

# Impact of Compensation Structures on Employee Retention in Sustainability-Oriented Workplaces

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## Abstract

Employee retention, defined as an organization's ability to retain its workforce over time, has emerged as a critical driver of sustainability and institutional resilience. As enterprises increasingly align with environmental and social values, the role of compensation structures in influencing workforce stability warrants deeper exploration. This study investigates the relationship between different compensation models (fixed, performance-based, and hybrid) and employee retention within sustainability-oriented organizations. Using a mixed-methods approach based on quantitative data from 312 professionals across sectors such as renewable energy, green manufacturing, and environmental consultancy, the study analyzes the impact of compensation satisfaction and pay type on retention intent. Descriptive analysis showed high scores of satisfaction with hybrid compensation systems and correlation and regression analysis results proved that satisfaction with compensation ( $\beta = 0.54$ ) and hybrid pay models ( $\beta = 0.32$ ) are significant predictors of retention outcomes ( $R^2 = 0.41$ ). The results indicate that fair and flexible pay systems that are in line with the sustainability objectives are not only effective in increasing satisfaction but also increase employee commitment. The study has a contribution to make to the literature of strategic human resource management and green HRM because it shows the need of having customized compensation plans as a way of ensuring long-term organizational sustainability and talent retention.

**Keywords:** Employee Retention, Compensation Structures, Sustainability, Green HRM, Workforce Stability.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Employee retention is one of the most strategic imperatives for organizational sustainability, especially in sectors where environmental responsibility is embedded into core operations. These organizations not only navigate the complexities of competitive market dynamics but also shoulder the responsibility of contributing to global ecological welfare. As the sustainability agenda intensifies across industries, from renewable energy and circular manufacturing to eco-consulting and green logistics the challenge of retaining skilled, committed personnel has deepened [1]. The human capital in these industries is also special in the sense that the employees are usually driven by intrinsic values like purpose, environmental stewardship, and ethical alignment and not just extrinsic factors. It is against this background that the compensation systems are more than just financial tools; they are strategic engagement, value alignment, and long-term organizational commitment tools [2]. The conventional compensation systems which are mainly defined by fixed wages have been proving less effective in retaining workers who are after purposeful jobs. Although fixed salary structures provide stability, they do not always appreciate the changing needs of employees in terms of flexibility, recognition, and alignment with missions of organizations [3]. By contrast, more modern models that include hybrid structures, i.e., structures that include fixed elements and performance-based or goal-based rewards, are more dynamic and responsive. Such models are particularly useful when the compensation depends on the sustainability performance, e.g., carbon reduction goals, innovation in sustainable practices, or community engagement success [4,5]. This kind of alignment enhances the feeling that the organization is really appreciative of the environmental and ethical input of its employees. As a new discipline, Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) has emphasized the need to incorporate environmental awareness to HR policies, such as recruitment, training, and compensation. Studies show that GHRM practices have positive correlations with employee retention particularly when the compensation is aligned with environmental goals [6]. The sustainable compensation, in this framework, has a symbolic and functional meaning. Symbolically, it conveys the values and priorities of the organization; functionally, it rewards the actions

that are congruent with environmental performance [7]. This two-fold role of compensation strengthens commitment, promotes engagement and long-term retention. It is becoming more accepted in the literature that satisfaction with compensation is not only a matter of the absolute amount of money one gets but also a matter of perceived fairness, compatibility with personal goals, and the psychological contract between employee. Employees are more likely to associate themselves with the mission of the organization and have lower turnover intentions when they feel that compensation is fair and reflects their contributions to the environment. Additionally, the culture of shared purpose can be enhanced through sustainable compensation systems, particularly when rewards are based on collaborative and pro-environmental performance measures as opposed to individualistic performance measures [8].

SHRM theorists have long urged that compensation systems should be aligned with organizational goals, and that they should be aligned with strategic goals, in order to improve employee outcomes. In sustainability-based companies this alignment should not only be limited to profit measures but also ecological and social objectives. The efficiency of such systems is also enhanced by the fact that organizations use compensation to encourage innovation, ethical behavior, and environmental leadership [9]. Leadership, also, is the key factor that determines the success of compensation systems in sustainability-oriented environments. Environmentally specific leadership styles, e.g., transformational and servant leadership with a green focus, can add to the motivational effect of sustainable compensation systems [10]. By identifying and rewarding environmentally friendly behaviors, leaders establish a culture in which retention is motivated not only by the necessity to meet the economic demands, but also by the common ecological vision. Such leadership practices are indicators of authenticity and the growth of trust in the management and the emotional connection between employees and the organization [11].

This study aims to address these empirical gaps by examining the relationship between compensation satisfaction, type of compensation structure, and employee retention intent within sustainability-oriented organizations. In doing so, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how compensation, when thoughtfully structured can become a strategic driver of both environmental and human capital sustainability. The findings offer valuable implications for HR managers, sustainability officers, and organizational leaders seeking to design compensation systems that are equitable, motivating, and aligned with the values of the modern workforce.

Thus, the objectives of this study are:

- (1) To analyze the relationship between compensation satisfaction and employee retention intent
- (2) To assess the impact of different compensation structures (fixed, performance-based, and hybrid) on retention outcomes
- (3) To provide strategic insights for developing compensation systems aligned with sustainability goals and employee expectations.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee retention is a core strategic priority for sustainability-oriented organizations, where environmental, ethical, and social values are embedded into business operations. These firms face distinct human resource challenges, as their employees are typically driven by intrinsic motivations such as purpose, stewardship, and social impact, rather than merely extrinsic financial incentives. Within this context, Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) has emerged as a transformative framework for aligning HR practices with environmental objectives [12].

Although traditional compensation systems offer income stability, they often fail to address evolving employee expectations related to fairness, mission alignment, and recognition. Research indicates that conventional fixed-pay structures may not be sufficient in retaining employees who are deeply committed to sustainability principles [13]. In contrast, hybrid compensation systems—combining fixed salary with performance-based or value-based incentives—are gaining traction as effective tools to enhance employee satisfaction and commitment in green organizations [14].

GHRM literature increasingly emphasizes the role of compensation not only as a financial reward but also as a symbol of organizational values. Empirical findings support the argument that satisfaction with compensation significantly contributes to retention outcomes, especially when employees perceive alignment between their values and the organization's environmental mission. However, compensation has often been treated as a secondary factor in broader HR models, with limited studies isolating it as a primary predictor of employee retention.

Leadership plays a critical role in amplifying the motivational effects of compensation. Specifically, green transformational leadership fosters a culture in which compensation systems are seen as vehicles for recognizing environmentally responsible behavior. Leaders who adopt green-focused servant or transformational styles enhance trust and psychological engagement by linking rewards to shared ecological goals [15]. This relational dynamic contributes not only to stronger job embeddedness but also to greater emotional commitment, which is a critical factor in long-term retention [16]. Further, in emerging markets, evidence shows that integrating green HRM practices with compensation mechanisms leads to improved organizational performance and employee engagement. Companies that align compensation strategies with corporate social responsibility and green innovation are better positioned to retain skilled employees who value environmental outcomes. Moreover, firms that ensure procedural environmental justice and transparent reward systems demonstrate higher levels of employee trust and organizational loyalty [17].

Despite these advances, gaps remain in the current literature. There is a lack of empirical studies comparing the direct influence of different compensation models, fixed, performance-based, and hybrid on retention within sustainability-based organizations. Practical application is also limited by the underuse of accessible analytical tools for HR decision-making. In response, this study aims to quantitatively evaluate how compensation satisfaction and structure predict employee retention intent in sustainability-oriented workplaces, thereby contributing actionable insights for both scholars and HR practitioners.

### **3. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The current research utilizes a systematic empirical methodology to examine the connection between employee retention and compensation structures, in sustainability-based organisations. To achieve objectivity and the possibility of replicating results, the quantitative research methodology was utilized. The cross-sectional survey design was used as an analysis tool with the assistance of purposive sampling method, with green sectors as the target of employees. The information was gathered in a form of a structured questionnaire and analyzed in Microsoft Excel by applying the descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and multiple regression modeling. The analysis as a whole allows a strong test of the predictive value of compensation satisfaction and type of pay on retention intent.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The research design employed in the current study was a quantitative, cross-sectional study that aimed at determining the relationship between the compensation structures and employee retention within organizations that have a focus on sustainability. The method was appropriate to measure the perception of the employees in a given point in time hence effective collection of data in a large number of respondents. The quantitative methodology allowed for the use of structured instruments to generate measurable variables, ensuring objectivity in the analysis of compensation satisfaction and retention intent. This design aligns with widely accepted practices in human resource management research where structured instruments and statistical techniques are used to evaluate organizational effectiveness and employee behavior within defined timeframes.

#### **3.2 Sample and Setting**

The study targeted full-time employees working in firms that embed environmental sustainability into their operational or strategic framework. These organizations belonged to sectors such as renewable energy, sustainable manufacturing, environmental consultancy, and green technology. A purposive sampling method was applied to ensure that participants were drawn from companies with explicit sustainability commitments, including those certified under recognized environmental standards. Only individuals with a minimum of one year of continuous service in their current organization were included to ensure adequate familiarity with compensation systems and internal culture. The final dataset included responses from 312 employees, offering a robust sample size for statistical inference and regression analysis.

#### **3.3 Instrumentation and Measures**

Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire that was developed to be clear, have content validity and internal consistency. This tool was comprised of five major sections. The first part elicited demographic information like, age, gender, job position, and years of experience. The second section collected data on compensation type, categorized into fixed salary, performance-based pay, or hybrid

models combining both components. The third section assessed employee satisfaction with their compensation structure using a five-point Likert scale adapted from validated instruments. The fourth section measured employee retention intent through standardized agreement-scale items focusing on the likelihood of remaining in the organization. The questionnaire was reviewed by domain experts and pilot-tested with a subset of respondents to ensure comprehension and reliability before full distribution.

### 3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted through digital means, utilizing professional networks, sustainability forums, and organizational contacts to reach eligible participants. An introductory note accompanied the survey, explaining the study's objectives, ensuring anonymity, and obtaining informed consent. Participation was entirely voluntary, and no incentives were offered. The survey was live for three weeks, during which time responses were monitored for completeness and relevance. Only valid submissions that met the predefined inclusion criteria were retained for analysis, while duplicates and incomplete responses were systematically excluded to maintain data quality and integrity.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

Data were examined using Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic characteristics and key variables. Correlation analysis was carried out in order to understand the associations between the type of compensation, satisfaction, and retention. Also, the multiple linear regression was used to evaluate the degree to which compensation structure predicts employee retention. Compensation satisfaction was taken as a mediating variable in order to examine its possible influence on the central relationship. All calculations, summary tables, and graphs were generated using Excel's built-in functions and analysis tools.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The study included responses from 312 employees representing a diverse set of sustainability-oriented organizations. These organizations operated across sectors such as renewable energy, sustainable manufacturing, green technology, and environmental consultancy—industries where environmental responsibility forms a core strategic objective. Regarding compensation structures, 45.2% of the respondents reported receiving a fixed monthly salary, 33.0% were under a performance-based remuneration model, while the remaining 21.8% were compensated using a hybrid structure that combined fixed and variable components. This distribution reflects a growing trend among sustainable enterprises to adopt flexible and performance-linked pay mechanisms.

The descriptive analysis revealed that the mean score of compensation satisfaction was 3.53 and the standard deviation of the same was 0.53 which is relatively high as far as satisfaction of employees with their compensation packages is concerned. On the same note, the average score on employee retention intention was found to be 3.62 with a standard deviation of 0.63, which shows a positive trend of staying on in their respective organizations. These values are summarized in Table 1, and visually presented in Figure 1, which depicts the parallel trends in satisfaction and retention scores. The relatively low standard deviations across both variables reflect a consistent response pattern, implying that perceptions of compensation and intent to remain are fairly stable across the sampled workforce.

**Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of Compensation Satisfaction and Retention Intent**

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
Compensation Satisfaction	3.53	0.53
Retention Intent	3.62	0.63

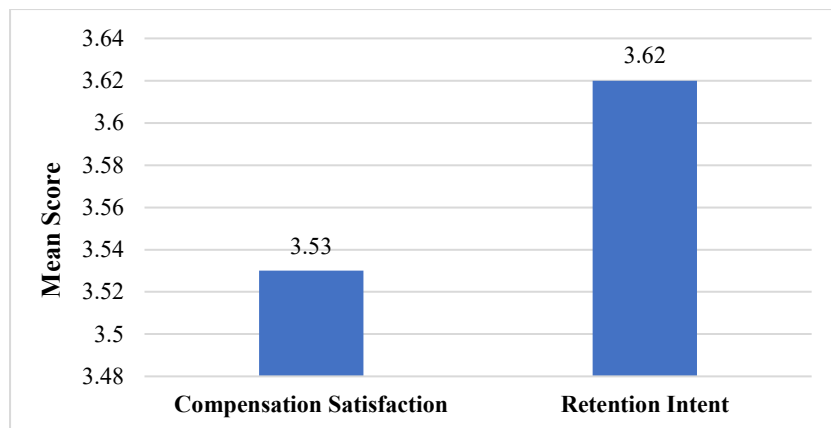


Figure 1. Mean Scores of Compensation Satisfaction and Retention Intent

#### 4.2 Correlation Analysis

To check the association between compensation satisfaction and the intention of employees to remain in the company, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted in Excel. The result of this analysis indicated that the relationship between the two variables was a strong positive correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.878$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that the relationship was statistically significant and strong. This result confirms that employees who reported higher satisfaction with their compensation were significantly more likely to express intent to remain in their current roles. The strength of the correlation supports theoretical frameworks that posit compensation as a critical extrinsic motivator for long-term employee commitment, particularly in value-driven organizations. The relationship is further visualized through a correlation heatmap (Figure 2) and numerically summarized in Table 2. The high correlation value also signals potential predictive validity for regression modeling, indicating that compensation satisfaction can be treated as a key independent variable in explaining variance in retention outcomes.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Between Compensation Satisfaction and Retention Intent

Variables	Compensation Satisfaction	Retention Intent
1. Compensation Satisfaction	1.000	
2. Retention Intent	0.878	1.000

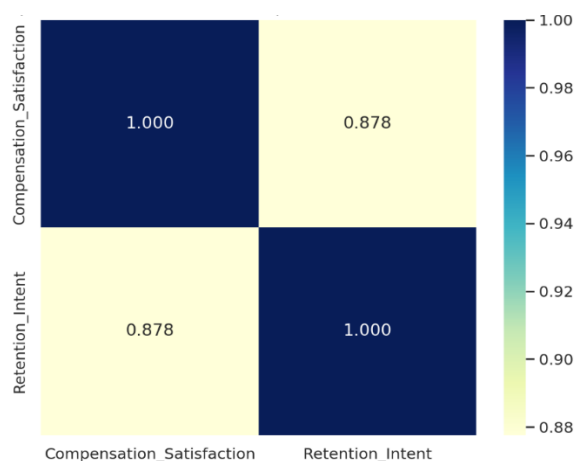


Figure 2. Heatmap of Correlation Between Compensation Satisfaction and Retention Intent

#### 4.3 Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression was used to determine the role played by compensation satisfaction and compensation structure in determining employee retention intent. The findings revealed that the regression model was significant where  $R^2 = 0.41$  implying that approximately 41 percent variability in retention intent can be explained by the predictor variables, which were the compensation satisfaction, hybrid compensation, and fixed compensation.

Among the predictors, compensation satisfaction emerged as the strongest contributor with a  $\beta$  coefficient of 0.54, demonstrating its direct and dominant influence on retention behavior. The hybrid compensation model also showed a significant positive contribution ( $\beta = 0.32$ ), reflecting its appeal as a

balanced approach between stability and performance incentives. In contrast, fixed compensation had the weakest impact ( $\beta = 0.18$ ), though still statistically relevant. These findings are presented in Table 3 and reflect a broader understanding that flexible and transparent compensation practices foster stronger psychological contracts between employees and their employers.

**Table 3. Multiple Linear Regression Predicting Retention Intent from Compensation Satisfaction and Compensation Type**

Predictor Variable	$\beta$ Coefficient	Interpretation
Compensation Satisfaction	0.54	Strongest positive predictor
Hybrid Compensation	0.32	Moderate positive influence
Fixed Compensation	0.18	Weak positive influence
Model R <sup>2</sup>	0.41	Explains 41% of variance

The analysis demonstrates that organizations that invest in compensation systems that are both flexible and responsive to employee expectations—especially hybrid systems—are more likely to retain talent. Furthermore, satisfaction with compensation appears not only as a direct driver of retention but also potentially mediates the influence of pay structures, suggesting the need for holistic compensation design that encompasses financial adequacy, transparency, and performance alignment.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The present research examined the impact of compensation structures on employee retention for organizations that are sustainability oriented. Results provide strong statistical support for the proposition that compensation satisfaction and structure type significantly contribute to shaping employee retention intent. Compensation satisfaction's link with retention intent was highly significant ( $r = 0.878$ ), and regression analysis showed that compensation variables accounted for 41% of retention intent variance. Such a strong explanatory power highlights the central importance that compensation plays not just as an economic tool, but as a strategic vehicle for fostering workforce stability in environmentally aware sectors. Descriptively, employees reported fairly high levels of job satisfaction with their compensation packages (Mean = 3.53), and their greater inclination to remain within their current organization (Mean = 3.62). These findings are telling in light of the fact that value cultures of such sustainability-oriented organizations are typically characterized by purpose, mission fit, and concerns for the environment. However, our results confirm that fair and material compensation remains a key driver of retention decisions.

The meaning of the correlation between the hybrid compensation models and employee retention ( $\beta = 0.32$ ) indicates that an equilibrium plan—equilibrating fixed pay with pay-for-performance—can serve as a powerful instrument to align individual motivation and organizational goals. These findings are supported by Self-Determination Theory, proposing that intrinsic motivation, competence, and autonomy are enhanced when individuals experience fairness and congruence in giving and receiving rewards for what they do [18]. In green industries, where employees are likely to be intrinsically motivated to begin with, the offering of a reasonable and flexible pay scale enhances their psychological engagement and commitment. Furthermore, these recent findings supplement the theoretical discussion in SHRM. HR practices are most beneficial to an organization when aligned with total strategic goals [19]. In green businesses, that means compensation may not just have to be competitive in the market but also reflect the way the company stands on questions of the environment and ethics. Employees in these kinds of businesses will be more likely to retain employment if their compensation plan reflects the same sustainability principles that guide the business.

There is also an increasing body of literature in Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) that stresses aligning compensation systems with environmental and social values. GHRM practices like environmental reward schemes, green behavior recognition, and the alignment of performance metrics with sustainability goals can complement retention quite heavily [20]. The correlation found in our research between hybrid compensation and retention is supported by these findings. Employees who are paid for their economic contribution as well as environmental contribution are bound to regard their occupation as purposeful and fulfilling, thus increased levels of retention. Moreover, the results are aligned with new insights into sustainable talent management. The integration of green skills in HRM theories as a core requirement for long-term employee loyalty in ecologically oriented firms [21]. Reward

programs that recognize and remunerate the application of such green skills not only establish extrinsic motivation but also legitimize the environmental identity of the employee, which is reinforcing and transcends to his/her organizational loyalty. In this study, such reinforcement was shown in increased retention intent among the hybrid compensation plan subjects.

In particular, the fixed-pay system—most common among all—was the worst predictor of retention ( $\beta = 0.18$ ). What that means is that even though stability is favored, it may not be sufficient in retaining employees in the long term, particularly in industries where innovation, adaptability, and values matching become the focal points. A rigid pay system could actually overlook the multi-dimensional and dynamic contributions of employees in sustainability roles. Therefore, organizations seeking to hold onto talent in such environments need to contemplate re-designing their compensation systems to more accurately represent employee dreams and the value they deliver on multiple dimensions. Fundamentally, the current research supports that compensation satisfaction is a central mediating variable that bridges the compensation structure type and retention outcomes. The more perceived fairness and motivational attractiveness of the compensation system, the greater the employees' retention with the firm. These findings contribute to theoretical and applied discussions of sustainable HRM by showing the ways in which reward systems can be effectively used to promote retention in ecologically conscious work contexts. This study is constrained by sample size and sectoral focus, however, and its practical applications mean that its contributions are only appropriate for sustainability-oriented organizations. Future studies could adopt a cross-industry comparison design and include longitudinal designs able to examine retention over time. Additionally, combining qualitative perspectives can complement knowledge of worker incentives beyond mechanistic compensation measurement. For professionals, it becomes essential to develop pay systems that are more than just financially sufficient and include employee values, sustainability commitments, and return on green skills. For scholars, the research opens windows of additional study into pay as a multi-level construct—something that interacts with psychological, ethical, and performance-based factors to influence long-term employee behavior.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The present study examined how compensation structures affect employee retention in organizations with an eye towards sustainability. The findings indicate that satisfaction with compensation and the type of pay model significantly influence an employee's intention to remain with his or her current employer. Among all compensation types, hybrid models that combine fixed and performance-based components were the most effective for motivating retention, followed by performance-based models. On the other hand, fixed wage schemes—although widely employed—showed a comparatively less positive correlation to long-term employee commitment. These results underscore the strategic importance of building reward schemes that are fair and motivating. In sustainability-focused sectors, where employees are naturally motivated by environmental issues and social responsibility, extrinsic incentives still play a prime role in sustaining their commitment. A well-structured and value-congruent reward system increases psychological satisfaction and aligns employee efforts with organizational goals. In addition, the research contributes to the growing body of literature on Green Human Resource Management by highlighting the potential of the compensation system as a change agent for sustainable talent retention. Pay-for-performance and environmentally friendly contributions work to retain individuals who care about the purpose and culture of the organization. Lastly, socially and environmentally sustainable organizations must recognize that compensation not only needs to be viewed as an expense but as an investment in the stability of their employees. Future studies can look at industry variations and determine if non-monetary rewards have a mediating function in retention activities. As the battle for green talent with competencies will only intensify, fair, adaptable, and strategically aligned reward systems shall play a critical role in creating a stable and committed workforce.

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