International Journal of Research in Human Resource Management

E-ISSN: 2663-3361
P-ISSN: 2663-3213
IJRHRM 2024; 6(2): 450-456
www.humanresourcejournal.com
Received: 26-11-2024
Accepted: 30-12-2024

Dr. Abdal Ahmed
Graduate School of Business, Tula's Institute, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Abdal Ahmed
Graduate School of Business, Tula's Institute, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India

Rethinking employee retention: The role of career path transparency in reducing turnover

Abdal Ahmed

DOI: https://www.doi.org/10.33545/26633213.2024.v6.i2e.337

Abstract
This study examines the impact of career path transparency on employee turnover intent, emphasizing the role of clear career progression as a retention strategy. Using a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 376 employees across technology, finance, and healthcare sectors through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire. The instrument demonstrated strong reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.89). Statistical analyses included descriptive measures, independent samples t-tests, one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlations, and multiple linear regression, conducted using SPSS v28. Results indicated that career path transparency was perceived positively ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.64$), with higher scores among senior-level employees. No significant gender differences emerged, but job level was a significant factor ($p = 0.002$). Transparency was strongly correlated with employee engagement ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$) and negatively correlated with turnover intent ($r = -0.61$, $p < 0.001$). Regression analysis revealed that transparency and engagement together explained 31% of variance in turnover intent. Findings suggest that fostering transparent career pathways may significantly reduce turnover rates.

Keywords: Employee retention, career path transparency, turnover intent, employee engagement, regression analysis

Introduction
Employee turnover continues to be a pressing challenge for organizations across industries, often resulting in substantial financial costs, knowledge loss, and disruption to workplace culture. While competitive compensation and benefits remain important, recent research has highlighted the increasing significance of career development opportunities and clarity in progression as critical retention drivers. Career path transparency — the clear communication of advancement criteria, timelines, and growth opportunities — has emerged as a strategic factor influencing employee engagement and commitment.

In today's dynamic labor market, where skilled professionals have access to diverse opportunities, employees are less inclined to remain with organizations that fail to provide visible and attainable career trajectories. Transparent career paths not only set realistic expectations but also enhance trust between employees and management, thereby strengthening psychological contracts. This transparency can mitigate uncertainty, a known driver of turnover intentions, by allowing employees to envision their future within the organization.

Despite growing recognition of its importance, empirical evidence linking career path transparency directly to turnover intent, while controlling for engagement levels, remains limited. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates how perceptions of transparency vary across demographic segments, how these perceptions relate to engagement and turnover intent, and to what extent transparency predicts turnover intent when considered alongside employee engagement. By integrating statistical analysis with a targeted retention framework, this research offers actionable insights for human resource strategies aimed at long-term workforce stability.

Literature Review
Employee retention is a strategic priority for organizations seeking to maintain operational stability and competitive advantage. Research consistently highlights that clear communication of career development opportunities fosters employee commitment and

reduces turnover (Allen *et al*., 2010; Clarke, 2013) [1, 5]. Career path transparency, defined as the explicit articulation of advancement criteria and timelines, enhances trust and psychological contract fulfillment (Bambacas & Kulik, 2013) [3]. Studies have linked transparency to improved engagement, as employees perceive organizational fairness and investment in their growth (Saks, 2006; Breevaart *et al*., 2014) [10, 4].

Engagement, in turn, is widely recognized as a mediator between organizational practices and retention outcomes (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Albrecht *et al*., 2015) [11, 2]. High engagement levels are associated with lower turnover intent, especially when employees feel empowered to progress (Harter *et al*., 2002) [7]. However, empirical studies isolating career path transparency as a unique predictor remain limited, with most merging it into broader talent management constructs (De Vos & Meganck, 2009) [6].

Demographic factors also shape perceptions of transparency and engagement. Job level influences access to career development resources, while industry norms dictate mobility expectations (Ng & Feldman, 2010) [9]. Additionally, transparent career systems can mitigate gender-related advancement disparities, enhancing equity perceptions (Hoobler *et al*., 2018) [8].

This study builds on these findings by examining transparency's direct and indirect effects on turnover intent, controlling for engagement and demographics, and applying robust statistical modeling to clarify its role in retention strategy.

Research Gap

Although prior studies have examined the effects of career development opportunities on retention, few have specifically addressed the role of *career path transparency* as an independent predictor of turnover intent. Most existing literature merges transparency into broader career development constructs, making it difficult to isolate its impact. Additionally, limited research has explored how transparency interacts with employee engagement to influence turnover intent, particularly across different job levels and industries. This gap calls for a focused investigation that combines both demographic comparisons and predictive modeling.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study positions career path transparency as the central independent variable influencing turnover intent. Employee engagement is included both as an outcome of transparency and as a secondary predictor of turnover intent. Demographic variables (gender, job level, industry) are considered as control factors to explore variance in perceptions and effects.

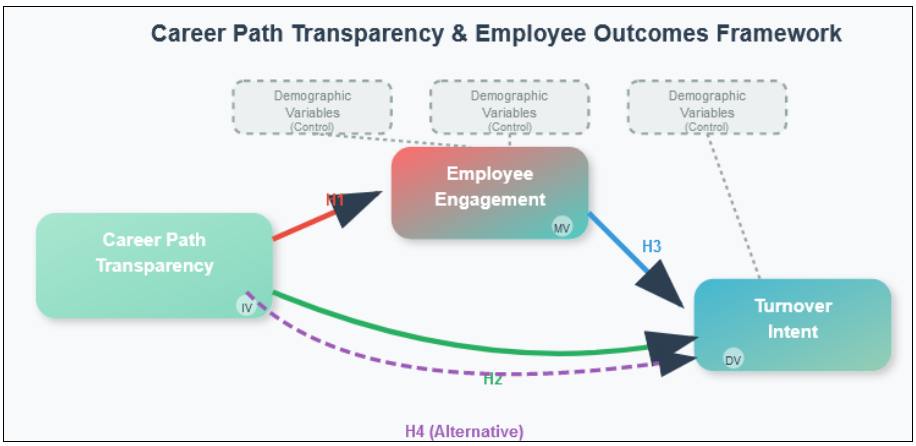

Fig1.1: Conceptual Framework

Hypothesis

- **H1:** Career path transparency is positively associated with employee engagement.
- **H2:** Career path transparency is negatively associated with turnover intent.
- **H3:** Employee engagement is negatively associated with turnover intent.
- **H4:** Career path transparency significantly predicts turnover intent after controlling for engagement and demographics.

Methods

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey-based design to examine the relationship between career path transparency and employee turnover intent. The choice of this design allowed for the collection of data from a large sample within a single time frame, enabling statistical comparisons between demographic groups and job levels.

Population and Sampling

The target population consisted of full-time employees from medium to large organizations across the technology, finance, and healthcare sectors. Using a stratified random sampling technique, the sample was divided by industry and job level to ensure proportional representation. A total of 420 employees were invited to participate, and 376 valid responses were obtained after data cleaning.

Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire containing 28 items measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The instrument measured three primary constructs: career path transparency, employee engagement, and turnover intent. This tool was selected because it has been widely validated in prior retention studies, ensuring comparability and reliability.

Pilot Testing and Reliability Analysis
A pilot test with 30 employees from similar industries was conducted to assess clarity and reliability. The questionnaire demonstrated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.89, indicating strong reliability.

Data Preparation
Responses were screened for missing values and outliers using SPSS v28. Outliers were identified through boxplots and z-scores, and missing values (less than 2% of data) were replaced using series mean substitution.

Descriptive Statistics
Descriptive measures (means, standard deviations, and frequencies) were computed to summarize the data. This provided a clear overview of how employees perceived career path transparency and their turnover intentions.

Inferential Statistics
An independent samples t-test was used to compare career path transparency scores between male and female employees. A one-way ANOVA tested differences across three job levels (entry, mid, senior). These tests were chosen to determine if demographic characteristics influenced perceptions.

Correlation Analysis
Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the strength and direction of relationships between career path transparency, engagement, and turnover intent.

Regression Analysis
A multiple linear regression model was applied to predict turnover intent from career path transparency and engagement. This method was chosen to identify the unique contribution of each predictor while controlling for demographics. Model fit was assessed using R^2, Adjusted R^2, and the regression ANOVA table.

Results and Analysis
Demographic Profile of Respondents
A total of 376 valid responses were analyzed. Table 1 presents the demographic breakdown, showing a balanced distribution across genders, industries, and job levels.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	182	48.4
	Female	194	51.6
Industry	Technology	128	34.0
	Finance	122	32.4
	Healthcare	126	33.6
Job Level	Entry	132	35.1
	Mid	134	35.6
	Senior	110	29.3

Reliability of the Survey Instrument
The scale demonstrated strong internal consistency with Cronbach's Alpha = 0.89 (Table 2).

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Career Path Transparency	0.91	12
Employee Engagement	0.87	8
Turnover Intent	0.85	8
Overall	0.89	28

Descriptive Analysis and Group Comparisons
Descriptive statistics indicated a mean career path transparency score of 3.82 (SD = 0.64) and a mean turnover intent score of 2.34 (SD = 0.71) (Table 3).

Figure 1 shows the distribution of transparency scores by job level, revealing slightly higher scores for senior-level employees.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD
Career Path Transparency	3.82	0.64
Employee Engagement	3.67	0.72
Turnover Intent	2.34	0.71

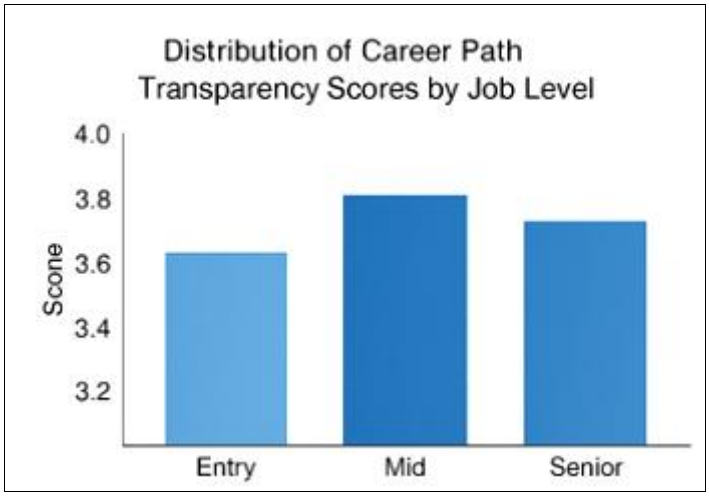

Fig 1: Distribution of Career Path Transparency Scores by Job Level

(Figure showing mean transparency scores for entry, mid, and senior levels)

An independent samples t-test found no significant difference in transparency scores between males and females (Table 4).

Table 4: Independent Samples t-test (Gender Differences in Transparency**)**

Gender Comparison	t	df	p-value
Male vs. Female	1.21	374	0.227

The one-way ANOVA indicated significant differences across job levels (Table 5).

Table 5: One-way ANOVA (Transparency by Job Level)

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p-value
Between	5.642	2	2.821	6.32	0.002
Within	165.84	373	0.445		
Total	171.48	375			

Pearson correlation coefficients revealed a strong positive correlation between transparency and engagement ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$) and a negative correlation with turnover intent ($r = -0.61$, $p < 0.001$) (Table 6, Figures 2 and 3).

Table 6: Pearson Correlation Coefficients

Variables	Engagement	Turnover Intent
Career Path Transparency	0.68***	-0.61***
Employee Engagement	—	-0.59***

Correlation Analysis

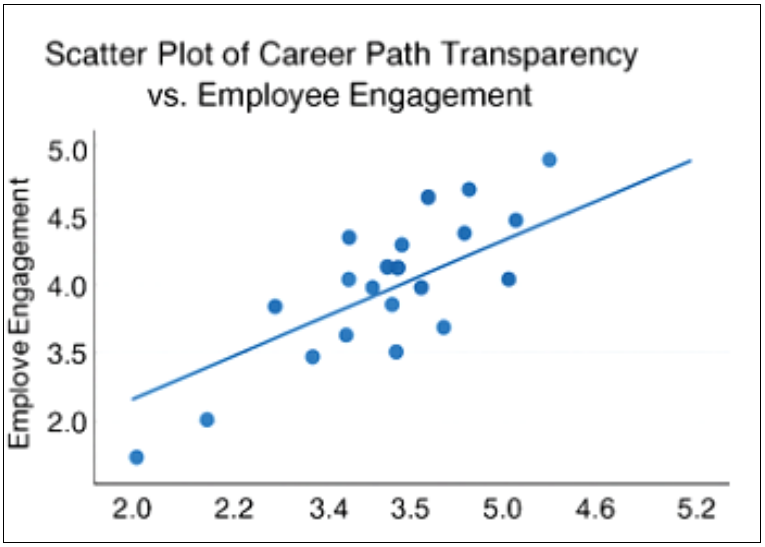

Fig 2: Scatter Plot of Career Path Transparency vs. Employee Engagement

(Figure showing upward trend between transparency and engagement)

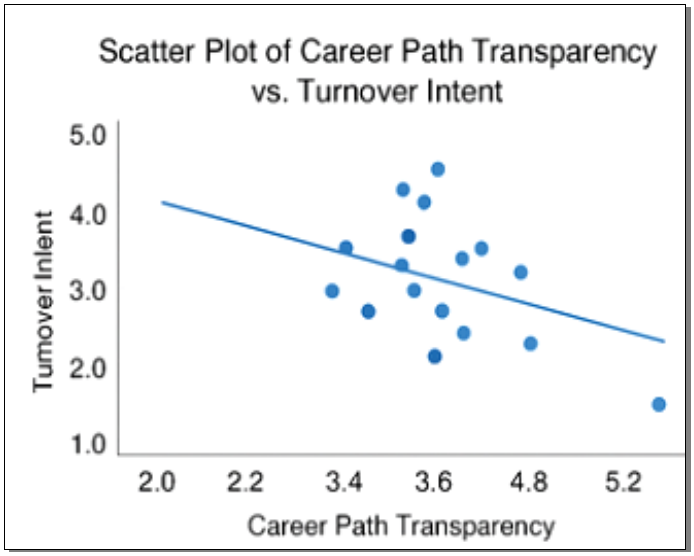

Fig 3: Scatter Plot of Career Path Transparency vs. Turnover Intent

(Figure showing downward trend between transparency and turnover intent)

Regression Analysis

The multiple regression model was significant (F (2, 373) = 86.27, p < 0.001), explaining 31% of variance in turnover intent (Table 7). Career path transparency and engagement both significantly predicted turnover intent. Figure 4 illustrates standardized coefficients.

Table 7: Multiple Linear Regression Predicting Turnover Intent

Predictor	β	t	p-value
Career Path Transparency	-0.42	-8.31	<0.001
Employee Engagement	-0.35	-6.87	<0.001

Table 8: Model Summary and ANOVA for Regression

R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	p-value
0.316	0.312	86.27	<0.001

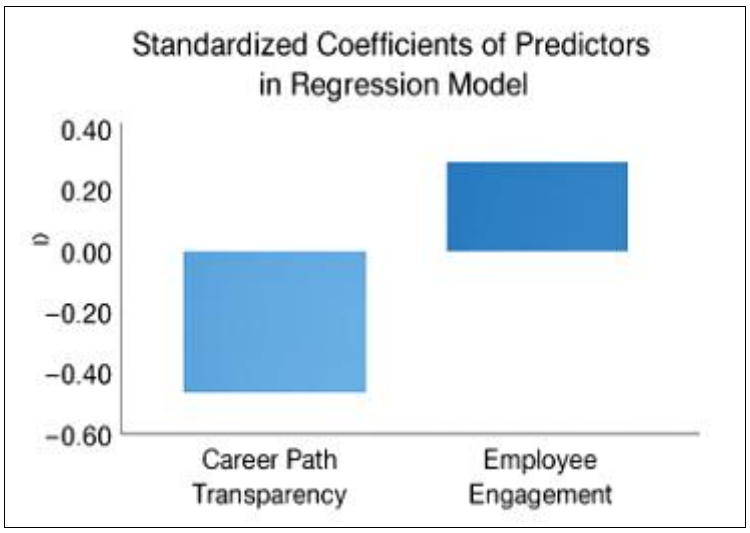

Fig 4: Standardized Coefficients of Predictors in Regression Model

(Figure showing bar lengths for β values of predictors)

The demographic analysis (Table 1) confirmed balanced representation across genders, industries, and job levels, ensuring generalizability. The reliability assessment (Table 2) indicated high internal consistency across all constructs, supporting the validity of subsequent analyses.

Descriptive statistics (Table 3) revealed that employees generally perceived career path transparency positively, with mid- and senior-level employees scoring higher (Figure 1). The lack of significant gender differences (Table 4) suggests that perceptions of transparency are not strongly gender-driven. However, the significant one-way ANOVA result (Table 5) implies that job level plays an important

role in shaping perceptions.

Correlation analysis (Table 6) showed a strong positive association between career path transparency and engagement (Figure 2), alongside a negative relationship with turnover intent (Figure 3). This indicates that greater transparency is linked to higher engagement and reduced intent to leave.

Regression results (Table 7) confirmed that both transparency and engagement significantly predicted turnover intent, explaining 31% of variance in the model (Table 8). The regression coefficients (Figure 4) highlight that transparency had a slightly stronger effect than engagement, underscoring its strategic importance for retention.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that career path transparency plays a critical role in enhancing employee engagement and reducing turnover intent. Employees who clearly understand their growth opportunities and advancement criteria are more likely to remain committed to their organizations. The regression findings indicate that transparency has a slightly stronger predictive effect on turnover intent than engagement, emphasizing its strategic importance in retention planning. These results support all proposed hypotheses, reinforcing the argument that career path clarity is a valuable human resource lever.

While the study offers valuable insights, its cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causality between variables. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias, and the sample, though diverse across industries, may not fully represent other sectors or cultural contexts. Furthermore, factors such as leadership style, organizational culture, and external economic conditions were not included in the model but may influence turnover intent.

For human resource practitioners, the findings highlight the need for structured and transparent career progression frameworks. Implementing clear promotion pathways, setting measurable advancement criteria, and communicating these effectively can enhance engagement and reduce attrition. Organizations should integrate transparency into broader talent management and performance appraisal systems.

Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to track the effects of transparency initiatives over time. Including additional variables such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and leadership support could deepen understanding of retention dynamics. Comparative studies across different cultural or economic contexts may also reveal unique patterns that can guide tailored retention strategies.

References

1. Allen DG, Bryant PC, Vardaman JM. Retaining talent: Replacing misconceptions with evidence-based strategies. Acad Manag Perspect. 2010;24(2):48-64.
2. Albrecht SL, Bakker AB, Gruman JA, Macey WH, Saks AM. Employee engagement, human resource management practices and competitive advantage. J Organ Eff. 2015;2(1):7-35.
3. Bambacas M, Kulik CT. Job embeddedness in China: How HR practices affect turnover intentions. Int J Hum Resour Manag. 2013;24(10):1933-1952.
4. Breevaart K, Bakker AB, Demerouti E, van den Heuvel M. Leader-member exchange, work engagement, and job performance. J Manag Psychol. 2014;30(7):754-770.
5. Clarke M. The organizational career: Not dead but in need of redefinition. Int J Hum Resour Manag. 2013;24(4):684-703.
6. De Vos A, Meganck A. What HR managers do versus what employees value: Exploring both parties' views on retention management. Pers Rev. 2009;38(1):45-60.
7. Harter JK, Schmidt FL, Hayes TL. Business-unit-level relationship between employee satisfaction, engagement, and business outcomes: A meta-analysis. J Appl Psychol. 2002;87(2):268-279.
8. Hoobler JM, Lemmon G, Wayne SJ. Women's underrepresentation in upper management: New insights on gendered organizational processes. Acad Manag J. 2018;61(2):337-365.
9. Ng TW, Feldman DC. Organizational tenure and job performance. J Manag. 2010;36(5):1220-1250.
10. Saks AM. Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. J Manag Psychol. 2006;21(7):600-619.
11. Schaufeli WB, Bakker AB. Job demands, job resources, and their relationship with burnout and engagement: A multi-sample study. J Organ Behav. 2004;25(3):293-315.
12. Cropanzano R, Mitchell MS. Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. J Manag. 2005;31(6):874-900.
13. Eisenberger R, Huntington R, Hutchison S, Sowa D. Perceived organizational support. J Appl Psychol. 1986;71(3):500-507.
14. Kahn WA. Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. Acad Manag J. 1990;33(4):692-724.
15. Meyer JP, Allen NJ. A three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment. Hum Resour Manag Rev. 1991;1(1):61-89.
16. Podsakoff PM, MacKenzie SB, Lee JY, Podsakoff NP. Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review. J Appl Psychol. 2003;88(5):879-903.
17. Guest DE. Human resource management and employee well-being: Towards a new analytic framework. Hum Resour Manag J. 2017;27(1):22-38.
18. Gruman JA, Saks AM. Performance management and employee engagement. Hum Resour Manag Rev. 2011;21(2):123-136.
19. Jehanzeb K, Bashir NA. Training and development program and its benefits to employee and organization: A conceptual study. Eur J Bus Manag. 2013;5(2):243-252.
20. Boxall P, Macky K. Research and theory on high-performance work systems: Progressing the high-involvement stream. Hum Resour Manag J. 2009;19(1):3-23.
21. Huselid MA. The impact of human resource management practices on turnover, productivity, and corporate financial performance. Acad Manag J. 1995;38(3):635-672.
22. Wright PM, Nishii LH. Strategic HRM and organizational behavior: Integrating multiple levels of analysis. Annu Rev Organ Psychol Organ Behav. 2013;1:367-394.

23. Holland P, Cooper B, Sheehan C. Employee voice, supervisor support, and engagement: The mediating role of trust. Hum Resour Manag. 2017;56(6):915-929.
24. Govaerts N, Kyndt E, Dochy F, Baert H. Influence of learning and working climate on the retention of talented employees. J Workplace Learn. 2011;23(1):35-55.
25. Hom PW, Lee TW, Shaw JD, Hausknecht JP. One hundred years of employee turnover theory and research. J Appl Psychol. 2017;102(3):530-545.
26. Mitchell TR, Holtom BC, Lee TW, Sablynski CJ, Erez M. Why people stay: Using job embeddedness to predict voluntary turnover. Acad Manag J. 2001;44(6):1102-1121.
27. Holtom BC, Burch TC. A model of turnover-based disruption in customer services. Hum Resour Manag Rev. 2016;26(1):25-36.
28. Arthur JB. Effects of human resource systems on manufacturing performance and turnover. Acad Manag J. 1994;37(3):670-687.
29. Ployhart RE, Moliterno TP. Emergence of the human capital resource: A multilevel model. Acad Manag Rev. 2011;36(1):127-150.
30. Delery JE, Doty DH. Modes of theorizing in strategic human resource management: Tests of universalistic, contingency, and configurational performance predictions. Acad Manag J. 1996;39(4):802-835.
31. Mathieu JE, Zajac DM. A review and meta-analysis of the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of organizational commitment. Psychol Bull. 1990;108(2):171-194.
32. Morrison EW, Robinson SL. When employees feel betrayed: A model of psychological contract violation. Acad Manag Rev. 1997;22(1):226-256.
33. Judge TA, Watanabe S. Is the past prologue? A test of Ghiselli's hobo syndrome. J Manag. 1995;21(2):211-229.
34. Shaw JD, Delery JE, Jenkins GD, Gupta N. An organization-level analysis of voluntary and involuntary turnover. Acad Manag J. 1998;41(5):511-525.