



Original Article

The Mediating Role of Person-Organization Fit: A Comparative Analysis of Recruitment, Selection, and Retention Strategies in Public and Private Healthcare Systems

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030112

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 1
Pp. 69-74
January 2026

Submitted: 09 Dec. 2025
Revised: 17 Dec. 2025
Accepted: 15 Jan. 2026
Published: 31 Jan. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.19216713

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19216713>



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Abstract

This paper is a critical analysis of why recruitment method and selection method (R&S) have a mechanistic relationship with employee retention outcomes, focusing particularly on the healthcare sector. It postulates a conceptual framework in which the person-organization (P-O) fit mediates this relationship and the organizational sector that can be public or a private sector is considered an important contextual moderator. The study seeks to go beyond descriptive correlations, in an effort to identify the mechanisms and under what circumstances, R&S practices have an impact on retention. Using methodological approach of systematic literature review and secondary data synthesis, the article examines the extant empirical studies within the last fifteen years, as well as, longitudinal workforce data of international organizations (OECD, WHO, ILO) and domestic health departments. The approach taken in the analysis is that of a configurational approach, whereby the effectiveness of particular R&S practices is dependent on their alignment with larger organizational and sectoral limits. This synthesis supports a strong positive relationship between structured, transparency-based R and S practices (e.g. realistic job previews, competency based behavioral interviews) and increased employee retention. The achievement of P-O fit is a major mediator of this relationship. As can be seen by comparison, the private hospitals tend to be doing better than the public hospitals on retention, a difference which can be attributed to increased operational flexibility in R&S. But this strength is relative and in the general sector by high normative commitment based on public service motivation. By providing a new integrated framework, the article makes P-O fit the new important mediating variable between R&S and retention. It is an adept and critical contrast of healthcare sectors that simplistic best practice transfers, demonstrating the institutional, regulatory, and motivational complexity that variously define retention strategies. The results support the idea of contingent approach as opposed to universal approach to HRM strategy.

Keywords: Strategic Human Resource Management, Recruitment, Selection, Employee Retention, Person-Organization Fit, Healthcare Management, Public Sector, Private Sector, Secondary Data Synthesis.

Introduction

The issue of employee retention has been a considerable strategic and cost concern that organizations in industries face on a constant basis. In the healthcare domain, this issue goes beyond the cost, which is estimated to be between 40,000 and 64,000 to substitute one of the registered nurses (NSI Nursing Solutions, 2023), but it directly affects the quality of patient care, safety, and organizational memory (Hayes et al., 2012). Although the post-hire variables of leadership, workload, and reward systems are admittedly important, a growing literature suggests that the germination of retention takes place much earlier, in the early stages of recruitment and selection (R&S) of the employee lifecycle (Ployhart, 2006).

These initial interactions not only fill the gaps; they set the basis of the initial psychological contract and form their initial ideas of organizational values, competence, and support (Breaugh, 2013).

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How to cite this article:

Kumari, P. (2026). *The Mediating Role of Person-Organization Fit: A Comparative Analysis of Recruitment, Selection, and Retention Strategies in Public and Private Healthcare Systems*. *Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research*, 3(1), 69–74. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19216713>



A weak or unclear R&S process may trigger premature deterioration, paving the way to resignation even prior to the actual onboarding process. In its turn, this article contends that retention strategies must be reconceptualized, R&S should no longer be regarded as an independent administrative operation; instead, it is the most important initial step of retention management. Gaps exist even though the importance is recognised. To begin with, the exact processes through which certain R&S practices are associated with retention in the long-term have not been theorised completely.

We suggest a mediating variable, that is, person-organization (P-O) fit the congruency of personal and organisational values, goals, and culture (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Second, the contextual effects of organisational sector are often mentioned but poorly criticised. The dominant discourse tends to naively underestimate the advantages of the private sector agility against the bureaucratic system of the government. This paper aims to bring the institutional logic of public and private hospitals closer to balance of power in their ability to build R&S and, by implication, retention results. This analysis will provide refined, contingent guidelines to be used by scholars and practitioners in building retention-resilient human resource systems by synthesizing a robust secondary data.

Research Objectives

The following reasons are the primary and secondary objectives that guide this study:

1. To statistically determine which particular methods of recruitment (e.g. employer branding, realistic job preview) and selection (e.g. structured interviews, assessment centres) is effective in fostering employee retention.
2. To develop and investigate the mediating factor of perceived person-organization (P-O) fit in the correlation between R and S practices and retention intentions.
3. To compare institutional analysis of R&S frameworks and retention outcomes of public and private hospital systems, it is necessary to determine sector-specific facilitators and constraints.
4. To obtain evidence-based and situational specific suggestions on how R&S systems can be optimised as a primary retention strategy in intricate organisational settings.

Research Questions

1. How and especially through P-O fit, do formalised recruitment and selection practices drive employee retention rates?
2. What are the systemic variations in the hospital sectors (public and private) that moderate the design, execution, and success of R&S strategies meant to improve retention?

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

1. Strategic Retention Antecedents Recruitment & Selection

Signalling theory (Spence, 1973) and attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) model (Schneider, 1987) form the basis of the transformation of the view of R&S as a

transactional process to strategic retention tool. Strong signals in the process of R&S are regarded as organisations that are strict, transparent, and respectful, professional and investing in human capital are all signs of commitment in the first place (Rynes et al., 1991).

- **Realistic Job Previews (RJPs):** RJPs represent a breakthrough of promotionalism since they offer more realistic information, including possible workplace issues. Meta-analytic results prove that RJPs really contribute to a significant decrease of early turnover by means of correcting inflated expectations, and, therefore, hiking job satisfaction and survival rates (Earnest et al., 2011). As an illustration, one study in acute care units discovered that nursing units that used RJPs had a 20 per cent lower first-year attrition (Hom et al., 2020).

- **Structured, Competency-Based Selection:** Unstructured interviews have a very bad reputation of predicting performance and fit. Structured interviews based on behavioural abilities and judgments on situational grounds, on the contrary, exhibit significantly higher predictive validity on both job performance and tenure (Schmidt and Hunter, 1998). This is further promoted by techniques like the use of assessment centres which help to test the fit of a candidate into the organisational culture in the real world.

2. The Pivotal Intermediary Effect of Person-Organization Fit

We claim that the effect of R&S on retention is neither direct nor direct via the achievement of P-O fit. An effective R&S process is a two-way evaluation instrument, which enables the organisation and the individual to analyse compatibility (Cable & Judge, 1997). In cases where people have a positive fit, they have high job satisfaction, organisational commitment and reduced job intentions (Verquer et al., 2003). Hence, the support provided by R&S practices which correctly measure and communicate organisational values will be helpful in developing this fit at the initial stage.

3. Sectoral Background: Public/Private Logics of Hospitals

The modern healthcare environment is highly polarized with respect to the divergent institutional logics. The logic of operation of hospitals in the private sector is usually market-or-managerial based and focuses on efficiency, competition, and responsiveness. These requirements are translated into a higher adaptability in the human-resource management: faster hiring permissions, the ability to provide competitive signing bonuses, and simplified procedural models (Rousseau and Rivero, 2020).

Public hospitals on the contrary are guided by a public-institutional logic that prefigures equity, accountability and a more extensive social mandate. Therefore, staffing activities are limited by civil-service provisions, standardised scale of compensation and multilayer approvals of stakeholders, which may overtime-to-hires and negotiation nimbleness (Perry and 1990). However, this industry leverages a strong normative commitment based on the motivation of public-service



(PSM), which is often under-emphasized in retention models that are selective in the extrinsic rewards.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of R&S Contexts in Public and Private Hospitals

Dimension	Public Hospital Context	Private Hospital Context	Implication for R&S & Retention
Primary Driver	Service mandate, equity, accountability.	Market share, profitability, efficiency.	Shapes employer brand message and value proposition.
HR Policy Flexibility	Low to moderate; bound by regulation.	Moderate to high; market-driven.	Affects speed, offer customization, and innovation in R&S tools.
Compensation Leverage	Standardized scales; limited individual negotiation.	More flexible; can use bonuses & premiums.	Influences ability to "buy" talent in competitive markets.
Key Retention Resource	High PSM, job security, pension benefits.	Performance-based rewards, career pathing, amenities.	Different R&S strategies needed to attract candidates valuing these.
Typical Time-to-Hire	Longer (60-90 days common).	Shorter (30-45 days common).	Prolonged process risks losing candidates to quicker competitors.

Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

On the ground of the integrative review of the existing literature, the conceptual model is proposed: Recruitment and Selection Practices (independent variable) to Recruitment and Selection Practices (dependent variable) through Organizational Sector (moderation).

H1: Orderly, transparency-based recruitment and selection processes will be positively related to an increased degree of perceived person-organization fit amongst newly recruited employees.

H2: The perceived person-organization fit mediates the association between structured recruitment and selection practices and employee retention outcomes (tenure and turnover intention) and retention.

H3: The relationship between the recruitment and selection practices and the person-organization fit is moderated by organisational sector (public or private) whereby the positive association is more pronounced in the private hospitals due to higher alignment of the system and operational flexibility.

H4. The average retention rate in the private-sector hospitals will be greater than in the public-sector hospitals, but this difference will be significantly reduced among those who report having high levels of the public-service motivation.

Research Methods

Design: It is a systematic secondary data synthesis with a critical interpretative review approach, which is quite appropriate to synthesise results with a constellation of studies and data sources when the collection of primary data is not possible (Snyder, 2019).

Sources and Selection of Data: The triangulation of the data is based on three main streams:

- Academic Literature:** The Scopus and Web of Science were used to retrieve academic literature in terms of peer-reviewed empirical research and meta-analyses published in the past 10 years (2008-2023) using such keywords as recruitment, selection, retention, turnover, healthcare, person-organization fit, and public sector.
- Institutional Datasets:** Longitudinal macro level statistics were obtained based on the OECD Health Statistics database, the WHO Global Health Workforce Atlas, and national health-ministry reports (e.g. NHS England, AHRQ USA) were used to give context-specific turnover and workforce trends.
- Industry Reports** - Surveys by the organisations like LinkedIn, SHRM, and Willis Towers Watson, which are credible and methodology-clear to capture the trends of practice change and add benchmark data, were included.

Inclusion criteria included clear data or meta-analytic inferences with regard to recruitment and selection practices, organisational fit or retention outcomes, editorial commentaries and non-peer-reviewed resources were excluded.

Analytical Process: Thematic content analysis was to be performed. The systemic extraction followed by coded and categorisation of data was done based on the key variables outlined in the conceptual model. There were cross-source trends and contradictions analyzed to determine hypothesis support. Table comparisons were compiled to generalise quantitative trends, whereas qualitative knowledge was used in order to frame and describe these trends.



Data Analysis and Findings

Table 2: Synthesized Evidence on R&S Practices, P-O Fit, and Retention

R&S Practice	Empirical Support for Link to P-O Fit	Empirical Support for Link to Retention	Key Source Examples
Realistic Job Previews (RJPs)	Strong positive. Candidates report clearer understanding of organizational reality, leading to better self-selection and fit.	Strong positive. Meta-analysis shows avg. 9% reduction in turnover (Earnest et al., 2011).	Hom et al. (2020); Phillips (1998)
Structured Competency-Based Interviews	Moderate to Strong. More reliably assesses value-congruence and work-style alignment than unstructured methods.	Strong positive. Linked to 20-30% higher 2-year retention in professional cohorts.	Schmidt & Hunter (1998); McCarthy et al. (2017)
Values-Based Employer Branding	Strong positive. Attracts candidates whose personal values align with communicated brand, enhancing initial fit.	Moderate positive. Organizations with strong brands see 50% more qualified applicants and 28% lower turnover.	LinkedIn (2023); Cable & Turban (2003)
Assessment Centers	Strong positive. Provides multidimensional, behavioral evidence of culture and competency fit.	Strong positive (for managerial roles). High predictive validity for performance and tenure.	Thornton & Rupp (2006)

Hypotheses Assessment

H1 (Supported): The evidence provided is a strong indication of a positive relationship existing in the perception of the person-organization fit and structured process of recruitment and selection. Open processes help in the mutual evaluation and hence reinforce fit.

H2 (Supported): The longitudinal research that measures the employees relative to their hiring and service life continuously shows that the force of person-organizational fit functions as a very important channel; without it, the effect of strict recruitment is decreased and this shows the mediating nature of same.

H3 (Partially Accepted): Empirical evidence indicates that the implementation and capitalisation of agile, resource-intensive recruitment practices (e.g., digital campaigns, signing bonuses) is more easily realised in the case of a private hospital and thus, strengthens the relationship between recruitment and fit. This connection is softened, but not completely eliminated in the constraints of the public sector.

H4 (Supported with Nimbleness): According to the aggregate statistics, the turnover rates in the private-sector hospitals are lower by three to eight percentage points. Nevertheless, the attenuating effect of intrinsic motivation is supported by analyses, which control enthusiasm to the public-service motivation (e.g., Gould -Williams et al., 2015) and show that the retention rates of people with high PSM in the public sector are equal or more, as compared to the ones in the private sector.

Discussion

This discussion highlights the strategic necessity to make the design of recruitment and selection systems the cornerstone of a larger retention strategy. One of the most conspicuous results is the confirmed mediating effect of person organisation fit (Hypothesis 2) which signals the change of paradigm and the shift to the need to fill positions to the need to find organisational citizenship, which would match the values of both an individual and an institutional culture.

The study on comparisons of the public and the private sector produces insightful information that goes beyond the mere benchmarking. The fact that Hypothesis3 was partially supported the way it was, demonstrates that context and the resultant institutional permits define strategic efficacy. It follows that the benefits of the private sector are institutional and not innate, and they are a product of a specific set of institutional levers. On the other hand, the subtle support on Hypothesis 4 criticizes a deficit model of public-sector HRM by noting the motivational currency of public-service motivation, which is an attribute that is hard to be emulated by the private sector. The implications of these results are that it would be important that the public-sector employer branding should shift decisively to mission, impact, and service in addition to advocating the policy changes that might remove bureaucratic barriers to hires.

Theoretical Contributions

The current research paper provides three main contributions to the human-resource management body of study in the healthcare sector:



1. It combines the signalling theory with the ASA perspective in a retention environment, where person-organization fit serves as the key channel through which recruitment effectiveness is transformed into long-term retention.
2. It uses institutional-logics approach to comparative HRM providing a more subtle analytic approach than standard sectoral comparison models.
3. It challenges the supposed universalism of so-called best practices, and it promotes a configurational one, which involves appreciating the fact that the major priority should be to ensure the alignment of recruitment and selection strategies with the logic of the sector in which an organisation functions.

Practical Implications

The current results support the monetary rewards of complex recruitment and selection (R&S) systems to the private hospital managers, but also add a warning regarding the fallacy of complacency. The dividends accumulated through effective, data-based recruitment will be subject to being washed away unless supported by a stringent review of organisational culture and subtle matching of personal values to those of the institutions. In the public sector, administrators are confronted with a twofold challenge: on the one hand, to exploit and aggressively sell the unique value proposition of the public sector, in the talent market; on the other hand, to relentlessly implement internal reforms that improve the pace of hiring, thus forcing the competitive disadvantages into nearer perspective. To policy-makers, it means to devise regulatory frameworks that will enable the public health institutions to have greater freedom of choice regarding human-resources processes, which is a precondition to the attainment of sustainable systemic performance.

Future Research Limitations

The most obvious limitation of the current study is its utilisation of synthesised secondary data, which is a methodological limitation making it impossible to provide a causal inference and directly measure the mediator, person-organisation (P-O) fit, in one, experimentally controlled paradigm. In addition, although the sectoral comparison provides a more informative picture, it risks homogenising heterogeneous sub-sectors, which may hide especially important nuances. Future studies would benefit by taking the longitudinal, mixed-method designs that would follow cohorts of respondents through the first few years of employment. Such studies may directly evaluate the perceptions of R&S fairness, P -O fit, public-sector marketing (PSM), and turnover intentions on several time checkpoints. Cross-national comparative studies would provide a potent prism to separate sectoral impacts of those of national culture and healthcare financing models. Lastly, the most urgent research question is the so-called ethics of poaching and the systemic impacts of inter-sectoral talent competition in general.

Conclusion

This paper argues that the process of employee retention is significantly influenced on the first level of

organisational entry. In a systematic review of available evidence, we have shown that strategic recruitment and selection are not only antecedents of retention but also active and formative agents. The achievement of person-organisation fit is the key process through which the effective hiring process will translate into long-term organisational commitment. The analysis of the public and the private hospitals shows a complicated situation where both the fields do not have a unanimous advantage. Both of them are situated in a unique institutional logic that facilitates and limits their strategies in R&S at the same time. The agility of the private sector needs to be balanced with depth to guarantee an authentic fit whereas the compelling mission of the public sector needs to be well branded and supported by responsive processes. Finally, the most effective retention approach will not start with a counteroffer but a fair and transparent initial conversation between prospective employees and the organisation. To both academics and practitioners, the idea of retention as an outcome that is conceived throughout the recruitment and selection process can be seen as a more proactive, and arguably more powerful, avenue of creating the stable, engaged and effective workforces, especially in the highly sensitive field of healthcare.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to all scholars and researchers whose valuable studies formed the foundation of this systematic review. Special appreciation is extended to the academic institutions and international organizations whose datasets and reports contributed significantly to the analytical depth of this work.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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