

Impact of Diversity Policies on Turnover Intentions: Mediating role of Job Satisfaction in Fertilizer Industry of Pakistan

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Abstract

Workforce diversity is considered a multifaceted concept, especially as the world has become a global village and organizations now compete in a global marketplace. One of the major challenges HR and line managers will face is managing increasingly diverse workforces and designing diversity-related policies that yield positive employee outcomes. This research focuses on assessing the impact of various diversity policies on turnover intentions. Using data from 208 employees in Pakistan's fertilizer industry, the study examines how gender, age, ethnicity, and educational diversity policies affect job satisfaction and, in turn, influence turnover intentions. The research model consists of independent variables (gender, age, ethnicity, and education diversity policies), job satisfaction, and the dependent variable, turnover intentions. The findings show that diversity policies positively influence job satisfaction, which in turn negatively impacts turnover intentions.

Keywords: Turnover intentions; Job Satisfaction; Diversity Policies; Age Diversity; Gender Diversity; Ethnic Diversity; Education Diversity

1. Introduction

Human resources play a vital role in the success of any organization (Maier et al., 2020). Talent management remains a key focus for HR practitioners and reflects best practices in HR (Al-Qudah et al., 2020; Solomon et al., 2023). Adopting best HR practices is crucial for competing in the global marketplace (Chadwick & Flinchbaugh, 2021). Talent is often the key competitive edge. However, retaining talent is a significant challenge (Kwon & Jang, 2022). Studies link diversity-related policies with organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Le et al., 2023).

Scholars worldwide are increasingly focused on designing diversity-related policies that enhance job satisfaction and reduce turnover intentions (Karwal & Tandon, 2022; Wang et al., 2024). Research consistently shows that when employees experience fair diversity practices, their job satisfaction improves, leading to greater retention and the achievement of organizational goals (Park, 2021; Wai et al., 2024). HR managers must manage diverse workforces and ensure all employee policies are free from discrimination based on background, fostering an inclusive environment that drives both satisfaction and retention.

A diverse workplace comprises employees of different races, genders, abilities, ages, education levels, and cultures (Tamunomiebi & John-Eke, 2020). In organizations with inappropriate diversity policies, employee morale deteriorates, productivity drops, and the bottom line suffers (Sweeney, 2022). To avoid these outcomes, organizations must develop diversity plans that detail policies and ensure adherence (Wolfe, 2022).

Agricultural sector of Pakistan contributes 21 percent to the GDP and 43.7 percent to the employment (Mangi et al., 2023). Accordingly, fertilizer sector significantly contributes to the economy and employment, and for this sector, fair diversity policies are critical (Mangi et al., 2023). High-tech machinery is vital for operations, but the workforce remains the backbone of this sector. When treated fairly, employees experience higher job satisfaction, reducing turnover intentions (Verma, 2020). Job satisfaction is crucial in handling organizational challenges, leading to better performance and lower turnover rates (Inayat et al., 2021). Retention of a skilled workforce is essential because replacing qualified employees can be difficult and costly (Elsafty & Oraby, 2022). Employee perceptions of discrimination based on diversity have financial implications (Triana et al., 2021). HR professionals and line managers must consider employee perceptions when making career-related decisions, as discrimination can increase turnover intentions and impact profitability (Wang et al., 2020; Nishii, 2013; Hom et al., 2017).

The importance of diversity-related policies has increased as diversity issues arise more frequently. Addressing these issues can enhance job satisfaction, improve efficiency, and foster creativity, leading to organizational success. Since employee turnover significantly impacts organizational success and intellectual capital, understanding the factors affecting turnover intentions is crucial. This study aims to study diversity-related policies and poses the research question of finding the impact of diversity policies and job satisfaction on turnover intentions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Human Resources Policies and Employees' Perception

Employee perceptions of human resource policies are crucial, as they influence key HRM and HRD functions such as recruitment, career progression, training, job satisfaction, employee creativity, turnover intentions, and collaborative decision-making processes (Stazyk et al., 2012). Workforce diversity is a significant aspect of human resource practice that affects both job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Carrell et al., 2006).

In a study on employee perceptions within an electronics company, Mor Barak, Cherin, and Berkman (1998) found considerable disparities in perceptions of diversity and discrimination between whites and nonwhites, as well as between men and women. White men perceived the company as fair and inclusive, whereas white women and people of color had different views. These inconsistent perceptions of discrimination among employees can negatively impact organizational culture, job satisfaction, and creativity, which in turn may harm the overall performance of the company (Mor Barak et al., 1998).

Varying employee perceptions of discrimination based on diversity can also have financial implications for the organization. It is increasingly important for HR professionals and line managers to consider employee perceptions when managing a diverse workforce and making career-related decisions, as these factors can influence turnover intentions and even the profitability of the company (Nishii, 2013; Hom et al., 2017).

2.1 Workforce Diversity

As the workforce becomes increasingly diverse across dimensions such as gender, age, ethnicity, and education level, it is essential for HR managers not only to manage this diversity but also to ensure that all employee-related policies are free from discrimination. Empirical research on the effects of diversity has yielded mixed results. One study found that diverse workforces outperform homogeneous ones (van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). However, other studies suggest that homogeneous teams may avoid the excessive conflict often present in diverse teams (Jehn et al., 1999; Ancona & Caldwell, 1992).

Diversity theories do not necessarily highlight benefits based on personal characteristics such as gender and age, but instead focus on diversity in perspective and information, which are subsets

of workforce diversity, as explained by Tsui & O'Reilly (1989) in their Social Category Diversity framework. It is also noted that diversity does not always correspond to other attributes; for example, age does not always equate to work experience. In their 40 years of research on diversity, Williams and O'Reilly (1998) concluded that the effects of diversity on individual outcomes remain inconsistent. Additionally, demographic factors such as age, gender, marital status, education level, and work experience have been found to significantly influence organizational commitment (McCue & Wright, 1996; Mannheim et al., 1997; Morrow, 1993; Wiedmer, 2006).

The literature on diversity research highlights the double-edged nature of diversity. While diversity can enhance creativity, it can also lead to dissatisfaction if diversity-related policies are perceived as discriminatory (Harrison & Klein, 2007; Jackson et al., 2003; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Workforce diversity can be defined as the presence of different manners, styles, and attributes that distinguish people from one another, affecting relationships and performance in an organization across factors like gender, age, ethnicity, and education (Munjuri & Maina, 2013). According to Jackson et al. (2003), diversity refers to the distribution of personal attributes among interdependent members of a work unit.

Workforce diversity often causes ambiguity in employees' roles, but diversity-related organizational policies can help mitigate these effects. Research indicates that when employees experience greater goal clarity—either in general or due to diversity management policies—they are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs (Stazyk et al., 2012). The growing diversity in gender, age, ethnicity, and education presents multiple challenges for HR and line managers, as well as organizations (Cascio, 1998). Studies have shown that diversity positively impacts job satisfaction (García-Rodríguez et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020), and ethnic diversity, in particular, has been found to enhance job satisfaction (Hsiao et al., 2020).

Based on these findings, the current study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1: Organizational Policies Favoring Gender Diversity have a positive relationship with Job Satisfaction (JS).

H2: Organizational Policies Favoring Age Diversity have a positive relationship with Job Satisfaction (JS)

H3: Organizational Policies Favoring Ethnic Diversity have a positive relationship with Job Satisfaction (JS).

H4: Organizational Policies Favoring Educational Diversity have a positive relationship with Job Satisfaction (JS).

2.2 Relationship of Job Satisfaction with Turnover Intentions

Job satisfaction is defined as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the evaluation of one's job or job experiences. High levels of job satisfaction often lead to positive organizational outcomes, such as increased organizational commitment and decreased turnover (Judge et al., 2001). Turnover intention refers to an employee's tentative plan to voluntarily leave their job, typically influenced by factors such as job dissatisfaction, the availability of better work-life quality elsewhere, or perceived unfair treatment in the workplace (Allen et al., 2010; Hom et al., 2017). It is essentially a plan to quit a job for another option with improved work-life quality (Nadiri & Tanova, 2010).

Research has consistently shown that job satisfaction has a negative effect on turnover intentions. Ramlawati et al. (2021) found that job satisfaction reduces turnover intentions, and Soeprapto et al. (2024) similarly demonstrated that job satisfaction has a significant negative impact on turnover intentions. Several other studies have also identified this negative relationship (e.g., Lin et al., 2021; Otache & Inekwe, 2022; Purwanto, 2020).

Based on these findings, the current study proposes the following hypothesis:

H5: Job satisfaction has a negative relationship with turnover intentions (TOI).

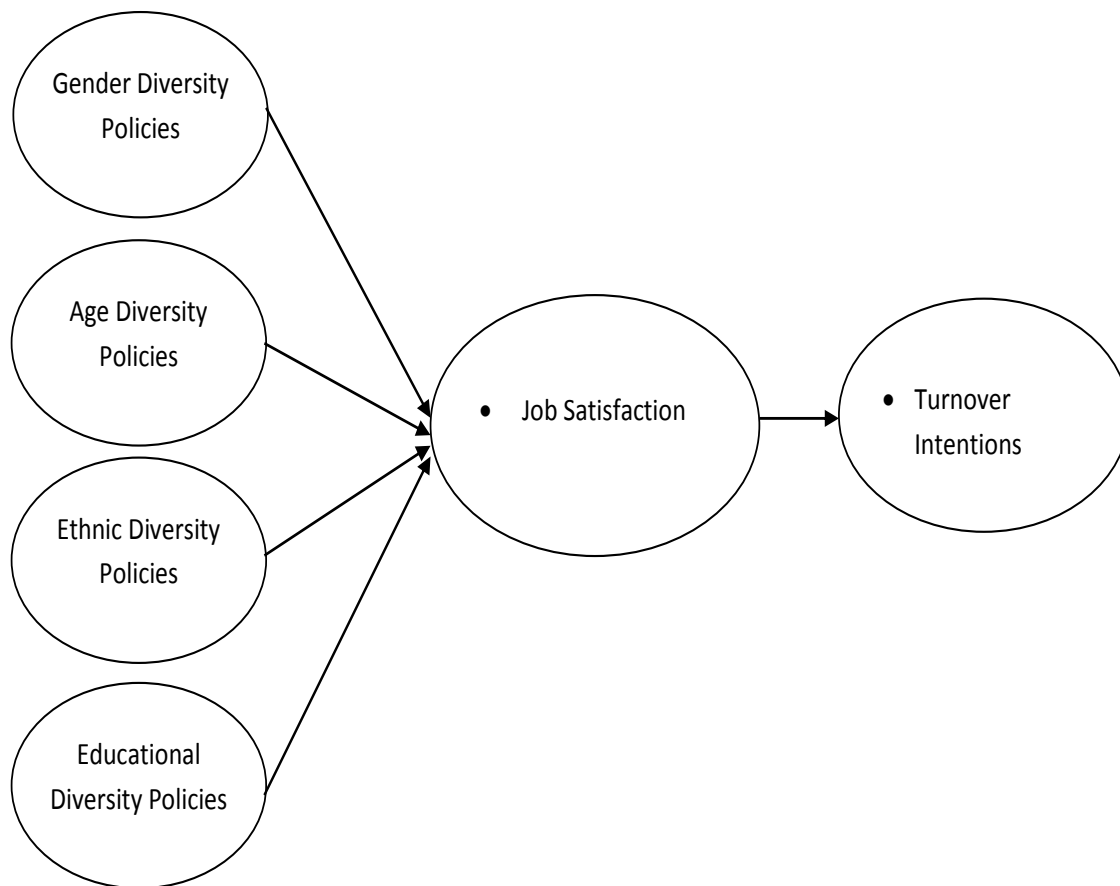


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Scale and Measurement

The questionnaire used to collect data for this study was meticulously developed by incorporating validated items from previously established instruments. The diversity scale consists of 20 items, covering four types of diversity: gender diversity, age diversity, ethnic diversity, and educational diversity. Each type is measured using five items (Fernández-Temprano & Tejerina-Gaite, 2020). The job satisfaction scale comprises 4 items (Bayona et al., 2020), while turnover intention is assessed using a 6-item scale (Su, 2021).

3.2 Data Collection

This research focused on collecting data from a sample that was closely aligned with the research objectives and the underlying philosophical approach of the study. The target population comprised junior to middle management employees in Pakistan's fertilizer industry. Data were randomly collected from nearly all major companies engaged in fertilizer manufacturing in Pakistan. A close-ended questionnaire, as referenced in Section 5.1, was developed to gather responses for each variable under study, with the intention of generalizing the results to the entire population. The questionnaire included demographic information, diversity-related data, and a reasonable number of questions targeting each variable, measured using a five-point Likert scale.

Data collection methods included emails, online surveys, and the distribution of hard copies of the questionnaire. In total, 330 survey forms were distributed to lower and middle management employees in the fertilizer sector. Of these, 208 completed surveys were returned, yielding a response rate of 63%. All self-administered questionnaires were correctly filled out by the participants.

The internal consistency and reliability of the scales were statistically analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha test. The results confirmed that the measures used in the study were unidimensional and provided reliable data for the subject under investigation. The values of Cronbach Alpha exceeded the minimum acceptable level, confirming the reliability of the instrument. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability scores are presented in the table below:

Table 1: Reliability Test using Cronbach's Alpha

Variables under Study	Cronbach's alpha Values	Number of Items
Gender Diversity	.781	4
Age Diversity	.708	3
Ethnic Diversity	.846	3
Education Diversity	.721	5
Job Satisfaction	.828	4
Turnover Intentions	.813	3

4. Results and Findings

Comprehensive statistical tests were employed in this study to achieve its objectives and provide robust support for the research findings. In line with the research objectives, careful attention was

given to ensuring that the results would be meaningful and beneficial for a range of stakeholders. Various statistical analyses were conducted to produce insightful outcomes. A correlation test was applied to measure the relationships between the variables. Simple and multiple regression analyses were conducted to assess the impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable, using SPSS software.

The results of these analyses are presented in detailed tables, along with visual representations, to ensure clarity and ease of understanding.

4.1 Profile of the Respondents

Analysis of respondent’s profile vis-à-vis independent variables used in this study is important, to understand the impact of these variable on turnover intentions.

Table 2: Gender Classification

Gender	Number	percentage %
Male	198	95%
Female	10	5%

The table above clearly shows that the number of female respondents was significantly lower compared to male respondents, with females comprising only five percent of the total sample. This suggests that the female workforce in the fertilizer industry represents a small proportion of the overall population. It is also important to note that most fertilizer manufacturing sites are in remote areas (with the exception of two sites near metropolitan areas), which may discourage female participation due to the long travel times and challenging living conditions in these locations.

Table 2: Age Groups of Respondents

Age Groups	Total	Percentage %
Below 29	54	26%
30-39	82	39%
40-49	60	29%
50 & above	12	6%

The table above presents the age groups of the survey respondents, revealing a diverse range of ages. This diversity suggests that the study has captured responses from various age categories, providing a well-rounded perspective. The inclusion of respondents from all age groups strengthens the study's ability to generalize its findings to the broader population.

Table 3: Qualification of the respondents

Qualification of Respondents	Total	Percentage %
Graduation	150	72%
Masters	54	26%
M.Phil	2	1%
Others	2	1%

A relatively low level of diversity in the educational qualifications of respondents was observed. This is likely due to the nature of the operations in the fertilizer industry, which tends to prioritize the recruitment of graduates with four-year university degrees in various engineering disciplines. Given that the majority of the workforce in this sector consists of engineering graduates, the respondent pool reflects limited diversity in qualifications. However, responses were still obtained from individuals with diverse educational backgrounds, suggesting that the findings can be generalized to the broader population.

Table 4: Ethnicity of respondents

Ethnicity	Total	Percent%
Punjabi	160	77%
Pathan	22	10%
Saraiki	8	4%
Urdu Speaking	8	4%
Sindhi	2	1%
Kashmiri	2	1%
Pakistani	6	3%

While the sample is predominantly composed of two ethnic groups, it still encompasses almost all major ethnicities in Pakistan. Notably, some respondents chose not to identify with any specific

regional ethnic group and preferred to be classified as "Pakistani." Given the responses from a diverse ethnic background, the results can be generalized to the entire population.

Table 5: Descriptive Details

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender Diversity	208	2.00	5.00	3.8750	.69505
Age Diversity	208	3.00	5.00	4.0721	.42548
Ethnic Diversity	208	2.33	5.00	4.1955	.61753
Educational Diversity	208	2.00	5.00	3.8173	.63587
Job Satisfaction	208	1.75	5.00	4.0409	.66404
Turnover Intentions	208	1.00	5.00	2.7885	.96315
<i>Valid N</i>	208				

Table 6 presents descriptive statistics, providing a comprehensive overview of all variables. It highlights the central tendency of each variable, along with the dispersion of data associated with each one. The mean value indicates the central tendency of the responses received for each variable, while the standard deviation (SD) reflects how closely the responses cluster around the mean. The SD values offer a reliable basis for assessing the consistency of the responses.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis of all independent variables indicates that each variable is positively associated with the mediating variable, Job Satisfaction, at a one percent significance level. The correlation coefficients, ranging from -0.518 to 0.419, demonstrate that the associations are from weak to moderate (Cohen, 1988). Specifically, the independent variables—gender (.419), age (.326), and education (.393)—exhibit moderate positive relationships with Job Satisfaction, while ethnic diversity policies (.249) show a weaker relationship with Job Satisfaction. This suggests that HR policies favoring gender, age, ethnic, and educational diversity positively influence Job Satisfaction.

Table 6: Test of Correlation

	Gender Diversity	Age Diversity	Ethnic Diversity	Educational Diversity	Job Satisfaction	Turnover Intention
Gender Diversity	1					
	208					
Age Diversity	.451**	1				
	.000					
	208	208				
Ethnic Diversity	.417**	.549**	1			
	.000	.000				
	208	208	208			
Educational Diversity	.550**	.589**	.480**	1		
	.000	.000	.000			
	208	208	208	208		
Job Satisfaction	.419**	.326**	.249**	.393**	1	
	.000	.000	.000	.000		
	208	208	208	208	208	
Turnover Intentions	-.293**	-.198**	-.140*	-.276**	-.518**	1
	.000	.004	.044	.000	.000	
	208	208	208	208	208	208

Given that gender diversity policies have a positive correlation, we can accept hypothesis H1, which states that "Organizational Policies Favoring Gender Diversity have a positive relationship with Job Satisfaction (JS)." Similarly, the positive relationship between age diversity policies and Job Satisfaction leads us to accept hypothesis H2: "Organizational Policies Favoring Age Diversity have a positive relationship with Job Satisfaction (JS)." Hypothesis H3, which posits that "Organizational Policies Favoring Ethnic Diversity have a positive relationship with Job Satisfaction (JS)," is also accepted based on the observed positive impact. The correlation analysis further revealed that ethnic diversity policies in the fertilizer industry of Pakistan positively impact Job Satisfaction, thus supporting hypothesis H4: "Organizational Policies Favoring Educational Diversity have a positive relationship with Job Satisfaction (JS)."

Additionally, the correlation analysis indicates that Job Satisfaction has a moderate negative correlation (-0.518 at a one percent significance level) with Turnover Intentions, leading to the

acceptance of hypothesis H5, which states, "Job Satisfaction has a negative relationship with Turnover Intentions (TOI)."

Overall, the detailed correlation analysis of the variables under study concludes that favorable diversity policies in the fertilizer industry enhance employees' Job Satisfaction while simultaneously reducing their turnover intentions.

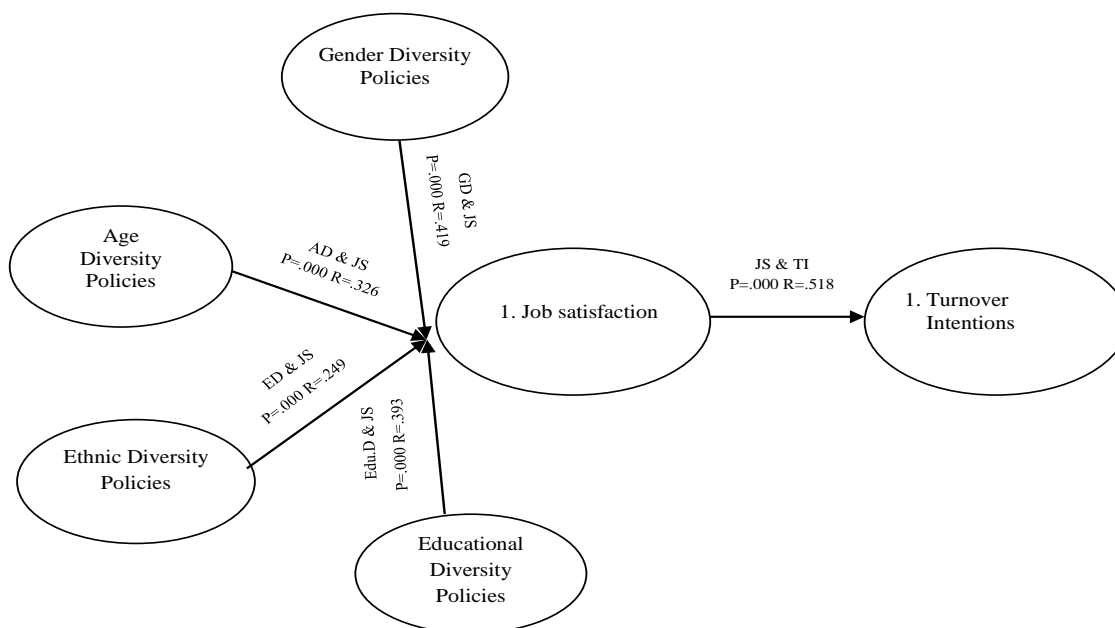


Figure 2: SEM analysis

4.3 Summary of Regression Analysis

Table 8 summarizes the analysis of each independent variable's relationship with Job Satisfaction. The results from the simple regression analysis indicate that the relationships between each independent variable and the mediating variable are statistically significant. To assess how well favorable organizational policies on Gender Diversity, Age Diversity, Ethnic Diversity, and Educational Diversity predict Job Satisfaction, the p-value is reported as .000, which is less than the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). This finding suggests that the impacts of Gender Diversity, Age Diversity, Ethnic Diversity, and Educational Diversity on Job Satisfaction are positive, with β values of 24.9%, 19.7%, 29.2%, and 24.7%, respectively.

Table 8: Simple Regression test Dependent Variables & Job Satisfaction

Model	(Constant)	Adjs. R ²	F	Sig	B	t – value	Sig
Gender Diversity	2.49	.172	43.951	.000	.401	6.630	.000
Age Diversity	1.97	.102	24.460	.000	.508	4.946	.000
Ethnic Diversity	2.92	.058	13.665	.000	.268	3.697	.000
Educational Diversity	2.47	.150	37.635	.000	.410	6.135	.000

Dependent variable: Job Satisfaction

These results indicate that Ethnic Diversity has the greatest effect on Job Satisfaction, followed by Gender Diversity. Educational Diversity also has a positive impact, while Age Diversity shows the least effect on Job Satisfaction. These findings align with previous research (e.g., García-Rodríguez et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020; Hsiao et al., 2020).

Table 9: Model Summary of Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.528 ^a	.279	.261	.82816
2	.518 ^b	.268	.264	.82605

a. Predictors: (Constant), Ethnic Diversity, Gender Diversity, Age Diversity, Educational Diversity

b. Predictors: (Constant), Job Satisfaction

c. Dependent Variable: Turnover Intentions

4.4 Impact of Job Satisfaction on Turnover Intentions

The current study also examined the effect of Job Satisfaction on Turnover Intentions. The results indicate a p-value of .000, which is less than the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). This finding denotes that Job Satisfaction has a negative impact on Turnover Intentions, with a β value of -34.9%. This result is consistent with findings from previous research (e.g., Ramlawati et al., 2021; Soeprapto et al., 2024; Lin et al., 2021; Otache & Inekwe, 2022; Purwanto, 2020).

Table 10: Simple Regression test Dependent Variable is Turnover Intentions

Model	(Constant)	Adjs. R ²	F	Sig	B	t – value	Sig
Job Satisfaction	-3.49	.262	44.32	.000	-0.384	6.630	.000

Dependent variable: Turnover Intentions

5. Conclusion

Workforce Diversity is regarded as a multifaceted concept, especially as the world has evolved into a global village and organizations compete in the global marketplace. The research model consists of independent variables (Gender Diversity Policies, Age Diversity Policies, Ethnic Diversity Policies, and Educational Diversity Policies), Job Satisfaction as a mediating variable, and Turnover Intentions as the dependent variable. The study examined the influence of diversity policies related to Gender, Age, Ethnicity, and Educational Background on Job Satisfaction, as well as the impact of Job Satisfaction on Turnover Intentions, using data collected from several fertilizer manufacturing companies. The findings indicated that Gender, Age, Ethnicity, and Educational Diversity policies have a significant positive effect on Job Satisfaction, while Job Satisfaction negatively impacts Turnover Intentions.

5.1 Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted within the Fertilizer Industry of Pakistan, which is relatively small; therefore, the results may not be generalizable to other industries or service sectors. The workforce size and the diversity of the workforce can vary significantly across organizations, which may limit the applicability of the findings to other contexts. Consequently, the results of the current study should be interpreted with caution in different organizational settings.

Despite the researchers' best efforts, responses were not received at a uniform rate from all participating organizations, with a significant portion (43 percent) of respondents coming from a single organization. This research employed a straightforward design utilizing self-reported outcomes; future studies may benefit from adopting more innovative designs, such as supervisor-reported employee outcomes like Employee Creativity. Additionally, this research could be replicated in different organizational settings, including the service sector and other manufacturing industries, to further investigate the impact of organizational policies favoring workforce diversity on employee outcomes.

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