The Employee Experience Imperative: Shaping Retention through Modern Workplace Drivers

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Abstract: The modern workplace is undergoing profound transformation after pandemic driven by digitalization, AI advancement, demographic shifts and evolving work culture. These shifts and changes resulted spike in attrition rates. In this condition, employee experience and modern workplace drivers emerged as a tool for employee retention. This study aimed to investigate the impact of modern workplace drivers on workplace outcomes through the mediation of employee experience. The study identified five modern workplace drivers - pay and benefits, role fit, collaboration, communication, and recognition, and three workplace outcomes - intent to stay, employee inclusion, and employee well-being. These variables were discovered from extensive literature review, and after which relevant hypotheses were formulated. To measure the relationships among these variables, a self-constructed, standardized and validated measurement scale was used. This cross-sectional study included 60 employees from Generation Y and Z working across various sectors of India. For the data analysis, linear regression analysis, and mediation analysis were applied using PLS SEM, SPSS 20.0, JASP and Smart PLS-4 respectively. The results revealed that all the modern workplace drivers had a significant relationship with the workplace outcomes, and employee experience successfully mediated the impact of the modern workplace drivers on workplace outcomes, i.e. retention factors. These findings were consistent with the existing literature and suggests for a larger cross-generational study to further validate and generalize the findings. The study contributes by providing a holistic 'Employee Experience Imperative' framework as a comprehensive measurement tool.

Keywords: Employee Experience, Modern Workplace Drivers, Workplace Outcomes, Mediation Analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

The fading of the Marxist epoch and the rise of a borderless, digital HR ecosystem have introduced a paradigm shift workplaces, creating major shifts in relationships and accelerating changes during COVID-19. In this context, employee experience has emerged as a strategic imperative rather than a conventional HR initiative. Organizations now compete not only for customers but also for a committed and a loyal workforce, highlighting the centrality of EX. Its ideation was experimented with to counter post-pandemic induced monotony and redefine employee perceptions across all touchpoints of the employee journey. This marked a paradigm shift from traditional engagement to EX, significantly influencing organizational outcomes. Yet many HR practitioners and leaders still rely on obsolete engagement practices and struggle with rapid skill evolution, talent shortages, and rising attrition. As a result, organizational success today is deeply intertwined with the quality of employee experience.

It implies that when an employee is fairly treated, gets the opportunity to grow, and develops trust with organization it can lead to positive outcomes, such as high discretionary or extra-role behavior ***(Pham et al., 2024)***, reduced turnover intentions, enhance satisfaction ***(Noorulkhathija et al., 2025)***, declines workplace ostracism ***(Ferris et al., 2008)***, as studies states that ostracized employees exhibit negative behaviour at workplace ***(O'Reilly et al., 2015)***. Furthermore, poor employee experience can fuel stress, disengagement, high voluntary turnover, and dissatisfaction, representing issues that erode productivity, and profitability ***(Joseph et al., 2017)***. Therefore, positive experience can provide favorable results, while a negative EX indicates saturated innovation, employee dissatisfaction, and negatively effects customer satisfaction and overall profitability, replicating the "Domino Effect" ***(Spasova, 2024)***.

However, studies also provide distinction between modern and precedent or early workplace drivers, providing gradual evolution of employee experience throughout the transformation the process of workplace. In "utilitarian" phase, employee was treated as a cog, mere tangible tools were enough for employees, wherein "productivity era", emphasized on productivity, followed by "engagement era" that advocated for employee needs and happiness ***(Morgan, 2017; Singh & Shakya, 2014)***. While, some scholars view EX as a continued form of employee engagement rather than its replacement ***(Panneerselvam, 2022)***, its strategic importance is intact and undeniable. The growing unrest among employees and voluntary turnover trends, HR practitioner looked for more practical and modern solutions by investing on EX, because a mere hike in perks or a 'funified' workplace could not curb the turnover trends ***(Plaskoff, 2017)***.

Not only the historical chronology but drivers of modern workplace too played a crucial role in shaping the workplace relationships and organizational outcomes. While, early workplace drivers, like physical working conditions ***(Mayo, 1933)***, stability and flexibility ***(Kanter, 1977)***, hierarchy levels ***(Herzberg, 1968; Maslow, 1943),*** traditional training and tenure based career growth ***(Walton, 1985)*** played vital role in enhancing productivity. On the other side, modern workplace revolutionized and introduced new workplace drivers, such as employee experience (EX) and well-being ***(Qualtrics, n.d.; Malik et al., 2023)***, flexible and hybrid workplace ***(Bloom et al., 2024)***, digital culture and technological environment ***(Vignoli et al., 2024)***, DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) initiatives ***(Shore et al., 2011)***, pay & benefits and recognition ***(Pangallo, 2022)***, highlighting modern workplace drivers affecting retention. Employee experience focuses on building a positive image about each and every interaction, taking place within

the organizational environment. Unlike the one-size-fits-all approach of traditional engagement practices, employee experience (EX) demands a personalized, holistic focus that fosters belongingness, recognition, and purpose ***(Sinurat et al., 2021; Vignoli et al., 2024)***, and entered the mainstream, to vocalize modern workplace needs, where a traditional construct like employee engagement was extended and transformed to create positive perception about overall journey ***(Morgan, 2017)***.

1.1. The Employee Experience Imperative

EX comprises every interaction and touchpoint across the entire employee lifecycle, shaping overall perception ***(Morgan, 2017; Pangallo, 2022)***. It was first coined by Hankin ***(Mckinsey & Company, 2022)*** to express his concern over the "war of talent." Further, ***Harris (2007)*** in the light of "customer experience," underscored the idea that loyal customers are a result of engaged employees. This perspective highlights how employees' positive perceptions and satisfaction with their workplace translate into a richer employee experience, which in turn enhances the overall customer experience and satisfaction. ***Emmett et al. (2021)*** in a McKinsey report, stated that the COVID-19 period has brought challenges for companies along with ample opportunities to expand its goodwill, work environment, and fulfilment of the basic needs that are evolving every day. For instance, an 800 US-based companies' survey by McKinsey & Co. revealed that remote working has positive effects on employees. An engaged and satisfied employee stays motivated, works efficiently, contributes with creative ideas ***(McKinsey & Company, 2022)***, is less likely to leave ***(Nair et al., 2024)***, wins customer loyalty by delivering exceptional services, and avoids absenteeism. Most importantly, organization's reputation improves if it values and retains high-quality talent by providing an effective experience ***(Spasova, 2024)***. As ***Caplan (2014)*** correctly noted that organizations increasingly prioritize retention, innovation, and engagement to maintain a competitive advantage. Therefore, employee engagement required translation into the broader, more nuanced, and evolved concept of employee experience ***(Kulkarni & Mohanty, 2023)***. Figure_1, presents the employee experience imperative, a holistic framework for the modern workplace that not only considers modern workplace drivers; but details each component comprehensively. Here, EX covers the overall employee journey, initiating with the onboarding experience, followed by the engagement stage, and concluding with the exit experience, where experience is measured through employee net promoter scores (eNPS).

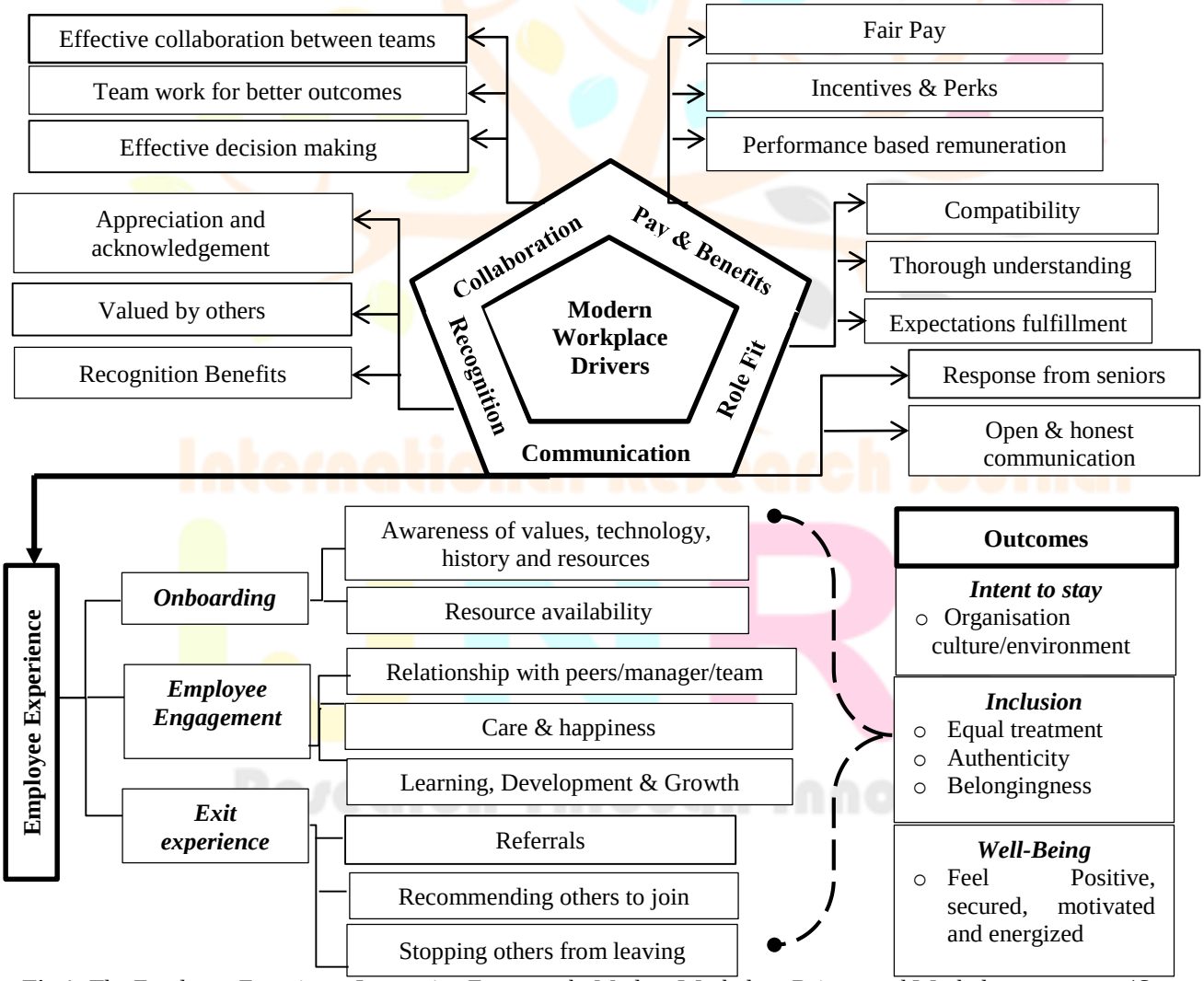

Fig 1: The Employee Experience Imperative Framework: Modern Workplace Drivers and Workplace outcomes (*Source: Author's Construct*)

Building on this, the present study explores how employee experience has become a key to success. According to the Smart Workforce report ***(IBM, 2016)***, employees with positive experiences tend to report high levels of performance and improved discretionary effort in the workplace, and they are likely to stay, which implies that the perception about the workplace influences voluntary turnover. Thus, the employee experience imperative reflects a strategic shift from transactional HR practices to a holistic and organic solution-based HR approach for talent retention, and well-being for organizational sustainability. The study contributes in terms of providing layered findings and rigorous analytics-based results. To establish the proposed employee experience

imperative framework with MWD as antecedents and RF as outcomes, and EX as a mediator, the authors have tested it as a first-order model and a higher-order model for robust examination of the overall framework.

This study, by employing 60 respondents, explores how these modern workplace drivers including; pay & benefits, recognition, communication, role fit, and collaboration, effects workplace outcomes including well-being, inclusion, and intent to stay, through the mediating power of employee experience. PLS SEM results revealed that despite significant direct effects, the mediating role of employee experience was significant in transmitting the effect of modern workplace drivers on workplace outcomes. By illuminating the pathways between workplace design and the intent to stay, the study provides practical and actionable insights for organizations determined to create a better workplace.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Theoretical Orientation

This study is grounded in Person–Environment (P-E) Fit Theory and Job Embeddedness Theory (JET). P-E Fit Theory holds; that positive outcomes occur when employees' values, abilities, and needs align with the workplace environment, its culture, resources, and technology ***(Kristof, 1996)***. Modern workplace drivers shape these perceptions: a strong fit fosters satisfaction, engagement, and performance, while a misfit leads to dissatisfaction and high and immediate turnover. Meanwhile JET ***(Mitchell et al., 2001)*** explains retention through three dimensions, namely links (connections with colleagues and the organization), fit (alignment of personal and organizational goals), and sacrifice (perceived cost of leaving). Drivers such as competitive pay and benefits, rewards, collaborative work culture, recognition and appreciation, and digital support reinforce these dimensions by deepening relationships, strengthening value skill alignment, and increasing the cost of exit.

When it comes to the conceptual orientation of this study, Maslow's hierarchy of needs can't be overlooked. ***Maslow (1943)*** emphasized that employees' need should be fulfilled at each stage of the employee journey. During onboarding, the employee needs clarity about its role, knowledge about its workplace, and resources accessibility, which can help in accomplishing their physiological needs through decent compensation and a productive physical workspace, while security and health become essential throughout employment, especially during training. A productive work culture fosters a sense of belongingness, and recognition builds self-esteem. Finally, self- actualization (manifested in creativity, and extra-role behaviour) can be pursued only when self-esteem has been satisfied.

2.2. Modern Workplace Drivers and Retention

A study by ***Kim et al. (2020)*** found that employee experience is positively related to organizational citizenship behaviour, which refers to extra-role behaviours that go beyond one's job duties to benefit the organization as a whole. According to ***Milhem et al. (2024)***, the modern workplace facilitates efficient employee performance, which is an outcome of strategic leadership. In the modern workplace, valuing employees leads to organization success, by upskilling the workforce, ensuring retention and engagement ***(Deepika, 2024)***. Apart from that, rewards and economic gain makes employees stay in the organization ***(Terera & Ngirande, 2014)***, while ***Mercer (2003)*** noted that employees leave due to poor rewards. Similarly, ***Pillay (2009)*** says, that monetary and non-monetary rewards are crucial to improve employee retention. Furthermore, better rewards, high passion, adequate recognition, motivation, and talent management reduce employee turnover ***(Mngomezulu et al. 2015)***. Compensation, recognition & appreciation, learning opportunities, relationships with colleagues, communication with the managers, rewards, leadership styles, and work life balance affect the employee retention ***(Govaerts et al. 2011)***. Additionally, supervision or guiding style, promotion procedures, fringe benefits, and communication are negatively correlated with intent to leave. Based on these literary evidences, the following evidences were formulated;

H_1 *= Modern workplace drivers significantly affects employee experience;*
H_2 *= Employee experience significantly affects Workplace outcomes;*
H_3 *= Modern workplace drivers significantly affects Workplace outcomes.*

2.3. Role of Employee Experience

The employee experience has emerged as a holistic construct that encompasses all the interactions that an employee has with an organization, from the recruitment process to the exit interview ***(Ghosh & Itam., 2020).*** Employee experience is all that employees encounter, big or small, good or bad, during their tenure in their organisations, from job application to the moment they wish to sign off from the workplace as an alumna ***(Farndale &Kelliher, 2023)***. ***Gheidar et al. (2020)*** discovered the need to reignite the purpose at work as employees feel disengaged, leading to a productivity crisis. ***IBM (2016)*** found that companies with positive EX scores have witnessed amplified voluntary turnover rate that is 2.5 times lower than companies with a poor EX. These studies suggest that a positive EX can help to reduce turnover and increase employee retention. The modern workplace highlights the essence of technology and prominence of digital culture, as digital transformation affects employee experience**. *Abhari et al. (2021)*** revealed that digital transformation effects how work environment and job elements are perceived by the employees. Effective employee experience fosters better customer experience and stronger financial results ***(Pine, 2020; Ahire & Sinha, 2022)***.

Global Talent Trends (2020) discovered that well-being, flexibility, skills development, inclusion and diversity, leadership and trust drive employee experience. ***Pangallo et al. (2022)*** explained various outcomes of EX in healthcare sector including engagement, intent to stay, inclusion, experience vs expectations, inclusion, well-being and burnout. Culture is one of the important drivers of employee experience, as it shapes the way people relate, work and productivity engage in workplace enabling employees to get voice, being whole selves, building capacities ***(Panneerselvam, 2022)***. A positive workplace culture that values employees, promotes collaboration, and fosters innovation can enhance employee engagement and well-being ***(Bailey et al., 2017)***. Organizational culture is correlated with employee retention and job satisfaction ***(Kehoe & Wright, 2013)***. Positive leadership

practices such as providing clear direction, offering support and feedback, and recognizing employee contributions can enhance the employee experience ***(Bailey et al., 2017).*** A study of South Korea by ***Lee & Kim (2023)***, stated that employee experience is associated with workplace, relationship with colleagues, recognition, compensation and meaningful work. Physical and cultural experience can increase organization commitment by high job satisfaction and psychological well-being. Furthermore, ***Sinurat et al. (2021)***, enjoyable employee experience affects performance. Based on extensive literary review, a hypothesis to test mediating role of employee experience was formulated;

$H_{3'}$ *= Employee experience significantly mediates the relationship between modern workplace drivers and Workplace outcomes.*

2.4. Conceptual Framework

Figure 2, presents the conceptual framework of the study, backed by the theories. The Social Exchange theory by ***Blau (1964)*** states that an employee reciprocates what it is offered in the organization. Positive experience and workplace drivers enhances the performance and reduces turnover intentions of the employees ***(Kimonyo, 2024)***. Kristof's theory of fit (1996), states that a person evaluates the environment and workplace drivers including culture, compensation/pay & benefits, collaborative opportunities, recognition and appreciation, ease of communication and openness, and role fit. Subsequently, these drivers don't operate in isolation but reciprocation. The people-environment (P-E) fit or misfit determines turnover intentions. The proposed conceptual framework is grounded in the Employee Experience Imperative framework (Figure 1), which integrates newly developed taxonomy of workplace drivers with key retention outcomes. The hypotheses were presented along with literature review.

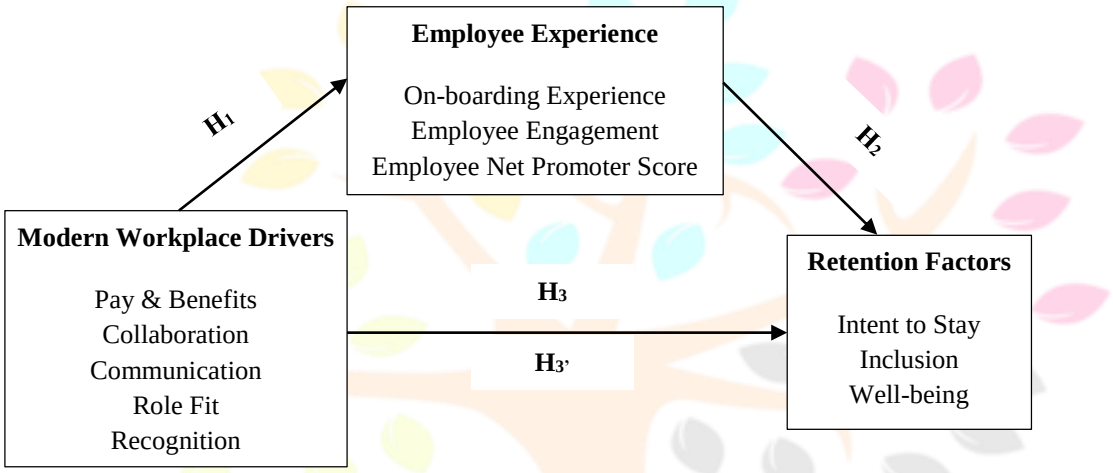

Fig 2: Conceptual Framework (*Source: Author's Construct***)**

2.4.1. ***Briefing of the study variables***

Modern workplace taxonomy included five drivers namely pay and benefits, which effects intent to stay. Role fit is a critical driver, aligning employee skills and interests with the job demands, increasing the retention rate ***(Carmeli & Spreitzer, 2009)***. Another key driver is recognition, which is sense of being valued and belongingness within their organization. Additionally, collaboration and communication in the modern workplace promotes a sense of team building and community, leading to greater employee retention. Workplace outcomes includes intent to stay, reflecting employee's willingness to continue employment, which is about employee's conscious and deliberate decision to remain with an organization for the upcoming future, ***(Tett & Meyer, 1993)***. Inclusion refers to degree to which employee feels valued, respected, included, and supported as a part of team or a member in their organization, enabling them to fully participate and contribute ***(Shore et al., 2011)***. Well-being means, the overall quality of an employee's experience at workplace, covering physical health, psychological safety, and a sense of purpose and satisfaction ***(Danna & Griffin, 1999).*** Employee experience is understood as an overall perception about employee journey encompassing each and every interaction, influencing retention ***(Morgan, 2017).***

3. METHODOLOGY

This cross-sectional study used a purposive sampling technique to recruit 60 full-time employees from Banking, Finance, IT, and business consultancy sectors. The sample was segmented according to Pew Research Centre's categorization, comprising Gen Z *(born between 1997-2012)*, Millennials *(born between 1981-1996)* and Gen X *(born between 1965-1980)* due to their diverse job demands and aspirations. For measurement of variables, a self-constructed instrument was created, in which MWD taxonomy included 5 dimensions with 3 indicators each, EX included 3 dimensions with 3 indicators each and lastly Workplace outcomes included 3 dimensions with 3 indicators each, making total 33 items in the measurement instrument on 5-point Likert scale (*where, 1= Strongly Disagree and 5=Strongly Agree*). Though, items were self-constructed, but dimensions were extracted from literature for robust theoretical foundation. Most responses were obtained through in-person interviews, with the remainder online. Participation was voluntary and confidential.

The results were displayed into two sections, namely measurement model assessment and structural model assessment, where former presented construct validity and model fit, and latter presented results of hypothesis testing. Instrument validity was confirmed through expert review, while reliability was assessed with PLS algorithm and measurement model assessment. Data was analyzed using IBM SPSS 20.0, JASP, and Smart PLS - 4, applying descriptive statistics, linear regression, and PLS-SEM with

bootstrapped mediation tests to evaluate employee experience as a mediator. Reliability and convergent/discriminant validity were also assessed. A given diagram in figure 3 outlines the sequential analysis steps.

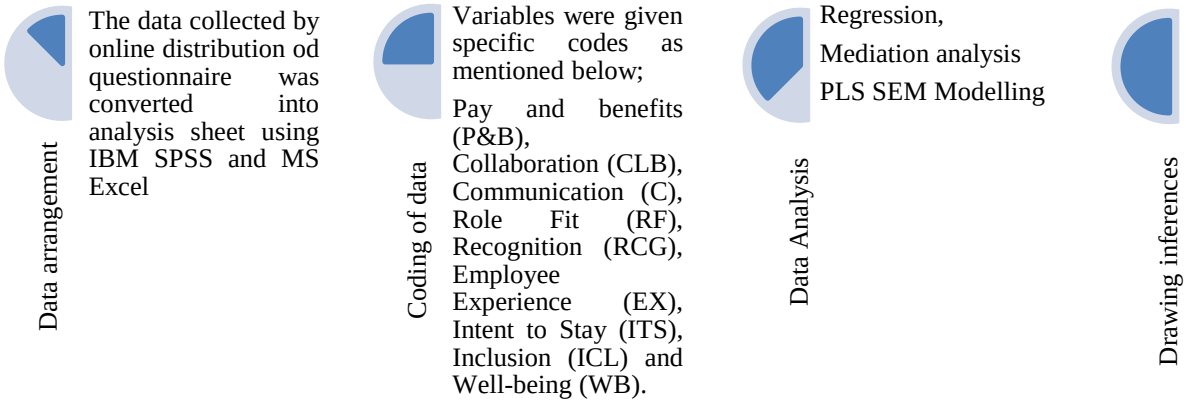

Fig 3: Data analysis process (*Source: Author's Construct*)

3.1. Details of Respondents

The final sample consisted of 65% women and 35% men. While only 7% had 21–25 years, on other hand, most of the respondents (almost 45%) had 1–5 years' experience. By management level, 42% were entry, 56% middle, and 2% top. The largest age group was 21–25 (44%), and the smallest was among 36–40 years' bracket (Table 1).

Table 1: Respondents' Profile

Current position in organization			**Gender**		
Current Position	***Frequency***	***Percentage***	***Gender***	***Frequency***	***percentage***
Entry level management	65	42%	Female	101	65%
Middle-level management	87	56%	Male	54	35%
Top-level management	3	2%	Total	60	100%
Total	60	100%			
Age Distribution of respondents			**Work Experience**		
Age	***Frequency***	***Percentage***	***Experience Years***	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
21-25	68	44%	Less than a year	20	13%
26-30	37	24%	1-5 year	70	45%
31-35	25	16%	6-10 year	34	22%
36-40	6	4%	11-15 year	15	10%
41-45	8	5%	16-20 year	6	4%
46-50	11	7%	21-25 year	11	7%
Total	60	100%	Total	55	100%

(Source: Compiled by authors)

3.2. Model Dimensionality

The model is multidimensional and was examined as both (Table_2), a single-order model and higher-order model. For linear regression in SPSS, authors have constructed second-order reflective-formative construct, subsequently for mediation analysis in PLS, a first-order reflective construct was preferred to avoid complexity and investigate multi-dimensionality of the conceptual framework. Specifically, the modern workplace drivers (MWD), employee experience (EX), and Workplace outcomes (RF) were first investigated using linear regression, where their individual indicators (e.g., Communication, Onboarding Experience, Well-being including others) were treated as reflective-formative dimensions as all indicators contained 3 items each. Further, where each dimension contributes to, rather than reflects or manifests the construct. For mediation in PLS, these second-order dimensions were then combined to create an overarching first-order reflective construct (e.g., overall EX, MWD and RF), since the latent variable is presumed to manifest in its dimensions, for which all the items directly constituted MWD, RF and EX, omitting earlier indicators.

Table 2: Details of Model-order and Indicators

Model order	**Method Used**	**Latent Variable**	**Indicator**	**Items**	**Source(s)**
Second-order Model *(Reflective-*	Linear Regression *(Basic Model)*	Modern Workplace Drivers	Pay & Benefits	3	Self-constructed
			Role Fit	3	Self-constructed
			Recognition	3	Self-constructed
			Communication	3	Self-constructed
			Collaboration	3	Self-constructed
			On-boarding experience	3	Self-constructed

Formative Constructs)		Employee Experience	Employee Engagement	3	Self-constructed
			Employee net Promoter Score	3	Self-constructed
		Workplace outcomes	Well-being	3	Self-constructed
			Intent to stay	3	Self-constructed
			Inclusion	3	Self-constructed
First-order Model *(Reflective Constructs)*	PLS SEM *(Advance modelling)*	Modern Workplace Drivers	------	15	Self-constructed
		Employee Experience	------	9	Self-constructed
		Role Fit	------	9	Self-constructed

(Source: Author's construct)

4. RESULTS

4.2. Evaluation of Measurement (Outer) Model

To test the measurement constructs used in this study, the model was first assessed by 16 experts in two staged review prior to investigating the structural relationships, to ensure validity and reliability of the measurement of the latent constructs, in order to establish a robust foundation for hypothesis testing ***(Hair et al., 2019)***. Post hoc Harman's single-factor test was used, to reveal any possibility of biasness and measurement error ***(Podsakoff, 2003; Jakobsen & Jensen, 2015)***. The outer model assessment included, tests of internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Internal consistency was evaluated through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR). Convergent validity was used to examine using factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE), while discriminant validity was assessed using the fornell–larcker criterion.

To reveal common method bias, also known as common method variance (CMB/CMV), often observed due to same sources and measurement styles used while collecting data. To address this, the data was collected in both ways, offline and online methods. It is suggested to manage the measurement error by maintaining confidentiality and anonymity during data collection ***(Jakobsen and Jensen, 2015)***. Subsequently, post hoc Harman's single factor test was used for checking measurement error ***(Podsakoff et al 2003)***. Harman's single factor test revealed that variance explained by the first factor was 47.25%, which is less than threshold limit of 50%. Also, in the second-order model, the Variance inflation factor (VIF) values were not greater than 5 (Table_3). Additionally, Gaussian copula was used to reveal multi-collinearity/endogeneity in the model, and found that all copula terms were insignificant ($p > 0.05$), supporting the conclusion that endogeneity or multi-collinearity is unlikely to have influenced the model.

4.2.1. ***Second-order Model: A Reflective-Formative Model***

For formative constructs there are only two main criteria in case of measurement model including significance and relevance of indicator weights and indicator collinearity ***(Hair et al., 2011).*** But, ***Hair et al. (2017)*** mentioned three basic steps to be followed, first - examining the convergent validity; second – addressing the collinearity issues; and lastly- evaluating the significance and relevance of formative indicators, which has been followed in the process of this study.

4.2.2.1. ***Reliability and Validity Assessment***

As displayed in Table 3, all constructs demonstrated high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 ***(Nunnally, 1978).*** Corrected item–total correlations for all items exceeded the threshold limit of 0.30, indicating adequate reliability ***(Benjamin et al., 2018)***. Overall, the statistical output provides strong evidence of internal consistency and reliability among all the constructs. For construct validation, both convergent and discriminant validity were evaluated. Convergent validity was checked using average variance extracted (AVE), factor loadings, and composite reliability (CR), displayed in Table 3. All factor loadings exceeded 0.50, indicating strong convergence among the constructs. AVE values were above 0.50, confirming that each construct explained more than half of its variance, and CR values also exceeded 0.70, demonstrating high internal consistency.

Meanwhile, discriminant validity was established using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, with inter-construct correlations remaining below 0.80, confirming adequate distinction between the latent variables. Furthermore, the cross loadings of each construct stood higher than the loadings on the other constructs, indicating that all the items are associated with their parent constructs and distinct from other constructs.

4.2.2.2. ***Dimension Reduction: Factor Analysis***

The factor loadings (Table_3) exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.5 ***(Hair et al., 2010)***. Therefore, none of the items were removed based on the threshold limit for factor loadings.

Table 3: Assessment of AVE, CR, Cronbach's Alpha and Factor Loadings

Constructs	Indicators	Factor Loadings	Cronbach alpha	CR	AVE
Pay & Benefits	P&B_1	0.868	0.702	0.710	0.625
	P&B_2	0.691			
	P&B_3	0502			
Collaboration	CLB_1	0.813	0.870	0.873	0.798
	CLB_2	0.765			
	CLB_3	0.851			
Communication	C_1	0.760	0.889	0.889	0.819
	C_2	0.826			
	C_3	0.777			

Role Fit	RF_1	0.850	0.953	0.960	0.913
	RF_2	0.832			
	RF_3	0.867			
Recognition	RCG_1	0.757	0.872	0.873	0.796
	RCG_2	0.714			
	RCG_3	0.756			
Employee Experience			0.870	0.710	0.538
On-boarding Experience	ONB_1	0.713			
	ONB_2	0.596			
	ONB_3	0.878			
Employee Net Promoter Score	ENPS_1	0.772			
	ENPS_2	0.768			
	ENPS_3	0.693			
Employee Engagement	EE_1	0.843			
	EE_2	0.597			
	EE_3	0.810			
Workplace outcomes			0.927	0.840	0.644
Intent to Stay	ITS_1	0.803			
	ITS_2	0.854			
	ITS_3	0.768			
Inclusion	ICL_1	0.790			
	ICL_2	0.705			
	ICL_3	0.751			
Well-being	WB_1	0.836			
	WB_2	0.784			
	WB_3	0.729			

(*Source: Author's construct, compiled using PLS algorithm; where, AVE = Average Variance Extracted, CR = Composite Reliability****)***

4.2.2.3. ***Path Coefficients in Regression Model***

The first section deals with the results demonstrating the relationship between MWD and RF (Table_4). It explains that how modern workplace drivers shape retention. Pay and benefits emerged as a powerful anchor: they showed a strong positive effect on intent to stay *($\beta = 0.61$, $R^2 = 0.37$)*, inclusion *($\beta = 0.61$, $R^2 = 0.44$)* and well-being *($\beta = 0.69$, $R^2 = 0.48$)*, with an overall retention effect of *($\beta = 0.64$, $p < 0.05$)*. Collaboration deepened that impact, driving intent to stay *($\beta = 0.63$, $R^2 = 0.39$)*, inclusion *($\beta = 0.78$, $R^2 = 0.61$)* and well-being *($\beta = 0.77$, $R^2 = 0.59$)*, and linking strongly to overall retention ($\beta = 0.78$, $p < 0.05$) as shown in Table 4. Open communication was equally striking: intent to stay *($\beta = 0.62$, $R^2 = 0.39$)*, inclusion *($\beta = 0.82$, $R^2 = 0.68$)* and well-being *($\beta = 0.80$, $R^2 = 0.64$)*, with a retention effect of *$\beta = 0.78$ ($p < 0.05$)*. Role fit played a quieter but meaningful role, influencing intent to stay *($\beta = 0.46$, $R^2 = 0.21$)*, inclusion *($\beta = 0.70$, $R^2 = 0.50$)* and well-being *($\beta = 0.67$, $R^2 = 0.45$)*, with an overall retention effect of *$\beta = 0.65$ ($p < 0.05$)*. Finally, recognition stood out as the most potent emotional driver: intent to stay *($\beta = 0.70$, $R^2 = 0.49$)*, inclusion *($\beta = 0.79$, $R^2 = 0.62$)* and well-being *($\beta = 0.79$, $R^2 = 0.63$)*, with a retention effect of *$\beta = 0.79$ ($p < 0.05$)*.

Study reveals a significant relationship of work behaviors, i.e. pay and benefits, collaboration, communication, role fit and recognition with employee experience. β value of 0.64, 0.78, 0. 78, 0.65 and 0.79 respectively. These are significant relationships of p value being </= 0.05 (Table_4). Further, employee experience is directly associated/affected with the pay and benefits, collaborations, communication, role fit and recognition at workplace. It was also found that employee experience has a significant direct relationship with individuals' intent to stay in an organization, inclusivity and well-being with a β value of 0.68, 0.80 and 0.84 respectively (Table_4) with p value being significant (i.e. </= 0.05). Together, these findings support that workplaces offering fair rewards, strong collaboration, open communication, clear role alignment, and genuine recognition foster an employee experience that powerfully strengthens retention. Also, MWD significantly effects EX and EX also effects RF dimensions.

Table 4: Regression Summary

Hypotheses	**Predictor**	**B**	**B (SE)**	**Beta**	**T-statistic**	**R**	**R^2**
H_1: P&B -> ITS, ICL, WB							
H_{1a}	P&B -> ITS	Pay and Benefits	0.67	0.12	0.61	5.62	0.61	0.37
H_{1b}	P&B -> ICL	Pay and Benefits	0.69	0.11	0.61	6.41	0.61	0.44
H_{1c}	P&B -> WB	Pay and Benefits	0.76	0.11	0.69	6.98	0.69	0.48
H_2: CLB -> ITS, ICL, WB							
H_{2a}	CLB -> ITS	Collaboration	0.63	0.11	0.63	5.82	0.63	0.39
H_{2b}	CLB -> ICL	Collaboration	0.74	0.08	0.78	9.00	0.78	0.61
H_{2c}	CLB -> WB	Collaboration	0.76	0.09	0.77	8.74	0.77	0.59
H_3: C -> ITS, ICL, WB							
H_{3a}	C -> ITS	Communication	0.59	0.1	0.62	5.79	0.62	0.39
H_{3b}	C -> ICL	Communication	0.74	0.07	0.82	10.52	0.82	0.68
H_{3c}	C -> WB	Communication	0.75	0.08	0.8	9.73	0.8	0.64

H_4: RF -> ITS, ICL, WB								
H_{4a}	RF ->ITS	Role Fit	0.4	0.11	0.46	3.80	0.46	0.21
H_{4b}	RF -> ICL	Role Fit	0.58	0.08	0.71	7.23	0.71	0.50
H_{4c}	RF -> WB	Role Fit	0.58	0.09	0.67	6.59	0.67	0.45
H_5: RCG -> ITS, ICL, WB								
H_{5a}	RCG ->ITS	Recognition	0.80	0.11	0.70	7.18	0.7	0.49
H_{5b}	RCG -> ICL	Recognition	0.84	0.09	0.79	9.25	0.79	0.62
H_{5c}	RCG -> WB	Recognition	0.89	0.09	0.79	9.46	0.79	0.63
H_6: PB -> EX								
H_6	PB -> EX	Pay and Benefits	0.51	0.08	0.64	6.12	0.64	0.41
H_7: CLB -> Ex								
H_7	CLB -> EX	Collaboration	0.56	0.06	0.78	8.98	0.78	0.60
H_8: C -> Ex								
H_8	C -> EX	Communication	0.53	0.06	0.78	9.08	0.78	0.61
H_9: RF -> EX								
H_9	RF -> EX	Role Fit	0.4	0.07	0.65	6.18	0.65	0.42
H_{10}: RCG -> EX								
H_{10}	RCG -> EX	Recognition	0.64	0.07	0.79	9.36	0.79	0.62
H_{11}: EX -> ITS, ICL, WB								
H_{11a}	EX -> ITS	Employee Experience	0.94	0.14	0.67	6.65	0.67	0.46
H_{11b}	EX-> ICL	Employee Experience	1.04	0.11	0.79	9.42	0.79	0.63
H_{11c}	EX-> WB	Employee Experience	1.16	0.10	0.84	11.23	0.84	0.70

(Source:** Author's Compilation – based on data statistics using SPSS 20.0; Note: Sub-parts of hypothesis were generated for linear regression only, to check separate effects in order to establish employee experience imperative framework and MWD taxonomy through this study**)

4.3. Evaluation of Structural (Inner) Model

As mentioned in the Table_2, direct and indirect effects included inner model assessment, which outlines the link between the latent constructs ***(Hair et al. 2012)***. The second-order construct was assessed using linear regression analysis. The first-order construct was investigated through mediation analysis in PLS. Notably, mediation was tested using partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) and ordinary least square regression (OLS), implemented with 5000 sample bootstrap sample, equivalent to Hayes' PROCESS macro in JASP to check indirect effect.

4.3.1. ***Validity & Reliability Assessment of First-order Model with Reflective Constructs***

The mediating role of employee experience (EX) was examined to test ***H_3***, and determine whether modern workplace drivers (MWD) influence Workplace outcomes more strongly through indirect pathway than via direct effects. For this, employee experience served as the mediating variable. Table_5 shows that Cronbach alpha values were greater than 0.7, furthermore, composite reliability exceeds 0.7 and average variance extracted (AVE) is more than 50% for each construct. The Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modelling (CB-SEM) method was used to assess the model fit, which provided SRMR = 0.018, NFI = 0.910, TLI = 0.899, CFI = 0.916, AIC = 1300.800, BIC = 1439.306, GFI = 0.482, RMSEA = 0.048, and Chi-square (χ^2) = 1162.800.

Table 5: Validity & Reliability of First-order Model in PLS

Constructs	**Cronbach Alpha**	**CR**	**AVE**
EX	0.870	0.902	0.538
RF	0.927	0.944	0.644
MWD	0.954	0.958	0.616

(Source: Author's compilation)

To ensure that no construct was highly correlated with other, collinearity was checked by observing VIF values, which must not exceed 5 ***(Hair et al., 2016)***. As mentioned in Table_6, the VIF estimate were less than 5, indicating towards absence of collinearity. And Table_7 presents fornell-larcker criteria, which consists of convergent and discriminant validity.

Table 6: Inner Model Collinearity Statistics (VIF Matrix with confidence intervals)

Model Paths	**Estimate**	**2.5%**	**97.5%**
EX -> RF	4.245	2.794	7.527
MWD -> EX	1.000	1.000	1.000
MWD -> EF	4.231	2.789	7.897

(Source: Author's compilation)

Table 7: Fornell-Larcker Criteria

Constructs	**EX**	**MWD**	**RF**
EX	0.851		
MWD	0.781	0.361	
RF	0.481	0.783	0.612

(Source: Author's compilation)

4.3.2. ***Hypothesis Testing in PLS***

The results of the structural model assessment are summarized in Table_8. The findings indicate that modern workplace drivers (MWD) have a significant positive impact on retention outcomes *(β = 0.513, p < 0.001)* and on employee experience *(β = 0.874, p < 0.001)*. Additionally, employee experience significantly predicts retention outcomes *(β = 0.433, p < 0.001)*, confirming its role as a mediator in the relationship between workplace drivers and retention outcomes. The interaction effect of MWD and EX on RF is also significant *(β = 0.449, p < 0.001)*, suggesting that the impact of modern workplace drivers on retention is enhanced when employee experience is high.

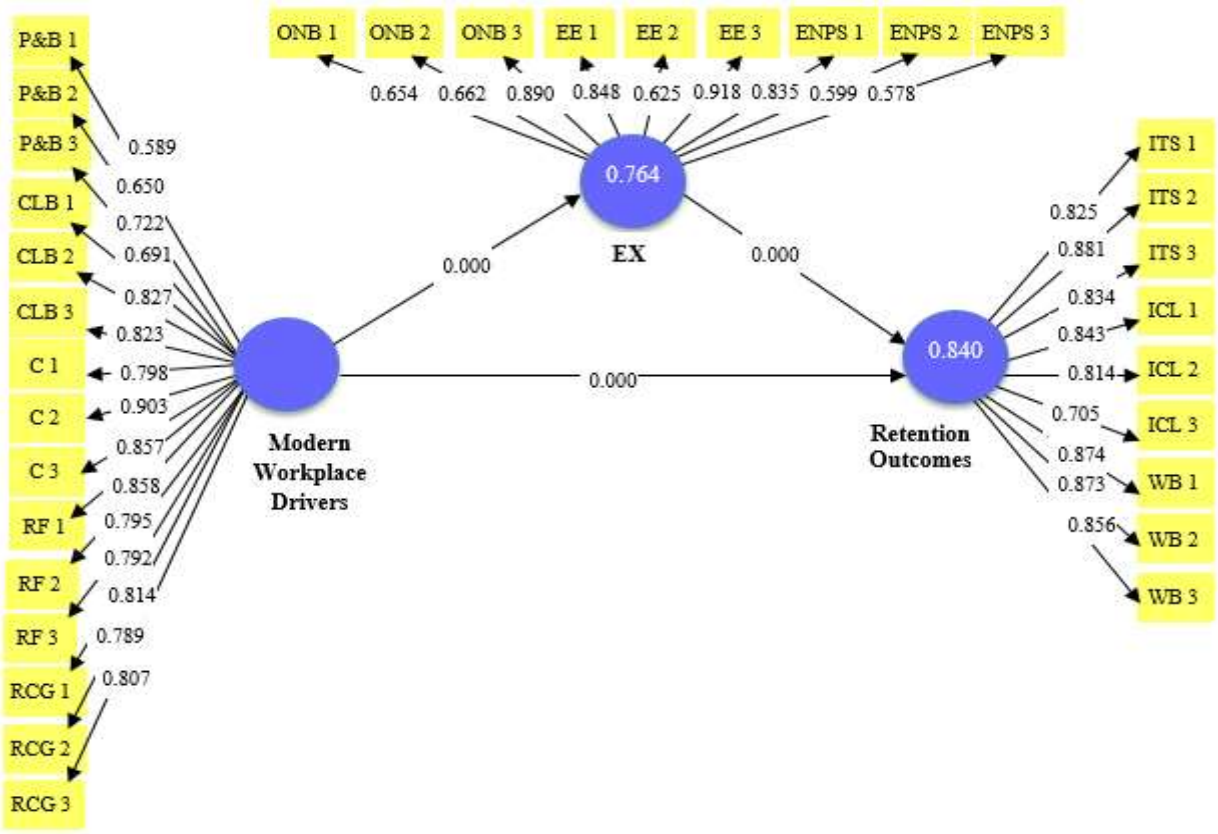

Fig 4: Higher-order Model: Mediation Analysis (*Source: Author's construct***)**

Table 8: Hypothesis testing

Hypotheses	Model Paths	β Values	SE	t-statistics	p-values	Decision
H_1	MWD –> RF	0.513	0.123	4.180	0.000	Supported
H_2	MWD –> EX	0.874	0.035	24.679	0.000	Supported
H_3	EX –> RF	0.433	0.123	3.520	0.000	Supported
$H_{3'}$	MWD * EX –> RF	0.449	0.114	3.982	0.000	Supported

(Source: Compiled by authors using PLS SEM)

Overall, all tested hypotheses are supported, demonstrating that modern workplace drivers directly and indirectly influence Workplace outcomes, with employee experience playing a critical mediating and moderating role. Here, as shown in Table 8, the direct and indirect effect of MWD can be compared, where the direct effect of MWD on RF is stronger without mediation (*B = 0.513; t-statistics = 4.180*), but, mediation of EX is also significant (*B = 0.449; t-statistics = 3.982*) with p values <0.001.

The squared correlations between particular endogenous actual value and the anticipated value of the constructs are to determine the coefficient of determination (R^2), which tests degree of change in dependent variable by predictor. The R^2 values above 0.7 reflecting good explanatory power of the model (Table_9).

Table 9: R-Square: Mean, STDEV, T values and p values

Constructs	R^2	R^2 adjusted	STDEV	T Statistics	P value
EX	0.774	0.728	0.061	12.721	0.000
RF	0.844	0.828	0.042	19.967	0.000

(Source: Author's compilation)

The f^2 values representing the effect size, ranged from moderate to large within the threshold limit (p =/<0.05), indicating a substantial impact of the independent variables on the dependent variables (Table_10).

Table 10: Effect Size: Estimate, STDEV, T values and p values

Model Paths	Estimate	STDEV	T Statistics	P value
EX -> RF	4.321	1.002	3.351	0.027
MWD -> EX	3.245	1.526	2.127	0.033
MWD -> EF	3.412	1.211	2.562	0.045

(Source: Author's compilation)

4.3.2. ***Moderation Effects in First-order reflective Model***

Moderator plays a crucial role in making the relationships dissimilar across moderator groups such as male, females among others. Here, gender was put as a potential moderator in the model to reveal gender based variations in the relationships between MWD –> EX –> RF. After putting gender as a moderator, the model shows that EX positively predicts Role Fit (RF) *(β =0.48, p = 0.04)*, while MWD have a strong negative effect on RF *(β = –2.16, p < 0.001)*. Gender also negatively affects RF *(β = –1.45, p < 0.001)*. Of the moderation interaction terms, only Gender × MWD → EX is significant *(β = 0.67, p < 0.001)*, indicating that the impact of workplace drivers on EX varies by gender. Other direct or moderating effects were non-significant (Table_11).

Table 11: Path Coefficients – Estimate, STDEV, T values and p values

Path	Estimate	STDEV	T Statistics	P values
EX -> RF	0.479	0.236	2.029	**0.043**
MWD -> RF	-2.156	0.365	5.907	**0.000**
MWD -> EX	-0.383	0.607	0.631	0.528
Gender -> EX	-0.158	0.355	0.444	0.657
Gender -> RF	-1.449	0.282	5.138	**0.000**
Gender × EX -> RF	0.151	0.419	0.360	0.719
Gender × MWD -> EX	0.668	0.123	5.435	**0.000**
Gender × MWD -> RF	0.326	0.255	1.279	0.201

(Source: Compiled by authors using PLS SEM)

Tables_12 and Table_13 show the conditional direct and indirect effects by gender in higher-order model.

Table 12: Conditional Direct Effects

Gender/Model Paths	MWD -> EX	EX -> RF	MWD -> RF
Male	0.688	0.479	0.327
Female	-0.781	0.322	0.477

(Source: Compiled by authors using PLS SEM)

For direct effects, the MWD → EX path was positive for males *(β = 0.688)* but negative for females (β = –0.781). The EX → RF link remained positive for both groups *(male β = 0.479; female β = 0.322)*, while the direct MWD → RF effect was slightly stronger for females *(β = 0.477)* than males *(β = 0.327)*. These findings indicate that gender affects the direct paths.

Table 13: Conditional Indirect Effect

Gender/Model Paths	Gender -> EX -> RF	MWD -> EX -> RF
Male	-0.693	-0.251
Female	-1.033	0.320

(Source: Compiled by authors using PLS SEM)

For indirect effects, the gender → EX → RF path was negative in both groups (male β = –0.693; female β = –1.033). The indirect MWD → EX → RF effect was mildly negative for males (*β = –0.251*) but positive for females (*β = 0.320*). These values illustrate small descriptive differences between genders; however, none were statistically significant, indicating no meaningful moderated mediation.

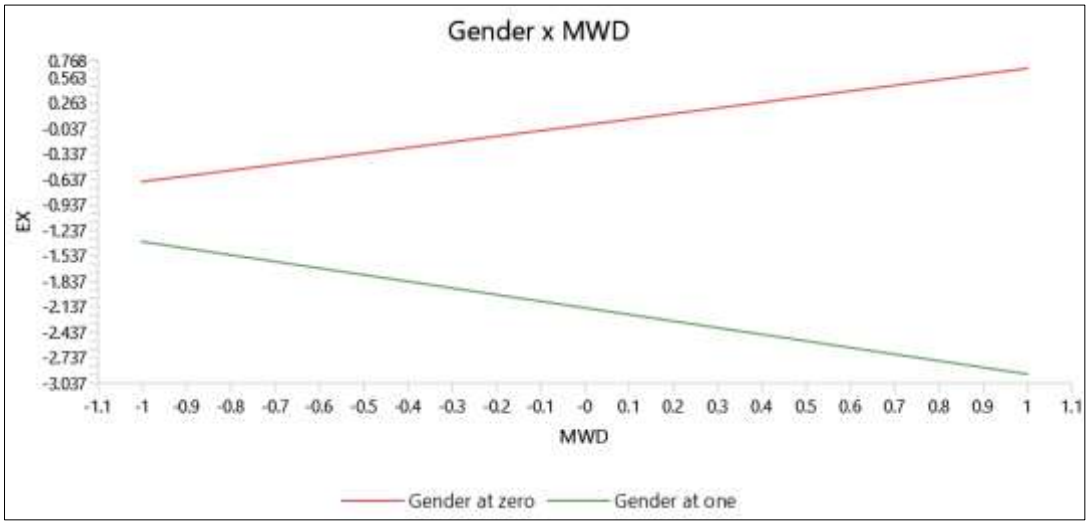

Fig 5: Gender Moderation on MWD -> EX

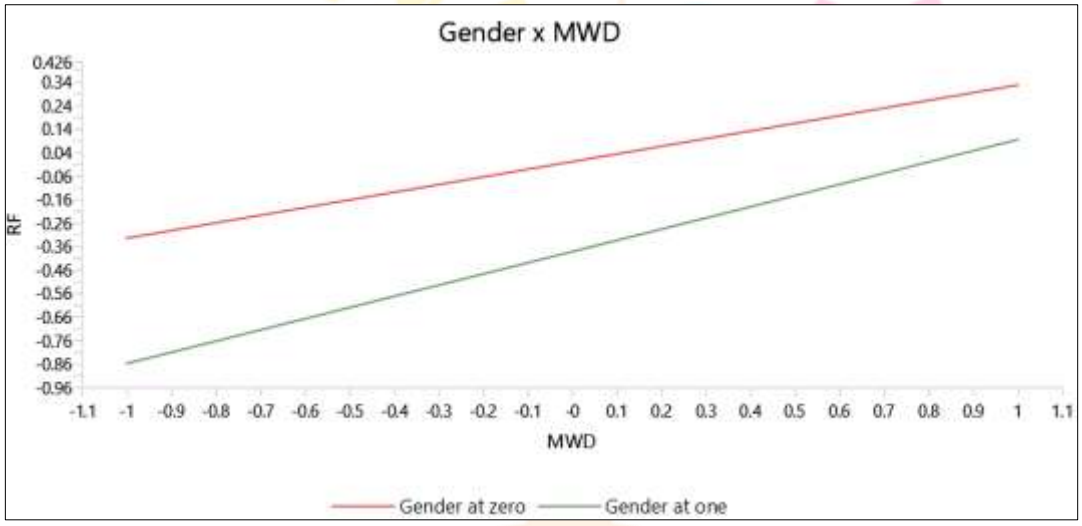

Fig 6: Gender Moderation on MWD -> EX

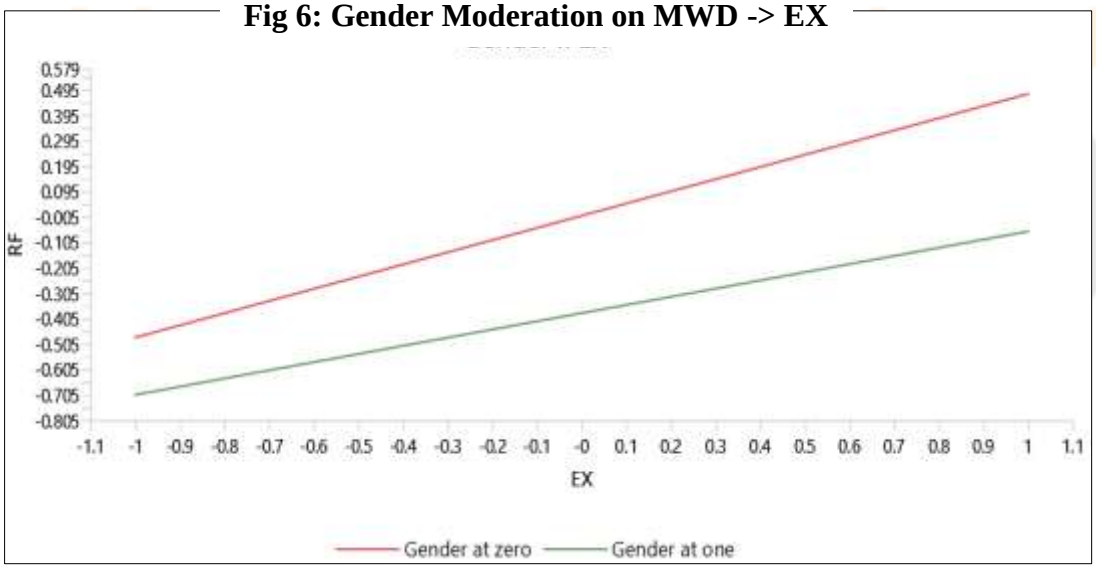

Fig 7: Gender Moderation on EX -> RF

In Figure 5, 6 and 7, moderation effect of gender is shown on the differences across the genders. Green line represents female and red line represents male.

4.3.3. ***Comparative Analysis: Direct Vs Indirect Effects (Hayes' PROCESS Method)***

The authors in further analysis, used Hayes' OLS (ordinary least square regression) method for a comparative glance, the Table_14 displays the direct effect of modern workplace drivers on retention outcomes is 0.779, with a 95% confidence interval of 0.473 to 1.030, indicating statistical significance at $\alpha = 0.05$. Similarly, the indirect effect through employee experience is 0.264, with a 95%

confidence interval of 0.088 to 0.478, also statistically significant. The positive indirect effect confirms that employee experience strengthens the relationship between workplace drivers and retention outcomes.

Table 14: Comparative Analysis

Model Path	Estimate	SE	z-value	p
MWD -> RF	0.779	0.141	5.522	< .001
MWD -> EX -> RF	0.264	0.107	2.462	0.014

(*Source: Author's compilation using JASP****)***

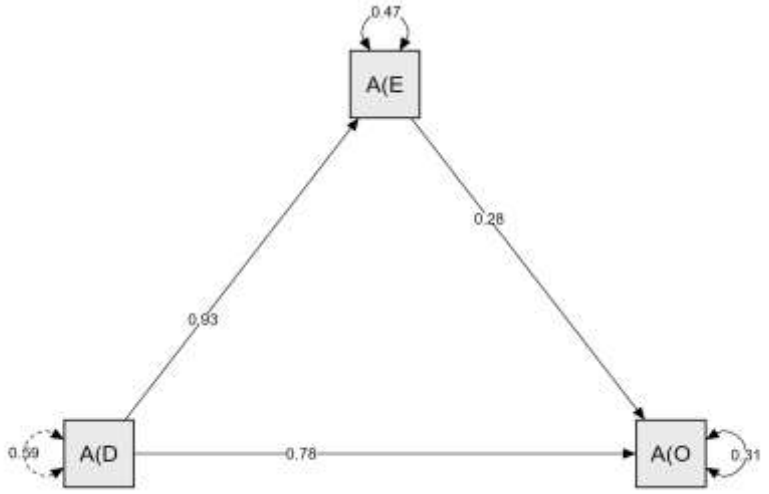

Fig 8_Path Plot (*Source: Author's construct in JASP***)**

In the mediation model, the top path in the plot (Figure_8) represents the relationship between workplace drivers and Workplace outcomes through employee experience, which is decomposed into the indirect effect and the direct effect. Based on the structural model, the proposed mediating role of A(E) between A(D) and A(O) shows only limited support. The direct effect of A(D) on A(O) remains strong *(β = 0.78)*, while the indirect path through A(E) is comparatively weaker (A(D) -> A(E) = 0.93; A(E) -> A(O) = 0.28, giving an overall indirect effect of about 0.26). Although, the PLS bootstrapping shows a significant mediation, but beta estimates denote that direct effect of MWD on RF *(β = 0.513)* was stronger than the indirect or mediating effect of EX between MWD and RF *(β = 0.449)*. Overall, these results demonstrate that employee experience partially mediates the impact of modern workplace drivers on retention, highlighting its critical role in enhancing employee retention outcomes.

4.3.4. Post-hoc Analysis

As after the assessment of the measurement model and the evaluation of the structural model through hypothesis testing, additional analyses was conducted using mediation in JASP to further examine indirect effects across different constructs. To ensure the robustness of all reported findings, including the first-order and second-order model, a post hoc power analysis was performed (Table_15).

Table 15 Post hoc Power Analysis

	Path Coefficient	Power 80%		Power 90%	
		Alpha 1%	Alpha 5%	Alpha 1%	Alpha 5%
EX -> RF	0.465	47.000	29.000	61.000	40.000
MWD -> EX	0.981	11.000	7.000	14.000	9.000
MWD -> RF	0.526	37.000	23.000	47.000	31.000

(Source: Author's Construct)

For the EX → RF path *(β = 0.465)*, the minimum required sample was 29 for α = 0.05, power = 0.80, and 40 for power = 0.90. For MWD → EX *(β = 0.981)*, only 7–9 cases were needed, while for MWD → RF *(β = 0.526)*, 23–31 cases sufficed (Table_15). Given that the actual sample size was 60, which far exceeds all thresholds, the model is adequately powered to detect the hypothesized effects ***(Kock & Hadaya, 2018)***.

5. DISCUSSION

The methodological pluralism denotes that in simple regression (second order model), relationship between independent and dependent variables were significant, meanwhile in first order model drawn in PLS method showed all significant effects confirming the former results. Furthermore, Mediation analysis in JASP and PLS showed variance, wherein PLS results indicates significant mediation (similar p value – 0.000 but higher Beta value = 0.449), on the other hand, partial mediation in JASP was noted. Subsequently, these relationships were significantly moderated by gender with some exceptions. The findings of this study provide strong evidence for the critical role of employee experience (EX) in shaping retention outcomes in the workplace. Extending Social Exchange Theory ***(Blau, 1964)***, modern workplace drivers (MWD), including pay and benefits, communication, collaboration, role fit, and recognition, were found to have a significant positive impact on workplace outcomes (RF). This highlights that organizations that strategically manage workplace drivers can foster stronger retention outcomes.

Importantly, employee experience emerged as both a mediator and a moderator in these relationships. Mediation analysis showed that the relationship between workplace drivers and Workplace outcomes is significantly strengthened through employee experience, indicating that EX acts as a mechanism through which workplace interventions translate into improved retention. This aligns with prior research emphasizing that positive employee experiences enhance engagement, commitment, and the intention to stay ***(Morgan, 2017)***.

The moderation findings further reveal that the effect of modern workplace drivers on retention is enhanced when employee experience is high ***(Pangallo et al., 2022)***. This underscores the interactive nature of workplace interventions, simply implementing drivers is not sufficient; their impact is maximized when employees perceive their experiences as meaningful, supportive, and engaging ***(Kulkarni & Mohanty 2023)***. Additionally, demographic factors such as gender significantly moderated the relationship between employee experience and outcomes ***(Nair et al., 2024)***. This suggests that individual characteristics shape how employees respond to workplace drivers and experiences, emphasizing the need for tailored HR strategies that consider diversity, intrinsic and extrinsic outcomes and generational expectations ***(Venkatesh et al., 2017).***

Overall, these results highlight the central role of employee experience in translating organizational efforts into tangible retention and performance outcomes. Organizations should prioritize interventions that enhance EX, not only through structural workplace drivers but also by fostering a culture of recognition, inclusion, and support that resonates across genders and generational cohorts.

6. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

6.1. **Theoretical Implications**

The findings of this study offer important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the results advance Social Exchange Theory by demonstrating that employee experience (EX) both mediates and moderates the relationship between modern workplace drivers and retention outcomes, highlighting the critical role of perceived organizational support in fostering reciprocal commitment ***(Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005)***. Moreover, the significant moderating effects of gender and generational cohorts extend the theoretical understanding of EX, emphasizing that its impact varies across individual characteristics ***(Ng & Burke, 2005)*** and that future research should explore interactive and conditional mechanisms rather than only direct effects.

6.2. **Practical Implications**

Practically, the study underscores the importance of designing workplace interventions that combine structural drivers, such as pay, recognition, collaboration, and role fit, with initiatives that enhance meaningful employee experiences ***(Morgan, 2017; Saks, 2006)***. Organizations should tailor HR strategies to diverse demographic groups, particularly in multigenerational contexts, to maximize retention, engagement, and discretionary behaviors ***(Lyons & Kuron, 2014)***. By leveraging the interaction between workplace drivers and EX, managers can not only improve retention but also enhance employee performance, productivity, and overall organizational effectiveness.

7. FUTURE SCOPE OF RESEARCH

While the current study provides valuable insights into the role of employee experience in linking modern workplace drivers to Workplace outcomes, it is limited by its cross-sectional design, which constrains the ability to draw causal inferences. Future research could adopt a longitudinal approach to better capture the temporal dynamics and causal relationships among workplace drivers, employee experience, and retention outcomes. Additionally, qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, may provide deeper insights into specific aspects of employee experience that most effectively mediate these relationships. Further studies could also explore additional moderating variables, such as organizational culture or leadership styles, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of factors that enhance retention and engagement across diverse workforce populations.

8. CONCLUSION

Based on the mediation analysis, the results indicate that employee experience (EX) partially mediates the relationship between modern workplace drivers—pay and benefits, collaboration, role fit, communication, and recognition—and Workplace outcomes, including intent to stay, employee inclusion, and well-being. This aligns with prior research showing that well-being can serve both as a driver and an outcome of employee experience ***(Malik et al., 2023)***. The direct effect of workplace drivers on Workplace outcomes was significant, confirming that these drivers positively influence retention outcomes. This is consistent with the findings of ***Purbasari & Abadi (2022)***, who emphasized that employee experience supports employee retention. Importantly, the indirect effect through employee experience was also significant, demonstrating that EX partially mediates this relationship. Specifically, intent to stay and well-being are notably influenced by both employee experience and workplace drivers. ***Pangallo et al. (2022)*** similarly highlighted inclusion and intent to stay as key outcomes of employee experience.

Among the drivers, role fit showed comparatively lower significance, exhibiting weaker correlations with Workplace outcomes, suggesting it may play a smaller role in influencing retention outcomes. Overall, these findings suggest that enhancing employee experience is a crucial strategy for improving retention, inclusion, and well-being. Organizations can achieve this by improving the physical work environment, job autonomy, and opportunities for learning and development, while addressing rewards, technologies, leadership practices, and peer relations—factors identified as significant in shaping employee experience ***(Mohyi & Sukmawati, 2023)***.

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