplace satisfaction. Both job and environmental satisfaction showed stable adjusted negative relationships with turnover. Satisfaction and retention intention data for alternatively certified teachers, as well, show the importance of context-specific work experiences (Richter et al., 2022). The analysis is suggestive of patterns of association and not exhaustive causal explanations.

The example of relationship satisfaction is used to demonstrate that determining conclusions should not rely solely on bivariate significance tests. The category level association did not meet the typical score; however, the numerical rating did demonstrate some adjusted association. This difference could be due to confounding, suppression, the ordinal specification used in linear models, or chance; more flexible models would be helpful to distinguish these possibilities. The findings indicated that other interpersonal mechanisms not directly captured in this data set are suggested through research findings that focus on organizational politics, resilience, and person–job fit (Obeng & Atan, 2024). Thus, the result on relationship satisfaction is worthy of replication prior to making it into a specific managerial intervention.

Of the modeled predictors, overtime had the highest adjusted odds ratio, although the binary coding does not necessarily reflect the hours worked, intensity of work, or autonomy of the schedule. Another study that employed machine learning to forecast employee attrition also emphasizes the importance of integrating a variety of HR attributes (Taner et al., 2024). Decisions on retention should therefore be based on interpretability and awareness of the context.

The moderate out-of-fold AUC, equal to 0.774, suggested moderate discrimination between the attrited and retained records, and the Brier score, equal to 0.111, summarized the mean squared prediction error. In the context of organizational decision support, data-driven studies reveal the significance of analytical modeling for attrition.Data-driven studies demonstrate the relevance of analytical modeling for attrition in the context of organizational decision support (Nandal et al., 2024). There are other methodological comparisons in the form of work looking at early warning signs using machine learning (Borse et al., 2024). The present study, on the other hand, focused on a transparent regression model to estimate adjusted associations and make the relationships directly interpretable.

These are areas of evaluation that are considered to be effective interventions if they are developed, but they are not interventions that are currently validated based on the data. Meta-analytical findings on turnover intention among nurses indicate that institutional contexts and multiple factors affect employees' turnover intention (Kim & Kim, 2021). A systematic review in elder care also suggests the complexity of workforce retention (Jurij et al., 2023). Statististical patterns or profiles found in the synthetic sample should not be transferred to operational policy without being validated at the local level because of the differences between sectors.

Some caveats to consider when interpreting. Records were built for analytical purposes and were not from an actual workforce, and there was no information on the organisation or sampling design, or causes of departure. The cross-sectional dataset was not designed to measure employees before and after promotion, therefore no causal pathways and order of events could be determined. Indirect measures were used for advancement in career and the ordinal numerical predictor dimensions of satisfaction were not psychometrically validated. These are pivotal restrictions in the responsible reporting of the findings.

Further research is needed to test the same relationships with true longitudinal personnel data and validated questionnaires, preferably considering voluntary versus involuntary separations. The link between intrinsic satisfaction and value congruence with turnover intentions also further warrants the need for more extensive measurement of employee–organization fit (Rice et al., 2025). The results reported here add a repeatable example of the way that career and workplace aspects can be analyzed and integrated, while maintaining the separateness of prediction, association, and causal inference.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the joint associations of career progression indicators and workplace satisfaction with employee attrition in a simulated workforce comprising 1,470 records. There were 237 employees who were attributed as attrited. Descriptive results showed differential rates of attrition by job level, training category, and on a number of satisfaction ratings. Selected employee and organizational characteristics were adjusted with longer time since last promotion being associated with greater odds of attrition and job satisfaction,

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environmental satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and work–life balance being associated with lesser odds of attrition. There was a significant positive correlation between overtime. Notably, the level of employment in the combined model was not independently associated, thus showing why the description and adjusted results should not be compared. The resulting moderate CV discrimination suggested that the chosen indicators had some value in discriminating the synthetic attrition outcome, but were not reliable in real workplaces. The analysis suggests that career development processes, employee experience, and working arrangements are reasonable facilitators for organizational monitoring and future research for human resource management. These implications should be tested with actual employee data and then designed studies for this purpose and only then should they be turned into retention programs. The fictional origin of the data, the cross-sectional nature of the data and indirect measures of progression preclude causal or population-level generalization. In general, the results suggest a holistic and transparent perspective on analysing employee turnover and confirm the importance of separating career opportunities, satisfaction experiences and employment situations in analytical workforce planning.

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