



## Does psychosocial mentoring buffer the effect of career mentoring on turnover intentions through attitude toward leaving?

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** This study seeks to examine distinct effects of career and psychosocial mentoring on employee turnover intentions in a moderated mediation model. Specifically, the purpose is to examine the mediating role of attitude toward leaving in the relationship between career mentoring and turnover intentions, and the moderating/buffering effect of psychosocial mentoring on the abovementioned mediating process.

**Design/methodology/approach:** Hypotheses have been tested deductively by using cross-sectional data from 352 bank employees. Analyses have been performed by applying partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM).

**Findings:** The findings suggest that attitude toward leaving mediates the career mentoring-turnover intentions relationship, and psychosocial mentoring moderates this mediating effect.

**Research limitations/implications:** This study integrates theory of planned behavior (TPB) and Eight Forces Framework of voluntary turnover, and extends organizational literature by unfolding how psychosocial mentoring buffers the mediating effect of attitude toward leaving on career mentoring-turnover intentions relationship. Study limitations are about cross-sectional nature of data and external validity of results.

**Practical Implications:** This study's contribution to practice is that organizations providing career mentoring to their employees should consider also the provision of psychosocial mentoring to avoid employee turnover intentions.

**Originality/value:** This study adds value to organizational literature by examining a previously untested buffering effect of psychosocial mentoring on the mediating process between career mentoring and turnover intentions.

**Keywords:** Career mentoring, Psychosocial mentoring, Turnover intentions, Attitude toward leaving, Moderated mediation

**Jel Codes:** M10, M12

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**1. Introduction**

Mentoring has long been recognized as an important leadership function (Yip & Walker, 2022). In mentoring relationship, a leader as an experienced employee (i.e. mentor) supports and guides a less-experienced subordinate (i.e. protégé) in developing certain capabilities (Murray, 1991). Subordinates or followers receive both the psychosocial and career support from mentor leaders (Kram, 1988; Busch, Crawshaw, Guillaume & Legood, 2023). Career mentoring is characterized by protection, visible and inspiring assignments, exposure and sponsorship to protégé from her or his mentor (Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). It is a process under which vicarious modeling helps protégé to learn management competency by observing her/his mentor leader (Dreher & Ash, 1990). Psychosocial mentoring involves reinforcing protégé's self-confidence, bestowing friendship, and behaving as a role model (Robbins & Judge, 2017). Under this process, a mentor leader acts as a friend and counselor, provides acceptance and regard to protégé (Dreher & Ash, 1990), and improves her/his "sense of competence, identity and effectiveness in a professional role" (Kram, 1988: page 32). This mentoring process facilitates protégé's entry into important social networks where she or he gains access to valuable information, and remains visible to higher management (Dreher & Ash, 1990).

Among various employee level outcomes of psychosocial and career mentoring, turnover intention is a widely studied phenomenon in organizational research (Banerjee-Batist & Reio, 2016; Cai, Wu, Xin, Chen & Wu, 2020; Craig, Allen, Reid, Riemenschneider & Armstrong, 2013; Deng, Guan, Zhou, Li, Cai, Li et al., 2023; Scandura & Viator, 1994). Turnover intention refers to "a conscious and deliberate willfulness to leave the organization" (Tett & Meyer, 1993: page 262). Existing literature has identified that actual turnover is a consequence of turnover intention (Craig et al., 2013). However, the findings of existing research are inconsistent about the influence of these mentoring functions on employee turnover intentions. For example, Yang, Guo, Wang and Li (2019) find a negative effect of psychosocial as well as career mentoring on intentions to leave. Nevertheless, Craig et al.'s (2013) results suggest that the negative effect of psychosocial mentoring on employee turnover intentions is stronger in relation to career mentoring. Similarly, Deng et al. (2023) report a positive link between career/professional mentoring and turnover. Recently, Musselman and Becker (2023) have recognized that existing research provides mixed results on the negative association between mentoring and turnover intentions.

Overall, insights from existing literature suggest that one school of thought believes that both the career and psychosocial function of mentoring reduce turnover intentions. But the other school believes that career mentoring increases while psychosocial mentoring decreases turnover intentions. These inconsistent findings require a scientific inquiry into the mechanisms that unfold the effects of these mentoring functions on turnover intentions. It will help to understand how each of these mentoring functions differently affects the mediating mechanisms, and subsequently the turnover intentions. Such inquiries provide a way of advancing theory and practice because the mechanisms explain 'how' a variable of interest affects outcomes (Windgassen, Goldsmith, Moss-Morris & Chalder, 2016).

Earlier studies have intended to test some mediating mechanisms between mentoring functions and employees' intentions to leave their organizations. These mechanisms are linked to general attitudes related to organization (e.g. affective commitment) and the job itself (e.g. job satisfaction, job involvement) (Craig et al., 2013; Kim, Im & Hwang, 2015). However, attitude toward leaving has received relatively less attention in this regard. In general, attitude is a person's positive or negative prospect about a behavior (Eng, Sun & Myrick, 2023). In this sense, attitude toward leaving means an employee's positive or negative view about quitting her or his current organization. When compared with general job attitudes, attitude toward leaving indicates "concrete plans and decisions regarding the future" (Van Breukelen, Van der Vlist & Steensma, 2004: p. 908).

In the context of this study, attitude toward leaving means how positive or negative an employee views leaving after developing mentoring relationships with her or his leader. Based on the findings of previous research that career and psychosocial mentoring differently affect employee turnover intention, we posit that employees in mentoring relationships with mentor leaders will develop contrasting attitudes toward leaving. In other words, we presume that career mentoring positively, while psychosocial mentoring negatively influences attitude toward leaving. In this regard, we propose that career mentoring indirectly increases turnover intentions through positive attitude toward leaving, while psychosocial mentoring buffers this indirect effect by negatively influencing attitude toward leaving.

In order to support that the relationship between career mentoring and turnover intentions is mediated by attitude toward leaving, one needs to support career mentoring as an antecedent of attitude toward leaving. We suggest that a reason why career mentoring develops attitude toward leaving is that it may influence employees' competence for external employability (Kram, 1988; Raghuram, Gajendran, Liu & Somaya, 2017; De Vos, De Hauw & Van der Heijden, 2011). However, this relationship might be influenced by the level of employees' attachment and friendliness with their leader and organization. Consequently, psychosocial mentoring can moderate the entire mediating process from career mentoring to attitude toward leaving to turnover intentions. It is because psychosocial mentoring develops employees, emotional bond with mentor leader (Wang, Greenberger, Noe & Fan, 2017) and affective commitment with their organization (Craig et al., 2013). This emotional bond and affective commitment provide employees with a better person-organization fit, and may refrain them from leaving their current organization, despite improvement in external employability due to career mentoring. This situation reflects a moderated mediation phenomenon where the abovementioned indirect effect may depend on the level of psychosocial mentoring. To the authors' understanding, previous research has not examined such a moderated mediation model.

This study's general objective is to examine contrasting effects of career and psychosocial mentoring on employees' attitude toward leaving, and subsequent effect on intentions to leave. This objective has been specified into two main objectives. First, we seek to examine the intervening role of attitude toward leaving in career mentoring-turnover intentions relationship. Second, we intend to examine the moderating effect of psychosocial mentoring on the abovementioned mediating process. Hypotheses have been developed by using Ajzen's (1985, 1991) theory of planned behavior (TPB) where we incorporate insights from social psychology to develop argument for the influence of cognitive and non-cognitive (affect) phenomena on individual attitudes. Specifically, the *Alternative and Affective Forces* from Maertz and Griffeth's (2004) Eight Forces Framework of voluntary turnover guide how career and psychosocial mentoring cognitively and affectively exert differential effect on employees' attitude toward leaving, and subsequently the turnover intentions. We posit that career mentoring cognitively determines an employee's attitude toward leaving as it activates in employees the *alternative forces* that strengthen their perceptions of self-efficacy about securing alternate employment (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). However, psychosocial mentoring affectively determines attitude toward leaving as it activates in employees the *Affective Forces*. These forces develop employees' psychological sympathy and staying motivation with their organization (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004: page 669). Based on these insights, we propose that career mentoring enhances turnover intentions through attitude toward leaving, while psychosocial mentoring buffers this indirect effect. This study is different from previous studies as it examines a previously untested buffering effect of psychosocial mentoring on the mediating process between career mentoring and turnover intentions.

## 2. Theory and Hypotheses

The theoretical model of this study has been shown in Figure 1, which indicates an indirect effect of career mentoring on turnover intentions via attitude toward leaving. In addition, it stipulates that psychosocial mentoring moderates the abovementioned indirect effect. Precisely, psychosocial mentoring moderates the effect of career mentoring on attitude toward leaving. Given the purpose of current research, we developed only the mediation and moderated-mediation hypotheses.

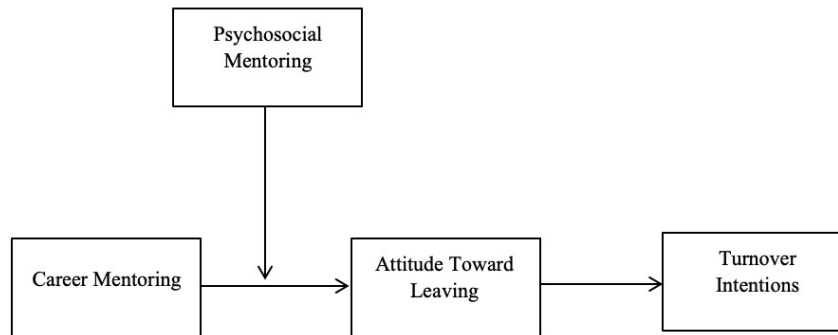


Figure 1. Theoretical Model

### 2.1. Career Mentoring Develops Turnover Intentions Through Attitude Toward Leaving

Evidence from existing literature suggests that career mentoring develops turnover intentions. For example, Raghuram et al. (2017) proposed that employees who receive career mentoring from their leaders are likely to have high employability in external organizations. They found that a good career mentoring enhances “turnover for better career prospects even in the absence of dissatisfaction with the job or the manager” (Raghuram et al., 2017: page 420). It suggests that career mentoring can develop employee turnover intentions as it increases their employability and enables them to capture better employment opportunities out of their current organization. Similar findings were presented by Deng et al. (2023) that career mentoring positively affects employee turnover when employees self-manage their external career and marketability. Hall and Smith (2009) reported that career mentoring had ability to increase turnover intentions of public accountants.

To explain why career mentoring may influence employee turnover intentions through attitude toward leaving, this study used the principles of TPB because this theory provides a rich theoretical and structural framework for studies establishing hypotheses related to attitudes, intentions and behaviors (Ajzen, 2020). Moreover, we took guidance from social psychology on how cognitive factors influence attitude toward leaving, and adduced *Alternative Forces* from Maertz and Griffeth’s (2004) Eight Forces Framework. The eight motivational forces in this framework are; “Affective, Contractual, Constituent, Alternative, Calculative, Normative, Behavioral, and Moral” (Maertz Jr & Campion, 2004: p. 570).

Insights from theory of reasoned action (TRA; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) and theory of planned behavior (TPB; Ajzen, 1985, 1991) suggest that turnover intentions are the immediate outcome of attitude towards leaving. The predictions of basic TPB model suggest that an individual’s intentions toward an action are predicted by his or her attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In light of Ajzen (1991), Conner and Armitage (1998) described that intentions refer to an individual’s motivation toward seeking a specific behavior, perceived behavioral control means how easy or difficult a person perceives performing a behavior, and subjective norms represent an individual’s perception about other significant people’s recognition about performing (or not performing) a behavior. Research on the basic predictors of TPB is abundant. However, there is a need to examine how TPB variables are affected by the variables that are external to TPB’s basic predictors (Van Breukelen et al., 2004). Mentoring is external to TPB variables, and there is a need to explain how career mentoring predicts attitude toward leaving, and subsequently, the turnover intentions.

Insights from attitude research in social psychology suggest that attitudes influence behaviors through intentions (Steel & Ovalle, 1984). The commonly discussed components of attitude are cognitive and affective components (Van den Berg, Manstead, van der Pligt & Wigboldus, 2006). In light of McGuire (1969), Edwards (1990) posited that a person’s feelings and emotions are related to his or her attitude’s affective component, while his or her judgments and beliefs reflect cognitive component. The dual attitude model suggests that individuals can concurrently carry both the cognitive and affective attitudes for an object in a given milieu (Edwards, 1990). These insights suggest that employees receiving career and psychosocial mentoring may have different attitudes toward leaving.

The alternative forces in the Eight Forces Model can explain how career mentoring plays a role in developing an employee’s cognitive focus on forming attitude toward leaving. We know from our discussion in previous

paragraph that cognitive focus is concerned with beliefs and judgments linked with the object of an attitude. In this study's context, cognitive formation of leaving attitude means employee's beliefs and judgments about the object of this attitude i.e. leaving or turnover. The *alternative forces* in the Eights Forces Model suggest that career mentoring increases an employee's "magnitude and strength of self-efficacy beliefs about obtaining alternative jobs" (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004: page 669). High self-efficacy leads to quitting (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004) because employees cognitively make evaluations and judgments about the availability of alternatives in external market once they are equipped with new skills and experiences after receiving career mentoring. These judgments are highly likely to develop their attitudes toward leaving in search of better opportunities out of their current organization.

Lee and Mitchell (1994) described that the idea of alternatives' influence on employee turnover echoes back to March and Simon's (1958) conception of employee's perceived ease of movement. The marketable skills acquired in career mentoring process increase employees' ease of movement or employability in the external market. Harris, Kacmar and Witt (2005) postulated that employees' perceptions of job opportunities in other organizations psychologically pull them away from their present work organization. In other words, career mentoring puts market pull forces in employee's favor by providing her or him with alternative job opportunities external to her or his organization. Consequently, employees develop attitude toward leaving. Insights from TPB propose that attitudes precede intentions. It suggests that career mentoring positively affects turnover intentions through attitude toward leaving.

In order to establish that career mentoring develops turnover intentions through attitude toward leaving, we tested the following hypothesis.

*Hypothesis 1: Career mentoring positively influences turnover intentions through attitude toward leaving.*

## **2.2. Buffering Effect of Psychosocial Mentoring**

The *affective forces* in Eights Forces Model represent hedonistic approach–avoidance mechanism where positive and/or negative "emotional responses toward the organization cause psychological comfort or discomfort with membership. Emotional comfort motivates approach or staying; discomfort motivates avoidance or quitting" (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004, page 669). Psychosocial mentoring is expected to cause psychological comfort and positive emotional response toward the organization because of feelings of self-confidence and friendship with mentor leader. Friendship, trust, respect and acceptance received by protégés in the form of psychosocial support help them in organizational adaptation (Yang et al., 2019: page 4088). It suggests that psychosocial mentoring develops employees' emotional attachment with mentor leader in the form of trust, friendship, respect and affective commitment, which encourage their attitude toward staying rather than leaving.

The affective force perspective suggests that attitude toward leaving is influenced by employees' emotional comfort of staying with the organization where psychosocial support is available. Therefore, it can be stated that psychosocial mentoring will not develop employee attitude toward leaving, and thus may be negatively associated with such attitude. In other words, it will act as an opposite force in relation to career mentoring. Consequently, the intensity of the effect of career mentoring on attitude toward leaving will change when psychosocial mentoring is also available. As a contradictory force acting upon attitude toward leaving, psychosocial mentoring can buffer the influence that career mentoring exerts on employee attitude toward leaving, and subsequently the turnover intentions. It suggests that the intensity of career mentoring-turnover relationship may change by the level of psychosocial mentoring when career mentoring interacts with it.

This study postulates that psychosocial mentoring reduces turnover intentions by abating the influence of career mentoring on attitude toward leaving. It means that different levels of psychosocial mentoring signify for deducing the influence of career mentoring on intentions to leave through attitude toward leaving. Therefore, attitude (toward leaving) enhancing effect of career mentoring decreases when psychosocial mentoring is high, and it can be presumed that psychosocial mentoring buffers the influence of career mentoring on turnover intentions by weakening employee attitude toward leaving. Formally, we formulated the following hypothesis.

*Hypothesis 2: Psychosocial mentoring buffers the mediating process of career mentoring to attitude toward leaving to turnover intentions.*

### 3. Research Methodology

This study deductively tested the hypothesized relationships. Subjective ratings of employees were obtained in a cross-sectional survey.

#### 3.1. Respondents and Settings

We collected data from lower and middle level workers of commercial banks (private) in south Punjab region of Pakistan. Banking sector is quite relevant to the variables examined in this study because the banks have a well-established manager-subordinate system where the subordinates continuously receive both the career and psychosocial mentoring. Pakistan has a very competitive and fast growing banking sector (Athar, Chughtai & Rashid, 2023), where the bank branches are characterized by modern organizational systems that are run by highly qualified and well trained people (Sumbal, Ključnikov, Durst, Ferraris & Saeed, 2023).

At the time of study survey, the target population was 1487. A two-steps procedure was adopted to collect the data. At first step, the sample size was determined. Hair, Hult, Ringle and Sarstedt (2014) suggested the use of Cohen's (1992) recommendations for deciding the size of survey sample. Cohen's (1992) recommendations are given in a table in Hair et al. (2014). These recommendations are based on the "statistical power analyses for multiple regression models" (Hair et al., 2014: page 20). Cohen (1992) recommended a sample size of 191 when any construct in the model is pointed out by four arrowheads, at  $R^2$  as 0.10, and p-value less than 0.01. We targeted a larger sample size because some respondents do not reply, and some respondents provide incomplete responses. Existing studies on survey-based research have also reported a low response rate. At second step, simple random sampling was performed to select the study sample. Randomly selected 500 employees were provided with paper based questionnaires. The survey completed in about one month. Employees provided self-ratings for the entire variables. After looking for missing values, 352 (70%) usable responses were received. Table 1 shows the sample characteristics.

Respondents' profile	N	(%)	Respondents' profile	N	(%)
<i>Sex</i>			<i>Education</i>		
Women	91	26	10 Years	3	1
Men	261	74	12 Years	24	7
			16 Years	274	78
			18 Years	51	14
			Above 18 Years	0	0
<i>Age (in years)</i>			<i>Experience (years)</i>		
18-21	14	4	Less than 1	00	00
22-30	176	50	01-05	156	44
31-40	112	32	06-10	104	30
41-50	45	13	11-15	86	24
Above 50	5	1	Above 15	6	2

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

#### 3.2. Measures

This study used the questionnaires that were already used and validated in previous studies. *Career and psychosocial mentoring* were measured by using five and six items scales, respectively. These measures were adopted from Armstrong, Allinson, and Hayes' (2002) who derived them from Noe's (1988). A five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree was used to obtain responses for these measures. *Attitude toward leaving* was measured by using four items based on Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) bipolar adjectives used in Van Breukelen et al (2004). This measure was also used by Al-Rafee and Cronan (2006) and other studies. These bipolar adjectives are; 'pleasant-unpleasant,' 'unfavorable-favorable,' 'annoying-nice,' and 'good-bad'. Following Van Breukelen et al. (2004), we reverse-scored the first and last item. *Turnover intentions* were measured by using Van Breukelen et al. (2004) four items scales where employee's 'perceived likelihood of leaving' was focused. Employees were asked to specify the possibility/chances that they would still be in their current organization

6 months, 1 year, 2 years, and 5 years later. The measurement scale was 1 (chances are very big) to 5 (chances are very small). Table 2 shows survey items for all the measures.

### 3.3. Analytical Approach

Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was the analytical approach for data analysis. PLS-SEM is highly recommended for estimating the complex models with composite variables (Agirre-Aramburu, Freundlich & Blázquez-Díaz, 2024). Compared to covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM), the use of PLS-SEM is suggested in perceptions based research as this technique does not require data normality, and easily handles small sample size (Astrachan, Patel & Wanzenried, 2014; Haider, Fatima & de Pablos-Heredero, 2020). Estimations were made in SmartPLS software (Ringle, Wende & Becker, 2022). In PLS-SEM, data are validated in measurement model and hypotheses are tested in structural model.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Measurement Model Assessment

Table 2 shows latent variable correlations and standard deviation, while Table 3 shows latent variables and their items, indicators, factor loadings ( $\lambda$ ), Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ), Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

Pearson Correlations	Original sample	Sample mean	Standard deviation
Career Mentoring ↔ Attitude Toward Leaving	0.114	0.124	0.053
Psychosocial Mentoring ↔ Attitude Toward Leaving	-0.129	-0.142	0.061
Psychosocial Mentoring ↔ Career Mentoring	0.049	0.045	0.050
Turnover Intentions ↔ Attitude Toward Leaving	0.611	0.613	0.041
Turnover Intentions ↔ Career Mentoring	0.107	0.115	0.057
Turnover Intentions ↔ Psychosocial Mentoring	-0.206	-0.206	0.066

Table 2. Latent Variable Correlations

Construct	Items	Indicators	$\lambda$	$\alpha$	CR	AVE
Attitude Toward Leaving	Overall, my attitude toward leaving my current organization is 'pleasant-unpleasant'	Att_Leav 1	0.77	0.82	0.88	0.65
	Overall, my attitude toward leaving my current organization is 'unfavorable-favorable'	Att_Leav 2	0.90			
	Overall, my attitude toward leaving my current organization is 'annoying-nice'	Att_Leav 3	0.85			
	Overall, my attitude toward leaving my current organization is 'good-bad'	Att_Leav 4	0.70			
Career Mentoring	My mentor leader helped me finish tasks or meet deadlines that would otherwise have been difficult to complete	C_Ment 1	0.80	0.86	0.90	0.66
	My mentor leader increased my contact with people likely to influence my future advancement	C_Ment 2	0.93			
	My mentor leader gave me tasks which enhanced my administrative skills	C_Ment 3	0.93			
	My mentor leader gave me assignments that presented opportunities to learn new skills	C_Ment 4	0.78			
	My mentor leader positively encouraged me in my preparation for career advancement	C_Ment 5	0.56			
Psychosocial Mentoring	I have a great deal of trust in my mentor leader	PsS_Ment 1	0.72	0.89	0.91	0.62
	I see my mentor leader as a role model	PsS_Ment 2	0.83			
	I respect and admire my mentor leader	PsS_Ment 3	0.89			
	My mentor leader conveys empathy for any concerns and feelings I discuss with him/her	PsS_Ment 4	0.83			
	My mentor leader conveys feelings of respect for me as an individual	PsS_Ment 5	0.78			

Construct	Items	Indicators	$\lambda$	$\alpha$	CR	AVE
	My mentor leader interacts with me on a social basis – more like a friend	PsS_Ment 6	0.67			
Turnover Intentions	How do you rate your chances of still working for your current organization six months from now	TOI 1	0.81	0.85	0.90	0.69
	How do you rate your chances of still working for your current organization one year from now	TOI 2	0.88			
	How do you rate your chances of still working for your current organization two years from now	TOI 3	0.86			
	How do you rate your chances of still working for your current organization five years from now	TOI 4	0.77			

Note: AVE = average variance extracted, CR = composite reliability,  $\alpha$  Cronbach's alpha;  $\lambda$  Factor/outer loadings

Table 3. Estimations of measurement model

The PLS measurement model was evaluated based on three commonly used data reliability/validity tests described in Hair et al. (2014). The first test is about determining internal consistency of a construct. Composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha's values equal to or above 0.70 indicate internal consistency of a construct (Hair et al., 2014). The second test is related to estimating convergent validity of a construct. A construct's outer loadings/factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE) above 0.70 and 0.50, respectively, stipulate convergent validity in a construct (Hair et al., 2014). The values of Cronbach's alpha, CR, AVE and factor loadings in Table 3 indicate that both the internal consistency and convergent validity of our constructs have been established because these values meet the required threshold, except for factor loadings of last items of career mentoring (0.56) and psychosocial mentoring (0.67). Hair et al. (2014) suggested that the items having factor loadings below 0.70 but above 0.40 should not be deleted from the construct until their removal exceeds the threshold values of CR and AVE. We retained these items because the values of CR and AVE did not increase when we tested the model without these items. Therefore, these items were retained with their respective constructs.

The third test, discriminant validity, measures the absence of correlations among latent variables (Hair et al., 2014). Traditionally, this validity is established by using two measures: Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion and the Cross-loadings of the construct indicators. However, a more latest and reliable measure for establishing this validity is testing the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations among constructs. This study used the above-mentioned ratios for establishing discriminant validity. The recommended HTMT ratio between two constructs is 0.85 or less (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2015). In our data, these ratios are below 0.85, which indicate the presence of discriminant validity (see Table 4).

	Attitude Toward Leaving	Career Mentoring	Psychosocial Mentoring	Turnover Intentions
Attitude Toward Leaving				
Career Mentoring	0.159			
Psychosocial Mentoring	0.147	0.073		
Turnover Intentions	0.722	0.124	0.225	

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

#### 4.2. Structural Model Assessment

Hypotheses were tested after a collinearity check between each set of predicting constructs. Researchers commonly use variance inflation factor (VIF) to test collinearity among predictor variables. The VIF value of 1 indicates the absence of correlation among a predictor variable and the rest of predictor variables in a model. It means that VIF around 1 stipulates that the variance caused by a predictor is not inflated due to collinearity or high correlation between this predictor and other predictors. As a general rule, it is believed that VIF's value



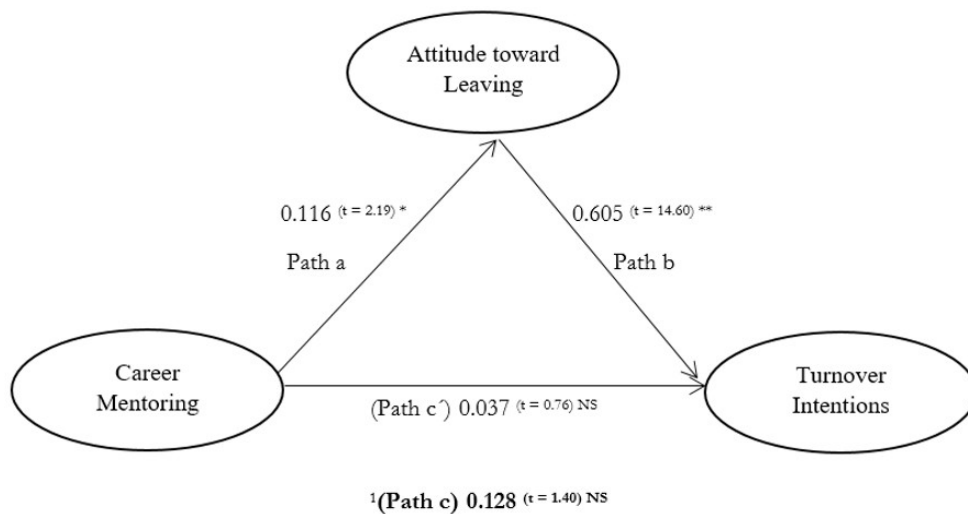
above 5 indicates the presence of collinearity (Hair et al., 2014), and calls for corrections or further inquiry into the proposed relationships. The VIF values in Table 5 show that there is no collinearity issue in our data.

	Attitude Toward Leaving	Career Mentoring	Psychosocial Mentoring	Turnover Intentions
Attitude Toward Leaving				1.021
Career Mentoring	1.003			1.015
Psychosocial Mentoring	1.025			
Turnover Intentions				

Table 5. Collinearity assessment (inner VIF values)

#### 4.2.1. Mediation Test

As suggested by Hair et al. (2017), Nitzl et al. (2016) and Zhao et al. (2010), mediation was performed by testing indirect and direct effects in the first and second steps, respectively. Mediation is confirmed if indirect effect is significant. The significance of direct effect indicates partial, while the insignificant direct effect indicates full mediation. We used Bootstrapping with bias corrected bootstrap confidence interval method to test whether the indirect effect is significant or not. Preacher, Rucker and Hayes' (2007) approach guided the estimation of indirect effect by multiplying the coefficients of path a ( $\beta = 0.116$ ) and path b ( $\beta = 0.604$ ) in Figure 2. The results of Bootstrapping at 5000 subsamples indicated that the indirect effect was significant [ $\beta = (0.116 \times 0.605) = 0.070$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ;  $t\text{-value} = 2.14$ ]. It supports our hypothesis 1 that career mentoring affects turnover intentions through attitude toward leaving.

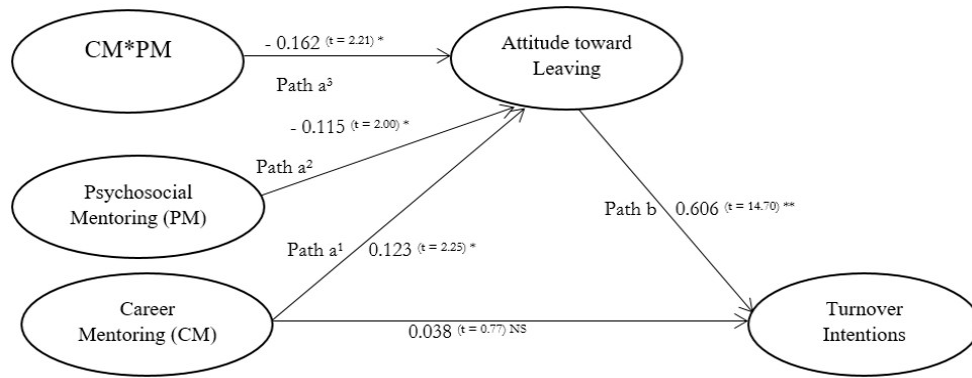


Note: <sup>NS</sup> Not Significant; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$

Figure 2. Estimated Mediation Model

#### 4.2.2. Testing Moderated Mediation

The buffering effect of psychosocial mentoring was examined by testing the first-stage model of moderated mediation explained in Hayes' (2015). In such a model, the predictor-mediator relationship is moderated by a third variable (moderator), and the moderator determines boundaries of the entire indirect effect (Hayes, 2015). A nonzero weight of moderator determines a mediation process is moderated (Hayes, 2015). However, the indirect effect's dependence on moderating variable will be determined by quantifying the "relationship between the proposed moderator and the size of the indirect effect" (Hayes, 2015: p. 9)



Note: \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; <sup>NS</sup> Not Significant

Figure 3. Estimated Moderated-Mediation Model

In a moderated mediation model, where a third variable moderates the entire mediation process, the significant moderation of the predictor-mediator relationship is not required (Hayes, 2015). However, we reported this effect as the researchers report it traditionally (Shakoor, Haider, Akhtar & Asadullah, 2023). The simple effect of psychosocial mentoring on attitude toward leaving has been shown on Path a<sup>2</sup> in Figure 3. Path a<sup>3</sup> shows only the moderating effect of psychosocial mentoring on the path linking career mentoring and attitude toward leaving. This effect is significant ( $\beta = -0.162$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 2.21$ ).

The moderation chart in Figure 4 shows psychosocial mentoring at mean, at + 1 standard deviation (SD) and – 1 SD. Moderation principal in PLS-SEM guides that a simple effect indicates the medium level of moderating variable (Hair et al., 2014). The central line (i.e. psychosocial mentoring at mean) shows positive relationship between career mentoring and attitude toward leaving. The rightward line (+1 SD) indicates that the positive relationship between career mentoring and attitude toward leaving becomes weak or even negative with the increase in psychosocial mentoring. In other words, an increase in psychosocial mentoring invalidates the positive effect of career mentoring on attitude toward leaving.

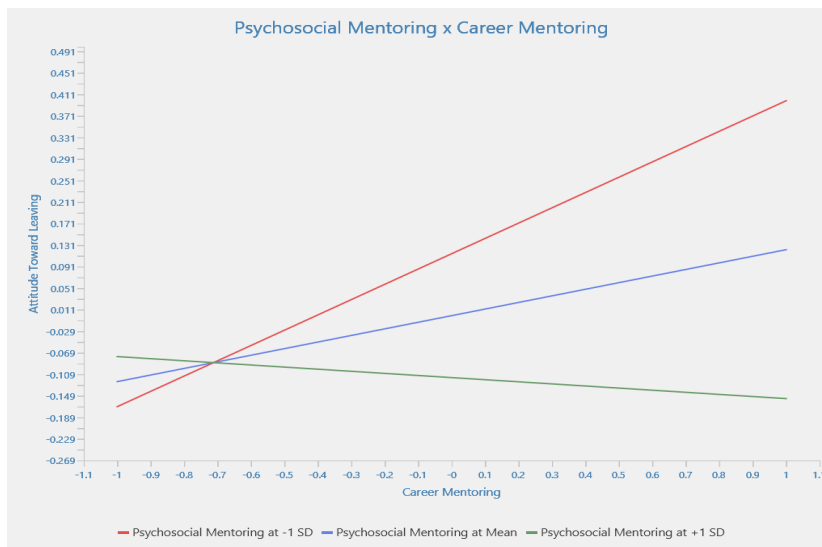


Figure 4. Moderating Effect of Psychosocial Mentoring on the Relationship between Career Mentoring and attitude toward Leaving

Nevertheless, the presence of moderated mediation in a model requires that the moderator must significantly influence the entire indirect effect. For this to happen, the indirect effect of the interaction of career mentoring (the predictor) and psychosocial mentoring (the moderator) on outcome variable via mediator, controlling for the predictor, must be significant (Hayes, 2015; Sarwar, Haider, Akhtar & Bakhsh, 2023).

Figure 3 shows that the interaction of career mentoring and psychosocial mentoring, while controlling for the effect of career mentoring, significantly influences turnover intentions through attitude toward leaving ( $\beta = -0.162 \cdot 0.606 = -0.098$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $t$ -values = 2.20). This effect ( $-0.098$ ) is called Hayes' (2015) index of moderated mediation which is “a direct quantification of the linear association between the indirect effect and the putative moderator of that effect” (Hayes, 2015: p. 3).

$$\omega = (a_1 + a_3 \text{PM}) b \quad (1)$$

$$\omega = a_1 b + a_3 b \text{PM} \quad (2)$$

In the above equation 2, PM is psychosocial mentoring,  $a_1 b$  is intercept, and  $a_3 b$  is slope (i.e. the index of moderated mediation). As discussed earlier, moderated mediation is determined when the slope is nonzero. Figure 3 shows a nonzero slope  $a_3 b$  ( $-0.162 \cdot 0.606 = -0.098$ ). It stipulates that the indirect effect of career mentoring on turnover intentions through attitude toward leaving is not free from the effect of psychosocial mentoring, but depends on the level of psychosocial mentoring. It means that psychosocial mentoring buffers this indirect effect.

A graph of the linear function has been drawn in Figure 5. In this graph, X denotes the indirect effect of career mentoring on turnover intentions through attitude toward leaving, and Y denotes the mean-centered moderator (i.e. psychosocial mentoring). The moderator's random values ranging from 5 to  $-5$  were used to draw this function. This function's negative slope shows a negative association between X and Y, which stipulates that with an increase in psychosocial mentoring, the effect of career mentoring on turnover intentions through attitude toward leaving decreases. In other words, psychosocial mentoring moderates or buffers the influence of career mentoring on turnover intentions through attitude toward leaving (Hypothesis 2 supported).

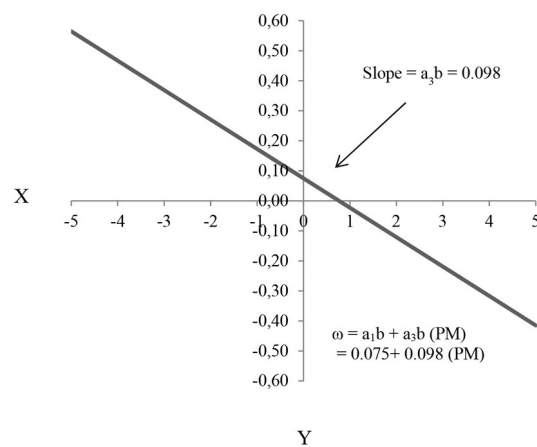


Figure 5. Graph of Equation (2) at different values of psychosocial mentoring

## 5. Discussion

This research examined a moderated mediation model where career mentoring mediated the relationship between career mentoring and turnover intentions, and psychosocial mentoring moderated the entire mediation process. The results supported the hypothesized relationships. The results from hypothesis 1 indicated that career mentoring positively affected turnover intentions but indirectly through attitude toward leaving ( $\beta = 0.070$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ;  $t$ -value = 2.14). The direct effect of career mentoring on turnover intentions was not significant ( $\beta = 0.037$ ,  $t$ -value = 0.76,  $p > 0.05$ ). The results from hypothesis 2 suggested that the psychosocial mentoring produced a negative effect on attitude toward leaving ( $\beta = -0.115$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ;  $t$ -value = 2.00). The interaction of psychosocial mentoring and career mentoring also negatively affected attitude toward leaving ( $\beta = -0.162$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $t$ -value = 2.21). Consequently, this interaction's indirect effect on turnover intentions through attitude toward leaving was also negative ( $\beta = -0.162 \cdot 0.606 = -0.098$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $t$ -values = 2.20).

The significant indirect effect and insignificant direct effect indicate a situation of ‘indirect-only’ mediation where the relationship between independent and dependent variable is determined only through mediator (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2022). This result suggests that career mentoring influences first attitude toward leaving, and then turnover intentions. Our results support the idea that attitude toward leaving is vital for translating the influence of career support mentoring on turnover intentions. Previous studies have also found both the direct and indirect effects (either negative or positive) of career mentoring on turnover intentions. For example, Kim et al. (2015) found career mentoring’s significant negative direct effect on turnover intentions, and indirect effect through job satisfaction. Similarly, Yang et al. (2019) found that both the direct and indirect effects (through organizational embeddedness) of career mentoring on turnover intentions were significant. The significance of direct and indirect effects in the above mentioned studies indicates complementary mediation, which means that their models have the space to include other possible mediator/s ‘whose indirect path has the same direction as the direct effect’ (Hair et al., 2022: page 235). Moreover, the significance of direct effects in these studies indicates that any external phenomena may influence (turnover) intentions without affecting attitude. It is, to some extent, inconsistent with TPB which posits that intentions are predicted through attitudes. Our study’s ‘indirect-only’ effect of career mentoring on turnover intentions is consistent with TPB as our findings suggest no direct effect, but an indirect effect of career mentoring on turnover intentions through attitude toward leaving.

The direction (positive or negative) of career mentoring’s effect on turnover intentions is also worth discussing. Our results are not consistent with Craig, et al. (2013), Kim et al. (2015) and Banerjee-Batist and Reio (2016) who found negative effect of career mentoring on turnover intentions. However, our findings are consistent with Deng et al.’s (2023), Hall and Smith’s (2009), and Raghuram et al. (2017) who found positive effect of career mentoring on employee turnover intentions. This line of research provides argument that career mentoring enhances self-efficacy and external employability, which result in turnover intentions and actual turnover (Harris et al., 2005; Maertz and Griffeth, 2004). It is intuitively appealing with strong empirical evidence. Gajendran and Somaya’s (2016) article, ‘*employees leave good bosses nearly as often as bad ones*’, published in Harvard Business Review, also confirms this point of view.

In line with hypothesis 2, the slope of Hayes’ (2015) index of moderated mediation was negative because psychosocial mentoring negatively affected or discouraged attitude toward leaving. Gajendran and Somaya (2016) found that ‘employees leave good bosses nearly as often as bad ones’ because of career mentoring received from their leaders. Their findings are interesting, and a good addition in literature. However, our study’s results indicate that career mentoring may not encourage employees to leave good bosses if they are also receiving psychosocial mentoring. It means that employees receiving psychosocial mentoring develop emotional bond with their mentor leaders and organizations, and are less likely to leave them even with enhanced employability. This idea is consistent with the application of attachment theory to leadership, which suggests that leader-follower separation might be painful for both of them (Mayseless, 2010). Consequently, the attachment with leader discourages turnover intentions (Banerjee-Batist & Reio, 2016) Our results suggest that, to a considerable degree, psychosocial mentoring may shield organizations from undesirable outcomes of career mentoring on employee turnover.

### **5.1. Theoretical Implications**

We report here two main contributions of this study. First, it adds to limited research that examined mediating mechanisms in the career mentoring–turnover intentions relationship. Specifically, the mediating role of attitude toward leaving was examined. In existing literature on mentoring and turnover intentions, research on the mediating effect of attitude toward leaving is scarce. Second, we examined the effect of the interaction of both mentoring functions on turnover intentions through attitude toward leaving. This study is an addition to existing literature, which lacks studies on the interaction effect of both career and psychosocial mentoring. A scientific inquiry into the indirect effects requires studying the phenomena that determine boundaries of these effects. This study did the same as it found that psychosocial mentoring determines the boundaries of the effect of career mentoring that is indirectly exerted on turnover intentions via attitude toward leaving.

### **5.2. Practical Implications**

This study has two important implications for practice, which are not limited to the sector under study. First, organizations providing career mentoring to their employees should consider also the provision of psychosocial

mentoring to avoid developing employee attitude toward leaving, which leads to turnover intentions. For this purpose, they should give the mentoring roles to supportive and ethical managers/leaders so that an emotional bond can be built with employees by developing friendship, trust, and respect among each other. In this way, organizations can avoid the loss of money spent on employees during career support process. Above all, organizations will be able to retain those employees whom it trained to achieve organizational goals. In this regard, organizations should hire or train the people on leadership and mentoring positions who are capable to develop psychosocial bond with employees.

Second, in line with TPB, our results suggest that employees develop first attitude toward leaving, and then turnover intentions. If banks are unable to provide employees with the kind of leadership that provides psychosocial mentoring parallel to career mentoring, they can take other steps that discourage attitude toward leaving. For example, an active career management system may help retain the trained employees by creating internal opportunities that match the potential leavers' skills and competencies (Raghuram et al., 2017). If organizations fail to do so, employees are likely to quit as they perceive lesser growth opportunities within their current organization (Weng & McElroy, 2012). Therefore, the banks should pay substantial attention toward providing in-house career growth or promotion opportunities.

Organizations that are unable to provide neither psychosocial support nor an active career management system, they should try to benefit from employee turnover by giving them smooth exit where 'an exit interview or a farewell drink' may help (De Winne, Marescaux, Sels, Van Beveren & Vanormelingen, 2019: page 3055). It will help organizations to convert leavers into organizational alumni that may provide social capital and networking opportunities across organizations (Raghuram et al., 2017).

### **5.3. Conclusion**

This study concludes that career mentoring leads to employee turnover intentions because it improves their skills and employability in external organizations. No doubt, it benefits employees to grasp career opportunities beyond their current organization. However, the turnover of trained employees is a loss for organizations that spend time and other resources on the employee who leaves for better opportunities outside. Organizations can benefit from the findings of this study by providing psychosocial mentoring besides career mentoring. It will develop employees' emotional bond with their leaders and organizations, and they may wait for better opportunities within their current organization. However, organizations focusing on their employees' career mentoring, should pay particular attention to developing career management systems besides providing psychosocial mentoring.

### **5.4. Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

The current study contributed to literature on mentoring and employee turnover. However, it also has some limitation. First, the study sample was limited to the commercial banks (private) in Pakistan's south Punjab region, which raise the issue of our results' external validity. In future, organizational researchers can expand the results of this study by examining these variables and relationships in other contexts. Second, our data were collected from single source (i.e. employees' self-ratings). It might have created the problem of common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003). Future researchers may avoid common method bias by collecting multisource data. Third, we did not control for the effects of respondents' demographic variables such as age, gender, education and tenure, which according to previous research affect turnover intentions (Jeong & Lee, 2023). Employees' career orientations and personalities also affect employee turnover intentions (Jeswani & Dave, 2012; Tschopp, Grote & Gerber, 2014). Future researcher may control the effects of these variables. Fourth, a true causal examination of the hypothesized relationships is limited due the cross-sectional data. Future researcher may conduct such studies based on longitudinal data and experimental designs. Fifth, our research did not examine other plausible explanations emerging from our research model. For example, we did not test the moderation of career mentoring on the indirect effect of psychosocial mentoring on turnover intentions through attitude toward leaving. Future researchers can test this relationship. Sixth, this study did not include information about career management system of the banks surveyed. It is important because organizations' career management policies and practices affect employee turnover (De Oliveira, Cavazotte & Alan-Dunzer, 2019), and thus, may also affect the effect of mentoring on turnover intentions. Future research on the

relationship between mentoring and employee turnover may benefit from considering the effects of organizations' career management system. Finally, as the study used Likert Scale based survey instruments for data collection, the readers should take into account some inherent limitations of such data. In such a method of data collection, the researcher has little opportunity to clarify the questions from respondents (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Likert scale categories may not sufficiently explain the subjectivity and complexity of the phenomena under study (Hasson & Arnetz, 2005). Moreover, response and nonresponse biases are always present in survey bases data (Af Wählberg & Poom, 2015).

Though the study has some limitation, its contribution to existing literature is significant as it examined the career mentoring-turnover intentions relationship by its 'why and when' aspects. Precisely, it clarified how psychosocial mentoring weakens the influence of career mentoring on attitude toward leaving, and thereafter the turnover intentions.

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### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest either among authors or with any third party.

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