

## **Beyond Support: The Interactive Impact of Psychological Contract on Job Satisfaction in Private Sector Higher Education Institutions**

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### **Abstract**

The present study investigates how the psychological contract moderates the relationship between organizational support (POS), employee engagement (EE), and job satisfaction (JS). The conceptual model is built upon the premise of social exchange theory. Data was collected from 573 respondents working in private sector higher education institutions, and further structural equation modeling was conducted using Smart PLS 4.0. The results show that both EE and the perceptions of an employee about the organizational support affect job satisfaction positively, with the psychological contract playing a moderating role. This research adds to the organizational behavior literature by highlighting the factors that play an important role in contributing towards job satisfaction particularly among employees in higher education. Additionally, it has practical implications by emphasizing the importance of the psychological contract in enhancing job satisfaction in the organisation for employees in private sector higher education.

**Keywords:** Psychological Contract, Perceived Organisational Support, Employee Engagement, Job Satisfaction, Social Exchange Theory, Higher Education Institutes

### **1. Introduction**

Contemporary managers should regard understanding the psychological contract as an essential component of their toolkit, providing a framework for comprehending the factors that drive the connection between an employee and their organization (DelCampo, 2007). Essentially, this enables organizations to supervise their employee base and cultivate productive relationships with them by gaining insight into their concerns, issues, and attitudes toward their roles. Ideally, this understanding will result in heightened motivation and enhanced performance, ultimately contributing to a more efficient and satisfied organization as a whole (Johnston, 2024).

However, The psychological contract, as described by Rousseau (1989), is the set of implicit obligations and perceptions held by both employers and employees. This is an unwritten agreement between supervisors and their subordinates. This contract may involve both implicit and explicit promises, wherein, explicit promises are conveyed through verbal communication or written, such as salary, while implicit promises are inferred by the employee (Van Gilst et al., 2020). There exists a considerable body of literature examining the psychological contracts of employees worldwide, including studies conducted in both developing as well as developed nations (Corder & Ronnie, 2018; Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000). However, previous research has not extensively delved into psychological contracts specifically among employees

of higher education institutes in the education industry, leaving many aspects of the concept unexplored (Hussain et al., 2022). Consequently, our study attempts to investigate the moderating influence and importance of psychological contracts among employees of private sector higher education employees. Effectively managing the psychological contract goes beyond merely knowing its definition and understanding its concept; organizations must also be capable of recognizing how it materializes in practice (Johnston, 2024).

A lasting employment relationship relies on positive social exchange dynamics between employees and employers, where the needs of both parties are addressed (Hu et al., 2014). In this exchange, employers seek employees' dedication, engagement, and loyalty, while employees assess whether their employer fulfills promises by prioritizing their well-being (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Eisenberger et al. (1986) formulated organizational support theory and introduced the notion of POS (POS). POS is employees' evaluation of how much the organization values their efforts and cares about their personal welfare, as conceptualized by social exchange theorists (Gouldner, 1960; Blau, 1964; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger et al., 2004; Hu et al., 2014; Maan et al., 2020). Theory of organizational support suggests that individuals form a sense of organizational support based on their belief that the employer either favors or disfavors them. (Hu et al., 2014). Additionally, research suggests that an employee's perception of organizational support enhances not only JS but also in-role performance (such as achieving goals) and extra-role performance (including helping and supporting coworkers). This study leverages social exchange theory to develop a research model that explicates JS among employees of private sector higher education institutions in India. POS and EE are identified as antecedents to JS. Furthermore, the study explores how psychological contracts moderate the relationship with job satisfaction.

The rest of the article is structured into four parts. The first part presents the introduction and reviews previous literature on psychological contracts and POS. In the second part, we introduce the conceptual model, the theoretical framework it is based on, and the hypothesis development. The third part provides the research methods, findings, and the discussion of the study. Finally, the study presents implications, acknowledges limitations, and suggests directions for future research.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Psychological Contract**

The employment relationship can be seen as an exchange in which an employee's ongoing participation in an organization relies on receiving sufficient rewards from the employer (Coyle-Shapiro & Parzafall, 2008). The concept of the "psychological contract" was first introduced by Argyris in the early 1960s, emphasizing employees' perceptions of their employment arrangement (Höglund, 2012). Grounded in social exchange theory, the psychological contract operates on the principle of reciprocity, where individuals perceive a moral duty to repay the benefits they have received (Sonnenberg et al., 2011). These reciprocal relationships involve unspecified social benefits, both extrinsic and intrinsic (Kasekende, 2017). A psychological contract is an individual's understanding of the terms and conditions governing their relationship with an organization (Rousseau, 1989). Psychological contracts are formed when employees perceive an implied agreement with their organization, where their contributions are exchanged for specific rewards (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). Fulfillment of these promises fosters increased commitment, intention to remain with the organization, and organizational citizenship behaviors (Robinson & Morrison, 1995; Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; Sturges et al., 2005), evolving into a set of expectations and obligations as individuals gain work experience (Rousseau, 1995). These experiences are influenced by supervisor-subordinate dynamics (Kasekende, 2017).

Despite its importance, measuring the psychological contract remains debated in the literature (Kasekende, 2017). Rousseau (1995) suggests three elements: perceived employee obligations, perceived employer obligations, and perceived fulfillment/violation of employer obligations. Guest (1998) introduces another dimension, the state of the psychological contract (SPC), which includes reciprocal experiences and obligations from both parties' perspectives. This research will explore the reciprocal nature of the psychological contract by examining the obligations perceived by both employees and employers.

The concept of psychological contract lacks a universally accepted operationalization, with the most general being the belief in obligations between parties (Rousseau, 1995). Obligations entail commitments to future actions agreed upon by the parties, though their terms, fulfillment, and mutuality may lead to contentions (Rousseau, 1995). Individuals

formulate their expected obligations before joining an organization, while supervisors develop expectations of employees just before their arrival. After employment, the psychological contract evolves as expectations are modified, leading to issues when either party feels cheated. Scholars like Bal et al. (2010) have examined psychological contract fulfillment by assessing the level of fulfillment of employee and employer expectations and obligations. According to Bal et al. (2010), employees expect employers to gain management capabilities, assist in monitoring, maintain systems, innovate, improve the organization, and take risks, thereby increasing employer obligations towards employees.

## 2.2 Perceived Organisation Support (POS)

POS assesses employees' overall belief in the organization's appreciation for their work and commitment to their overall welfare (Eisenberger et al., 1986). High levels of POS are thought to build faith, promote enduring commitments, and enhance employees' sense of belonging within the organization (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). POS within organizations can vary based on the introduction of new company policies and initiatives that favor employees or in response to significant incident that signal the organization's support (Erdogan et al., 2004).

The buildout of POS is fostered by employees' inclination to attribute human-like qualities to the organization (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003). Levinson (1965) suggested that the acts of organizational representatives are often perceived as manifestations of the organization's intentions, rather than merely the personal motivations of the agents. He suggested that this personification is enabled by the organization's ethical, financial, and legal responsibilities for its representatives' actions, along with consistent organizational culture, norms, and policies that dictate role behaviors, and the influence organizational representatives have over individual employees. Employees interpret the organization's actions as a reflection of its appreciation for their contributions and commitment to their overall welfare (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003).

According to Eisenberger et al. (1986), addressing employees' emotional well-being through POS can cultivate deeper emotional connections to the organization. Rhoades et al.'s (2001) longitudinal research indicated that while POS positively impacted employees' emotional commitment, the reverse was not true; emotional commitment did not influence POS. Additionally, Rhoades et al. (2001) found that POS played a mediating role in the connection between meaningful work events and employees' emotional attachment to the organization. In terms of performance reward expectations, Eisenberger et al. (1986) argued that employees perceive POS as a signal of the organization's willingness to acknowledge and compensate their efforts. Later studies have confirmed a positive relationship between (POS) and employees' expectations of performance-based rewards (Eisenberger et al., 1990). The frequency, strength, and authenticity of praise and endorsement are key factors in shaping employees' perception of organizational support (Blau, 1964). Other forms of rewards, such as salary, position, job enrichment, and involvement in organizational decision-making, may also affect perceived support by signaling the organization's favorable evaluation of the employee (Brinberg & Castell, 1982).

According to Johlke et al. (2002), the concept of POS is rooted in social exchange theory, suggesting that employees offer their dedication and hard work in exchange for tangible rewards and social affirmation from the organization. POS is conceptually linked to but empirically distinguishable from Leader-Member Exchange and supervisor support (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). While the former concepts highlight the dynamics between employees and their specific supervisors, perceived organizational support (POS) reflects the employee's broader view of the organization as a whole (Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003). Levinson (1965) specifically suggested that employees may interpret actions taken by supervisors as indicative of the organization's intentions, rather than attributing them solely to the supervisors' motivations.

Rhoades & Eisenberger (2002) argue that the anthropomorphization of the organization is reinforced by its ethical, financial, and legal accountability for its representatives' actions, which are influenced by the organization's culture, norms, and policies. Consequently, employees interpret their organization's favorable or unfavorable treatment not solely through the actions of their immediate supervisors but also the human-like attributes assigned to the organization's culture, norms, and policies. Eisenberger et al. (1986) identified four broad categories of perceived favorable treatment that contribute to employees' POS (POS): organizational rewards, supervisor support, fairness, and job conditions.

POS reflects employees' belief in their organization's appreciation for their work and commitment to their well-being (Ming-Chu et al., 2015). Organizations can enhance POS by implementing various strategies, such as treating employees

fairly, providing supportive resources to aid their success, establishing favorable working conditions, maintaining open communication with employees, and acknowledging their contributions (Ming-Chu et al., 2015); Eisenberger et al., 2020; Li et al., 2022). Moreover, POS is considered a valuable asset that boosts employees' confidence in handling job demands (Bai et al., 2023). Saeed & Hussain (2021) suggest that employees perceive organizational support as instrumental in helping them achieve the organization's objectives.

Existing literature indicates the opportunity to explore the correlation among POS, JS, EE, and psychological contract across various sectors to enhance the reliability of these factors. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the moderating influence of the psychological contract among employees in higher education regarding the relationship between POS and JS, as well as between EE and JS. An integrated framework has been constructed with substantial support from relevant literature

### 3. Theoretical Background

#### 3.1 Social exchange theory

Blau's Social Exchange Theory (1964) has been extensively applied to understand and explain employee attitudes and behaviors (Settoon et al., 1996). It revolves around a series of interrelated interactions wherein employees feel pressure to reciprocate positively due to the sense of obligation stemming from others' favorable and advantageous actions directed towards them (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Blau (1964) argued that social exchanges aren't strict contracts with clear terms. Instead, they create a general sense of obligation where the recipient decides how and when to repay. Central to this theory is the unwritten expectation that people will reciprocate actions without formal agreements dictating the terms of repayment. It entails voluntary reciprocal behaviors mediated by trust and gratitude, motivating individuals to make gratuitous repayments (Gould-Williams et al., 2005). Blau conceptualized social exchange as a dynamic process where individuals exchange resources and rewards, creating interdependent relationships (Emerson, 1976). Social exchange theory has significantly shaped the understanding of workplace behavior (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), particularly evident when employees strive for a mutually beneficial and equitable relationship with their organization (Chin & Hung, 2013). The essence of social exchange lies in the assumption that reciprocal favors are performed with the expectation of future returns (Aryee et al., 2002). Furthermore, the motivation behind the exchange is crucial, with actors perceiving it as altruistic rather than driven by self-interest (Karagonlar et al., 2016).

In the workplace, a social exchange can occur when a supervisor offers support to an employee with the implicit expectation of enhanced job outcomes. POS indicates the degree to which employees believe their employer prioritizes their well-being (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2001). Individuals perceiving high levels of organizational support are more likely to be committed to their jobs and achieve higher performance compared to those with low perceived support.

Previous studies have predominantly examined factors such as supervisor support, affective commitment, organizational rewards, fairness, job conditions, and satisfaction (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Erdogan, Berrin et al., 2004; Rhoades, Linda et al., 2001; Cook et al., 2013). Drawing on Social Exchange Theory, employees with high POS are more likely to experience JS compared to those with low performance ability (Sungu et al., 2019). Therefore, POS, which establishes the foundation for exchange relationships (Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993; as cited in Panaccio & Vandenberghe, 2009), reflects the employer's efforts to engage in an exchange with employees, resulting in increased affective organizational commitment, demonstrating an intent to reciprocate the employer with high job performance, and ultimately enhancing JS. Employee satisfaction (JS - JS) is characterized as an individual's emotional state regarding their position at work (Warr & Inceoglu, 2012). Additionally, Kahn (1990) suggests that emotional engagement is a component of EE. Both POS and Psychological contracts share similarities as they are rooted in social exchange (Blau, 1964) and rely on the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) to explain their impact on employee attitudes and behavior.

When employees uphold social exchange relationships with their organizations, they tend to reciprocate favorable treatment. When employees highly identify with their organization, they perceive their role as vital to its functioning (e.g., Mael & Ashforth, 1992), thereby viewing the organization's successes as their own. Consequently, those employees whose commitment is rooted in social exchange are inclined to remain committed only if the organization offers material and social rewards proportionate to their contributions. Conversely, employees who have a strong organizational identification are more likely to stay with as well as support the organization even during challenging circumstances, such as economic downturns or poor organizational performance, when the organization struggles to demonstrate its commitment to them through resource provision (e.g., Riketta, 2005; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). Social

Exchange Theory also underpins EE (Saks, 2006), providing a theoretical framework for understanding why employees vary in their level of engagement with their work and organization. Within the context of Social Cognitive Theory, the elements of engagement described by Kahn (1990) and Maslach et al.'s (2001) represent the interplay of tangible rewards and emotional connections in the workplace. When employees are provided with these resources by their organization, they feel a sense of duty to reciprocate by enhancing their level of engagement..Kahn (1990) suggests that employees feel a sense of obligation to become more deeply involved in their roles as a way to repay the organization for the resources it provides.

In this study, we employ social exchange theory to shed light on the association between POS and JS. While some research has explored the link between POS and JS, few studies have delved deeply into this relationship (Sungu et al., 2019; Ahmad et al., 2010;Maan et al., 2020). This paper offers a more comprehensive examination of the correlation between POS and JS. Schein (1980) proposed that a psychological contract reflects the mutual expectations between employees and the organization regarding the specific resources each party owes the other. In our study, we utilize Social Exchange Theory to investigate how the Psychological Contract moderates the association between POS and JS, as well as the connection between EE and JS. By doing so, we introduce Social Exchange Theory as a supplementary framework that enhances researchers' comprehension of POS concerning JS and the Psychological Contract, rather than displacing existing theoretical perspectives.

## **4. Hypothesis Development**

### **4.1 Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction**

EE can be defined as the dynamic interconnection between organizations and their employees (Al-dalahmeh et al., 2018). It represents an active psychological state (Locke, 1976), encompassing the cognitive and emotional dedication that employees invest in their roles within an organization (Amhalhal et al., 2015). Moreover, it embodies a focused and profound understanding of the connection between an employee and their position (Yalabik et al., 2017). This concept revolves around the satisfaction and contentment employees derive from their roles and the collaborative atmosphere they share with colleagues in their work environment. EE contributes to the degree to which employees experience JS and develop an emotional bond with their organization's success, thereby fostering improved productivity, innovation, and employee retention (Abraham, 2012). Engaged employees demonstrate commitment to their roles, display long-term loyalty to the organization, enhance productivity, provide excellent customer service, and ultimately contribute to increased profits within the organization (Gyensare et al., 2017). Nevertheless, Abraham (2012) emphasizes that JS can result from EE. JS refers to the emotional state an individual feels regarding their job role (Warr & Inceoglu, 2012). Brief & Weiss (2002) propose that there exists a correlation between EE and JS, with highly engaged employees typically experiencing satisfaction with their jobs. However, the notion of JS has frequently been confined to the job level, often perceived as a static, overarching gauge of employee sentiment rather than a dynamic, future-oriented one (Brief & Weiss, 2002). Given the preceding discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed

H1: Employee engagement positively affects job satisfaction

### **4.2 Perceived Organizational Support and Job Satisfaction**

As per Eisenberger et al. (1986), employees tend to form overall opinions about how much their organization values their work and cares about their well-being. These opinions, exchanged between employees and employers, are termed POS and are defined in this study. Elevated levels of POS instigate feelings of obligation towards the employer and prompt individuals to reciprocate the employer's commitment by engaging in behaviors that align with organizational objectives. Through the lens of social exchange theory, studies have indicated a positive correlation between POS and metrics such as job attendance and performance (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Employees who perceive high levels of organizational support often feel a reciprocal obligation to demonstrate affective commitment, according to social exchange theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Shore & Wayne, 1993). Eisenberger et al. (1990) suggest that employees who feel valued and cared for are more likely to align their efforts with the company's goals. Numerous studies across various professions, such as nursing (Filipova, 2011), sales (Stamper and Johlke, 2003), and part-time work (Cropanzano et al., 1997), underscore the significant correlation between POS (POS) and JS. Similarly, A longitudinal study by Armstrong-Stassen (1998) revealed that managers who perceived higher levels of



organizational support initially experienced significantly higher job satisfaction two years later compared to their counterparts with lower perceived support. A potential reason for this outcome is that POS strengthens employees' confidence in the organization's commitment to recognizing and compensating their contributions, thereby encouraging greater effort (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Cullen-Lester et al., 2014). Consistent with Gouldner's (1960) reciprocity principle, employees are likely to respond to organizational support by engaging in behaviors that can lead to higher job satisfaction. This aligns with social exchange theory, which posits that employees who perceive organizational value and care feel obligated to contribute to the organization's success. (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Building upon the previous points, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2: Perceived organizational support positively affects job satisfaction.

4.3 Psychological Contract as a Moderator

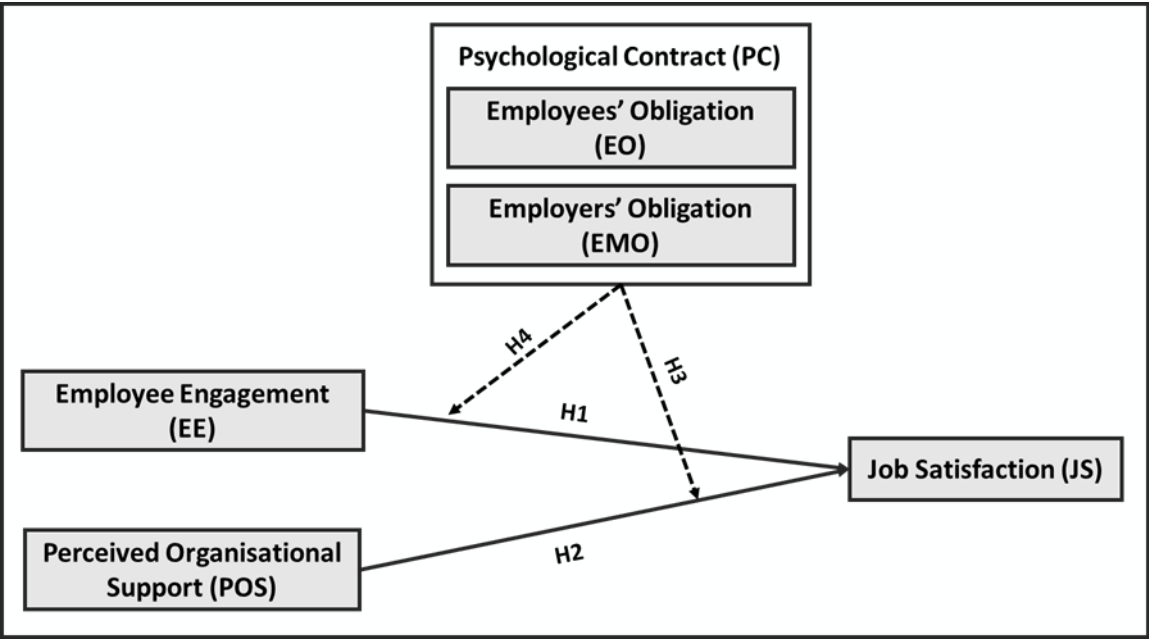
A psychological contract is formed when one party believes they have been promised future rewards, creating an expectation of reciprocal benefits. (Nayak et al., 2021). Employees form expectations based on promised future returns (Nayak, Sunanda, et al., 2021), including factors such as compensation, career growth, and professional development, etc. When these expectations are met, employees are more likely to feel committed, satisfied, and inclined to stay with the organization (Wanous et al., 1992). However, if employees perceive a discrepancy between promised and actual benefits in any area, job satisfaction may suffer, especially when those areas are considered important. (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994).

Existing research suggests that a perceived imbalance in the promises made between employees and their organizations can result in job dissatisfaction, which may manifest in increased absenteeism and turnover rates (Morrison et al., 1997; Hackett, 1989; Griffeth et al., 2000). If dissatisfied employees choose to stay with the organization, they may exhibit counterproductive behaviors such as providing subpar service, spreading malicious rumors, committing theft, or damaging company property (Knights & Kennedy, 2005). When employees perceive a high degree of internal ambassadorship, it positively correlates with their affective commitment (Burmahn et al., 2005; King et al., 2008), engagement (King et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2014; Briggs et al., 2022), and satisfaction (Arnett et al., 2002; Lu et al., 2017; Yandi & Hazimi, 2022). Therefore, it can be proposed that once expectations are met, this will influence obligations to contribute and remain longer in the organization, ultimately affecting the level of employee satisfaction within the organization.

H3: Psychological contract moderates the relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction.

H4: Psychological contract moderates the relationship between perceived organizational support and job satisfaction.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



## 5. Methodology

### 5.1 Sample & Research Design

The research was conducted among personnel employed in private-sector higher education institutions located in Uttar Pradesh, India. Utilizing a self-administered survey questionnaire, data were gathered from individuals working within these educational establishments. Direct communication channels were employed to reach out to staff members and solicit their participation in the survey, encouraging them to also invite their colleagues to take part.

The measurements of the variables were adapted from reliable sources: EE from Brad et.al (2017) , JS from Andrade, Omar et.al (2020), POS from Eisenberger et. al (1997), and Psychological Contract, from Rousseau (2000) The 5-point Likert scale was used, in which one indicated strongly disagree while five indicated strongly agree.

A Google Forms survey link was disseminated to over 1000 employees across these institutions, with a request for further distribution among peers in other organizations. No financial incentives were offered for survey participation, and respondents had the option to participate anonymously. Ultimately, 600 responses were received, and after screening for extensive missing data, 573 responses were deemed suitable for subsequent analysis.

**Table 1: Demographics**

| Demographics           |     | %     |
|------------------------|-----|-------|
| <b>Gender:</b>         |     |       |
| Males                  | 294 | 51.31 |
| Females                | 279 | 48.69 |
| <b>Marital Status:</b> |     |       |
| Married                | 389 | 67.89 |
| Unmarried              | 183 | 31.94 |
| Other                  | 1   | 0.17  |
| <b>Age:</b>            |     |       |
| Less than 25 years     | 96  | 16.75 |
| 25 - 35 years          | 213 | 37.17 |
| 36 - 45 years          | 134 | 23.39 |
| 46 - 55 years          | 87  | 15.18 |
| Above 55 years         | 43  | 7.50  |
| <b>Income:</b>         |     |       |
| Less than 1.5 Lacs     | 140 | 24.43 |
| 1.5 - 3 Lacs           | 183 | 31.94 |
| 3 - 4.5 Lacs           | 137 | 23.91 |
| 4.5 - 6 Lacs           | 84  | 14.66 |
| 6 - 10 Lacs            | 25  | 4.36  |
| More than 10 Lacs      | 4   | 0.70  |
| <b>Education:</b>      |     |       |

|                         |     |       |
|-------------------------|-----|-------|
| Undergraduate           | 0   | 0.00  |
| Post-graduate           | 396 | 69.11 |
| Doctorate               | 125 | 21.82 |
| Other                   | 52  | 9.08  |
| <b>Work Experience:</b> |     |       |
| Less than 1 year        | 85  | 14.83 |
| 1 - 5 years             | 262 | 45.72 |
| 5 - 10 years            | 155 | 27.05 |
| More than 10 years      | 71  | 12.39 |

6. Findings

The findings presented in Table 2 indicate that Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each construct in the model surpasses the recommended threshold of 0.7, as proposed by Nunnally (1978), suggesting adequate internal consistency and reliability of all constructs. Convergent validity was confirmed through factor loading values exceeding 0.7, and satisfactory average variance extracted values were observed (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) - Matrix (Table 3), revealing no concerns in this regard. To ensure the absence of multicollinearity, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all variable items were examined and found to be below 5, indicating no issues with multicollinearity in the dataset. Moreover, our proposed model demonstrated a favorable fit criterion, with an R-square value of 0.433.

Table 2: Reliability

|                                  | Cronbach's alpha<br>( $\alpha$ ) | Composite reliability<br>( $\rho_a$ ) | Composite reliability<br>( $\rho_c$ ) |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Employee Engagement              | 0.801                            | 0.847                                 | 0.841                                 |
| Job Satisfaction                 | 0.754                            | 0.757                                 | 0.826                                 |
| Perceived Organizational Support | 0.801                            | 0.817                                 | 0.849                                 |
| Psychological Contract           | 0.786                            | 0.833                                 | 0.822                                 |

Table 3: Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) – Matrix

|                     | Employee<br>Engagement | Job<br>Satisfaction | Perceived<br>Organizational<br>Support |
|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Employee Engagement |                        |                     |  |



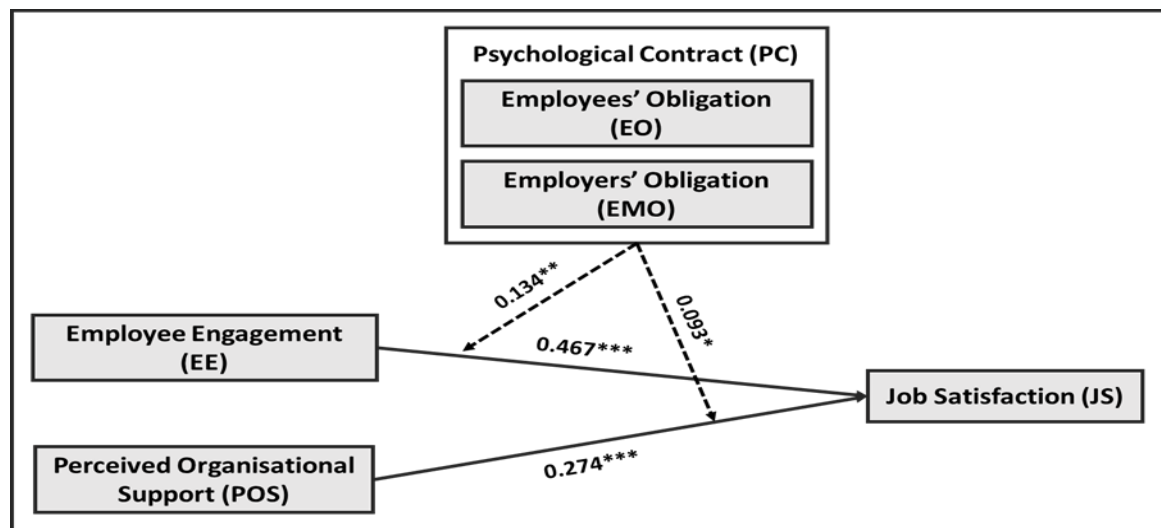
|   |       |       |  |
|---|-------|-------|--|
| <b>Job Satisfaction</b>                 | 0.759 |       |  |
| <b>Perceived Organizational Support</b> | 0.645 | 0.647 |  |

For this research, we adopted the procedural remedy advocated by Podsakoff et al. (2003) to address potential common method bias. The statistical assessment revealed a Harman single factor score of 17.02%, indicating the lack of common method bias. Additionally, we utilized SmartPLS software for the PLS-SEM analysis in this study, chosen for its user-friendly interface and consistent updates to remain current with advancements in PLS-SEM methodology (Sarstedt & Cheah, 2019).

Hypothesis H1 posits that EE positively affects JS. The results supported this hypothesis as the coefficient is significant ( $\beta = 0.467$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000^{***}$ ,  $LCL = 0.384$ ,  $UCL = 0.537$ ). Hypothesis H2 states that POS positively impacts JS. The results supported the hypothesis as the coefficient is significant ( $\beta = 0.274$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000^{***}$ ,  $LCL = 0.191$ ,  $UCL = 0.348$ ). Hypothesis H3 posits that psychological contract moderates the relationship between POS and JS. The results supported this hypothesis as the coefficient is significant ( $\beta = 0.093$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.019^*$ ,  $LCL = 0.019$ ,  $UCL = 0.174$ ). Hypothesis H4 posits that psychological contract moderates the relationship between EE and JS. The results supported this hypothesis as the coefficient is significant ( $\beta = 0.134$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.001^{**}$ ,  $LCL = 0.06$ ,  $UCL = 0.217$ ).

**Table 4: Path Coefficients**

|   | <b>B</b> | <b>T-Statistics</b> | <b>P values</b> | <b>LCL</b> | <b>UCL</b> |
|---|----------|---------------------|-----------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Employee Engagement -&gt; Job Satisfaction</b>                                     | 0.467    | 11.975              | 0.000           | 0.384      | 0.537      |
| <b>Perceived Organization Support -&gt; Job Satisfaction</b>                          | 0.274    | 6.833               | 0.000           | 0.191      | 0.348      |
| <b>Psychological Contract x Perceived Organization Support -&gt; Job Satisfaction</b> | 0.093    | 2.346               | 0.019           | 0.019      | 0.174      |
| <b>Psychological Contract x Employee Engagement -&gt; Job Satisfaction</b>            | 0.134    | 3.332               | 0.001           | 0.06       | 0.217      |



**Figure 2: Structural Model**

## 7. Discussion

This study investigated the interrelationships among POS (POS), EE (EE), and JS (JS) within a social exchange theoretical framework. While prior research has examined these constructs independently, this study adopted an integrated approach to explore their combined influence on employee outcomes. Findings supported the distinctiveness of POS and EE, demonstrating their independent contributions to JS. By establishing empirical linkages among these variables, this research extends the extant literature. Additionally, the study introduced psychological contract as the boundary condition. Results align with previous research affirming the positive association between EE and JS (e.g., Shanmuga & Vijayadurai, 2014) and the well-documented link between POS and JS (e.g., Armstrong-Stassen, 1998). Notably, the study revealed that fulfillment of psychological contracts amplifies the positive impact of both POS and EE on JS.

EE has garnered significant attention within organizational research due to its demonstrably positive impact on various organizational outcomes (Orgambidez-Ramos et al., 2014). Notably, research suggests a strong association between EE and JS (Kooij et al., 2017). Studies have shown that high levels of engagement can lead to increased JS (Lu et al., 2016) and a decreased intention to leave one's job (Rayton & Yalabik, 2014). This positive relationship translates into tangible benefits for organizations, including reduced turnover and a more satisfied workforce (Karanika et al., 2015). Further supporting this notion, Biswas & Bhatnagar (2013) and Vorina et al. (2017) identified a significant positive influence of EE on JS. Our findings build upon this established body of research, demonstrating that EE indeed positively affects JS.

Our study examined the relationship between POS and JS. Findings indicate a significant positive association between these constructs, suggesting that employees perceiving greater organizational value and care exhibit higher levels of JS. These results align with previous research consistently demonstrating a positive relationship between POS and JS (Cropanzano et al., 1997; Armstrong-Stassen, 1998; Stamper & Johlke, 2003; Filipova, 2011; Cullen-Lester et al., 2014; Riska et al., 2023; A-Stassen & Horsburgh, 1996; Burke & Greenglass, 2001; Burke, 2003; Stamper & Johlke, 2003; Bernarto et al., 2020; Khair et al., 2024). This study unveils a significant and positive moderating effect of psychological contract on the association between POS, EE, and JS. When the psychological contract is fulfilled, our results suggest that the positive influence of both POS and EE on JS is amplified. This underscores the critical role of reciprocity and trust within the employer-employee relationship.

Our findings converge with existing research on the role of psychological contracts in organizational relationships. Previous studies have primarily explored the mediating role of psychological contracts in the relationship between POS and JS (Bhatnagar & Biswas, 2012; Bahadir et al., 2022). Consistent with social exchange theory (Anand et al., 2010), these studies demonstrate that employees who perceive organizational support are more likely to reciprocate with positive work behaviors. However, while Koomson (2021) has identified a moderating effect of psychological contract breach on JS, the present study extends this literature by examining the moderating role of psychological contract fulfillment on the relationship between POS, EE, and JS. Our results indicate that when employees perceive that their organization has fulfilled its contractual obligations, the positive effects of POS and EE on JS are amplified. This finding aligns with the tenets of social exchange theory, emphasizing the reciprocal nature of the employment relationship. The study contributes to the literature by highlighting the importance of psychological contract fulfillment as a boundary condition for the positive impact of POS and EE on employee well-being. Future research could further elucidate the mechanisms underlying this moderating effect and explore its implications for organizational interventions aimed at enhancing employee satisfaction.

## 8. Limitations and Future Research

This research is limited in scope as the findings are centric to the employees of private sector higher education institutes. The results may not be generalizable to public sector employees of higher education institutes or organizations other than education or academic institutes. The research initially explored the associations between POS and JS; and also, between EE and JS. The study identified a significant relationship, although it is suggested that this connection requires a more comprehensive explanation. It was hypothesized that POS becomes evident when a psychological contract is in play within the organization. Future studies should delve deeper into understanding the association between these variables. The role of the psychological contract as a mediator can also be explored by future studies.

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