

Understanding Teacher Retention through the Lens of Job Satisfaction: An Empirical Study of Organizational and Human Resource Management in Chinese Universities

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Abstract

This study investigates the determinants of teacher retention in public universities in Sichuan Province, China, emphasizing the mediating role of job satisfaction between organizational management (OM) and human resource management (HRM) on job retention (JR). The research aims to (1) identify the key factors influencing the retention of non-established teachers and (2) propose effective strategies to enhance their job stability. A quantitative approach was applied using a questionnaire survey administered to 1,400 teachers from 27 public universities, yielding 1,335 valid responses (95% response rate). Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results demonstrate that both OM ($\beta = 0.031$, $p < 0.001$) and HRM ($\beta = 0.029$, $p < 0.001$) significantly and positively affect JR, while job satisfaction fully mediates these relationships ($\beta = 0.030$, $p < 0.001$). The explanatory power of the model was moderate, with $R^2 = 0.630$ for job satisfaction and $R^2 = 0.545$ for job retention, indicating that the proposed model accounts for over 50% of the variance in both variables. Descriptive statistics further revealed that 50.3% of respondents were non-established teachers, and 61.5% were female, highlighting a balanced and diverse sample. The findings indicate that well-structured OM and HRM practices, such as transparent promotion systems, career development opportunities, and inclusive institutional participation, substantially enhance teacher satisfaction and retention. This study's novelty lies in its integrated model combining OM, HRM, and job satisfaction to explain teacher retention, a topic rarely explored in the context of Chinese public universities. The research contributes to the literature by offering empirical evidence and actionable recommendations for policymakers and administrators to strengthen human resource strategies and ensure the long-term stability of university faculty.

Keywords: Organizational Management, Human Resource Management, Job Satisfaction, Job Retention

1. Introduction

Public universities in Sichuan Province play a vital role in promoting educational equity, research innovation, and regional development in China. Supported by government funding and guided by state policies, these institutions are central to advancing national educational goals while contributing to socioeconomic progress through talent cultivation and technological development [1]. As higher education reform in China intensifies, universities are expected to maintain high academic standards and ensure the sustainability of their teaching workforce. However, the retention of qualified and motivated teachers has become an increasingly pressing issue, particularly as universities face growing competition, performance pressures, and resource constraints [2].

Teacher retention (JR) is a critical factor influencing the quality of instruction, research productivity, and institutional stability. Previous research highlights that teacher retention is closely associated with Organizational Management (OM) and Human Resource Management (HRM) practices, including organizational structure, employee relations, recruitment and selection, compensation, and career development [3]. Effective management in these areas can improve job satisfaction (JS), which in turn enhances teacher commitment and reduces turnover [4]. Despite growing awareness of these factors, many public universities in Sichuan continue to experience challenges in maintaining a stable teaching staff, especially among Non-Established Teachers (NETs), who often work on temporary or contractual terms and lack

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access to institutional benefits [5]. Existing studies have primarily focused on permanent or established teachers, overlooking the experiences of non-established teachers who represent a significant portion of the academic workforce [6]. Furthermore, previous research tends to examine OM, HRM, and JS in isolation rather than in an integrated model, leaving the causal relationships between these constructs underexplored [7]. This lack of empirical evidence limits the development of comprehensive strategies to improve teacher retention in resource-constrained public universities, particularly in less urbanized regions such as Sichuan Province [8]. Therefore, there remains a critical need to examine how management practices and job satisfaction interact to influence teacher retention in these institutional contexts.

This study aims to fill this research gap by (1) identifying the key determinants influencing the retention of non-established teachers in public universities in Sichuan Province, and (2) examining the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between organizational management, human resource management, and job retention. The research addresses two central questions:

Q1: What key factors significantly influence the job retention of non-established teachers in public universities in Sichuan Province?

Q2: What effective strategies can be implemented to enhance teacher retention among non-established teachers?

This study contributes both theoretically and practically to the existing literature. Theoretically, it introduces an integrated analytical framework that combines OM, HRM, and JS to explain teacher retention — a novel approach in the Chinese higher education context [9]. Practically, it offers actionable insights for university administrators and policymakers to improve workforce stability through enhanced management practices, professional development programs, and inclusive institutional policies [10]. The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews the relevant literature, Section 3 presents the research methodology, Section 4 discusses the results and findings, and Section 5 concludes with implications and recommendations for policy and practice.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Organizational Management and Job Retention

Organizational Management (OM) plays a vital role in shaping employee behavior, institutional culture, and workforce sustainability. Previous research [1] found that OM and Human Resource Management (HRM) jointly affect Job Retention (JR), with Job Satisfaction (JS) mediating these relationships. Similarly, it has been highlighted [2] that employees' willingness to stay within an organization is influenced by how well they integrate into their work environment and align with institutional values. These findings suggest that OM significantly impacts the overall work climate and employee engagement, which are essential for retention.

From the Resource-Based View (RBV), strong management systems—such as transparent communication, fair policies, and supportive leadership—serve as strategic assets that promote employee loyalty [3]. Further studies [4] demonstrated, using Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, that both intrinsic motivators (recognition, achievement) and extrinsic motivators (salary, conditions) enhance job satisfaction and retention. Additional evidence [5] confirmed that JS acts as a mediator between OM, HRM, and JR, indicating that management practices indirectly influence employee retention through satisfaction.

H1: Organizational Management has a positive effect on Job Satisfaction.

Moreover, effective OM ensures goal clarity, strategic planning, and participatory leadership. It has been emphasized [6] that organizational objectives are achieved efficiently when management fosters collaboration and accountability. Further research [7] argued that OM directly affects teacher motivation, organizational cohesion, and retention. Other studies [8] found that innovative management structures enhance commitment and performance, while organizational culture also plays a significant role in promoting diversity and inclusion [9]. Together, these studies establish OM as both a direct and indirect determinant of teacher retention through JS.

H5: Organizational Management has both direct and indirect effects on Job Retention through Job Satisfaction.

2.2. Human Resource Management and Job Retention

Human Resource Management (HRM) is a strategic function that aligns an organization's human capital with its long-term objectives. HRM encompasses recruitment and selection, performance evaluation, compensation, and career development. Previous research [8] found that effective HRM practices significantly improve JS and JR among university teachers by fostering professional growth and equitable opportunities. Similarly, evidence confirms that supportive HRM policies reduce turnover and build commitment, particularly when they emphasize fairness, recognition, and participation [10].

H2: Human Resource Management has a positive effect on Job Satisfaction.

Furthermore, HRM contributes indirectly to teacher retention through its effect on satisfaction and motivation. Performance-based incentives, professional training, and transparent promotion systems enhance teachers' emotional attachment to their institutions. When teachers perceive HRM as supportive and developmental, their intention to remain increases substantially [11].

H3: Human Resource Management has both direct and indirect effects on Job Retention through Job Satisfaction.

2.3. Job Satisfaction and Job Retention

JS represents an employee's positive emotional state toward their work, encompassing factors such as working conditions, compensation, collegial relationships, and personal growth. It has been defined as a positive psychological response to job experiences [12]. Empirical findings [13] showed that higher JS levels lead to greater productivity, lower turnover intentions, and stronger organizational commitment. In the academic context, satisfied teachers are more motivated, display better teaching performance, and show stronger loyalty to their institutions [14].

H4: Job Satisfaction has a positive effect on Job Retention.

As a mediating factor, JS connects OM and HRM to JR, reflecting how institutional practices translate into employee retention outcomes. Teachers with high job satisfaction are less likely to seek employment elsewhere, contributing to workforce stability and long-term institutional growth.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study aims to investigate the key determinants influencing the retention of non-established teachers in public universities in Sichuan Province and to identify effective strategies for enhancing teacher retention. A quantitative research design was adopted to empirically test the proposed conceptual framework. As illustrated in figure 1, the model examines the direct effects of OM and HRM on JR, as well as the mediating effect of JS on these relationships. This design allows for a comprehensive understanding of how institutional management practices and teacher satisfaction interact to influence retention outcomes. The use of a quantitative approach was deemed appropriate because it enables the testing of multiple relationships among latent constructs and provides statistically valid generalizations across the population.

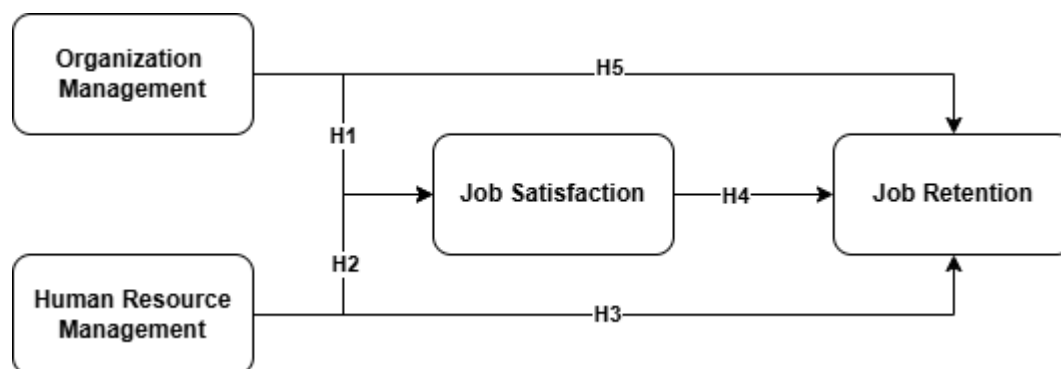


Figure 1. Research framework

3.2. Population and Sample

The study was conducted among lecturers working in 27 public universities across Sichuan Province, China. Data were collected through an online questionnaire survey distributed via email to 1,400 faculty members, including both established and non-established teachers. A total of 1,335 valid responses were received, yielding a high response rate of 95 percent, which enhances the reliability of the findings. To ensure the representativeness of the data, a stratified random sampling technique was employed. This approach allowed proportional inclusion of respondents across demographic categories such as gender, age, academic position, educational qualification, and years of teaching experience. The stratified sampling method also helped minimize selection bias and enhanced the generalizability of the study results to the broader population of public university teachers in Sichuan Province [15], [16].

3.3. Instrumentation

A structured questionnaire was designed to collect primary data on the four main constructs: OM, HRM, JS, and JR. All measurement items were adapted from well-established instruments used in previous empirical studies and refined to align with the context of Chinese higher education. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The construct of Organizational Management measured dimensions such as organizational commitment, structure, and culture [17], [18]. Human Resource Management focused on employee relations, recruitment and selection, performance evaluation, career development, and compensation and benefits. Job Satisfaction captured the degree of satisfaction with the work environment, leadership, and coworker relationships. Job Retention assessed aspects such as employee engagement, work-life balance, motivation, and perceived rewards and recognition. Prior to data collection, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts in organizational behavior and higher education management to ensure content validity, clarity, and contextual appropriateness.

3.4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), an advanced analytical technique suitable for testing complex relationships among multiple latent variables. PLS-SEM enables simultaneous evaluation of the measurement model and the structural model, making it particularly effective for assessing mediating relationships such as the role of JS between OM, HRM, and JR. The analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4.0 software, which provides robust tools for estimating path coefficients, assessing model reliability, and testing hypothesis significance [16]. The OLS regression method was used for estimating relationships, while model quality was assessed through indicators such as composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity [19], [20]. The choice of PLS-SEM was justified by its ability to handle large datasets, non-normal data distributions, and complex theoretical frameworks. This approach allowed for a rigorous examination of both the direct and indirect effects illustrated in figure 1, thereby providing empirical validation of the proposed conceptual model.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 1,335 valid respondents who participated in this study, representing lecturers from 27 public universities across Sichuan Province. The data reveal a balanced composition between employment types, with non-established teachers accounting for 671 respondents (50.3%) and established teachers accounting for 664 respondents (49.7%). This near parity highlights the structural duality of employment within Chinese public universities, where both contractual and permanent faculty members play vital roles in academic delivery, research output, and institutional development. The even distribution between these two categories ensures that the results of this study can adequately capture the perspectives and challenges of both groups.

In terms of educational background, the largest group of respondents held a master's degree ($n = 587$, 44.0%), followed by those with a bachelor's degree ($n = 403$, 30.2%) and a doctoral degree ($n = 345$, 25.8%). This distribution reflects the general qualification standards of Chinese higher education, where a master's degree is typically the minimum requirement for university teaching positions. The relatively lower proportion of doctoral degree holders suggests that a significant number of faculty are in the earlier stages of their academic careers, particularly in teaching-oriented

public universities. This composition also points to the developing research culture in regional institutions such as those in Sichuan, which may influence faculty satisfaction and long-term retention.

Regarding professional titles, teaching assistants ($n = 547$, 41.0%) and lecturers ($n = 406$, 30.4%) together accounted for over 70 percent of the sample, while associate professors ($n = 282$, 21.1%) and professors ($n = 100$, 7.5%) represented the remaining portion. The dominance of junior and mid-level faculty indicates that the academic workforce is predominantly composed of educators in early or intermediate career stages. This distribution pattern suggests a strong potential for institutional growth and development but also highlights the need for clear promotion pathways and professional development opportunities to maintain motivation and retention among younger academics.

The gender distribution of the respondents shows that female teachers comprised 61.5 percent ($n = 821$) of the sample, whereas male teachers represented 38.5 percent ($n = 514$). This finding aligns with broader national trends in Chinese higher education, where women increasingly dominate the teaching profession, especially in social science and education disciplines. However, despite their majority representation, women often face slower promotion rates and limited access to leadership positions, potentially impacting their job satisfaction and retention over time.

The age distribution of the respondents reveals that the largest group of teachers falls within the 31–45 age range ($n = 590$, 44.2%), followed by those aged 20–30 ($n = 416$, 31.2%), and 46–60 ($n = 329$, 24.6%). This indicates a workforce that is predominantly middle-aged and experienced but still within productive career stages. Teachers aged 31–45 typically hold stable positions and engage actively in both teaching and research responsibilities, making them the cornerstone of institutional performance. The relatively smaller group of older educators may suggest limited senior leadership representation, which could influence mentorship and institutional continuity in the long term.

The data on seniority further reflect a moderately experienced workforce. Nearly half of the respondents (49.0%, $n = 654$) reported having 6–15 years of teaching experience, followed by 28.9% ($n = 386$) with 16–20 years, 12.6% ($n = 168$) with 1–5 years, and 9.5% ($n = 127$) with more than 20 years of service. These results suggest a teaching force that is relatively stable yet dynamic, with a majority of faculty at the midpoint of their careers. The modest proportion of long-tenured teachers may point to challenges in long-term retention, possibly driven by institutional reforms, contract systems, or career mobility in China’s competitive higher education environment.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of respondents ($N = 1,335$)

Demographic Profile	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Teacher Type	Non-Established	671	50.3
	Established	664	49.7
Educational Background	Bachelor’s	403	30.2
	Master’s	587	44.0
	Doctoral	345	25.8
Professional Title	Teaching Assistant	547	41.0
	Lecturer	406	30.4
	Associate Professor	282	21.1
	Professor	100	7.5
Gender	Male	514	38.5
	Female	821	61.5
Age (Years)	20–30	416	31.2
	31–45	590	44.2
	46–60	329	24.6
Seniority (Years)	1–5	168	12.6
	6–15	654	49.0

16–20	386	28.9
Above 20	127	9.5

The overall mean of 2.35 and a standard deviation of 0.82 (less than 1) indicate limited variation in respondents' demographic characteristics, confirming a high level of homogeneity within the sample. This consistency enhances the representativeness of the dataset and supports the robustness of subsequent structural model analyses.

4.2. Reliability and Validity Analysis

Table 2 presents the results of the reliability and validity assessments conducted to evaluate the internal consistency and measurement accuracy of the constructs used in this study. Three major reliability indices—Cronbach's alpha (α), Dijkstra-Henseler's rho (ρ_A), and Jöreskog's composite reliability (ρ_C)—were employed to determine the internal reliability of each latent construct. The results show that the values of ρ_C ranged from 0.801 to 0.870, ρ_A ranged from 0.737 to 0.800, and Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.690 to 0.800. These results demonstrate satisfactory internal consistency reliability across all constructs, as the majority of coefficients exceed the minimum threshold of 0.70 [17]. Even though one of the Cronbach's alpha values is marginally below this threshold (0.690 for HRM), the corresponding ρ_C and ρ_A values exceed 0.75, which confirms the reliability of the construct when assessed using composite measures.

The AVE was used to assess convergent validity, which reflects the extent to which indicators of a particular construct converge or share a high proportion of variance. As shown in table 2, the AVE values range from 0.487 for HRM to 0.669 for JS. Although the AVE for HRM is slightly below the recommended benchmark of 0.50, [17] argued that if the composite reliability of a construct exceeds 0.60, the convergent validity of that construct remains acceptable. In this study, the high composite reliability value for HRM ($\rho_C = 0.801$) compensates for the marginally lower AVE, thereby justifying the retention of the construct in subsequent analyses. Overall, the results indicate that all latent variables demonstrate adequate convergent validity, with their observed items sufficiently capturing the theoretical meaning of each construct [17].

To further ensure the absence of measurement bias, Harman's single-factor test was performed using PCA to assess potential Common Method Variance (CMV)—a common concern in survey-based studies where all data are collected from a single source. The results revealed that the first unrotated factor accounted for 39.67% of the total variance, which is well below the 50% criterion commonly used to indicate CMV. This finding suggests that common method bias does not pose a significant threat to the validity of the dataset and that respondents' answers were not excessively influenced by single-source or common response patterns.

Collectively, the reliability and validity assessments confirm that the measurement model is robust and appropriate for structural equation modeling. The constructs of OM, HRM, JS, and JR all demonstrate stable internal reliability, acceptable convergent validity, and minimal bias, providing a sound foundation for subsequent hypothesis testing and structural model estimation.

Table 2. Reliability and validity results

Construct	ρ_C	ρ_A	α	AVE
HRM	0.801	0.785	0.690	0.487
JR	0.870	0.800	0.800	0.626
JS	0.858	0.753	0.753	0.669
OM	0.851	0.737	0.737	0.655

All indicators were statistically significant at $p < .001$.

4.3. Model Fit and Discriminant Validity

Table 3 presents the overall model fit indices obtained from the PLS-SEM analysis. To evaluate the quality of the model, three goodness-of-fit measures were examined: the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), the d_ULS (squared Euclidean distance), and the d_G (geodesic distance). These indices provide a comprehensive

evaluation of how well the proposed model reproduces the observed covariance matrix and whether the structural model adequately fits the empirical data.

The SRMR value serves as an absolute measure of model fit, where values below 0.08 are generally considered acceptable and values below 0.06 indicate a good fit. In this study, the SRMR value was 0.057 for both the saturated and estimated models, indicating that the model fits the data very well. The d_{ULS} and d_G indices, which measure the discrepancy between the empirical and model-implied correlation matrices, were 0.393 and 0.179, respectively. The identical values for both the saturated and estimated models suggest a high degree of consistency and stability in the model estimation process. This finding indicates that the estimated model closely approximates the ideal saturated model, implying that the specified relationships among variables in the structural model accurately reflect the underlying data structure.

Collectively, these results demonstrate that the overall model exhibits a satisfactory level of global fit, confirming that the hypothesized relationships between OM, HRM, JS, and JR are statistically and conceptually coherent. The model's high degree of fit reliability provides a strong foundation for the subsequent interpretation of structural paths and hypothesis testing.

Table 3. Model fit indices

Indicator	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.057	0.057
d_{ULS}	0.393	0.393
d_G	0.179	0.179

To further ensure the robustness of the measurement model, discriminant validity was evaluated using the HTMT criterion. The HTMT ratio is considered one of the most reliable modern methods for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based SEM. Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which constructs that are theoretically distinct also differ empirically; it is an important condition for ensuring that each latent construct measures a unique concept rather than overlapping with others.

Table 4 presents the HTMT results among the four constructs: OM, HRM, JS, and JR. Most HTMT values were below the conservative threshold of 0.90, confirming that the constructs are adequately distinct from one another. However, the HTMT ratios between JS–HRM (0.993) and JS–OM (0.986) slightly exceeded the 0.90 cut-off value, indicating potential conceptual overlap between job satisfaction and the management-related constructs. This overlap is theoretically plausible because job satisfaction is often influenced by organizational and human resource management practices, suggesting that while the constructs are closely related, they remain empirically distinguishable.

In contrast, the relationships between other variable pairs, such as OM–JR (0.859) and HRM–JR (0.887), were comfortably below the 0.90 threshold, confirming strong discriminant validity in the structural model. These findings imply that each construct captures unique aspects of the overall framework and that multicollinearity among latent variables is not a concern. Therefore, the measurement model satisfies the necessary criteria for discriminant validity, ensuring that subsequent path analyses and hypothesis testing are statistically reliable and conceptually sound.

Table 4. HTMT discriminant validity results

Constructs	HRM	OM	JR	JS
HRM	—			
OM	0.954	—		
JR	0.887	0.859	—	
JS	0.993	0.986	0.855	—

Overall, the results from both the model fit indices and the discriminant validity tests confirm that the proposed model demonstrates a strong fit, adequate construct distinctiveness, and conceptual coherence. These results provide further

confidence that the relationships specified in the theoretical model—linking organizational management and human resource management to job satisfaction and job retention—are both empirically valid and theoretically justified.

4.4. Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural equation model estimated using SmartPLS 4.0, which depicts the hypothesized relationships among the four latent variables: OM, HRM, JS, and JR. To assess the predictive accuracy of the model, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was first examined for the endogenous variables. As shown in [table 5](#), the R^2 value for JS was 0.630, while the R^2 for JR was 0.545.

According to [\[14\]](#), R^2 values of 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 indicate small, medium, and large explanatory power, respectively. Thus, the obtained values demonstrate that the model exhibits a moderate to substantial level of explanatory power, explaining 63% of the variance in Job Satisfaction and 54.5% of the variance in Job Retention. These findings confirm that the proposed model effectively captures the major factors influencing teacher satisfaction and retention within public universities in Sichuan Province. The high explanatory strength also suggests that OM and HRM play a decisive role in shaping teachers' satisfaction and commitment to remain in their institutions.

Table 5. Coefficient of determination results

Construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Explanatory Power
JR	0.545	0.544	Medium
JS	0.630	0.630	Medium

Beyond the explanatory power of the model, the path coefficient analysis provides insights into the strength and significance of the hypothesized relationships among variables. As presented in [table 6](#), all five hypothesized paths were found to be statistically significant at $p < 0.001$, with t-values exceeding the critical value of 1.96, indicating robust support for all proposed hypotheses (H1–H5).

Specifically, the path from Organizational Management to Job Satisfaction ($OM \rightarrow JS$) was significant ($\beta = 0.028$, $t = 13.776$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that effective organizational structures, participatory decision-making, and supportive institutional culture contribute positively to teacher satisfaction. This result supports H1 and aligns with the theoretical proposition that organizational management directly influences employees' affective responses toward their work environment.

Similarly, the path from Human Resource Management to Job Satisfaction ($HRM \rightarrow JS$) was significant ($\beta = 0.028$, $t = 16.469$, $p < 0.001$), validating H2. This indicates that transparent recruitment, equitable compensation, and opportunities for professional development enhance teachers' satisfaction levels, thereby strengthening their sense of belonging and motivation.

The direct path from Human Resource Management to Job Retention ($HRM \rightarrow JR$) also showed a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.029$, $t = 11.527$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3. This suggests that HRM practices influence retention both directly—through employment conditions and incentives—and indirectly through their impact on satisfaction. Teachers are more likely to remain in institutions that provide fair HR policies, growth opportunities, and recognition mechanisms.

The relationship between Job Satisfaction and Job Retention ($JS \rightarrow JR$) was also found to be positive and highly significant ($\beta = 0.030$, $t = 8.237$, $p < 0.001$), providing strong support for H4. This finding reinforces existing evidence that satisfied teachers exhibit stronger organizational commitment, lower turnover intentions, and higher engagement with institutional goals.

Finally, the direct path from Organizational Management to Job Retention ($OM \rightarrow JR$) was significant ($\beta = 0.031$, $t = 7.464$, $p < 0.001$), confirming H5. The indirect effect through JS was also found to be significant, indicating that organizational management not only affects retention directly but also enhances it indirectly by improving job satisfaction. This dual influence underscores the strategic importance of effective management structures in fostering a supportive academic environment that encourages long-term commitment among faculty members.

Table 6. Path analysis results

Path	β	t-value	p-value	Hypothesis
HRM $\rightarrow$ JR	0.029	11.527	0.000	Supported
HRM $\rightarrow$ JS	0.028	16.469	0.000	Supported
JS $\rightarrow$ JR	0.030	8.237	0.000	Supported
OM $\rightarrow$ JR	0.031	7.464	0.000	Supported
OM $\rightarrow$ JS	0.028	13.776	0.000	Supported

Taken together, these results confirm that Organizational Management and Human Resource Management are both critical antecedents of Job Satisfaction and Job Retention, with Job Satisfaction serving as a significant mediating mechanism. The relatively high R^2 values and statistically significant path coefficients validate the robustness of the proposed structural model. These findings also highlight the interplay between institutional management practices and individual psychological factors in explaining retention outcomes among university teachers.

Overall, the structural model confirms that enhancing organizational and human resource management practices can lead to greater job satisfaction and higher retention rates among teachers. In particular, strategies focusing on transparent governance, professional development, fair performance evaluations, and supportive workplace environments are essential for building a stable and motivated academic workforce in public universities.

4.5. Discussion

The results of this study provide clear empirical evidence that both OM and HRM exert significant and positive effects on JS and JR among university teachers in public institutions in Sichuan Province. Moreover, Job Satisfaction plays a mediating role in these relationships, confirming the validity of the proposed conceptual framework presented in [figure 1](#). These findings reinforce the theoretical premise that effective management systems and human resource strategies jointly determine teachers' emotional attachment to their institutions and their intention to remain in their positions over time.

From an organizational perspective, the significant path between Organizational Management and Job Satisfaction (OM $\rightarrow$ JS) demonstrates that a supportive and structured institutional environment fosters greater satisfaction among academic staff. Institutions characterized by clear organizational hierarchies, participatory decision-making, and strong institutional culture tend to enhance teachers' sense of belonging and professional identity, thereby improving their motivation to perform and remain within the institution. This finding supports H1 and H5 and is consistent with earlier research [\[1\]](#), [\[14\]](#), which emphasized that organizational clarity and inclusivity improve employee engagement and commitment. It also aligns with the Resource-Based View (RBV), which posits that well-managed organizational resources, including human capital, contribute directly to institutional effectiveness and workforce stability.

The results also highlight the critical role of Human Resource Management practices in shaping both satisfaction and retention outcomes. The positive and significant relationships between HRM $\rightarrow$ JS and HRM $\rightarrow$ JR (supporting H2 and H3) indicate that transparent recruitment systems, fair compensation structures, career development programs, and effective performance appraisal mechanisms have a substantial impact on teachers' job-related attitudes and behaviors. These practices not only influence satisfaction directly but also reinforce a sense of organizational justice and psychological safety, which are key drivers of long-term commitment. This result is consistent with previous studies [\[11\]](#), [\[12\]](#), [\[13\]](#), which reported that institutions implementing structured HRM systems tend to experience lower turnover rates and higher morale among educators.

The mediating role of JS between management factors and retention is particularly noteworthy. The significant path between JS $\rightarrow$ JR (supporting H4) confirms that teachers who perceive their work environment as supportive, rewarding, and aligned with their professional goals are more likely to stay with their institution. This finding echoes established motivation theories such as Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory [\[19\]](#), which distinguishes between hygiene factors (e.g., salary, policies, job security) and motivators (e.g., recognition, achievement, growth). Both dimensions

appear to operate within the higher education context, where intrinsic motivation and institutional support jointly enhance teacher satisfaction and, consequently, retention.

Furthermore, the combined explanatory power of the model ($R^2 = 0.630$ for JS and $R^2 = 0.545$ for JR) suggests that organizational and human resource management factors collectively explain more than half of the variance in teacher retention intentions. This substantial proportion underscores the importance of institutional systems and workplace climate as key determinants of workforce stability. It also highlights that job satisfaction serves as a crucial psychological bridge linking management practices with employee behavioral outcomes.

In comparison with previous research [2], [3], [14], the current study extends the literature by focusing on non-established teachers—a group often underrepresented in retention studies within China's higher education context. The findings indicate that their job satisfaction and retention are more sensitive to institutional policies, managerial transparency, and recognition mechanisms than those of established teachers. This reinforces the notion that employment security and perceived fairness are central to sustaining motivation and engagement among contract-based educators, a group increasingly prevalent in public universities due to ongoing education reforms and budget constraints [7], [9], [10].

From a practical standpoint, the results imply that universities seeking to enhance teacher retention must adopt a multi-dimensional management approach. First, institutions should prioritize transparent governance, equitable evaluation systems, and inclusive participation in decision-making to strengthen teachers' organizational identification [4], [8]. Second, HRM policies should focus on career progression pathways, continuous professional development, and performance-linked incentives to improve satisfaction and reduce turnover [11], [16]. Third, fostering a culture of collegiality, recognition, and psychological support is essential for sustaining long-term motivation [5], [17], [18]. These strategies are particularly important in the context of Chinese public universities, where increasing competition, administrative centralization, and workload intensification have contributed to declining job satisfaction among academic staff [6], [15].

In theoretical terms, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on employee retention and motivation within higher education by empirically demonstrating the mediating role of job satisfaction between management practices and retention [13], [19], [20]. It provides a refined understanding of how institutional and human resource mechanisms interact to influence teachers' affective and behavioral outcomes. The validated model can serve as a conceptual foundation for future research exploring additional mediating or moderating variables—such as organizational commitment, work engagement, or leadership style—that may further explain teacher retention dynamics in academic settings.

Overall, the findings affirm that effective organizational management and human resource practices are essential levers for sustaining a satisfied and stable academic workforce. Institutions that invest in transparent, participatory, and development-oriented management systems are more likely to cultivate teachers' loyalty, enhance job satisfaction, and achieve long-term institutional sustainability.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the determinants of job retention among non-established teachers in public universities across Sichuan Province, focusing on the roles of OM, HRM, and the mediating influence of JS. Using data collected from 1,335 respondents and analyzed through PLS-SEM, the study confirmed that both OM and HRM significantly and positively affect JS and JR. Moreover, JS was found to mediate these relationships, validating the proposed conceptual framework and emphasizing the central role of employee satisfaction in the retention process.

The results revealed that sound organizational structures, effective communication systems, and participatory decision-making enhance teachers' satisfaction and commitment, thereby reducing turnover intentions. Similarly, well-designed human resource management practices, including transparent recruitment, fair performance evaluations, career development opportunities, and equitable compensation, contribute to improved satisfaction and retention. The empirical model demonstrated substantial explanatory power, with $R^2 = 0.630$ for Job Satisfaction and $R^2 = 0.545$ for Job Retention, suggesting that management and HRM factors collectively explain more than half of the variance in

retention outcomes. These findings affirm that a well-managed institutional environment—supported by transparent governance and fair human resource policies—is fundamental to sustaining a stable and motivated academic workforce in China’s higher education sector.

From a theoretical perspective, this study extends the existing literature by providing an integrated model that combines organizational and human resource dimensions to explain job retention through the mediating mechanism of job satisfaction. Unlike previous research that often treated these factors independently, this study highlights their interdependence and demonstrates how satisfaction acts as the psychological link connecting management systems and behavioral outcomes. The findings also add to the limited empirical evidence on non-established teachers, an increasingly significant yet underexamined segment of the academic labor force in Chinese public universities.

Practically, the results offer several important implications for policymakers and university administrators. First, institutions should strengthen organizational management systems by promoting transparency, decentralization, and participatory governance to improve teachers’ sense of belonging and autonomy. Second, universities should enhance human resource strategies through fair promotion systems, professional development programs, and recognition mechanisms to foster motivation and commitment. Third, creating a supportive institutional culture that values collegiality, work-life balance, and employee well-being can significantly enhance satisfaction and reduce turnover rates. These interventions, if effectively implemented, can contribute to the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of public universities in China’s evolving higher education landscape.

Despite its strengths, this study is not without limitations. The research was conducted within a single province, which may limit the generalizability of findings to other regions with different administrative or cultural contexts. Additionally, the study employed a cross-sectional design, preventing causal inferences about the relationships among variables. Future research could adopt longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to explore how teacher retention dynamics evolve over time and to capture qualitative insights into the lived experiences of non-established teachers. Expanding the model to include moderating factors such as leadership style, organizational justice, or institutional support would also enrich the understanding of how management practices influence teacher retention across different higher education systems.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that organizational and human resource management practices are powerful predictors of teacher retention, with job satisfaction serving as a critical mediating mechanism. By aligning institutional strategies with the psychological and professional needs of educators, universities can build a resilient, motivated, and committed academic workforce—an essential foundation for advancing educational quality and institutional excellence in China’s public higher education sector.

6. Declarations

6.1. Author Contributions

Conceptualization: X.X., T.T.; Methodology: T.T.; Software: X.X.; Validation: X.X. and T.T.; Formal Analysis: X.X. and T.T.; Investigation: X.X.; Resources: T.T.; Data Curation: T.T.; Writing Original Draft Preparation: X.X. and T.T.; Writing Review and Editing: T.T. and X.X.; Visualization: X.X.; All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

6.2. Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

6.3. Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

6.4. Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

6.5. Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

6.6. Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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