

## SOCIAL RECOGNITION AS A PREDICTOR OF JOB RETENTION AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN PUNJAB

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### **Abstract**

*Teacher retention remains a serious issue in the Punjab public primary schools in Pakistan because a sustainable and motivated teaching force is central to the quality and sustainability of educational provision. Even though the organizational factors that lead to retention have been studied with growing academic interest, there is limited empirical evidence to define the predictive validity of social recognition on teachers' choice to stay in the occupation. The current research examined how far social recognition can be used as a predictor of job retention among primary school teachers of Punjab. The study was based on a positivist paradigm, and the research design that was used was a causal-comparative research design. A multistage simple random sampling approach was used in the selection of 1,200 primary school teachers in three divisions of Punjab in the public sector. A five-point Likert-type survey was developed based on the research question, measuring the dimensions of social recognition, such as status, prestige, care, respect, and social esteem and job retention components, such as environment, workplace adjustment, role of school leadership, teachers evaluation, teachers need assessment, job satisfaction and mentoring, as well as the data were collected. Predictive relationships were examined using both the simple and multiple regression analyses. The results suggested that social recognition is a strong predictor of job retention and respect, social esteem, and care were found to be the best-defined dimensions. The research suggests institutionalizing the structured recognition systems by the educational authorities and the school leadership, creating a positive, respectful and supportive professional atmosphere and thus strengthening teacher dedication and encouraging long-term retention in the Punjab government school system in primary education.*

**Keywords:** Social Recognition, Job Retention, attrition.

### **Introduction**

Teacher retention in primary education has emerged as a critical challenge for educational systems worldwide, particularly in developing regions such as Punjab, Pakistan, where the stability of the teaching workforce directly influences educational quality, equity, and long-term student outcomes (Siddiqui & Shaukat, 2021; Khalid & Tadesse, 2023). Persistent teacher attrition disrupts instructional continuity, weakens institutional memory, and undermines the effectiveness of educational reforms, thereby posing serious threats to the sustainability of primary education systems (Shibiti, 2020).

A growing body of research has identified multiple intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing teachers' job satisfaction and retention, including job characteristics, school climate, leadership practices, remuneration, and personal attributes (Abdullah et al., 2023; Shibiti, 2020). Leadership styles such as transformational and servant leadership have been widely examined and shown to positively affect teachers' organizational commitment and retention intentions, particularly at the elementary level in Southern Punjab (Khan et al., 2022; Iqbal & Hassan, 2021). Similarly, workplace happiness, job security, and professional development opportunities have been recognized as key determinants of teachers' decisions to remain in the profession (Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015; Ali et al., 2020).

Despite these insights, social recognition remains a comparatively under-explored yet potentially powerful predictor of teacher retention. Social recognition refers to the acknowledgment, respect, and appreciation of teachers' professional contributions by school leadership, colleagues, parents, and the broader community. Prior studies suggest that social recognition plays a vital role in shaping teachers' professional identity, motivation, self-esteem, and psychological well-being (Shaukat et al., 2019; Siddiqui, 2020). Evidence from Pakistan indicates that social recognition is significantly associated with teachers' self-esteem and emotional commitment, particularly among secondary school teachers, yet its direct predictive role in job retention among primary school teachers remains insufficiently examined (Siddiqui & Shaukat, 2021).

The relevance of social recognition becomes more pronounced in contexts characterized by limited material incentives and high emotional labor. Teacher migration from rural to urban areas in Punjab often reflects a search for greater professional honor, social status, and recognition rather than purely financial benefits (Siddiqui & Shaukat, 2021). Supporting this perspective, research conducted in China highlights professional honor as a fundamental motivator influencing teachers' mobility and career decisions, underscoring the universal importance of social recognition as a non-monetary incentive (Liu & Onwuegbuzie, 2014). Such findings suggest that social recognition may serve as a protective factor against burnout, stress, and attrition, especially in resource-constrained educational settings (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

In Punjab, primary school teachers face multifaceted challenges, including curriculum implementation pressures, gender-specific constraints, work-related stress, and limited institutional support (Khalid & Tadesse, 2023; Fatima & Sahibzada, 2020). While Continuous Professional Development (CPD) initiatives aim to enhance teachers' pedagogical competencies, their effectiveness may be limited if teachers do not perceive themselves as valued and socially acknowledged members of the educational system (OECD, 2019). Therefore, understanding the predictive role of social recognition in teacher retention is essential for developing holistic, evidence-based policies that address both structural and psychosocial dimensions of the teaching profession.

Against this backdrop, the present study examines social recognition as a predictor of job retention among primary school teachers in Punjab, Pakistan, aiming to fill a critical gap in the existing literature. By focusing on social recognition as a key psychosocial factor, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of teacher retention dynamics and offers practical implications for policymakers, school administrators, and educational leaders seeking to stabilize and strengthen the primary education workforce.

### Literature Review

Teacher retention constitutes a critical challenge in primary education. Punjab experiences annual teacher attrition of 12-18%, substantially exceeding the 5% sustainability threshold (Federal Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Siddiqui and Shaukat (2021) document significant teacher mobility affecting educational stability, with differential patterns between public and private schools. Attrition disrupts pedagogical continuity, increases institutional costs, and disproportionately undermines learning in disadvantaged communities (Khalid & Tadesse, 2023). Retention depends on multifactorial determinants. Abdullah et al. (2023) identify both intrinsic factors, personal attributes, psychological characteristics, career aspirations and extrinsic factors including job characteristics, institutional features, and organizational conditions as retention influences. Shibiti (2020) demonstrates that satisfaction with retention factors correlates directly with work engagement. However, psychosocial determinants, particularly social recognition, remain underexamined in South Asian contexts. Primary teachers in Punjab face distinctive challenges: curriculum implementation complexity, work-related stress, and gender-specific constraints affecting female educators (Siddiqui & Shaukat, 2021). Identifying modifiable factors strengthening retention within existing constraints is essential for policy reform.

Social recognition encompasses acknowledgment and valuation of individuals' contributions by relevant social reference groups. Within educational contexts, recognition operates across three integrated dimensions: (1) Respect professional esteem valuing teachers' competence from students, families, peers, and community; (2) Care institutional and interpersonal concern for teacher well-being, development, and psychological security; (3) Self-esteem teachers' internalized sense of professional worth and valued social standing. These dimensions interconnect to construct professional identity and occupational engagement.

Respect operationalizes as professional recognition from multiple constituencies: student attentiveness and valuation of instruction; parental confidence in teacher judgment; collegial collaboration and professional standing; community acknowledgment of educational contributions. Care manifests through administrative support, resource provision, workload management, professional development access, and leadership behaviors demonstrating genuine concern. Self-esteem represents internalized professional competence and social value, strengthened through external recognition and functioning as a mediator between recognition and retention.

Empirical evidence demonstrates substantive associations between social recognition and psychological well-being. Recognition correlates positively with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and reduced burnout. Self-esteem among secondary teachers correlates with recognition, with particular significance in developing contexts where alternative affirmation sources are limited. Teachers experiencing elevated recognition report enhanced psychological engagement, reduced anxiety, and increased motivation for occupational excellence (Abdullah et al., 2023).

Three theoretical mechanisms explain recognition's effects on outcomes: Social Exchange Theory posits recognition as valued organizational return, increasing employment relationship value. Self-Determination Theory identifies recognition as satisfying fundamental psychological needs for competence (respect), relatedness (care), and autonomy (valuation). Job Embeddedness Theory demonstrates recognition strengthens integration within organizational and community

networks, increasing retention costs. These frameworks converge, suggesting social recognition functions as a critical psychological resource influencing occupational persistence.

Social recognition assumes particular significance in resource-constrained educational systems where fiscal constraints limit compensation enhancement. Teacher mobility patterns in developing contexts frequently reflect pursuit of professional honor and recognition rather than exclusively monetary differentials. Chinese research documents that professional honor functions as a fundamental motivator influencing teacher migration from rural to urban schools. This pattern demonstrates recognition operates as an independent motivational force substantially influencing retention decisions, independent of material compensation.

From a policy perspective, recognition-fostering interventions represent cost-effective approaches to retention improvement. Recognition programs, supportive leadership training, community engagement initiatives, and peer recognition systems require minimal fiscal investment while addressing fundamental psychological needs. This positions social recognition as a potentially powerful policy lever for improving retention within fiscal constraints. Teacher retention depends on multiple institutional factors: Environment fit congruence between teacher attributes and institutional characteristics; Compensation salary adequacy and financial security; Leadership administrative support and supportive behaviors; Evaluation constructive developmental feedback; Mentoring peer support and knowledge transmission. These factors operate interdependently, creating cumulative retention effects.

Importantly, social recognition dimensions respect, care, and self-esteem operate as distinct mechanisms potentially independent from material and structural factors. Teachers with adequate compensation but minimal recognition frequently contemplate departure, while recognition may compensate for compensation inadequacy. This suggests social recognition functions as an independent retention mechanism, potentially operating as powerfully as material factors, operating through psychological rather than material mechanisms. Existing literature extensively documents retention determinants, including compensation, leadership, evaluation, mentoring, and institutional factors. However, empirical investigation of social recognition's predictive strength for primary teacher retention in Punjab remains substantially limited. Recognition's associations with secondary teacher self-esteem are documented; systematic investigation of recognition's multidimensional effects (respect, care, self-esteem) on primary teacher retention remains absent from South Asian literature. This gap limits the development of South Asian retention models and provides insufficient evidence regarding modifiable psychological factors for resource-constrained systems.

This investigation examines: (1) social recognition's prevalence and dimensional structure among primary teachers; (2) associations between recognition dimensions and retention intentions; (3) moderating influences of school urbanicity and teacher demographics; (4) mechanisms through which recognition affects retention. Theoretically, integrating social exchange, job embeddedness, and self-determination frameworks explains how recognition addresses psychological substrates of occupational commitment. Practically, understanding recognition's independent and interactive effects provides evidence-based guidance for retention-focused policy interventions within resource-constrained primary education systems.

### **Theoretical framework**

Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs can be used in interpreting the levels of satisfaction and the retention rates among teachers in schools. This applies to the teachers, whereby their most

basic needs should be met to a certain level, and then they should have the fulfilment of their feelings of security and identification at the school set up. The teachers might influence the satisfaction rates and decision to remain in the job because they feel part of the school and that they have a role to play (Burke et al., 2015). The higher a teacher climbs Maslow's hierarchy, the more chances that the teacher will not quit teaching. The lower scale teachers will have a greater chance of suffering stress and burnout, which will prompt them to either abandon the teaching profession or school. The factors of stressful situations that lead to teacher turnover are not a specific phenomenon in one specific area of teaching (Fisher and Royster, 2016, p. 994).

### Conceptual framework



### Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it explores social recognition as a key predictor of job retention among primary school teachers in Punjab. In the context of Pakistan, where teacher turnover affects educational quality and continuity, understanding non-monetary factors such as respect, appreciation, and societal value of teachers is essential. The study provides evidence for policymakers to design recognition-based strategies that strengthen teacher commitment and reduce attrition. For school administrators, it highlights the importance of supportive leadership and acknowledgment practices in enhancing teachers' motivation and intention to stay. Academically, the research contributes to the literature on teacher retention by integrating social recognition into predictive models, offering a culturally relevant perspective and a foundation for further research in educational management and teacher motivation.

### Research Objectives

The objective of the study was to:

1. Investigate the effect of social recognition on job retention of primary school teachers from Punjab, Pakistan.

### Research Questions

Based on the above objectives, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. In what ways social recognition may affect the retention of primary school teachers from Punjab, Pakistan?

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The philosophical foundation of this study was grounded in the positivist paradigm. This study adopted casual comparative research design, which typically aims at establishing a relationship among independent and dependent variables when an event or action has already taken place (Salkind, 2010). Public sector primary school teachers of the Punjab province formed

the population of this study and the researcher used multi stage simple random sampling technique to select the sample. At present, the province of Punjab has been divided into 11 divisions with 36 districts. At the first step, researcher selected 3 divisions randomly. The rationale for selecting 3 division is that one division were selected from upper Punjab, one from central Punjab and third were selected from lower Punjab. At second step, two districts from each division were selected using a simple random sampling technique. At the third step, two tehsils were selected from each district and at the fourth step, 25 girls and 25 boys (50 schools) were selected from each tehsil. At the fifth step, 2 primary teachers were selected randomly from each selected school. Overall, 1200 (600 female and 600 male) primary school teachers were selected as the sample of the study.

### Instrumentation

In this research, the researcher has used the five-point Likert-type questionnaire that is designed by the researcher with the supervisor's consultation and an in-depth review of the available literature on the same field. The first part of the questionnaire was aimed at obtaining demographical data of the respondents (gender, age, teaching experience, academic qualifications); the second part included closed-ended questions directly correlated with the research purposes that were stated. The items were to explore three such dimensions among the primary school teachers: social recognition, job retention and job performance: the dimension of each scale in question was as follows:

**Table 1**

*Instruments Details of the Study*

Scales	Scale Items	Scale Dimensions
Social Recognition Scale (SRS) (Independent)	Various items assessing teachers' perception of social recognition.	Status Prestige Care Respect Social Esteem
Job Retention Scale (JRS) (Dependent)	Various items assessing teachers' views on job retention.	Environment Workplace Adjustment  Role of School Leadership Teachers' Evaluation Teachers 'Need Assessment Job Satisfaction Mentoring

### Data Analysis and Results

#### Regression Analysis of the Effect of Teacher Social Recognition on Job Retention

To determine the predictive power of teacher social recognition on job retention, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted. This analysis helps identify the extent to which social recognition explains the variance in job retention scores among teachers. As shown in Table 4.16,

the results indicate a statistically significant positive effect, demonstrating that increased social recognition is associated with higher levels of job retention.

**Table 2**

*Regression Analysis for Effect of Teachers' Social Recognition on Teachers' Job Retention*

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	.655	.429	.429	.404

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Social Recognition	.393	.013	.655	29.162	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Job Retention

The regression analysis presents a significant predictive relationship between teacher social recognition and job retention. The correlation coefficient ( $R = .655$ ) indicates a strong positive relationship between these variables, consistent with the earlier correlation analysis. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = .429$ ) reveals that teacher social recognition explains approximately 42.9% of the variance in job retention. This substantial proportion suggests that social recognition serves as a powerful predictor of teachers' decisions to remain in their profession. The unstandardized regression coefficient ( $B = .393$ ) indicates that for each one-unit increase in social recognition, job retention increases by 0.393 units. The standardized coefficient ( $Beta = .655$ ) confirms the strong predictive relationship between these variables when measured on a standardized scale. The t-statistic ( $t = 29.162$ ) and the level of significance ( $p < .001$ ) are convincing facts that there is a statistically significant correlation between teacher social recognition and job retention, which is not because of mere coincidence. This regression model substantiates the theoretical hypothesis that an increase in social recognition by teachers can help to increase retention rates substantially. Educational administrators and policymakers might consider implementing strategies that elevate teachers' social recognition as an effective approach to addressing teacher job retention challenges. The model suggests that interventions targeting social recognition could yield substantial improvements in retention outcomes, potentially addressing a significant portion of the factors contributing to teacher turnover.

**Table 4.18**

*Regression Coefficients for the Effect of the dimensions of Social Recognition on Teachers' Job Retention*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients Beta	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
Status	.05	.01	.11	3.43	.00
Prestige	.03	.02	.06	1.68	.09

Care	.08	.01	.16	4.21	.00
Respect	.12	.01	.24	7.05	.00
Social Esteem	.09	.01	.17	4.97	.00

The regression analysis examining the effect of various social recognition dimensions on teachers' job retention reveals important insights into which specific aspects of recognition most significantly influence retention decisions. Respect emerges as the strongest predictor of job retention, with the highest standardized coefficient (Beta = .24). This indicates that teachers' perception of being respected by society, parents, and colleagues has the most substantial impact on their decision to remain in the profession. For every unit increase in respect, job retention increases by 0.12 units (unstandardized B), holding other variables constant. Social Esteem follows as the second most influential factor (Beta = .17), suggesting that teachers' perception of their esteem within society significantly contributes to retention. The unstandardized coefficient (B = .09) indicates that a one-unit increase in social esteem is associated with a 0.09 unit increase in job retention. Care shows the third strongest effect (Beta = .16), with an unstandardized coefficient of 0.08, highlighting the importance of caring attitudes toward teachers in retention decisions. Status demonstrates a smaller but still significant effect (Beta = .11), indicating that the professional status of teachers contributes to retention, though less powerfully than respect, social esteem, and care.

Prestige is the only dimension that fails to reach statistical significance (Beta = .06), suggesting that the prestige associated with the teaching profession may not independently predict job retention when controlling for other recognition dimensions. These findings suggest that efforts to improve teacher retention should prioritize fostering respect for teachers, enhancing their social esteem, and demonstrating care for their well-being. The results indicate that the relational aspects of recognition (respect and care) may be more influential than the status-related dimensions in retention decisions.

### Major Findings

The results of this study were summarised below for each research question:

1. Social recognition showed strong positive correlations with job retention, explaining 42.9% of the variance, respectively.
2. For every unit increase in social recognition, job retention increased by 0.393 units, indicating substantial predictive relationships.
3. In multiple regression analysis for job retention, Respect emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by Social Esteem and Care, while Status showed a smaller effect, and Prestige was non-significant.

### CONCLUSION

This quantitative causal comparative study examined social recognition as a predictor of job retention among 1,200 primary school teachers (600 female, 600 male) in Punjab province, selected through multi-stage random sampling from three geographically representative divisions. The findings demonstrate that social recognition is a significant predictor of job retention, explaining 42.9% of the variance ( $r^2 = .429$ ). The regression coefficient ( $\beta = 0.393$ ) indicates that each unit increase in social recognition corresponds to a 0.393-unit increase in job retention. Among the dimensions of social recognition, respect emerged as the strongest predictor, followed

by social esteem and care, while status showed minimal effect and prestige was non-significant. These results underscore that intrinsic forms of recognition—particularly respect, esteem, and care are substantially more influential in predicting teacher retention than extrinsic markers such as prestige or status. This finding suggests that authentic professional valuation by communities and colleagues constitutes a more potent determinant of occupational persistence than material or hierarchical incentives. However, the cross-sectional causal comparative design limits causal inference. While social recognition significantly predicts retention, the research cannot establish directionality whether elevated recognition promotes retention or continued employment generates enhanced recognition through accumulated credibility and integration. Educational policymakers should prioritize institutional interventions that cultivate genuine professional respect, emotional support, and collegial care rather than relying primarily on material incentives or status elevation. Such interventions may prove more efficacious in addressing teacher attrition and sustaining educational quality. Future research employing longitudinal designs and multilevel modeling would strengthen causal understanding. Comparative studies across provinces and educational contexts would determine the generalizability of these findings. Qualitative investigations could elucidate the mechanisms through which social recognition influences retention decisions. In conclusion, social recognition significantly predicts job retention among primary school teachers in Punjab, with respect, social esteem, and care as its most influential dimensions. These findings warrant institutional and policy attention to professional recognition as a strategic retention lever.

## DISCUSSIONS

This study found that social recognition significantly predicts job retention among primary school teachers in Punjab. These findings align with Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, which identifies recognition as a fundamental human motivator. Herzberg's (1966) two-factor theory supports recognition as a job satisfier. Eyal & Roth (2011) demonstrated that perceived recognition from administrators and colleagues strongly associates with teacher job satisfaction and retention commitment. Wentzel & Brophy (2014) confirmed that recognized teachers persist longer in their roles. These results support international evidence that recognition motivates teacher retention across contexts. Teacher attrition in South Asia is substantial. Pandya & Kazim (2021) reported that Pakistani primary school teacher attrition reaches 20-25% in rural areas. Ingersoll & Strong (2011) found 16% annual U.S. teacher departure rates, with higher rates in developing countries. Darling-Hammond & Sykes (2003) argued that retention requires strategies beyond salary alone. Ahmed & Hassan (2020) identified that South Asian teacher retention depends on unique cultural factors including community respect and social standing, explaining why recognition proves particularly effective in Punjab. Qureshi & Ehsan (2019) documented higher rural teacher attrition in Punjab, suggesting community recognition interventions benefit rural contexts especially. Deci & Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory explains the mechanism: recognition satisfies the relatedness need belonging within professional communities. Khan & Iqbal (2021) confirmed that meeting relatedness needs predicts Pakistani teacher organizational commitment and retention. Bakker & Demerouti's (2007) Job Demands-Resources framework identifies recognition as a job resource buffering against demands. Hoigaard et al. (2012) showed recognition prevents educator burnout. Mitchell et al. (2001) established that organizational commitment mediates job satisfaction and actual retention behavior, suggesting recognition, commitment and retention pathways. Recognition's effects distinctly differ from salary effects. Ballou & Podgursky (2000) showed salary improves retention but Liang & Zhang's (2022) meta-analysis found multi-

dimensional approaches combining salary with recognition prove most effective in developing countries. Park & Hallman (2020) confirmed recognition's substantial effects even controlling for structural factors. Desimone et al. (2014) found that valued professional development increases retention, suggesting recognition amplifies development benefits. Leithwood & Riehl (2003) identified principal leadership in recognizing teachers as critical for retention. Shakeel & Brown (2021) found South Asian principals' recognition roles crucial for school culture and commitment, particularly impactful in hierarchical Punjab educational systems. Recognition operates through three mechanisms. Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory explains psychological effects: recognition strengthens teachers' beliefs in their teaching capacity, increasing persistence. Burt's (2000) social capital theory explains social effects: recognition strengthens professional relationships and community bonds, creating reasons to remain. Pfeffer's (1997) organizational symbolism explains institutional effects: visible recognition signals organizational value, reinforcing work meaningfulness. World Bank (2018) guidance emphasizes non-monetary recognition as central to South Asian teacher retention, especially where budgets constrain salary increases. Hussain et al. (2020) recommended Punjab develop formal recognition programs. Recognition-based strategies prove cost-effective: they require no proportional financial investment, implement through community engagement, strengthen relationships, and build culture without substantial resources. Reverse causality remains possible committed teachers may elicit greater recognition. However, Ladd (2011) found recognition typically precedes commitment. Confounding variables require control. Weiqi (2007) identified school resources, administrative support, working conditions, and demographics affecting both recognition and retention. Khurshid & Kausar (2015) documented that female Pakistani teachers especially benefit from peer recognition networks, indicating recognition effects vary by gender. Future research should examine longitudinal effects on sustained retention, explore psychological mechanisms through qualitative methods, test recognition intervention impacts experimentally, investigate generalizability across regions, identify moderating demographic and institutional factors, and analyze recognition interactions with salary, conditions, and development. These findings establish social recognition as a measurable, actionable retention predictor implementable in resource-limited Punjab schools, supporting evidence-based recognition strategies that address psychological and social dimensions of teacher retention alongside structural and financial factors.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Education authorities should institutionalize structured recognition systems to enhance teachers' sense of value and strengthen their commitment to remain in the profession.
2. School leaders should actively promote consistent appreciation, supportive feedback, and inclusive practices to improve teachers' intention to stay.
3. Schools should prioritize fostering respectful and caring professional environments rather than relying primarily on status or prestige-based recognition.
4. Future research should examine additional psychosocial and organizational factors that may interact with social recognition to further explain teacher retention across different educational levels and regions.

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