





“The mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between recruitment & selection and employee retention at the National Bank of Bahrain”

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THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RECRUITMENT & SELECTION AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION AT THE NATIONAL BANK OF BAHRAIN

Abstract

Employee retention is a critical challenge in the banking sector, with high turnover rates leading to significant costs and operational disruptions. This study investigates the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between recruitment and selection practices and employee retention at the National Bank of Bahrain (NBB). A quantitative cross-sectional survey approach was employed, with data collected from a random sample of 257 NBB employees across various departments and hierarchical levels. The study utilized structural equation modeling via SmartPLS to analyze the data. Results indicate that recruitment and selection practices significantly influence employee engagement ($\beta = 0.861, p < 0.000$) and employee retention ($\beta = 0.455, p < 0.006$). Moreover, employee engagement was found to have a significant positive effect on employee retention ($\beta = 0.406, p < 0.018$). Notably, the study reveals a significant indirect effect of recruitment and selection on employee retention through employee engagement ($\beta = 0.35, p < 0.019$), confirming the mediating role of employee engagement. These findings emphasize the importance of strategic recruitment and selection practices in fostering employee engagement and enhancing retention rates. The study significantly contributes to the literature on human resource management in the banking sector, providing a deeper understanding of employee engagement's role in retention and offering practical implications for organizations seeking to improve their talent management strategies and reduce turnover.

Keywords

employee engagement, employee retention, recruitment & selection, national bank, mediating role of employee engagement, Bahrain

JEL Classification

G21, O15, J50, J54, J53

INTRODUCTION

Employee retention has become a critical concern for organizations worldwide, particularly in today's highly competitive job market. The ability to retain talented and skilled employees has become a top priority for businesses across various sectors (Suganya Devi, 2021). Organizations invest substantial time and resources in recruiting and selecting the best candidates to fill their positions. However, building a successful workforce extends far beyond the initial hiring phase. Engaging employees and creating an environment that encourages them to stay and contribute to the organization's long-term success is equally crucial.

In the modern corporate landscape, employee retention has been recognized as pivotal in fostering organizational success and sustaining a competitive edge (Venkat et al., 2023). At the core of this dynamic lies the

intricate interplay between recruitment and selection processes and employee retention strategies (Patil et al., 2024). Within human resource management, the significance of employee engagement has been widely acknowledged as a crucial catalyst for enhancing employee commitment, productivity, and loyalty.

This study explores the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between recruitment and selection practices and employee retention at the National Bank of Bahrain (NBB). By investigating how employee engagement serves as a bridge between the initial recruitment and selection process and long-term employee commitment, this study seeks to provide valuable insights for HR practitioners and organizational leaders. The findings are expected to guide the design and implementation of effective recruitment and selection strategies tailored to optimize employee engagement and ultimately enhance retention rates within the banking sector.

The National Bank of Bahrain, like many other financial institutions, faces the persistent challenge of retaining skilled and competent employees in an increasingly competitive job market. Despite employing rigorous recruitment and selection processes, some employees may display disengagement or a lack of commitment over time. This phenomenon prompts the need to understand the underlying factors mediating the relationship between recruitment, selection, and employee retention. While numerous studies have separately investigated employee engagement, recruitment and selection, and employee retention, a notable research gap exists in comprehensively exploring how these elements intertwine within the specific context of the banking industry in Bahrain.

Although prior research has explored the individual aspects of recruitment and selection, employee engagement, and employee retention, few studies have holistically examined their interconnectedness within the context of the National Bank of Bahrain (Alshehri, 2018; Salh, 2017). Addressing this research gap is crucial to enriching the knowledge of human resource management in the banking sector. By focusing on the mediating role of employee engagement, this study aims to deepen the understanding of how recruitment and selection practices can be leveraged to bolster employee retention through enhanced engagement levels. The findings may also have broader implications for other financial institutions facing similar challenges in employee retention.

Therefore, this study seeks to offer valuable insights into cultivating a dedicated workforce and will be relevant to human resource practitioners and decision-makers within the banking sector. The outcomes are expected to facilitate the development of more effective strategies to retain talented employees and foster long-term organizational success. Ultimately, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge in human resource management, enhancing the understanding of the complex dynamics between recruitment, employee engagement, and retention in the context of the National Bank of Bahrain.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

The National Bank of Bahrain (NBB) operates in a competitive and evolving banking industry that requires robust talent management strategies to attract, select, engage, and retain top talent. As one of Bahrain's leading banks, NBB faces challenges like high turnover rates, changing customer expectations, and the need for technological innovation. These challenges necessitate effective recruitment and retention practices to maintain competitive advantages and sustainable growth

Talent management is essential for organizational success, encompassing strategies and practices to attract, select, develop, and retain skilled individuals (Bouteraa & Bouaziz, 2023; Kaliannan et al., 2023). The recruitment and selection process is vital in identifying and acquiring the appropriate talent, while retention strategies guarantee long-term engagement and dedication (Raheef, 2019). This literature review delves into current research on talent management, specifically focusing on recruitment and selection and employee retention. Moreover, talent management, particularly in recruiting and selecting, has become a key priority

for organizations aiming to gain a competitive edge in the current dynamic job market (Hongal & Kinange, 2020). Efficient talent acquisition strategies are crucial for attracting, selecting, and retaining high-caliber candidates with the necessary skills, knowledge, and abilities to contribute to organizational success (Boštjančič & Slana, 2018; Trost, 2020). Thus, this literature review summarizes recent research findings on talent management in recruiting and selecting, providing insights into the most effective practices, challenges, and emerging trends in this area. Therefore, recruitment and selection practices are vital for any organization's success. They directly impact employee retention rates, contributing to overall organizational performance. However, a direct relationship between recruitment and selection and employee retention. This study explores the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between recruitment and selection practices and employee retention.

Retaining employees is vital for the long-term success of any organization, particularly in industries such as the banking sector that often experience high turnover rates (Daniyal & Khan, 2020; Shahzad et al., 2020). It is essential to keep good employees as they contribute to improving customer satisfaction (Lambert & Orkaido, 2023). However, the banking sector faces several challenges, including talent retention, increased competition, changing customer expectations, regulatory compliance, and technological advancements (Swacha-Lech, 2017). To address these challenges, banks must embrace and develop effective talent management, invest in technology infrastructure, and adapt to changing customer preferences (Sehatpour et al., 2022). By proactively addressing these challenges, banks can position themselves for sustainable growth and success in an evolving industry landscape (Mujtaba & Mubarik, 2022).

Effective recruitment and selection practices focus on attracting and selecting candidates who align with the organization's values, goals, and culture. These practices ensure that the right individuals are hired for the right positions, leading to enhanced job satisfaction, motivation, and commitment among employees. Furthermore, research has shown that well-executed recruitment and selection processes lead to higher levels of employee

engagement (Vogel et al., 2024; Solihah et al., 2023; Ying et al., 2023). In addition, effective recruitment and selection practices also contribute to a more diverse and inclusive workforce. Organizations can attract candidates from different backgrounds and perspectives by implementing strategies that promote equal opportunities and eliminate bias, fostering innovation and creativity within the company. Moreover, a well-designed recruitment and selection process can help minimize turnover rates by ensuring that candidates possess the necessary skills and qualifications for the job, reducing the likelihood of mismatches between employees and their roles (Evan & Dwianto, 2023).

Employee engagement refers to employees' emotional commitment and involvement towards their work, colleagues, and the organization. Engaged employees tend to be more productive, satisfied, and loyal, increasing retention rates. Various factors influence employee engagement, including job design, organizational culture, leadership style, and the recruitment and selection process.

Employee engagement is a mediating factor in the relationship between recruitment and selection practices and employee retention. When organizations implement effective recruitment and selection practices, they attract and select employees who fit well with their values and culture. These employees are more likely to feel a sense of belonging and connection, leading to higher engagement levels (Girsang et al., 2023).

Research conducted by Iskandar et al. (2023) found that recruitment and selection practices significantly influenced employee engagement. The study showed that organizations with well-designed recruitment and selection processes had higher levels of employee engagement, leading to improved employee retention. Additionally, a study by Alam et al. (2024) demonstrated that employee engagement was positively related to employee retention. Their research found that engaged employees were more likely to remain with the organization, reducing turnover and increasing overall retention.

Understanding the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between recruitment and selection practices and employee re-

tion has important implications for organizations. By investing in effective recruitment and selection processes, organizations can attract and select candidates more likely to become engaged employees. This, in turn, leads to improved employee retention rates and overall organizational performance.

Recruitment and selection are critical stages in the employee lifecycle. Effective recruitment strategies attract qualified candidates, while selection ensures that the best fit for the organization is chosen (Hayat & Ahmad, 2024). These processes impact various aspects of the organization, including employee retention. Several studies have highlighted the correlation between recruitment and selection practices and employee retention (Rashid, 2024; Stephen, 2024). Research conducted by Rashid found a positive relationship between effective recruitment and selection practices and employee retention. Their study emphasized the importance of aligning recruitment strategies with the organization's goals and values and identifying candidates with the necessary skills and competencies. When selected based on these criteria, employees are more likely to be engaged and committed to the organization, leading to higher retention rates.

Recruitment is crucial in attracting qualified candidates to organizations. Effective recruitment strategies ensure that the right individuals with the necessary skills and qualifications are identified and brought into the organization. Moreover, recruitment significantly enhances organizational diversity by actively seeking candidates from different backgrounds and experiences (Avery et al., 2013; Dover et al., 2020; Trifilo & Blau, 2024; Walker et al., 2011). Additionally, successful recruitment efforts can contribute to a positive employer brand, attract top talent, and create a competitive advantage in the market. On the other hand, selection involves evaluating and choosing the most suitable candidates from the pool of applicants. It aims to identify individuals with the required qualifications and align with the organization's values and culture (Wyland et al., 2024). As highlighted in a recent review, employee retention is a significant challenge in the hospitality industry. The study emphasizes the importance of implementing effective strategies to retain employees in this sector. Thus, the relationship be-

tween recruitment, selection, and employee retention is crucial for organizations to attract and retain talented individuals.

Employee engagement encompasses emotional connection and dedication toward their work, colleagues, and the organization (Yousf & Khurshid, 2024). Engaged employees demonstrate a strong sense of commitment, enthusiasm, and willingness to invest their efforts in contributing to the organization's objectives. The literature suggests a robust positive relationship between employee engagement and employee retention. Research conducted by Milhem et al. (2019) demonstrates that employee engagement positively correlates with employee retention. Their findings indicate that engaged employees are more likely to remain with the organization, thereby reducing turnover rates and enhancing overall retention. Johnson and Shamroukh (2024) corroborate this relationship, revealing that organizations with higher employee engagement experience lower employee turnover (Abou Zeid et al., 2024). Furthermore, employee engagement significantly influences job satisfaction and organizational commitment, impacting employee retention. Engaged employees derive greater fulfillment from their roles and exhibit a stronger emotional bond with the organization, making them less inclined to seek employment opportunities elsewhere.

Various initiatives aimed at fostering employee engagement have been found to contribute to higher levels of engagement and, consequently, improved retention rates. These initiatives include providing opportunities for skill development, a positive and supportive work environment, and involving employees in decision-making processes (Senoaji et al., 2024). By implementing these strategies, organizations can enhance employee engagement and, consequently, improve their ability to retain a dedicated and committed workforce.

The conceptual framework emphasizes the pivotal role of employee engagement in the connection between recruitment, selection, and employee retention. The literature review aims to amalgamate and synthesize research findings to comprehend the mediating function of employee engagement in this relationship and identify potential future research directions. Cai et al. (2024) studied the

impact of employee engagement on the link between organizational cynicism and employee performance. Their findings indicate that employee engagement positively influences employee performance and can diminish cynicism in the workplace, underscoring its potential to enhance performance and cultivate positive work (Cai et al., 2024). Improving workplace factors such as the work environment, feedback sources, management relationships, barriers, and recruitment and promotion strategies can bolster workplace performance. These findings underscore the significance of establishing a supportive work environment to elevate employee engagement and retention.

Employees' inherent attitudes towards life and work can impact their turnover intentions. Factors like a robust portfolio and a company's brand name influence turnover propensities based on an employee's attitude towards life and work. This emphasizes the need for organizations to consider individual differences and tailor their recruitment and selection strategies to attract and retain employees with the right attitudes and values (Fastina et al., 2024). Furthermore, green human resource management practices, including green training and development and top management commitment, have a positive association with sustainability. This suggests organizations can enhance employee engagement and retention by integrating sustainability practices into their HRM strategies.

Additionally, self-leadership positively impacted work engagement, increasing employee retention (Abdul-Hamid, 2019; Jones, 2024; Kossyva et al., 2024). This suggests empowering employees to take ownership of their work and develop their leadership skills can boost engagement and retention. Moreover, talent management practices encompassing talent planning, workplace culture, recruitment and retention, talent development, professional advancement, and rewards positively influence employee performance. This underscores the importance of comprehensive talent management strategies to attract, develop, and retain high-performing employees. Furthermore, talent management significantly relates to talent retention, mediating employee engagement (Chopra et al., 2024;

Mathur & Srivastava, 2024; Narayanan et al., 2019). This indicates that organizations should prioritize talent management practices that foster employee engagement to improve talent retention. Additionally, team knowledge complexity positively impacts team information sharing and searching, with team learning goal orientation mediating these effects. This underscores the importance of fostering a collaborative and learning-oriented team environment to enhance employee engagement and knowledge sharing.

Thus, the literature review underscores the significance of employee engagement in the nexus between recruitment, selection, and employee retention. The findings suggest that enhancing workplace factors, addressing workplace bullying, considering individual differences, incorporating sustainability practices, promoting internal marketing and self-leadership, implementing comprehensive talent management strategies, and fostering a collaborative team environment can elevate employee engagement and retention. Future research could explore how employee engagement mediates the relationship between recruitment, selection, and employee retention and investigate the efficacy of different strategies in diverse organizational contexts. Based on the literature and insights into NBB's practices, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1: *Recruitment and selection practices directly influence employee retention in the banking sector, including at NBB.*
- H2: *Recruitment and selection practices positively impact employee engagement, as demonstrated by NBB's talent acquisition strategies.*
- H3: *Employee retention is directly and positively influenced by employee engagement, as observed in NBB's focus on fostering a supportive workplace culture.*
- H4: *Employee engagement mediates the relationship between recruitment and selection practices and employee retention, particularly in the context of NBB's initiatives to align talent management with organizational goals by employee engagement.*

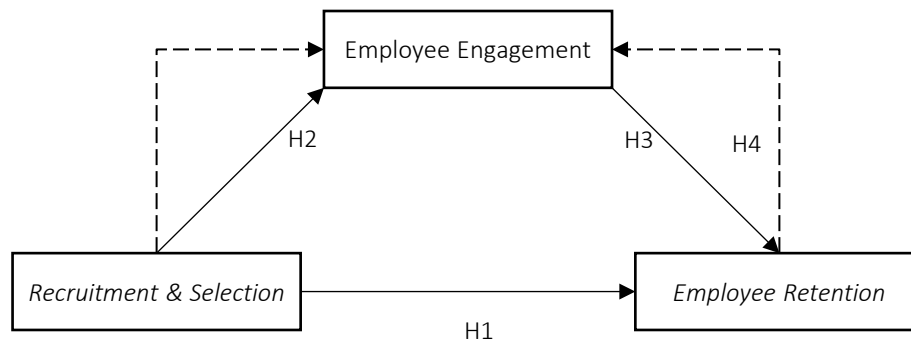


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

2. METHOD

The research design used in this study is a cross-sectional survey approach, where data were collected at a specific time. A random sample of employees from different departments and hierarchical levels within NBB was selected to participate in the survey. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire assessing various talent management practices and factors influencing employee retention. SmartPLS was employed to determine the impact of talent management practices on employee retention.

A quantitative research design was selected for this study to collect and analyze numerical data from a large sample systematically (Abbasi et al., 2023). This approach is efficient for investigating the relationship between talent management and employee retention, as it employs statistical methods to identify significant patterns and derive meaningful conclusions. Additionally, using a quantitative research design ensures objectivity and enables other scholars to replicate the study and validate the results. This study quantifies the association between talent management strategies and employee retention rates, providing valuable insights that can inform and improve organizational practices.

The study focused on all employees at the National Bank of Bahrain (NBB). According to the NBB Annual Report 2022, there were 772 individuals. Two hundred fifty-seven employees were selected using Raosoft's sample size calculator to ensure a representative sample. The sample was chosen with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. Due to limited access to individual employees' information, a non-probabilistic convenience

sampling method was used. This method involves collecting data from participants who are easily accessible and willing to participate in the study. The selected participants were from different departments and levels within the organization to ensure diversity in the sample. Each participant received a consent form explaining the study's purpose, the measures taken to maintain confidentiality, and their right to withdraw at any time. Online surveys were distributed to collect data, and all the gathered information was treated as confidential and used exclusively for research purposes. This study aims to provide valuable insights into employee satisfaction and engagement levels at NBB, which will contribute to continuous improvement efforts within the organization.

Data were collected by administering a self-administered questionnaire to a sample of NBB employees. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, each consisting of five items. The initial section concentrated on talent management practices, while the subsequent section addressed employee retention. The questionnaire items' design incorporated a Likert scale, enabling participants to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement. This methodological approach facilitated the collection of quantitative data, which could subsequently be subjected to statistical analysis to ascertain the magnitude and direction of the relationship between talent management and employee retention.

The collected data will be analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques, such as correlation analysis and regression analysis. These methods will help identify the presence and strength of any relationships between the variables under investigation. Correlation analysis will be used to de-

termine the degree of association between talent management practices and employee retention (Ali et al., 2023). Regression analysis will further examine the predictive power of talent management practices on employee retention, allowing for the identification of specific factors that may influence retention rates. The results obtained from the data analysis will be interpreted and discussed in the context of the research objectives, providing insights into the role of talent management in fostering employee retention at NBB. Therefore, this section clearly outlines the research design, sampling strategy, data collection process, and analysis methods employed in the study. It establishes a solid foundation for investigating the influence of talent management practices on employee retention at the National Bank of Bahrain.

3. RESULTS

Table 1 presents the analysis results, explicitly focusing on the path coefficients, mean values, standard deviations, t statistics, and p values. For the path coefficient EE → ER, the original sample (O)

yielded a value of 0.406, which was very close to the sample mean (M) of 0.407. The standard deviation (SD) for this coefficient was 0.172. The t statistic, calculated by dividing the original sample value by the standard deviation (O/SD), resulted in a value of 2.361. The p-value associated with this coefficient was 0.018. Moving on to the path coefficient RS → EE, the original sample (O) produced a value of 0.861, slightly higher than the sample mean (M) of 0.85. The standard deviation (SD) for this coefficient was 0.062. The t statistic for this coefficient was 13.928, indicating a strong relationship. The associated p-value was not mentioned. Lastly, for the path coefficient RS → ER, the original sample (O) resulted in a value of 0.455, which was very similar to the sample mean (M) of 0.453. The standard deviation (SD) for this coefficient was 0.165. The t statistic for this coefficient was 2.759. The p-value associated with this coefficient was 0.006. Thus, these results provide insights into the relationships between EE, ER, and RS variables. The path coefficients, t statistics, and p values help us understand the significance and strength of these relationships (Milhem et al., 2024).

Table 1. Path coefficient – Mean, STDEV, T values, P values

Variable	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
EE → ER	0.406	0.407	0.172	2.361	0.018
RS → EE	0.861	0.85	0.062	13.928	0
RS → ER	0.455	0.453	0.165	2.759	0.006

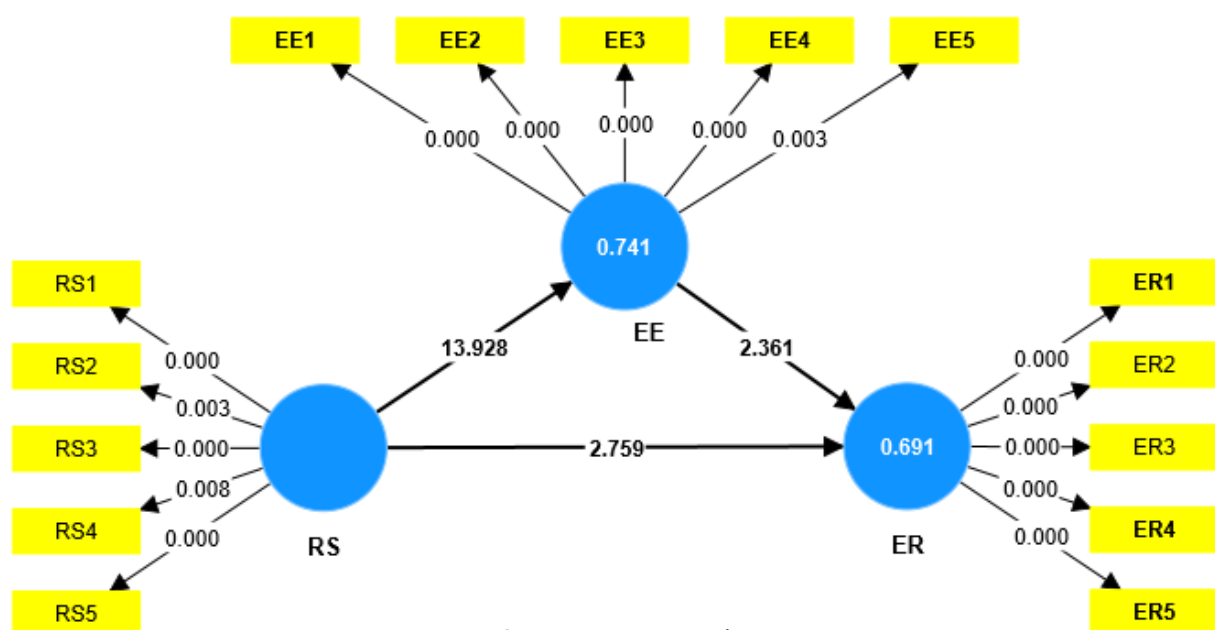


Figure 2. Framework

Table 2. Indirect effect – Mean, STDEV, T values, P values

Variables	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
RS → EE → ER	0.35	0.346	0.15	2.337	0.019

Table 2 presents the analysis results for the indirect effect, explicitly focusing on the mean values, standard deviations, t statistics, and p values. The indirect impact being examined in this table is the path RS → EE → ER. The original sample (O) yielded an indirect effect value of 0.35. This was very close to the sample mean (M) of 0.346. The standard deviation (STDEV) for this indirect effect was 0.15. The t statistic, calculated by dividing the original sample value by the standard deviation ($|O/STDEV|$), resulted in a value of 2.337. The t statistic value of 2.337 suggests that the indirect effect of RS → EE → ER is statistically significant. However, the p-value associated with this indirect effect is 0.019. Thus, these results indicate an important indirect impact between RS, EE, and ER variables. Understanding and analyzing this indirect effect can provide valuable insights into the relationship between these variables and their impact on each other.

4. DISCUSSION

Building a highly engaged workforce is contingent upon the successful recruitment and selection of employees. Employee engagement is the term used to describe employees' emotional connection and commitment to their work, colleagues, and the organization as a whole (Boccoli et al., 2023). Engaged employees are enthusiastic about their work, exhibit a strong sense of purpose, and are prepared to invest their efforts to contribute to the organization's objectives. Employee engagement is a critical focal area at the National Bank of Bahrain, as the organization acknowledges the beneficial effects of engaged employees on retention and overall performance.

Comparative studies have demonstrated that the mediating function of employee engagement is essential in the relationship between employee retention and recruiting and selection. A sense of belonging and connection to the organization is more likely to be experienced by employees when

they are recruited and selected based on their alignment with the organizational culture and values (Krušković et al., 2023). This initial alignment establishes the foundation for increased levels of engagement as employees align themselves with the bank's mission and vision. Subsequently, engaged employees are more dedicated to their positions, exhibit increased productivity, and are less inclined to pursue opportunities outside the organizations. Additionally, the relationship between recruitment and selection and employee retention is mediated by employee engagement, which influences job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Achmad et al., 2023). Engaged employees are more likely to experience job satisfaction, as they are motivated to perform at their best and derive fulfillment from their responsibilities. Furthermore, their profound emotional attachment to the organization fosters heightened organizational dedication, inspiring them to invest in their long-term partnership with the bank.

The National Bank of Bahrain acknowledges the significance of fostering employee engagement to improve employee retention. The bank invests in initiatives designed to increase engagement, including providing opportunities for skill development, promoting a positive work environment, and involving employees in decision-making processes (Tarr et al., 2023). The bank enhances its retention strategies and cultivates a culture of loyalty and dedication among its workforce by emphasizing employee engagement.

Comparative analyses with other organizations underscore the essential role of strategic recruitment and employee engagement in fostering retention. For example, research has shown that organizations with high engagement scores exhibit superior overall performance and lower turnover rates than those with lower engagement levels. This emphasizes the ubiquitous applicability of the National Bank of Bahrain's findings and the significance of employee engagement as a critical factor in organizational success.

In conclusion, the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between recruitment and selection and employee retention is paramount at the National Bank of Bahrain. The bank's emphasis on recruiting and selecting employees who align with its values and culture sets the stage for fostering high levels of engagement. As engaged employees are more likely to experi-

ence job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and loyalty significantly contribute to the bank's efforts to retain top talent. By recognizing the interconnectedness of these factors, the National Bank of Bahrain demonstrates a comprehensive approach to human resource management that acknowledges the pivotal role of employee engagement in achieving sustainable employee retention.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between recruitment and selection practices and employee retention at the National Bank of Bahrain. The findings have shed light on the critical linkages between these vital elements of human resource management and their impact on the bank's overall retention strategies.

Moreover, the results have demonstrated that effective recruitment and selection processes significantly influence employee engagement levels. By attracting and selecting employees who align with the bank's values, goals, and culture, NBB has successfully fostered a workforce that feels connected and committed to the organization. This initial alignment, established through strategic recruitment and selection practices, sets the foundation for building a highly engaged workforce. Furthermore, the study has revealed that employee engagement potentiates the relationship between recruitment, selection, and employee retention. Engaged employees experience higher levels of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and loyalty, making them less likely to seek employment elsewhere. As a result, employee engagement emerges as a crucial factor in enhancing retention rates and reducing costly employee turnover.

The study's findings have important implications for NBB and other financial institutions facing similar challenges in employee retention. Organizations can develop holistic strategies that address each aspect of this intricate relationship by recognizing the interconnectedness of recruitment, selection, employee engagement, and retention. This comprehensive approach will improve retention rates and foster a dedicated, committed workforce that drives organizational success.

Thus, this study has provided valuable insights into employee engagement and retention dynamics at the National Bank of Bahrain. By understanding the mediating role of employee engagement, NBB can leverage this knowledge to refine its recruitment and selection practices, implement targeted initiatives to enhance engagement levels, and ultimately create a sustainable workforce that contributes to the bank's long-term growth and prosperity.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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Formal analysis: Ali Ateeq.

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Writing – original draft: Mahmoud Merza, Ali Ateeq.

Writing – review & editing: Mohammed Alzoraiki, Ali Ateeq, Marwan Milhem.

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