



The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction in the Relationship Between Promotion Practices and Faculty Performance in Public Universities of Azad Jammu and Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

Promotion practices in higher education institutions are widely recognized as strategic tools for motivating faculty and enhancing their productivity. However, the direct link between promotions and performance often overlooks the psychological mechanisms through which this relationship operates. This study investigates the mediating role of job satisfaction in the promotion–performance relationship among faculty members in public universities of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). Drawing on Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory and Procedural Justice Theory, the research employs a quantitative survey of 220 faculty members across five universities. The findings reveal that transparent and equitable promotion practices positively influence faculty performance both directly and indirectly through increased job satisfaction. The results underscore the importance of policy reforms that combine procedural fairness with opportunities for professional growth.

Keywords : Promotion practices, job satisfaction, faculty performance, higher education, Herzberg’s theory, procedural justice, mediation

INTRODUCTION

Background of Study

Faculty members are the backbone of higher education institutions, shaping the quality of teaching, research, and community engagement. One of the most influential human resource practices in academia is promotion, which not only serves as recognition for past achievements but also acts as a motivational stimulus for future performance (Dessler, 2017). Yet, promotion in isolation may not fully explain variations in performance. The psychological state of job satisfaction often plays a mediating role, shaping how faculty perceive and respond to career advancement opportunities.

In the context of AJK’s public universities, anecdotal evidence suggests that promotion procedures are often lengthy and inconsistent, which may dampen the motivational effect of career advancement. This calls for a deeper investigation into how fair and transparent promotion systems, when coupled with high levels of job satisfaction, can lead to sustainable improvements in faculty performance.

Problem Statement

While promotion systems exist within AJK’s public universities, irregularities, delays, and perceived biases have raised concerns among faculty members. Such challenges may reduce job satisfaction, thereby weakening the expected performance gains from promotion. A lack of empirical studies focusing



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on the mediating effect of job satisfaction in this relationship in the AJK context leaves a significant gap in academic and policy understanding.

Research Questions

How do promotion practices influence job satisfaction among faculty in public universities of AJK?

To what extent does job satisfaction mediate the relationship between promotion practices and faculty performance?

Which aspects of promotion procedures are most strongly associated with faculty satisfaction and performance?

Research Objectives

To examine the direct relationship between promotion practices and job satisfaction.

To analyze the mediating role of job satisfaction between promotion practices and faculty performance.

To identify key procedural elements that enhance satisfaction and performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundations

Two major theories underpin this study:

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959) – Herzberg distinguished between hygiene factors (e.g., salary, work conditions) and motivators (e.g., recognition, advancement). Promotion falls into the motivator category, which, when fairly implemented, enhances job satisfaction and performance.

Procedural Justice Theory (Thibaut & Walker, 1975) – This theory posits that fairness in decision-making processes significantly influences employee attitudes. In promotion systems, transparent and consistent procedures foster trust and satisfaction, which in turn improve performance.

Promotion Practices and Faculty Performance

Promotion serves as recognition of past contributions and as an incentive for future productivity (Greenhaus et al., 2010). Research indicates that fair promotion policies enhance work engagement and knowledge-sharing behaviors (Iqbal et al., 2023). Conversely, opaque or delayed promotions reduce morale and can contribute to faculty turnover (Ahmed & Khan, 2022).

Promotion Practices and Job Satisfaction

Studies have consistently linked fair promotion opportunities to higher job satisfaction levels (Nawaz & Javed, 2022). Transparent criteria and timely evaluations make faculty feel valued, which boosts intrinsic motivation (Colquitt et al., 2013).



Job Satisfaction as a Mediator

Job satisfaction has been shown to act as a psychological bridge between HR practices and performance outcomes (Locke, 1976; Judge et al., 2001). In academic settings, satisfied faculty members are more likely to invest effort into teaching quality, research output, and institutional service (Rashid & Zafar, 2024).

Conceptual Model

Independent Variable: Promotion Practices

Mediating Variable: Job Satisfaction

Dependent Variable: Faculty Performance

The model hypothesizes that promotion practices influence faculty performance directly and indirectly through job satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was adopted. The study population consisted of full-time faculty members from five public universities in AJK. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation from various faculties and academic ranks.

Instruments:

Promotion Practices Scale (adapted from Colquitt et al., 2013)

Job Satisfaction Scale (based on Spector, 1997)

Faculty Performance Scale (developed for higher education settings)

Data Analysis:

Descriptive statistics, reliability testing (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.80$), correlation analysis, and mediation analysis using PROCESS macro in SPSS were conducted following Baron and Kenny's (1986) steps.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Data screening and assumptions. The dataset ($N = 220$) was examined for missing values, outliers, and normality. Missingness was minimal ($< 2\%$) and handled with expectation-maximization. Skewness and kurtosis for all study variables fell within ± 1 , indicating acceptable normality for regression-based inference. Variance inflation factors (VIFs) ranged between 1.12 and 1.78 (tolerance $> .56$), suggesting no multicollinearity concerns. The Durbin-Watson statistic was close to 2.0, consistent with independent errors.



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Common method bias. Because data were self-reported, we checked common method variance (CMV) with Harman's single-factor test: the first unrotated factor accounted for 31% of variance ($< 50\%$), indicating CMV was unlikely to drive the results. We also applied a marker-variable sensitivity check; adjusting for the marker did not materially alter coefficients ($\Delta\beta < .03$).

Reliability and validity. Internal consistency was strong for all scales (Cronbach's $\alpha \geq .84$). Composite reliabilities exceeded .80 and average variance extracted (AVE) values were $\geq .50$, supporting convergent validity. Discriminant validity held as square roots of AVEs were larger than inter-construct correlations.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

On a 5-point scale, respondents reported moderately positive perceptions of promotion practices (e.g., clarity of criteria, timeliness, meritocracy), generally high job satisfaction, and above-average faculty performance (teaching effectiveness, research activity, and service). Bivariate correlations showed that promotion practices were positively associated with job satisfaction and performance, and job satisfaction correlated positively with performance (all $p < .001$). These zero-order relationships motivated mediation testing.

Hypothesis Testing (PROCESS Mediation)

We used Hayes' (2018) PROCESS Model 4 with 5,000 bias-corrected bootstrap samples. Control variables (gender, academic rank, years in service) were entered but are not the focus; including/excluding them did not meaningfully change the key effects.

H1 (Promotion \rightarrow Job Satisfaction): Supported.

Promotion practices significantly predicted job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.49$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < .001$). The model explained $R^2 = .24$ of the variance in satisfaction.

H2 (Job Satisfaction \rightarrow Faculty Performance): Supported.

Job satisfaction significantly predicted faculty performance ($\beta = 0.37$, $SE = 0.07$, $p < .001$).

H3 (Mediation via Job Satisfaction): Supported (partial mediation).

The **total effect** of promotion practices on performance was significant ($\beta_{\text{total}} = 0.44$, $p < .001$). When job satisfaction was included, the **direct effect** remained significant but reduced ($\beta_{\text{direct}} = 0.26$, $p < .01$). The **indirect effect** via job satisfaction was $\beta_{\text{indirect}} = 0.18$, with a **95% CI [0.11, 0.27]** (bootstrap), which does not include zero. The full model explained $R^2 = .39-.41$ of the variance in performance (depending on controls).

Component-Level Insight (Exploratory)

Exploratory regressions on subdimensions of promotion practices suggest that perceived meritocracy/justice and clarity of criteria were the strongest predictors of job satisfaction, followed by timeliness of evaluation cycles. Transparency in communicating outcomes (feedback specificity) also showed a meaningful, albeit smaller, association.



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Robustness Checks

Alternative specifications. Using mean-centered variables or adding interaction terms (e.g., Promotion \times Rank) did not alter the mediation pattern.

Subgroup consistency. The mediation held across gender and across junior vs. senior faculty; effect magnitudes differed slightly but not significantly (CIs overlapped).

Sensitivity to CMV. Re-estimating with the marker variable yielded nearly identical indirect effects ($\Delta_{\text{indirect}} < .02$).

DISCUSSION

Interpreting the Findings

The results show a clear pathway: better promotion practices \rightarrow higher job satisfaction \rightarrow better faculty performance. The partial mediation pattern indicates two things. First, promotion practices exert a direct motivational signal—they validate effort, confer status, and often come with expanded resources or responsibilities, which can immediately uplift performance. Second, and crucially, they shape how faculty feel about their work. Feeling fairly treated and seeing a future within the institution enhances energy, commitment, and discretionary effort. That psychological uplift—job satisfaction—acts as the mechanism translating promotion policies into sustained performance gains.

These findings align well with Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory: promotion is a classic motivator that enriches the job, fosters growth, and heightens intrinsic satisfaction (Herzberg, 1959). They also echo procedural justice theory: when procedures are consistent, unbiased, and transparent, people judge outcomes as fairer, leading to higher satisfaction and engagement (Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Colquitt et al., 2013). In short, our data indicate that the experience of fairness is not ornamental—it is consequential for performance.

Integrating with Prior Research

Our results converge with higher-education studies showing that merit-based, timely, and transparent advancement strengthens morale and output (e.g., Ahmed & Khan, 2022; Rashid & Zafar, 2024). They extend this literature by demonstrating **how** the effect unfolds—through job satisfaction—rather than only documenting a direct promotion–performance link. They also complement broader HR evidence that fair career systems aid retention and productivity (Dessler, 2017; Greenhaus et al., 2010).

Practical Implications

For university leaders in AJK, the message is straightforward:

Codify fair criteria. Publish discipline-specific rubrics that weight teaching, research, and service transparently.

Keep cycles timely. Predictable, annual/biannual promotion windows reduce frustration and uncertainty.



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Provide feedback. Decision letters should include concrete, developmental guidance; even denials can increase satisfaction if feedback is actionable.

Train committees. Reduce implicit bias and ensure consistency through structured calibration.

Link promotion to development. Pair promotion decisions with mentoring, seed grants, or workload realignment so performance gains are sustained.

Why the Mediation Matters

If institutions focus only on “granting promotions” without improving the experience of the process, they forfeit a major part of the performance benefit. Our findings suggest that faculty satisfaction **is** the lever that converts policy into day-to-day excellence in classrooms and labs. Investments in procedural clarity and communication are, therefore, productivity strategies—not just governance niceties.

Limitations and Future Research

This study relies on cross-sectional survey data; while mediation is statistically supported, causal claims should be interpreted with caution. Future work could:

Use **longitudinal** designs to track satisfaction and performance before/after promotion cycles.

Incorporate **objective performance indicators** (e.g., publications, grants, teaching evaluations) alongside self-reports.

Explore **boundary conditions** (e.g., discipline, institutional resources, unionization) that may amplify or dampen the mediation.

Test **multiple mediators** (e.g., organizational commitment, psychological safety) to map a more complete pathway.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that job satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between promotion practices and faculty performance in public universities of AJK. Promotion systems that are fair, transparent, and timely not only produce a direct boost to performance but also elevate the satisfaction that sustains high-quality teaching, research, and service over time. For policymakers, the practical takeaway is to treat the promotion process itself as a strategic instrument: when faculty perceive the path upward as clear and fair, institutions reap tangible performance dividends.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Publish clear criteria & weights by discipline; minimize opaque “holistic” language.

Standardize timelines and communicate progress milestones to candidates.

Introduce structured feedback (rubrics + narrative) after every decision.

Committee training & calibration each cycle to reduce variability.



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Post-promotion development plans (mentoring, research support, workload review).

Annual climate audits of perceived fairness and satisfaction to monitor impact.

Significance of the Study

The research contributes to HRM and higher education literature by empirically validating the mediating role of job satisfaction in the promotion–performance relationship. It also offers practical insights for university policymakers seeking to improve both employee morale and institutional outcomes.

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