

## BRIDGING THE GAP: EMPLOYER BRANDING, PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT FULFILLMENT AND JOB SATISFACTION

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### Abstract

In today's competitive organizational environment, employer branding has also become a strategic tool not only for talent attraction but also to shape the attitudes and behaviors of current employees. Therefore, this research examines the mediating effect of Psychological Contract Fulfillment (PCF) between Perceived Employer Brand (PEB) and Job Satisfaction (JS), with attention to both intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions of satisfaction of existing employees. Based on Social Exchange Theory and Psychological Contract Theory, a quantitative questionnaire was administered to 402 permanent employees from four major telecom service providers in Pakistan. Structural equation modeling was used for the analysis of the data. The findings showed that PEB had a positive effect on intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction, where PCF was found to partially mediate these effects. The results add to the theoretical expansion of employer branding by unveiling the psychological processes by which it affects employee attitudes. The research also offers practical contributions for HR managers seeking to enhance employee satisfaction by harmonizing branding efforts with stable and purposeful organizational practices.

### INTRODUCTION

Today's employment scenario is being driven more and more by the changing dynamics of the relationship between organizations and employees. In a world of fierce global competition, accelerating technological changes, and changing employee expectations, organizations are driven to redesign conventional talent-attracting, engaging, and retaining strategies. Among the numerous drivers of these dynamics, employer branding and psychological contracts have become key drivers of employee satisfaction and organizational success. Employer

branding – the distinctive value proposition conveyed to existing and potential employees – has a crucial part to play in influencing attitudes towards an organization as one to choose to work for (Shabanabi & Kesavaraj, 2019; Wilden et al., 2010). Likewise, the psychological contract, an unspoken arrangement of reciprocal expectations between employer and employee, influences employee attitudes such as job satisfaction, loyalty, and performance (Horvat et al., 2019).

Nonetheless, corporations nowadays are confronted with unprecedented problems because of the increased mobility of knowledge workers and the shifting expectations of the next generation of employees, who value an employer's vision, mission, social responsibility, and people practices (Edwards, 2005). The "war for talent" (Chambers et al., 1998) calls attention to the need for companies to not only recruit but also retain talented employees by responding to their changing needs and expectations. Although there has been widespread research based on employer branding's impact on the recruitment of prospective employees and organizational performance (Maheshwari et al., 2017; Eger et al., 2019), very few studies have focused on its impact on the exiting employees (Nazish et al., 2023) more specifically on current employees' satisfaction and retention (Alzaid & Dukhaykh, 2023). Previous research focuses more on employer branding as a recruitment tool and not as a strategy to increase the intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction of current employees (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Kumar & Möller, 2018).

The gap has recently been addressed by recent studies. For example, a study by Azmy et al. (2023) discovered that employer branding, psychological contracts, and job environment influence turnover intention directly and indirectly, underlining the relevance of these factors in retaining employees. In the same way, another study released by Alzaid and Dukhaykh (2023) indicated that employer branding has a direct impact on relational psychological contracts as well as employee retention, underlining the mediating influence of psychological contracts in the case. With these developments notwithstanding, there is still a lack of research emphasis on how perceived employer branding impacts the psychological contract fulfillment of employees and consequently influences their intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction. Bridging this gap is needed for organizations aiming to sustain a satisfied, committed, and high-performing workforce in the face of growing competition. Accordingly, the main aim of this research is to investigate how perceived employer branding influences employee psychological contract fulfillment and its direct effect on intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction.

## 1. Literature Review

### 1.1 Relationship between Employer branding and job satisfaction

Employer branding (EB) plays a pivotal role in shaping employees' perceptions of their work environment, directly influencing their levels of job satisfaction (JS). Scholars define employer branding as the promotion of a company's reputation as an employer, emphasizing the functional, economic, and psychological benefits associated with employment (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). These benefits align closely with the two broad categories of job satisfaction: extrinsic satisfaction, derived from external rewards such as pay, benefits, and job security, and intrinsic satisfaction, arising from the work itself, including personal growth, recognition, and meaningfulness (Spector, 1997; Ashraf et al., 2014).

Employer branding is inclusive of an organization's culture, values, systems, and interpersonal relations, which further enhances its appeal to both current and prospective employees (Singh & Rokade, 2014). A pleasant and conducive work environment differentiates a firm from its competitors and becomes a key driver for attracting and retaining talent (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Organizations that promote work-life balance actively and provide competitive remuneration benefit extrinsic satisfaction among employees, at the same time creating intrinsic satisfaction through the reinforcement of significant organizational values (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016).

Current research highlights the point that a robust and genuine employer brand is a strategic weapon for creating not just job satisfaction but also long-term employee commitment (Mihalcea, 2017). The strategy of building an effective employer brand involves carrying out internal analysis to learn the firm's current culture and HR practices, crafting a strategic employee value proposition, and both external and internal marketing to convey and fulfill the same (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). All this alignment of employer brand communications with employee experiences strengthens both intrinsic rewards—like feeling appreciated and enjoying personal development—and extrinsic rewards—like competitive rewards and a beneficial working environment.

In addition, when employees feel that the employer brand promises are always honored, their affective commitment to the company intensifies, resulting in increased satisfaction both in extrinsic and intrinsic aspects (Theurer et al., 2018). However, inconsistencies between the perceived employer brand and work experience might result in dissatisfaction if unattained rewards were awaited (Moroko & Uncles, 2008).

With increasing sophistication in what employees expect, particularly in knowledge-intensive sectors, scholars posit that employer branding has to focus both on tangible and intangible aspects of working to be successful in improving job satisfaction (Kaur et al., 2020). Companies that use employer branding strategically are therefore more likely to secure quality applicants, improve inter-personal relationships at the workplace, and overall organizational performance (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

With the above in mind, there is a need to investigate how the different aspects of employer branding have differential effects on intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction among existing employees, something which is still relatively underdeveloped in current literature.

**H1:** Perceived Employer Brand is positively related to Intrinsic Job Satisfaction.

**H2:** Perceived Employer Brand is positively related to Extrinsic Job Satisfaction.

### 1.2 Perceived Employer Brand and Employee Psychological Contract Fulfillment

Perceived employer brand plays a crucial role in shaping employees' views about the fulfillment of psychological contracts. Psychological contracts refer to employees' beliefs regarding the mutual obligations between themselves and their employer (Rousseau, 1995). When an organization promotes a strong employer brand highlighting values such as development opportunities, respect, fairness, and supportive work environments, it sets expectations among employees about what they will receive in return for their contributions (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Theurer et al., 2018).

Employees who perceive that the organization delivers on these promises experience psychological contract fulfillment, which fosters higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and reduced turnover

intentions (Lievens, 2007; Edwards, 2005). A well-communicated and consistently delivered employer brand can thus reinforce employee trust, loyalty, and engagement. In contrast, when the perceived employer brand promises are not met in practice, it can lead to feelings of betrayal and breach of the psychological contract (Moroko & Uncles, 2008).

Research suggests that organizations investing in employer branding strategies not only enhance external attractiveness but also maintain stronger internal relationships by aligning employee expectations with organizational realities (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016; Mihalcea, 2017). Therefore, a positive perceived employer brand is strongly associated with higher levels of psychological contract fulfillment.

**H3:** Perceived Employer Brand is positively related to Employee Psychological Contract Fulfillment.

### 1.3 Employee Psychological Contract Fulfillment and Job Satisfaction

According to Beynon, Heffernan, and McDermott (2012) psychological contract has an important impact on worker's behavior inclusive of job satisfaction. Agarwal and Bhargava (2013) ascertained that a strong and powerful psychological contract is formed by an employee's positive approach related to the organization in relevance to the attainment of their duties. The more the employees will believe on the organization in terms of fulfillment of their promises, the higher will be the job satisfaction they will experience (Deas & Coetzee, 2020; Rodwell & Ellershaw, 2016). Literature also supports that the psychological contract fulfillment and job satisfaction are both positively associated (Baral & Bhargava, 2010; Chambel & Alcover, 2011; Pohl, Bertrand, & Ergen, 2016; Birtch, Chiang, & Van Esch, 2016). However, violation of psychological contract might lead to dissatisfaction with job (Rodwell, Ellershaw, & Flower, 2015). Researchers also find out that any kind of violation in the psychological contract can cause negative impact on employee's attitude, which in turn reduce job satisfaction (Beynon et al., 2012; Chao, Cheung, & Wu, 2011). Lijo and Lyngdoh (2016) also reveal important role of perceived PC for creating job satisfaction among HR professionals working in startup IT businesses. Further, literature provides a support that psychological contract that develops positive perception of employee towards organization

is referred as a fulfillment of expectation that can lead towards higher level of satisfaction, otherwise employees can decide about their course of action in future (Varma & Chavan, 2020). Hence, it is assumed that;

**H4:** Employee Psychological Contract Fulfillment is positively related to Intrinsic Job Satisfaction.

**H5:** Employee Psychological Contract Fulfillment is positively related to Extrinsic Job Satisfaction.

#### 1.4 Mediating role of PCF

Employer branding has emerged as a pivotal strategy in the increasingly competitive labor market, where organizations strive to attract and retain top talent (Majumdar, 2020; Purusottama & Ardianto, 2019). A strong employer brand enhances how employees perceive their organization, shaping their expectations regarding reciprocal obligations (Rousseau, 1995). These expectations constitute the foundation of the psychological contract, which reflects employees' beliefs about the mutual obligations between them and their employer (Turnley & Feldman, 2000).

Recent research has shown that perceived employer brand has helped many employers establish a strong image as an employer of choice (EOC) by leveraging various HR practices. These include offering attractive salaries and leave benefits (economic value), providing training and mentoring opportunities (development value), fostering team spirit and interpersonal relationships (social value), designing jobs with challenging and diverse tasks (diversity value), and building a reputable image from both current and prospective employees' perspectives (reputation value) (Nazish et al., 2023). Such branding practices help raise employees' expectations and shape the mutual psychological contract between the employer and the workforce.

While much of the earlier literature focused on psychological contract breach (PCB) (Raja et al., 2004), more recent scholarship emphasizes the positive dimension—psychological contract fulfillment (PCF)—which has been found to significantly influence key employee outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment, and engagement (Conway & Coyle-Shapiro, 2012; Rayton & Yalabik, 2014). When employees perceive a strong employer brand, they are more likely to expect and experience fulfilled

promises, leading to higher levels of PCF and, consequently, greater job satisfaction.

Employer branding has a foundational influence on employees' perceptions of organizational promises, policies, and practices. Such perceptions affect the development and satisfaction of the psychological contract (Bhatnagar & Biswas, 2010; Ruchika & Prasad, 2017). Empirical evidence supports PCF as a mediating variable in linking organizational practices and employee attitudes. For instance, Birtch et al. (2016) proved that PCF mediates the impact of job characteristics to job outcomes like job satisfaction and commitment. Latorre et al. (2016) also analyze that PCF partially but significantly mediated the impact between high-commitment HR practices and job satisfaction. Therefore, it is expected that;

**H6:** Employee Psychological Contract Fulfillment mediates the relationship between Perceived Employer Brand and Intrinsic Job Satisfaction.

**H7:** Employee Psychological Contract Fulfillment mediates the relationship between Perceived Employer Brand and Extrinsic Job Satisfaction.

#### 1.5 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964), which formulates that working relationships are shaped through reciprocal exchanges. In this context, employees evaluate their employer based on perceived organizational investment and the extent to which expectations are fulfilled. High perceived employer brand (PEB)—economic, development, social, diversity, and reputational value (Schlager et al., 2011; Nazish et al., 2023)—may signify organizational investment in personnel that influences their attitudes and job-related consequences.

Psychological contract fulfillment (PCF) is an intellectual process in which employer branding becomes irrelevant. When workers feel that their company has fulfilled its promises, it creates a perception of justice and trust, which further creates more positive attitudinal outcomes like satisfaction, engagement, and commitment (Bal et al., 2010; Birtch et al., 2016; Latorre et al., 2016). To this extent, the model under consideration places PCF as an intermediary between perceived employer brand and two aspects of job satisfaction—intrinsic and extrinsic—touching both emotional and material facets of

working life (Spector, 1997). This is because recent research (e.g., Qureshi et al., 2021; Rehman et al., 2022) asserts that satisfaction of employer promises enriches employee outcomes by fortifying the perceived psychological contract. Specifically, this framework makes a new contribution by examining how employer brand perception is

converted into employee satisfaction through psychological contract fulfillment, particularly in the telecom industry in Pakistan, where employer branding is now a strategic HR focus area. Drawing from this theoretical framework, the following conceptual framework is developed.

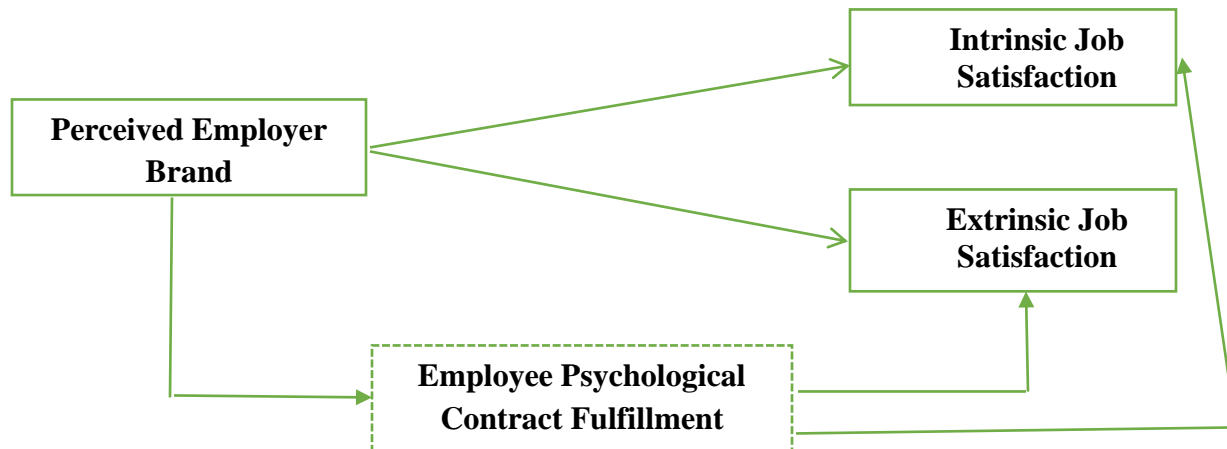


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

2. Methodology

This research used a quantitative design to examine the mediating effect of psychological contract fulfillment between perceived employer brand and job satisfaction. The study focused on permanent employees who were on the official payroll of four prominent cellular network operators in Pakistan's telecommunication industry: Jazz, Ufone, Telenor, and Zong. This industry was selected because it has increasingly emphasized employer branding to address modern workforce issues and has persistently been recognized for strong HR practices, such as career development, reward to employees, employer image, and socially responsible practices (Ashraf et al., 2011; Ayub, 2015; Marwat, 2013). Of interest, these companies have already been recognized for their efforts in employer branding (Keijzer, 2011; Mobilink Careers Blog, 2016; Anjum, 2017).

2.1 Sample and Sampling Technique

To make sure that only workers with pertinent organizational experience and exposure to employer branding practices were included, the study used a

purposive sampling technique. In order to meet the sampling criteria, respondents had to be:

- Current, permanent employees of the chosen telecom companies.
- Worked for a minimum of six months to guarantee adequate exposure to employer branding campaigns and HR procedures.
- Actively involved in core operational, administrative, or service delivery functions, excluding interns or temporary staff.

A total of 402 valid responses were collected and used for the final analysis, which is deemed an adequate sample size for structural equation modeling and regression-based mediation analysis.

2.2 Data Collection Procedure

A structured, self-administered questionnaire was used to gather data, and it was made available online and in print to accommodate different organizational units' differing accessibility levels. Where required, formal approval was obtained from the appropriate HR departments, and confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed to promote truthful and objective answers. Participation was completely voluntary, and

respondents received clear instructions. In order to minimize non-response bias and increase the response rate, follow-ups and reminders were carried out. To guarantee coverage across different departments and job roles within the participating organizations, data collection was carried out over a number of weeks.

### 2.3 Measurement Instrument

Each variable was measured using validated scales in the study:

- Independent Variable: A 24-item measure adapted from Schlager et al. (2011) which assessed five employer brand dimensions relevant to existing employees was employed to assess the independent variable, perceived employer brand.
- Dependent Variable: The Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) of Spector (1997) was administered to assess job satisfaction. It consisted of 20 items: 8 extrinsic satisfaction items (items 5, 6, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, & 19) and 12 intrinsic satisfaction items (items 1-4, 7-11, 15, 16, & 20).
- Mediator variable: Psychological Contract Fulfillment (PCF), an assessment of employees' perception of how well their employer meets psychological expectations, was assessed with a 6-item version adapted from Rousseau (2008).

All the answers were captured on a five-point Likert scale where 1 represents "strongly disagree" and 5 represents "strongly agree." To examine the suggested mediation model and determine direct and indirect relationships among the variables, SMART PLS was applied to examine the data

### 4. Analysis

The hypothesized relationships in the model proposed were examined through the use of the Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach, which was carried out using SmartPLS 3.3.5 (Henseler et al., 2015). The use of PLS-SEM has been prevalent in management research (Nazish et al.,

2023) and is overall presumed to be a good tool for both simple and complicated models (Hair et al., 2019). PLS-SEM also offers a variety of tests to assess the validity and reliability of the measurement scales.

### 2.4 Reliability and validity

#### 2.4.1 Reliability

Internal consistency was assessed through both Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ). According to Hair et al. (2019), a score greater than 0.7 for both CR and  $\alpha$  is taken to signify acceptable internal consistency. The findings, as shown in Table 1, show that all the constructs score over 0.7 for CR and  $\alpha$ , thus affirming good internal consistency and reliability for all constructs.

#### 2.4.2 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was checked using the factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). As advised by Hair et al. (2019), factor loadings must not be less than 0.5. Hence, as reflected in Table 1, all the items reflected loadings between 0.707 and 0.936, which signifies each item is valid enough and contributes significantly to its own construct. In addition, taking the suggestion of Fornell and Larcker (1981), an AVE value greater than 0.5 is considered sufficient to establish convergent validity. From Table 1, it is observed that all the constructs possess AVE values greater than 0.5, which establishes the fact that the measures have sufficient convergent validity.

#### 2.4.3 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), as proposed by Henseler et al. (2015). According to this criterion, all correlations between constructs should be less than 0.9 to ensure discriminant validity. The results in Table 2 confirm that all the HTMT values are below the threshold of 0.9, supporting the claim that the constructs in the model are discriminantly valid.

*Table 1: Reliability and Convergent Validity*

Construct	Items	Factor Loadings	AVE	CR	$\alpha$
DTV	DTV_1	0.890	0.768	0.909	0.850
	DTV_2	0.867			
	DTV3	0.873			
DV	DV_1	0.810	0.614	0.888	0.842
	DV_2	0.819			
	DV_3	0.742			
	DV_4	0.769			
	DV_5	0.775			
EV	EV_1	0.803	0.638	0.898	0.858
	EV_2	0.819			
	EV_3	0.772			
	EV_4	0.780			
	EV_5	0.820			
RV	RV_1	0.810	0.657	0.905	0.869
	RV_2	0.798			
	RV_3	0.808			
	RV_4	0.836			
	RV_5	0.800			
SV	SV_1	0.857	0.681	0.927	0.906
	SV_2	0.857			
	SV_3	0.801			
	SV_4	0.799			
	SV_5	0.853			
	SV_6	0.780			
EPCF	EPC_1	0.820	0.583	0.893	0.857
	EPC_2	0.696			
	EPC_3	0.727			
	EPC_4	0.743			
	EPC_5	0.756			
	EPC_6	0.831			
IJS	IJS_1	0.847	0.620	0.951	0.944
	IJS_2	0.736			
	IJS_3	0.733			
	IJS_4	0.793			
	IJS_5	0.776			
	IJS_6	0.779			
	IJS_7	0.818			
	IJS_8	0.793			
	IJS_9	0.776			
	IJS_10	0.784			
	IJS_11	0.789			
	IJS_12	0.819			



EJS	EJS_1	0.824	0.615	0.927	0.911
	EJS_2	0.744			
	EJS_3	0.801			
	EJS_4	0.810			
	EJS_5	0.820			
	EJS_6	0.731			
	EJS_7	0.758			
	EJS_8	0.782			

Table 2: Discriminant Validity

HTMT	DTV	DV	EV	RV	SV	EPCF	IJS	EJS
DTV	1							
DV	0.483	1						
EV	0.398	0.669	1					
RV	0.622	0.611	0.544	1				
SV	0.427	0.681	0.585	0.669	1			
EPCF	0.441	0.370	0.266	0.354	0.345	1		
IJS	0.257	0.178	0.210	0.250	0.194	0.268	1	
EJS	0.235	0.203	0.194	0.248	0.212	0.254	0.197	1

2.5 Hypothesis Testing

With satisfactory reliability and validity results, we executed bootstrapping using 5000 resamples to obtain coefficient  $\beta$  as well as t values. Firstly, the results (see Table 3) of direct relationships is explained here. Hypothesis 1 (H1) posited a positive relationship between PEB and IJS. The results confirmed this hypothesis with a significant path coefficient of  $\beta = 0.180$  ( $t = 3.398, p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that PEB has a positive and statistically significant influence on IJS, supporting the idea that PEB plays a crucial role in fostering IJS. Second, when Hypothesis 2 (H2) examined the impact of PEB on EJS, the results indicated a strong positive correlation ( $\beta = 0.191, t = 3.496, p < 0.001$ ). These findings support the second hypothesis by demonstrating that PEB has a significant impact on EJS. Third, the impact of PEB on EPCF was investigated by Hypothesis 3 (H3), which found a significant and robust effect ( $\beta = 0.391, t = 7.377, p < 0.001$ ). This shows that PEB significantly improves EPCF, which supports the theoretical framework that suggests PEB is a key factor in EPCF. Fourth, the direct relationship between EPCF and IJS was suggested by Hypothesis 4 (H4), and it was supported by a significant path coefficient of  $\beta = 0.181$  ( $t = 3.422, p < 0.001$ ). The idea that EPCF considerably improves IJS

is supported by this finding. Fifth, significant results were obtained from Hypothesis 5 (H5), which investigated the effect of EPCF on EJS ( $\beta = 0.165, t = 2.929, p = 0.002$ ). This strengthens the role of EPCF in the overall model by confirming that it has a positive impact on EJS.

Furthermore, the indirect effects suggested by Hypotheses 6 and 7 were the subject of additional investigation. The mediating function of EPCF in the relationship between PEB and IJS was examined in Hypothesis 6 (H6). PEB influences IJS through EPCF, as evidenced by the significant indirect effect ( $\beta = 0.071, t = 2.937, p = 0.002$ ). This result partially supports the mediation hypothesis by indicating that EPCF mediates the relationship between PEB and IJS. But in this relationship, the value for "Variance Accounted For" (VAF) was found to be 28% (Table 4). According to standard guidelines (Hair et al., 2019), a VAF between 20% and 80% indicates partial mediation. Therefore, EPCF partially mediates the relationship between PEB and IJS.

Similarly, Hypothesis 7 (H7) tested the mediating role of EPCF in the relationship between PEB and EJS. The indirect effect was again significant ( $\beta = 0.064, t = 2.661, p = 0.004$ ), indicating that PEB has an indirect effect on EJS through EPCF. This finding provides evidence that EPCF mediates the relationship

between PEB and EJS, further validating the mediating role of EPCF. Like H6, VAF for this

relationship is also 25 % (Table 4), indicating a partial mediation.

Table 3: Hypothetical Results

H	Paths	$\beta$	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
H1	PEB -> IJS	0.180	0.053	3.398	0.000
H2	PEB -> EJS	0.191	0.055	3.496	0.000
H3	PEB -> EPCF	0.391	0.053	7.377	0.000
H4	EPCF -> IJS	0.181	0.053	3.422	0.000
H5	EPCF -> EJS	0.165	0.056	2.929	0.002
H6	PEB -> EPCF -> IJS	0.071	0.024	2.937	0.002
H7	PEB -> EPCF -> EJS	0.064	0.024	2.661	0.004

Note: PEB = Perceived Employer Brand; IJS = Intrinsic Job Satisfaction; EJS = Extrinsic Job Satisfaction; EPCF = Employee Psychological Contract Fulfillment.

Table 4: VAF

Hypotheses	IV	DV	MV	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	VAF	VAF (%)
H6	PEB	IJS	EPCF	0.071	0.251	0.283	28%
H7	PEB	EJS	EPCF	0.064	0.255	0.251	25 %

Note: IV=Independent Variable; DV=Dependent Variable; MV=Mediator; VAF=Variance Accounted For.

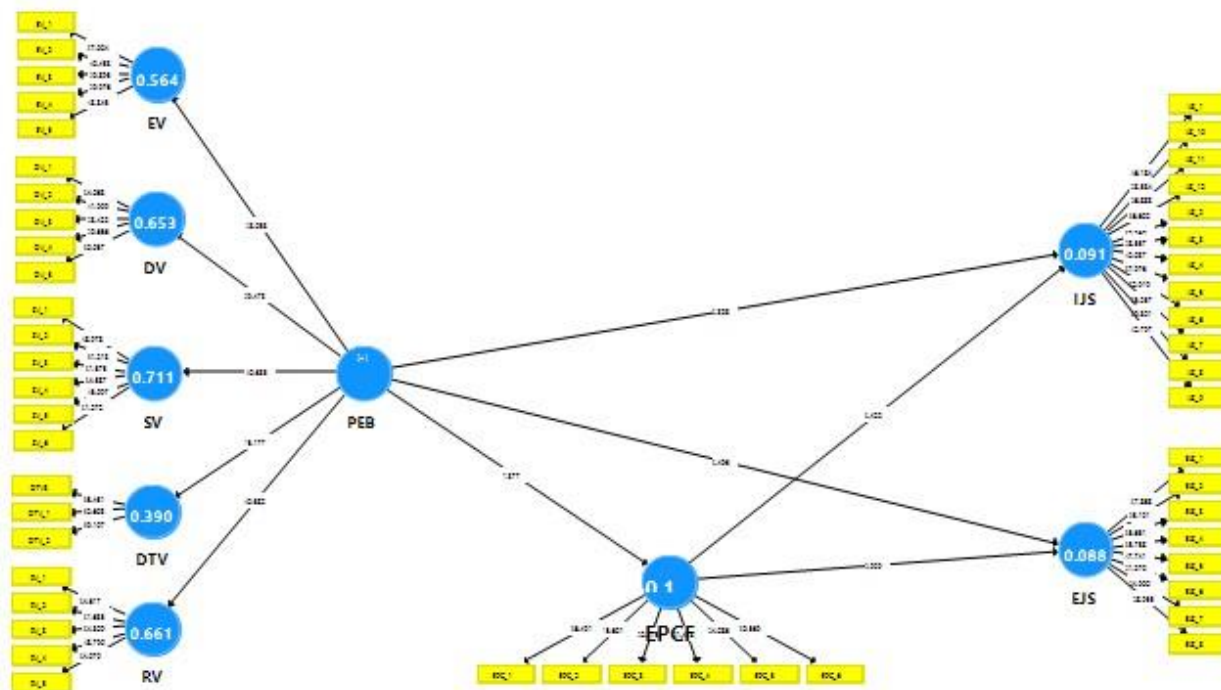


Figure 2: Model of Research

### 3. Discussion of the Results

The findings of this study affirm the pivotal role of perceived employer brand (PEB) in shaping employee attitudes, particularly job satisfaction, both intrinsically and extrinsically. The results are consistent with existing literature which suggests that when employees perceive their organization as a credible and attractive employer, it contributes positively to their overall work experience (Schlager et al., 2011; Nazish et al., 2023). This fits with the notion that employer branding is not only a talent attraction strategy but is also an expression of psychological signal of organizational values and long-term commitment.

Moreover, the research demonstrates that PEB significantly increases the sense of psychological contract fulfillment among employees (EPCF). This finding concurs with the previous work of Rousseau (2008) and Bal et al. (2010), who argued that employees' trust in the employer's truthfulness is improved and confidence is improved when promises and expectations are viewed as being met. Such psychological perceptions are a vital anchor for employee engagement and satisfaction, especially in dynamic and competitive industries like telecommunications.

Above all, the results provide support for EPCF's mediating role in the link between employer branding and intrinsic as well as extrinsic job satisfaction. This implies that employer branding impacts seriously on the psychological model that employees apply to measure their workplace experiences, and not merely on a transactional or surface level. These findings draw on the theoretical premise of Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), suggesting that when employer brand attitudes are felt to be psychological contracts that are being met, they become meaningful.

In addition, this also points to a potential risk: unless branding promises are delivered in concrete, experienced ways, the psychological contract can be destroyed, and this can lead to dissatisfaction or disengagement. The research compels firms to think of branding as something beyond marketing and to incorporate branding in an organic way with inner HR processes such as career growth, equitable pay, and a good working environment—factors that employees actually experience as contract satisfaction (Birtch et al., 2016; Latorre et al., 2016).

The research contributes to the growing, but so far uninvestigated, literature linking psychological processes and employer branding. This study demonstrates that PEB makes a sustained effect on employees' satisfaction at the present time through psychological contract processes, while other studies have only viewed it as an instrument for attracting people. It is in accordance with recent calls (e.g., Quratulain et al., 2018; Rehman et al., 2022) for companies to ensure that their workplace promises are delivered in their branding.

Overall, this research explains how psychological contract fulfillment is a strategic driver that connects employer brand values and employee satisfaction, not just an incidental result of good HR practice. Recognizing such a connection, organizations—particularly in high-stress service environments—can better structure and deliver HR interventions that are not only capable of attracting but also retaining and satisfying a dedicated workforce.

#### 3.1 Theoretical Implications

This study makes several contributions to organizational behavior and HRM literature. First, it extends the theoretical understanding of employer branding by situating it within the framework of psychological contract fulfillment (PCF), thereby responding to calls for deeper exploration of the mechanisms through which employer branding impacts employee attitudes (Conway & Coyle-Shapiro, 2012). Second, the mediating role of PCF offers a nuanced explanation of how branding perceptions translate into job satisfaction, integrating concepts from psychological contract theory and social exchange theory. Finally, this study adds to the emerging discourse that emphasizes the employee's psychological processing of organizational actions, thus reinforcing the importance of relational (rather than merely transactional) employer-employee exchanges (Bal et al., 2013; Quratulain et al., 2018).

#### 3.2 Managerial Implications

From a practical standpoint, the findings highlight that employer branding must be more than an external reputation strategy—it must be supported by consistent internal practices that fulfill employee expectations. HR managers should align branding messages with realistic and deliverable commitments

to avoid psychological contract breaches. Organizations, especially in dynamic sectors like telecom, should focus on holistic HR practices such as employee development, fair rewards, inclusive culture, and meaningful work—areas strongly tied to PCF and job satisfaction. Moreover, tracking and managing psychological contract fulfillment through regular feedback mechanisms can serve as a diagnostic tool for identifying dissatisfaction before it leads to disengagement or turnover.

### 3.3 Limitations and Future Directions

Despite its contributions, this study is not without limitations. The use of purposive sampling and focus on the telecom sector in Pakistan may limit the generalizability of findings across industries or cultural contexts. Longitudinal studies could further enrich the understanding of how employer branding and psychological contracts evolve over time. Future research might also explore additional mediating or moderating variables, such as organizational justice, leadership style, or generational differences, to understand differential responses to branding strategies. Including qualitative insights could further deepen the understanding of how employees perceive and interpret employer brand values in relation to their psychological contracts.

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