

Compensation Practices and Faculty Retention in Higher Education Institutions: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Faculty retention is important to higher education institutions because experienced faculty contribute to teaching, research, student support, and institutional continuity. This systematic literature review examines how compensation practices influence faculty retention, with emphasis on salary, increments, performance-based pay, incentives, bonuses, benefits, and perceived fairness. A PRISMA-informed screening process was used to organize literature identified from Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, ResearchGate, and other sources. The reported review record comprises 540 identified records, 400 screened records, 140 full-text assessments, 60 studies in qualitative synthesis, and 25 studies identified for quantitative synthesis. A descriptive bibliometric profile of 30 focal studies was also prepared because complete citation and keyword-network data were not available. The synthesis indicates that competitive compensation, predictable increments, performance-linked rewards, and supportive benefits are generally associated with satisfaction, commitment, and stronger retention intentions, particularly when rewards are viewed as fair and transparent. The review also shows that direct higher-education evidence is narrower than the broader teacher-retention literature. It therefore identifies a need for India-specific HEI research that examines multiple compensation components together and considers job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and perceived fairness as related pathways.

Keywords: Faculty Retention, Higher Education Institutions, Compensation Practices, Salary, Performance-Based Pay, Incentives, Organizational Commitment, Job Satisfaction

1. Introduction

1.1 Higher Education Context

Higher education institutions depend on qualified faculty members to deliver teaching, supervise students, conduct research, contribute to curriculum development, and support institutional development. Retaining experienced faculty therefore has implications beyond employee continuity. When experienced faculty members leave, institutions may face recruitment costs, loss of institutional knowledge, disruption in academic activities, and additional workload for remaining staff. The original manuscript already establishes the importance of higher education, the central role of teachers, and the consequences of turnover. The revised paper narrows the unit of analysis to faculty members working in higher education institutions so that the title, objectives, literature scope, and conceptual framework are aligned. (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Ingersoll, 2001; Kraft et al., 2016)

1.2 Compensation and Faculty Retention

Compensation represents the financial and employment-related rewards provided in return for academic work. In the reviewed literature, the major components are salary, increments, performance-based pay, incentives, bonuses, and benefits. The evidence does not suggest that compensation operates in isolation. Rather, compensation can influence how faculty members evaluate job satisfaction, recognition, fairness, organizational support, and their willingness to continue with an institution. The revised review therefore moves beyond a simple description of salary effects and examines how different compensation components fit together within established motivational and exchange theories. (Bhatnagar & Aggarwal, 2019; Patel & Desai, 2019; Sharma & Jyoti, 2018)

1.3 Need for the Review

Existing research is dispersed across school education, higher education, countries, and different compensation practices. Some studies examine salary alone, whereas others focus on incentives, performance pay, or broader reward systems. The supplied manuscript also contained inconsistent PRISMA figures on pages 14 and 15. The revised version resolves this problem by using one consistent screening record based on the detailed PRISMA diagram: 540 records identified, 140 removed before screening, 400 screened, 260 excluded at title and abstract stage, 140 assessed in full text, 80 excluded, 60 included in qualitative synthesis, and 25 identified for quantitative synthesis. This correction removes the earlier 270-record table and prevents conflicting study counts. (Snyder, 2019; Xiao & Watson, 2019)

2. Objectives of the Review

- To examine the major compensation practices associated with faculty retention in higher education institutions.
- To synthesize empirical evidence on salary, increments, performance-based pay, incentives, bonuses, benefits, and perceived compensation fairness.
- To examine the theoretical explanations connecting compensation practices with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and faculty retention.
- To identify the geographical, methodological, and contextual limitations of existing literature and establish a focused research gap for higher education.
- To develop a conceptual framework that can guide future empirical research on compensation practices and faculty retention.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design using a PRISMA-informed screening process. The purpose is not simply to list earlier studies but to compare their contexts, methods, compensation variables, and retention outcomes and then synthesize the evidence into themes and a conceptual model. The review process follows the principles of transparent identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion. (Tranfield et al., 2003; Booth et al., 2016; Page et al., 2021)

3.2 Sources and Search Terms

The source manuscript reports searches across Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and ResearchGate. The revised paper treats these as scholarly databases or discovery sources rather than assuming that every source has the same indexing function. The principal search terms were combinations of “faculty retention,” “teacher retention,” “higher education,” “compensation practices,” “salary,” “salary increments,” “performance-based pay,” “incentives,” “bonuses,” “benefits,” “job satisfaction,” and “organizational commitment.” (Snyder, 2019; Xiao & Watson, 2019)

3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The review prioritizes peer-reviewed and scholarly studies dealing with compensation and retention. For the final conceptual focus, evidence concerning faculty members in universities, colleges, and other higher education institutions is treated as direct evidence. Studies conducted only among school teachers are retained as contextual evidence because they inform the broader compensation-retention relationship, but they are not treated as equivalent to higher-education evidence. This distinction directly addresses the reviewer’s concern that the earlier title did not make the study population clear.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Category	Revised criterion
Included	Studies on faculty/academic staff in higher education; studies examining compensation and retention; peer-reviewed or scholarly publications; English-language studies; empirical or review studies with identifiable methods.
Contextual	School-teacher studies that examine compensation and retention and help explain the wider evidence base but do not directly represent higher education.
Excluded	Non-educational sectors; duplicate records; editorials/opinion pieces; records without sufficient methodological information; publications unrelated to compensation or retention.

3.4 Review Period

The source manuscript states that the literature review primarily covers 2010–2025, while several earlier landmark studies are retained for theoretical and historical context. The revised paper keeps this logic but clearly distinguishes the 30 focal studies used for the descriptive bibliometric profile from the larger PRISMA screening pool. (Webster & Watson, 2002)

4. Theoretical Foundation

The revised review uses established theories to explain why compensation may influence faculty retention. This theoretical foundation reduces the earlier descriptive character of the literature review and provides a logical basis for the proposed conceptual framework. (Herzberg et al., 1959; Adams, 1965; Blau, 1964; Vroom, 1964)

Table 2. Theoretical Foundation of the Review

Theory	Key source	Relevance to faculty retention
Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory	Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman (1959)	Salary and employment conditions function as important hygiene factors, while recognition and achievement can strengthen positive work motivation. The theory helps explain why inadequate compensation can create dissatisfaction and why recognition-linked rewards may support motivation.
Equity Theory	Adams (1965)	Faculty members may compare their compensation, effort, qualifications, and rewards with relevant colleagues or alternatives. Perceived inequity can generate dissatisfaction and withdrawal intentions, making fairness a central part of compensation evaluation.
Social Exchange Theory	Blau (1964)	A fair and supportive compensation system can be viewed as an organizational investment. Faculty members may respond to valued treatment through stronger commitment and willingness to maintain the employment relationship.
Expectancy Theory	Vroom (1964)	Performance-linked rewards can influence motivation when faculty members believe that effort can lead to performance and performance can lead to valued outcomes. This is particularly relevant to performance-based pay and incentives.

5. Conceptual Framework

Based on the reviewed evidence and established theories, the proposed framework treats compensation practices as the main explanatory construct. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are positioned as mechanisms through which compensation may influence retention. Perceived fairness is included as a cross-cutting condition because the literature repeatedly refers to fair, transparent, and competitive compensation. The framework is conceptual and is intended to guide future empirical testing rather than to claim causal relationships from the review alone.

Table 3. Conceptual Framework Linking Compensation and Faculty Retention

Compensation Practices	→	Job Satisfaction	→	Faculty Retention
Salary Increments Performance-based pay Incentives Bonuses / benefits	→	Higher satisfaction Lower dissatisfaction	→	Intention to stay Lower turnover intention
Perceived fairness & transparency	→	Organizational commitment	→	Long-term institutional association

The framework integrates Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory through the compensation and recognition dimensions, Equity Theory through perceived fairness, Social Exchange Theory through reciprocal organizational relationships, and Expectancy Theory through performance-linked rewards. In this structure, faculty retention is the principal outcome, while job satisfaction and organizational commitment provide plausible explanatory pathways.

6. Descriptive Bibliometric Analysis

A descriptive bibliometric profile was added to strengthen the review. The supplied manuscript reports 30 focal studies in its Indian and international literature sections: 15 Indian studies and 15 international studies. Because the supplied document does not contain a bibliographic export file, citation counts, author identifiers, or keyword-network data, a full co-citation or co-word network analysis would require additional raw records. The present analysis therefore uses transparent publication-year and study-context profiling rather than inventing citation or network statistics. (Donthu et al., 2021)

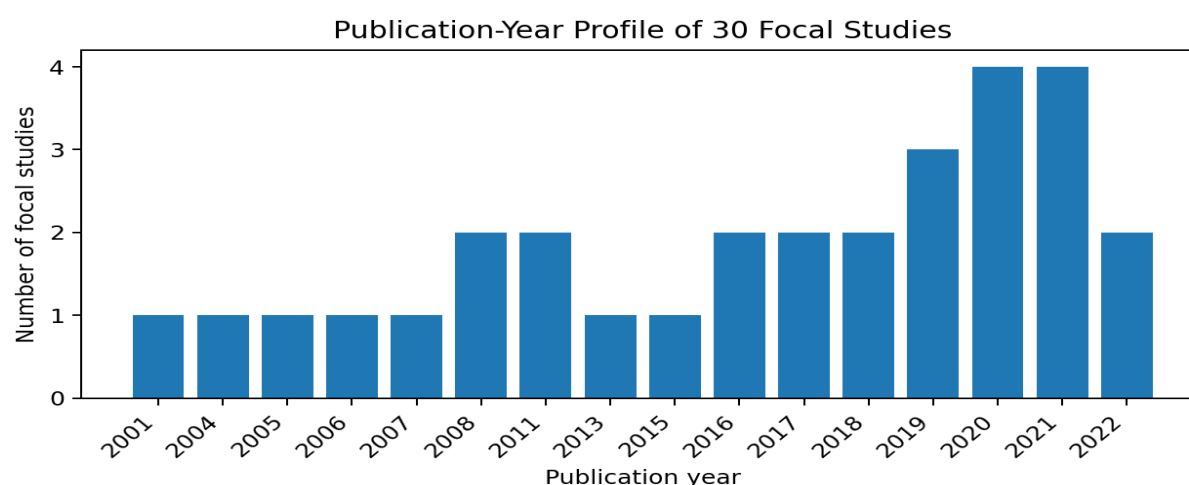


Figure 1. Descriptive bibliometric profile of the 30 focal studies reported in the manuscript.

Table 4. Descriptive Bibliometric Profile of the 30 Focal Studies

Study group	No. of studies	Publication span	Observed pattern
Indian studies	15	2017–2022	Predominantly questionnaire-based studies; compensation satisfaction, salary, increments, incentives, and retention.
International studies	15	2001–2020	Greater use of administrative, longitudinal, quasi-experimental, review, and survey evidence; salary incentives and retention are recurring themes.
Total focal studies	30	2001–2022	Balanced India/international representation in the focal set, but direct higher-education evidence is much narrower than the overall teacher literature.

The publication profile shows that the focal literature is not concentrated in a single period. However, the evidence is also not homogeneous: several influential international studies concern school systems, while only a smaller subset directly addresses higher education faculty. This distinction becomes important when interpreting the research gap.

7. Comparative Literature Synthesis

To reduce description and increase analytical value, the earlier paragraph-by-paragraph literature review has been reorganized into comparative themes. The 30 focal studies are interpreted according to the compensation element emphasized, educational context, methodological orientation, and retention implication.

Table 5. Comparative Thematic Synthesis of the Literature

Theme	Representative studies	Analytical synthesis
Salary and salary satisfaction	Bhatnagar & Aggarwal (2019); Kumar & Bhatia (2017); Patel & Desai (2019); Borman & Dowling (2008); Clotfelter et al. (2008); Hanushek et al. (2004); Ingersoll (2001) (Bhatnagar & Aggarwal, 2019; Kumar & Bhatia, 2017; Patel & Desai, 2019; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Clotfelter et al., 2008; Ingersoll, 2001)	Competitive and satisfactory salary is repeatedly associated with stronger retention intentions and lower mobility.
Salary increments and financial growth	Chandra & Saxena (2018); Kaur & Kaur (2021); Rani & Sharma (2022) (Chandra & Saxena, 2018; Kaur & Kaur, 2021; Rani & Sharma, 2022)	Regular increments are linked with satisfaction, perceived growth, and stronger institutional attachment.
Performance-based pay	Mehta & Shah (2020); Rao & Reddy (2020); Dee & Wyckoff (2015); Podgursky & Springer (2007) (Mehta & Shah, 2020; Rao & Reddy, 2020; Dee & Wyckoff, 2015; Podgursky & Springer, 2007)	Performance-linked rewards can strengthen motivation and retention when employees understand the reward criteria and view them as fair.
Incentives and bonuses	Gupta & Verma (2021); Singh & Mishra (2020); Springer et al. (2016) (Gupta & Verma, 2021; Singh & Mishra, 2020; Springer et al., 2016)	Additional rewards can strengthen recognition, commitment, and continuity, especially where staffing or retention pressures are high.

Theme	Representative studies	Analytical synthesis
Fairness, benefits and organizational support	Joshi & Patel (2022); Kulkarni & Deshpande (2021); Loeb et al. (2005); Kraft et al. (2016); Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2017) (Joshi & Patel, 2022; Kulkarni & Deshpande, 2021; Kraft et al., 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017)	Compensation is more effective when employees perceive the system as fair and when monetary rewards operate with supportive employment conditions.
Compensation as part of a wider retention system	Nair & Thomas (2019); Sharma & Jyoti (2018); Yadav & Singh (2021); Buchanan et al. (2013); Feng & Sass (2011) (Kumar & Bhatia, 2017; Rani & Sharma, 2022; Sharma & Jyoti, 2018; Yadav & Singh, 2021)	Compensation interacts with professional development, recognition, motivation, and organizational conditions rather than operating as an isolated factor.

8. Comparative Table Highlighting the Contribution of the Present Review

The following comparison makes the contribution of the present review explicit. It also addresses the reviewer's request for a comparative table before identifying the research gap.

Table 6. Comparative Contribution of the Present Review

Dimension	Earlier literature / review tendency	Contribution of present review
Unit of analysis	Many studies examine teachers generally or school teachers.	The review title and framework are explicitly focused on faculty members in higher education institutions.
Compensation coverage	Often studies one element, especially salary or incentives.	Brings salary, increments, performance pay, incentives, bonuses, benefits, and fairness into one analytical framework.
Context	International school evidence is prominent; Indian higher-education evidence is comparatively limited.	Separates direct higher-education evidence from school-level contextual evidence and identifies the HEI-specific shortage.
Theory	Several studies report relationships without a unified theoretical explanation in the supplied review.	Integrates Herzberg, Equity, Social Exchange, and Expectancy perspectives.
Review method	Literature is often presented study-by-study.	Uses PRISMA-informed screening, thematic synthesis, and a descriptive bibliometric profile.
PRISMA reporting	Earlier manuscript contained conflicting counts: 270 in the table and 540 in the flow diagram.	Uses one consistent PRISMA record based on the detailed flow diagram: 540 → 400 → 140 → 60 → 25.
Conceptual model	No explicit model was presented in the earlier version.	Proposes a model linking compensation practices with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and faculty retention, with perceived fairness as a key condition.
Research gap	Gap was broad and mainly stated as a lack of combined compensation studies.	Identifies a focused gap in India-specific, HEI-level, multi-component compensation research and fairness perceptions.

9. PRISMA-Based Review Process

The PRISMA record has been standardized to the numbers shown in the detailed flow diagram in the supplied manuscript. This resolves the discrepancy between the earlier 270-record table and the 540-record PRISMA diagram. The corrected screening sequence is internally consistent and is used throughout the revised Results section.

Table 7. PRISMA-Based Review Selection Process

PRISMA stage	Number	Explanation
Records identified from databases	524	Google Scholar 210; Scopus 150; Web of Science 90; ERIC 45; ResearchGate 29.
Records from registers/other sources	16	Additional records reported in the supplied PRISMA diagram.
Total records identified	540	524 + 16.
Records removed before screening	140	Duplicate 120; marked ineligible 15; other reasons 5.
Records screened	400	540 – 140.
Records excluded after title/abstract screening	260	Excluded during initial screening.
Full-text articles assessed	140	400 – 260.
Full-text articles excluded	80	Not related to compensation 35; not related to retention 25; no empirical data 12; conference papers/reports 8.
Studies included in qualitative synthesis	60	Final qualitative evidence base.
Studies identified for quantitative synthesis	25	Studies reported as suitable for quantitative synthesis; no pooled effect size is claimed in this revised paper because comparable effect-size data are not supplied.

10. Research Gap

10.1 Research Problem

The research problem emerging from the literature is the absence of a sufficiently integrated, India-specific explanation of faculty retention in higher education based on compensation practices. Existing findings suggest that pay matters, but they do not adequately establish how salary, increments, performance-linked rewards, incentives, bonuses, benefits, and compensation fairness work together in the HEI context. The literature also gives limited attention to job satisfaction and organizational commitment as possible pathways between compensation and the decision to remain. This problem provided the direction for the present review and supports future empirical testing among faculty members in Indian higher education institutions.

The literature survey points to a specific research gap rather than a general shortage of studies. First, a substantial part of the available evidence concerns school teachers, while direct evidence on faculty members in higher education is more limited. Second, studies often examine salary, incentives, performance pay, or benefits separately, making it difficult to understand the combined influence of a compensation package. Third, perceived fairness and transparency are frequently discussed but are not consistently measured alongside retention outcomes. Fourth, Indian HEI evidence is comparatively limited and methodologically uneven. Finally, retention intention is often examined without a clear integration of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. These limitations

indicate the need for an HEI-focused study that tests multiple compensation dimensions together and examines the mechanisms through which compensation may influence faculty retention.

11. Results

11.1 Review Selection Results

The revised PRISMA record identifies 540 records at the identification stage. After 140 records were removed before screening, 400 records were screened. A further 260 records were excluded on the basis of titles and abstracts. Full texts of 140 records were assessed, 80 were excluded for specified reasons, and 60 studies were retained for qualitative synthesis. The source PRISMA record further identifies 25 studies for quantitative synthesis. These figures are now consistent across the methodology, PRISMA table, and Results section.

11.2 Bibliometric Results

The descriptive bibliometric profile of the 30 focal studies contains equal numbers of Indian and international studies. The largest publication-year frequencies in this focal set occur in 2020 and 2021, with four studies in each year, followed by 2019 with three studies. The older international evidence extends back to 2001, showing that compensation has been considered in retention research for more than two decades. The Indian focal studies are concentrated between 2017 and 2022, indicating a comparatively recent development of the Indian evidence base. (Donthu et al., 2021)

11.3 Thematic Results

Across the focal studies, salary and salary satisfaction appear most consistently as retention-related compensation factors. Regular increments are associated with perceptions of financial progression. Performance-based pay and incentives are generally associated with motivation and recognition, although their effectiveness depends on transparency and perceived fairness. Benefits and broader employment conditions strengthen the value of compensation when they signal institutional support. Overall, the evidence supports a multi-component view of compensation rather than a salary-only explanation. (Bhatnagar & Aggarwal, 2019; Chandra & Saxena, 2018; Mehta & Shah, 2020; Gupta & Verma, 2021; Sharma & Jyoti, 2018)

11.4 Higher-Education-Specific Result

The strongest result for the research-gap stage is contextual rather than numerical: the focal literature contains fewer directly higher-education studies than school-level studies. This means that findings from school settings should not automatically be generalized to universities and colleges. Faculty members operate within additional academic responsibilities such as research, mentoring, curriculum work, and institutional service, which makes a clearly defined HEI-focused investigation necessary. (Patel & Desai, 2019; Rao & Reddy, 2020; Sharma & Jyoti, 2018)

12. Discussion

The findings suggest that compensation influences faculty retention through more than its monetary value. Salary can provide financial security and signal the institution's valuation of academic work. Increments can communicate career progression, while performance-linked rewards can provide recognition when evaluation systems are credible and transparent. Incentives and bonuses may strengthen the employment relationship when faculty members understand why rewards are provided and perceive them as equitable. (Herzberg et al., 1959; Adams, 1965; Blau, 1964; Vroom, 1964)

The theoretical interpretation strengthens this conclusion. Herzberg's framework helps distinguish dissatisfaction arising from inadequate employment conditions from positive motivation associated with recognition and achievement. Equity Theory explains why the same salary may be evaluated differently by two faculty members if they perceive differences in workload, qualifications, or comparable rewards. Social Exchange Theory suggests that fair compensation can encourage reciprocal commitment. Expectancy Theory explains why performance-linked rewards are more likely to motivate when faculty members see a credible connection between effort, performance, and valued outcomes.

The findings also indicate that compensation should not be treated as a stand-alone retention policy. Work environment, professional development, recognition, and career opportunities appear alongside financial rewards in the reviewed evidence. For higher education, this suggests that institutions may need integrated retention policies rather than isolated salary interventions. The proposed conceptual framework therefore places job satisfaction and organizational commitment between compensation practices and retention, while perceived fairness provides an important interpretive condition.

A further implication concerns research design. The reviewed literature contains descriptive surveys as well as stronger longitudinal, administrative, and quasi-experimental approaches. Future Indian HEI research can improve evidence quality by combining multi-component compensation measures with validated measures of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, perceived fairness, and retention intention. Such work can also compare public and private institutions and examine whether compensation effects differ by faculty career stage or institutional role.

Administrators and policy makers should encourage fair and sustainable compensation structures across higher education institutions. Policy discussions should distinguish school-teacher evidence from HEI faculty evidence and support institution-level data collection on compensation, satisfaction, commitment, and retention.

13. Implications

13.1 Implications for Administrators and Policy Makers

Faculty members can benefit when institutions provide transparent salary progression, meaningful recognition, professional development, and clearly defined reward opportunities. Transparent communication can also help employees understand how compensation decisions are made and how performance is evaluated.

13.2 Implications for Faculty Employees

Institutional leaders should treat compensation as part of a wider retention system rather than as an isolated financial intervention. They should monitor turnover risks, workload, recognition, career progression, and the quality of the employment relationship alongside salary and incentives.

13.3 Implications for Employers and Institutional Leaders

HR departments should establish clear compensation criteria, communicate reward decisions, and periodically assess faculty perceptions of fairness. Performance-linked rewards should be based on understandable and consistent measures so that faculty can see a credible relationship between performance and outcomes.

13.4 Implications for Human Resource Departments

HEIs should review salary structures, increments, benefits, and reward systems for competitiveness, consistency, and transparency. Retention strategies should combine financial rewards with recognition, professional development, supportive working conditions, and credible career opportunities.

14. Limitations and Future Research Directions

The review is limited by the information available in the supplied manuscript. Although 60 studies are reported as included in the qualitative synthesis and 25 as suitable for quantitative synthesis, detailed bibliographic metadata and comparable effect sizes are not provided. Consequently, the bibliometric component is descriptive rather than a full citation-network analysis, and no pooled meta-analytic effect size is claimed. The focal literature also contains school-level studies, which are treated as contextual evidence rather than direct HEI evidence. Future research should obtain complete bibliographic records from Scopus or Web of Science and conduct citation, co-citation, bibliographic-coupling, and keyword co-occurrence analyses using a reproducible workflow such as bibliometrix or VOSviewer. Empirical studies should then test the proposed framework using faculty-level data from Indian higher education institutions. (Donthu et al., 2021; Page et al., 2021)

The review concludes that compensation is a meaningful component of faculty retention in higher education, but its effect is better understood as part of a wider employment relationship. In response to the first two objectives, salary, regular increments, performance-based pay, incentives, bonuses, benefits, and perceived fairness emerge

as the principal compensation dimensions associated with retention-related outcomes. In response to the third objective, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, Equity Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Expectancy Theory provide complementary explanations through satisfaction, fairness, reciprocal commitment, and performance-reward expectations. The fourth objective is addressed by identifying the shortage of India-specific HEI evidence, the frequent separation of compensation components, and the limited measurement of fairness and explanatory pathways. The fifth objective is addressed through the proposed framework linking compensation practices with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and faculty retention. Overall, the review supports future empirical research among Indian HEIs using multi-component compensation measures and validated retention-related constructs.

15. Conclusion

The review concludes that **compensation practices play an important role in faculty retention in higher education institutions**. Salary, regular increments, performance-based pay, incentives, bonuses, and benefits can improve job satisfaction, motivation, and organizational commitment when they are competitive and fairly implemented. The literature also indicates that **perceived fairness and transparency** are important in determining how faculty members respond to compensation practices. However, direct evidence relating to higher education faculty, particularly in the Indian context, remains comparatively limited. Therefore, future research should examine the combined effect of compensation practices, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and perceived fairness on faculty retention in higher education institutions.

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