

# Investigating the Dynamics of Workforce Stability: The Influence of Perceived Employability on Career Resilience, Task Performance, Learning Agility and Employee Retention

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## ABSTRACT:

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the complex interrelationships among perceived employability, employee task performance, employee retention, career resilience, and learning agility to cover this knowledge gap and provide HR practices and policies supported by evidence that can increase service sector development and contribute to Saudi Arabia's economic goals. The study used a cross-sectional quantitative design and conducted an online survey of employees in the service sector of Saudi Arabia. Snowball sampling was used during the data collection, and 403 usable responses were collected and utilized for data analysis. Data analysis techniques included descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and composite assessment analyses were conducted through SPSS 28. For hypothesis testing, the PLS-SEM model was used through SmartPLS4. R<sup>2</sup>adj, standardized root means square residual, Normed fit index, and Q<sup>2</sup>predict were used for model evaluation. The research findings highlighted the importance of perceived employability which is positively related to task performance and retention and show the need for organizations to train their employees so that they are characterized by career resilience and learning agility, which relate positively on their task performance and their retention within the Saudi service industry. Acquiring knowledge and understanding regarding these relationships is essential to develop targeted practices and policies to improve employee outcomes and elevate the organization's competitiveness in an economy undergoing rapid transformations. This study's findings provide practical implications regarding human resource management and organizational development strategies in Saudi Arabia that will support future research by enhancing perceived employability, building career resilience, developing employee task performance, improving learning agility, and ensuring a higher rate of employee retention, realizing the significance of each element in developing organizational goals and success.

*Keywords: perceived employability, employee task performance, employee retention, career resilience, learning agility.*

## 1. Introduction

Due to economic challenges and today's rapidly changing labor market, such as during COVID-19, there is a strong and urgent demand for qualified people who contribute to and are committed to the organizational performance (Di Battista et al.,

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2023). To advance their careers, employees must focus on improving their skills and adapting to organizational changes while analyzing workplace challenges.

With the rise of new jobs, many employees need to develop their skills and adapt to the changes occurring in the labor market; therefore, organizations must enhance this through perceived employability (PE) (Ibrahim, Eman, 2020). Perceived employability (PE) refers to an individual's ability to find and maintain employment (Domagała-Zyśk et al., 2021). According to Sanchez et al. (2020), employees engaged with an organization's objectives and directions are likelier to have a sense of ownership and commitment to the organization, leading to a greater willingness to continue working for the same organization.

Perceived employability (PE) plays a significant role in enhancing employee retention (ER), which denotes that many initiatives are made by organizations to motivate their workforce so they remain part of the organization for a longer duration (Singh, 2019). A high retention rate indicates commitment and satisfaction; it could also be due to a lack of job opportunities, whereas a lower intention to leave suggests positive collective behavior, which can impact organizational success (Biason, 2020).

Learning agility (LA) and career resilience (CR) are two important variables that have a significant influence on employee task performance (ETP) and retention (ER). Burke et al. (2021) stated that 'learning' indicates to seven behavior-based aspects: information seeking, feedback seeking, collaborating, performance risk-taking, interpersonal risk-taking, reflecting, and experimenting. Whereas, 'agility' indicates to flexibility and speed. VanVuuren and Fourie (2000) introduced a new and improved model of career resilience (CR), which includes four factors: belief in oneself, disregard for traditional sources of career success, self-reliance, and receptivity to change, and they also developed a measurement tool to assess career resilience (CR) (Ahmad et al., 2019).

With enhanced PE, there will be more instigation of proactive career behaviors, hence driving engagement (Sohail et al., 2023). Therefore, HR can stimulate employees to take responsibility for their career development by creating an enabling environment that enhances PE, which in turn increases CR, ETP, and retention. CR is important in helping the employee to cope with various events of change and other career challenges at work (Sheridan et al., 2022). By knowing how ETP is mediated by CR on PE, HR could design resilience initiatives to achieve better performance and retention. ETP has a direct relation to ER, where better performance tends to create satisfaction and value feelings among employees (Igbinoaba et al., 2022). This research proposed that PE and CR can raise ETP; hence, this dimension gives HR ways of enhancing productivity and retaining employees. The fast and changing present work environment is one in which LA plays an important role (Ghosh et al., 2021). The study would help to demonstrate that PE might be a predictor of higher LA, which enhances CR and improves ETP. Employees with high LA are better equipped to handle career transitions and organizational changes, enhancing both their CR and ETP. Retention is a big problem faced by organizations operating in the highly competitive service industry. By understanding the working mechanism of PE, CR, LA, and performance, HR can formulate strategies to retain employees effectively.

In Saudi Arabia, employability has garnered significant attention, especially considering the recent shifts in the larger economy and Vision 2030, which is developing employment skills to cope with the labor market requirements (Asfahani et al., 2023).

Therefore, to increase ER, the Saudi Arabian service sector focuses on improving ETP through training programs that develop employee careers and fit the sector's goals and success. In Saudi Arabia, the service sector is a key pillar of Vision 2030's initiative to increase economic diversification and reduce oil dependency, resulting in unprecedented and extensive changes. A highly skilled workforce with competence in their current jobs, flexibility, determination, and the potential to move through the current labor market is essential. The most significant factors in this context are PE, ETP, CR, LA, and ER. Enhancing understanding these relationships in Saudi Arabia is necessary, resulting in more academic research and human resources strategies.

The significance of employability, performance, and retention for organizational success and sustainability in the dynamic service sector of Saudi Arabia is increasing. Economic changes, technological developments, and changes in employee expectations have showcased the complex associations among PE, ETP, CR, LA, and ER. However, further research is required to comprehend the interrelationships and outcomes of these variables in the organizational environment. This gap presents a barrier for organizations seeking to leverage empirical data to design effective HRM strategies and practices that enhance employee development, retention, and performance. The study also aims to explore these dynamics and provide HR practices and policies supported by evidence that can increase service sector development and contribute to Saudi Arabia's economic goals. Employees with LA and CR are more proficient at adapting to rapid market changes and making greater contributions to their organizations. However, there is uncertainty regarding how these variables affect the correlation between ETP, retention outcomes, and PE. The study's results comprehensively analyze these interconnections within the Saudi service industry. Acquiring knowledge and understanding regarding these relationships is essential to develop targeted practices and policies to improve employee outcomes and elevate the organization's competitiveness in an economy undergoing rapid transformations.

## 2. Theoretical Background

Social exchange theory was used as the theoretical framework for this study to explore the relationship between PE, ETP, and ER and understand the impact of CR and LA on ETP and ER. Social exchange theory suggests that people engage in social relationships based on the expectation of reciprocity and mutual benefit (Blau, 1964). Employees who have high employability will be motivated to act, search for skill development opportunities, and handle challenging tasks that enhance efficiency and effectiveness while they are doing their tasks (Shaikh et al., 2019). Therefore, mutually beneficial exchange is developed, that can be translated by considering the SET and the norms of reciprocity. To describe the relationship between organizational activities for competencies development and ER, organizations need to enhance their workforce affective commitment and perceptions on internal employability (Moreira et al., 2020). CR is associated with certain competencies and skills, and competencies related to a career are associated with resilience (Ahmad et al., 2019). Cantante-Rodrigues et al. (2021) studied the relationship between resilience and job performance and confirmed that resilient employees attain better job performance than their less resilient peers. Cabrera-Aguilar et

al. (2023) explained that employees who have higher LA have a higher level of ability and resilience; they provide time and effort at the job, are not exhausted easily, and are persistent during difficulties. As a result, when the ETP is high, the job will be done quickly, and the company's ability to retain employees will be higher (Nguyen, 2020; Subedi, 2023).

## **2.1 Perceived Employability**

PE is a concept that has been discussed extensively over the past two decades. PE refers to the skills, competencies, and proficiencies that benefit individuals and the economy (Sohail et al., 2023). The PE is a psychological factor concerning individuals' capability to experience workplace transformation as an outcome of employee competencies, knowledge, and compliance (Moreira et al., 2020). PE refers to individuals' self-perception of their abilities to retain fulfilling work and having the knowledge, understanding, skills, experience, and personal attributes to move self-sufficiently within the labor market (Oosthuizen et al., 2021). PE could be either internal employability, in which individuals could meet the requirements of their current job, or external employability, in which individuals believe they could attain the requirements of a new job (Zhang et al., 2021).

## **2.2 Employee's Task Performance**

It refers to how effectively and efficiently an employee works within an organization and is influenced by individual competencies, motivation, and the work environment (Zhu et al., 2022). Task performance is an employee's efficiency in fulfilling their duties and contributing to company activities like production and productivity. Professional competence, clear job descriptions, a suitable working environment, and moral qualities influence it. (Aslan et al., 2022). ETP is an important indicator of an individual's contribution to the organization. High-performing employees often exhibit exceptional work skills, performance, and quality. Performance expectations are met or exceeded, contributing significantly to organizational objectives (Igbinoba et al., 2022). According to human capital theory, PE refers to an employee's psychological assessment of human capital and is thought to improve productivity (Rodrigues et al., 2022). Employees with a strong sense of their employability are motivated to put effort and energy into their work. This motivation stems from the belief that increased productivity benefits the current organization and increases its marketability for future opportunities (Aslan et al., 2022). As a result, individuals with high PE are more likely to set ambitious performance goals, seek challenging tasks, and face obstacles—all of which contribute to improved ETP (Kethan, 2022). Employees with high PE generally tend to demonstrate a proactive method to their responsibilities, taking initiative and willingly tackling challenge assignments, leading to increased efficiency and effectiveness in executing the tasks (Shaikh et al., 2019). Marzec et al. (2021) give empirical evidence on the relationship between task content, employability, and process performance in public organizations, concluding that enhancing employability leads to more productivity and great results for both organizations and employees. Employees actively seeking ways to develop their skills and contribute beyond their basic job requirements are valuable assets to organizations

(She & Li, 2023). Therefore, employees with high PE may invest in creativity, as employers highly value it.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** *Perceived employability directly and significantly influences employee task performance.*

### 2.3 Employee Retention

Due to the need for more competent employees in the labor market, corporate leaders today face a major and significant challenge in the form of ER (Khan, 2020). Employee retention (ER) is an idea that began during the 1970s and mid-1980s when both people and organizations were unaware of the importance and advantages of keeping potential employees (Elbert-Ajogbor, 2020). ER refers to the strategies used by organizations to keep valuable employees for a longer period (Shirina et al., 2023). According to Ghani et al. (2022), retention refers to keeping or encouraging employees to stay with the organization for as long as possible. Organizations must retain potential employees to achieve goals and gain a competitive advantage (Sawaneh et al., 2019). With the rapid changes and development in some business fields, employee retention (ER) has a significant and effective role in the organization's behavior and productivity. It is considered one of the main challenges organizations must consider in their plans (Kurdi & Alshurideh, 2020).

ETP is utmost important for an organizational human resource management as it is associated to the efficiency of all activities (Varshney & Varshney, 2020). Employee performance is achieved by prioritizing and completing important tasks efficiently with minimal time and effort. This involves proper task planning and focusing on result maximization and effort minimization (Nemteanu et al., 2021). Therefore, when the ETP is high, they will get the job done quickly and feel less pressured, so the company's ability to retain employees will be higher (Nguyen, 2020). Research has consistently shown that employees who consistently perform well are more likely to be recognized and rewarded and have higher organizational commitment and job satisfaction, and reducing the likelihood of turnover (Igbinoba et al., 2022). This led us to the hypothesis:

**H<sub>2</sub>:** *Employee task performance directly and significantly influences employee retention.*

Employee competencies are necessary for the organization's success; that is, when employees' job performance is high, the work will be done quickly, and therefore, the retention of employees will be higher (Nguyen et al., 2021). Employees who believe they can handle challenges are more likely to engage in proactive problem-solving, creativity, and innovation, which results in enhanced overall performance in their roles. Employees who are confident in their abilities also lead to enthusiasm and determination in tasks, improving ETP (Parent-Lamarche et al., 2022). Higher levels of PE can result in heightened motivation and engagement, thereby exerting a positive impact on ETP (Bargsted et al., 2021). ETP is a crucial factor in determining ER as it measures the efficiency and effectiveness of job tasks. High-performing employees are more inclined to be acknowledged, rewarded, and offered growth prospects, strengthening their dedication to the organization (Koo et al., 2020). Cerdin et al. (2022) discovered that organizations that implement exclusive talent management practices experience greater internal talent employability, leading to increased employee perception of internal career opportunities, ultimately resulting in enhanced employee retention. Enhancing the ETP improves

employee retention by increasing their value to the organization and boosting job satisfaction.

PE can impact employee retention by improving ETP. Moreira et al. (2020) analyzes the association between organizational competencies advancement practices and ER via affective commitment and PE, describe that mechanisms of PE and affective commitment are strongly associated with organizational competencies development practices and employee's intentions to stay. Lin and Huang (2021) establish a strong correlation between ETP and intention to stay, suggesting that employees who demonstrate high performance are less inclined to depart from the organization. This discovery highlights the significance of the mediating function of ETP, as it directly impacts employees' choices to remain with their employer. From this, we hypothesize that:

**H<sub>3</sub>:** *Employee's task performance mediates the relationship between employee's perceived employability and employee retention.*

## 2.4 Career Resilience

It combines self-efficacy, risk orientation, and dependency (Pasha et al., 2019). CR refers to an individual's ability to adapt to change and navigate challenges in their career path. In organizational studies, CR is defined as recovering swiftly from external changes and overcoming adversity (Sheridan et al., 2022). CR is gaining attention in career development and counseling, focusing on vocational functioning under disabling circumstances and identifying difficult and challenging transitions (Gilson et al., 2022). However, others viewed CR as a complex phenomenon in which the context needs to be considered, especially when individuals face anticipated or unanticipated changes, adversity, or disruptions (Su et al., 2022).

CR is a crucial element in PE and ETP, as it influences how individuals respond to their professional lives' inevitable ups and downs (Ghani et al., 2022). High CR in employees is linked to their PE despite uncertainties and market fluctuations; this resilience is attributed to a positive mindset, belief in overcoming obstacles, and proactive career management, viewing challenges as growth opportunities (Zayed et al., 2022). Individuals with career resilience concentrate more on continuous learning to compete in the global economy, knowing the market's needs, and building career understanding (Ahmad et al., 2019). CR positively impacts employee task performance by enabling individuals to handle stress, setbacks, and changes in the work environment. They are more problem-solving, seek constructive feedback, persist despite difficulties, and enhance task performance (Aman-Ullah et al., 2022).

**H<sub>4</sub>:** *Career resilience mediates the relationship between perceived employability and employee task performance.*

ETP involves efficiently and effectively performing formal job requirements and organizational procedures, as most tasks are routine for employees. (Hussain et al., 2022). Fatima et al. (2024) study found that high ETP leads to greater CR, suggesting that individuals better equipped to complete job-related tasks can handle career challenges. Resilience is a key predictor of success since those who are very resilient tend to achieve success (Ahmad et al., 2019). Resilient employees adapt to change, find solutions, recover from setbacks, sustain job happiness, have great team-building abilities, and sustain energy

in challenging conditions (Varshney & Varshney, 2020). A study by Cantante-Rodrigues et al. (2021) confirmed a relationship between resilience and job performance, and resilient employees attain better job performance than less resilient ones. Resilience's definition in positive organizational behavior consists of the ability to build strength and virtue for potential high performance and the development of suitable HR practices for employee resilience and positive employee results as job performance will, in turn, improve organizational performance (Cantante-Rodrigues et al., 2021). Organizations should understand that improving staff performance leads to higher ER rates among young employees (Nguyen et al., 2020). Employees who consistently perform well are likelier to stay with the organization longer (Fatima et al., 2024).

*H<sub>5</sub>: Employee task performance mediates the relationship between employee career resilience and retention.*

## 2.5 Learning Agility

It is a crucial element contributing to an individual's overall effectiveness in the workplace. 'Learning' refers to seven behavior-based dimensions: feedback seeking, information seeking, collaborating, interpersonal risk-taking, performance risk-taking, reflecting, and experimenting, and 'agility' refers to speed and flexibility (Burke et al., 2021). LA is the ability to acquire skills quickly and efficiently through self-awareness, feedback, collaboration, and reflection, enabling learners to apply past experiences in diverse situations (Ghosh et al., 2021). LA is a crucial factor in talent management, predicting future individual performance by enabling individuals to learn new competencies under different conditions (Cabrera-Aguilar et al., 2023).

High-performing employees contribute significantly to an organization by demonstrating exceptional skills, productivity, and quality. They are recognized, rewarded, and have higher job satisfaction, increasing commitment and reducing turnover (Igbinoba et al., 2022). LA is crucial for employee performance. High-level learners have a growth mindset, adapt quickly to changing situations, and apply new insights. They embrace challenges, seek feedback, and actively pursue learning opportunities, enhancing ETP (Linge, 2019). Quick learners and adaptability enable better handling of complex tasks, creative problem-solving, and innovation. Applying lessons learned from one situation fosters continuous improvement and enhances overall ETP (Madi Odeh et al., 2023). Employees with high LA have greater confidence, accomplishment, and self-perception, improving job satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, and retention, resulting in increased organizational commitment (Ismayajati & Widhianingtanti, 2023).

*H<sub>6</sub>: Employee's learning agility mediates the relationship between employee's task performance and employee's retention.*

The Conservation of Resources Theory (COR) suggests that personal characteristics influence individuals' ability to respond flexibly, leading to career success. (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Khan et al. (2023) found a correlation between high-performance work systems: recruitment, training, development, motivation, decision-making, and employee-perceived ability. CR is characterized by the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, accept job and organizational changes, collaborate with diverse people, and demonstrate self-confidence and risk-taking (Guillén, 2021). Today's labor market supports retaining those with special skills and abilities (Deepa et al., 2021). Kumar et al. (2023) highlights the importance of employee learning and high-performance HR practices

in fostering ER and improving performance through knowledge and capability recognition.

Employees with high PE are more resilient, perform better (Tripathi & Sankaran, 2021), and exhibit higher learning agility, resulting in lower turnover intentions (Ismail et al., 2023). Hadiono et al. (2023) study emphasizes the importance of employee learning and motivation policies, emphasizing the role of human resources practices in creating a supportive organizational climate that fosters learning flexibility and ER.

**H7:** *The relationship between perceived employability and employee retention is sequentially mediated by employee’s career resilience, task performance, and learning agility.*

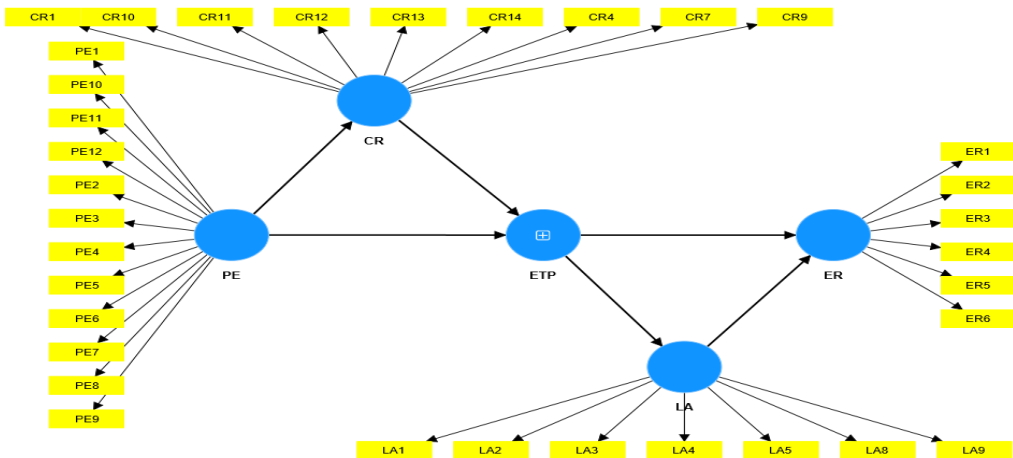


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1 Participants

The study's target population was employees who work in the service sectors (i.e., education, healthcare, and banking) of Saudi Arabia. The service sector was chosen because it is one of the most important sectors influencing Saudi Arabia's economy. The survey of the study was distributed to 500 employees, and to ensure that the sample accurately represents the entire population, snowball sampling was used during the data collection process. Snowball sampling is more receptive to non-random sampling as it relies on participants to refer other participants of the same sub group. This leads to overrepresentation of certain characteristics (i.e., gender, belief, behavior etc.) that is not factual of the broader population (McPherson et al., 2001). To solve this issue, survey distribution was started with diverse set of initial participants from different subgroups and a cap of maximum five referrals was set from each participant. Moreover, each referral chain was monitored periodically to review the composition of the sample. The survey was designed in Arabic and English. Participation was voluntary, and all data were treated confidentially, as stated in the survey's introduction. Overall, 421 responses (84.2%) were collected. For identifying outliers, Cook and Leverage test was performed. As a result, 18 responses were removed, and for further analysis, only 403 (80.6%) were retained. The



data included male (55.7%) and female (44.3%); 63.7% of the respondents were from the age group of 31–45 years; and 20.1 % were from 46–50 years.

### 3.2 Measures

The demographic information of the participants was collected through a demographic questionnaire. The demographic items were on the organization sector (Public and Private), gender (Male and Female), age group (including seven categories from less than 25 years to above 50 Years), education level (Ph.D., Masters, Bachelor, Diploma, Other), work experience (including six categories from less than one year to above 20 Years), and marital status (Single, Married, Divorced).

PE was measured according to the respondent's perception of their employability. PE was measured using 12 items on the employability scale from Rothwell and Arnold (2007). A sample item included "people who do the same job as me who work in this organization are highly valued." ETP was measured according to the participant's perception of TP. ETP was assessed by five items of the task performance scale from Koopman et al. (2013). A sample item included, "In the last three months, I managed to plan my work to be done on time." ER was measured according to the respondent's perception of their retention with their organization. ER was measured through six items from Kyndt et al. (2009). A sample item included, "If I wanted to do another job or function, I would look first at the possibilities within this organization." LA was measured according to the respondent's perception of their learning agility. LA was measured through 10 items of LA from Bouland-van Dam et al. (2022). A sample item included, "At work, I try to develop different influential styles (e.g., taking the lead and empowering others)." CR was measured according to the respondent's perception of their CR. CR was measured through 14 items on CR from Guillén (2021). A sample item included "I feel anxious about the consequences of possible failure when considering a change in job. Respondents were asked to evaluate their PE, LA, ETP, ER, and CR on a Likert-scale questionnaire ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

### 3.3 Procedure

The questionnaire for the study was designed to be neutral and unbiased to prevent respondents from feeling pressured or embarrassed. The questionnaire began with a brief introduction to the study. The data collection was voluntary, confidential, and used only for scientific research. The information collection regarding the names and departments of the participants and the responses was coded, so no one knew who filled out which type of information (i.e., Anonymity assurance). These processes help to reduce the social desirability bias from the respondents. Moreover, the data were collected in three phases (i.e., temporal separation). In first phase, data regarding PE were collected, while in the second phase, data for LA and CR were collected. In the last phase, data regarding ETP and ER were gathered. There was a gap of two months between each phase. This reduce the chances of respondents recalling and being influenced by their earlier responses. In addition to this, the order of the questions in survey phase was randomized so that respondents would not get influenced by earlier or later questions (i.e. Counterbalancing question order) (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Activities like anonymity assurance, temporal

separation, and counterbalancing question order during data collection phases help researchers to cater common method variance (CMV).

As for all the variables, a single source data collection was conducted; that could result in common method variance and can weaken the outcome validity. To examine the occurrence of CMV Harman’s single factor test was performed. The result showed the five variable's items and capture distinct constructs verifying that no CMV presence.

**4. Results**

The study used (PLS-SEM), also known as PLS Path Modeling, a wide method of multivariate data analysis used to examine models with latent variables (Memon et al., 2021).

**4.1 Measurement Model Assessment**

The reliability of the construct can be measured in two ways: Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha$ ) and composite reliability (CR), and both reliability criteria need to be above 0.70, followed by AVE value that should be 0.5 or above for each variable (Hair et al., 2020).

**Table 1:** Reflective Measurement Assessment

Constructs	Items	Loading	AVE	CR	rho-A	CA	VIF
Perceived Employability	PE1-PE12	0.429 – 0.605	0.545	0.905	0.890	0.885	1.375 - 2.377
Career Resilience	CR1, CR4, CR7, CR9, CR14	0.428 - 0.619	0.502	0.892	0.877	0.875	1.456 - 2.175
Employee Task Performance	ETP1 -ETP5	0.461- 0.607	0.536	0.816	0.785	0.783	1.366 - 1.628
Learning Agility	LA1- LA5, LA8, LA9	0.548 - 0.666	0.623	0.920	0.901	0.899	2.041 – 2.453
Employee Retention	ER1 – ER6	0.505 – 0.643	0.578	0.891	0.855	0.853	1.549 – 1.920

*Note:* Cronbach alpha (CA); Composite reliability (CR); Average variance extracted (AVE); Variance inflation factor (VIF)

Table 1 shows the reliability values for PE ( $\alpha = 0.885$ , rho-a = 0.890, CR = 0.905). for CR ( $\alpha = 0.875$ , rho-a = 0.877, CR = 0.892); for ETP ( $\alpha = 0.783$ , rho-a = 0.785, CR = 0.816); for LA ( $\alpha = 0.899$ , rho-a = 0.901, CR = 0.920); and for ER ( $\alpha = 0.853$ , rho-a = 0.855, CR = 0.891). Therefore, all five variables in the construct are reliable. The AVE value of each item was above 0.5, so there is no validity problem in the tested model (Nasution et al., 2020). For the value of the variance inflation factor (VIF), it must be less than 3.0, so all the values of all the variables are between 1.0 and 3.0, so they are less than 3.0; therefore, there is no multicollinearity among the items, as shown in Table 1.

Discriminant validity refers to the differences in the construct from one another. Cross-loading indicators can evaluate the discriminant validity, the Fornell & Larcker criterion, and the Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) correlation ratio (Ab Hamid et al., 2017). For the Fornell-Larcker criterion, all the variables have positive values and,

therefore, have positive relationships; all the values are less than 0.8 and higher than 0.3. As a result, there is a high correlation among the variables and no discriminant validity problems for these variables. The second test to check the validity of the variables is the Fornell Larcker test. Table 2 shows that the square root of each construct for each variable is less than their relationship correlations, so there is discriminant validity that tests the variables that are valid for further analysis.

**Table 2:** HTMT and Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	HTMT Criterion					Fornell-Larcker Criterion				
	PE	CR	ETP	LA	ER	PE	CR	ETP	LA	ER
<b>PE</b>						<b>0.738</b>				
<b>CR</b>	0.673					0.683	<b>0.709</b>			
<b>ETP</b>	0.616	0.683				0.647	0.653	<b>0.732</b>		
<b>LA</b>	0.697	0.641	0.713			0.717	0.648	0.683	<b>0.789</b>	
<b>ER</b>	0.689	0.653	0.675	0.731		0.703	0.654	0.679	0.729	<b>0.761</b>

*Note 1:* Square root of AVE of each construct are the diagonal bold numbers in Fornell- Larcker section.

## 4.2 Descriptive and Correlation Statistics

Table 3 shows descriptive analysis (i.e., M and SD) and correlation coefficients (i.e., Pearson correlation) of variables. The mean and standard deviations, as shown in Table 3, for all five variables show that the employees have higher PE (M = 3.949, SD = 0.442), higher CR (M = 4.037, SD = 0.437), higher ETP (M = 3.998, SD = 0.429), higher LA (M = 4.180, SD = 0.474), and higher ER (M = 4.052, SD = 0.447).

**Table 3:** Descriptive and Correlation Statistics

	Descriptive Analysis			Correlations Statistics				
	Mean	SD	PE	CR	ETP	LA	ER	
Perceived Employability	3.949	0.442	<b>1</b>					
Career Resilience	4.037	0.437	0.675**					
Employee Task Performance	3.998	0.429	0.846**	0.645**	<b>1</b>			
Learning Agility	4.180	0.474	0.709**	0.743**	0.682**	<b>1</b>		
Employee Retention	4.052	0.447	0.772**	0.649**	0.881**	0.728**	<b>1</b>	

*Note 1:* \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Pearson correlation values shown in Table 3 predict that the for PE, the highest correlation is with ETP ( $r = 0.846$ ) and weakest correlation is with CR ( $r = 0.675$ ), whereas for the ER, the highest correlation exists with ETP ( $r = 0.881$ ) and weakest correlation is with ( $r = 0.649$ ). The lowest correlation exists between CR and ETP ( $r = 0.645$ ).

### 4.3 Hypothesis Testing

To test the hypothesis, the study conducted PLS-SEM, which was done by bootstrapping. The results analyze the relationship between exogenous and endogenous variables and show that all study hypotheses were supported (Table 4) (Nasution et al., 2020).

For the direct effects, PE has a positive, direct, and significant influence on ETP. The values of path coefficient (0.752), t-value (21.876), and p-value (0.000) thus prove H<sub>1</sub>. To examine H<sub>2</sub> (i.e., ETP has a positive, direct, and significant impact on ER, the path coefficient value (0.715), t-value (20.784), and p-value (0.000), thus proving H<sub>2</sub>. Therefore, H<sub>2</sub> is supported (Table 4).

**Table 4:** Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Direct / Indirect Effect	β Value	T Value	P Value	Bias	Bias Corrected		Hypothesis Support
						2.5 %	97.50%	
H <sub>1</sub>	PE -> ETP	0.752	21.876	0.000	0.002	0.682	0.815	Supported
H <sub>2</sub>	ETP -> ER	0.715	20.784	0.000	0.001	0.646	0.779	Supported
H <sub>3</sub>	PE -> ETP -> ER	0.538	14.229	0.000	0.002	0.464	0.610	Supported
H <sub>4</sub>	PE-> CR -> ETP	0.295	7.379	0.001	0.001	0.243	0.421	Supported
H <sub>5</sub>	CR -> ETP -> ER	0.199	6.599	0.000	0.001	0.136	0.314	Supported
H <sub>6</sub>	ETP -> LA -> ER	0.364	11.510	0.000	0.001	0.278	0.454	Supported
H <sub>7</sub>	PE -> CR -> ETP -> LA-> ER	0.516	16.559	0.000	0.001	0.425	0.669	Supported

*Note:* Perceived Employability (PE); Career Resilience (CR); Employee Task Performance (ETP); Learning Agility (LA); Employee Retention (ER).

To examine the mediating influence of ETP on the relationship between PE and ER, the path coefficient value (0.538), t-value (14.229), p-value (0.000), and BCCI values (0.464, 0.610) were tested. They showed the positive and significant mediation of ETP between the relationship of PE and ER. Thus, proving H<sub>3</sub>. To examine the mediating influence of CR on the relationship of PE and ETP, the path coefficient value (0.295), t-value (7.379), p-value (0.001), and BCCI values (0.243, 0.421) were tested. They showed the positive and moderately significant mediation of CR between the relationship of PE and ETP. Thus, proving H<sub>4</sub>. To examine H<sub>5</sub> (i.e., mediation of ETP between the relationship of CR and ER), the path coefficient value (0.199), t-value (6.599), p-value (0.000), and BCCI values (0.136, 0.314) were utilized. The values demonstrated the positive and moderately significant mediation of ETP between the relationship of CR and ER. Therefore, proving H<sub>5</sub>. To analyze the mediating influence of LA on the relationship of ETP and ER, the path coefficient value (0.364), t-value (11.510), p-value (0.000), and BCCI values (0.278, 0.454) were tested. They showed the positive and significant mediation of LA between the relationship of ETP and ER. Thus, proving H<sub>6</sub>.

To analyze the sequential mediation of CR, ETP, and LA between the relationship of PE and ER (i.e., H<sub>7</sub>), the path coefficient value (0.516), t-value (16.559), p-value (0.000), and BCCI values (0.425, 0.669) were examined. The values of the tests demonstrate the

positive and significant sequential mediation of CR, ETP, and LA between PE and ER. Hence, proving H<sub>7</sub> (Table 4).

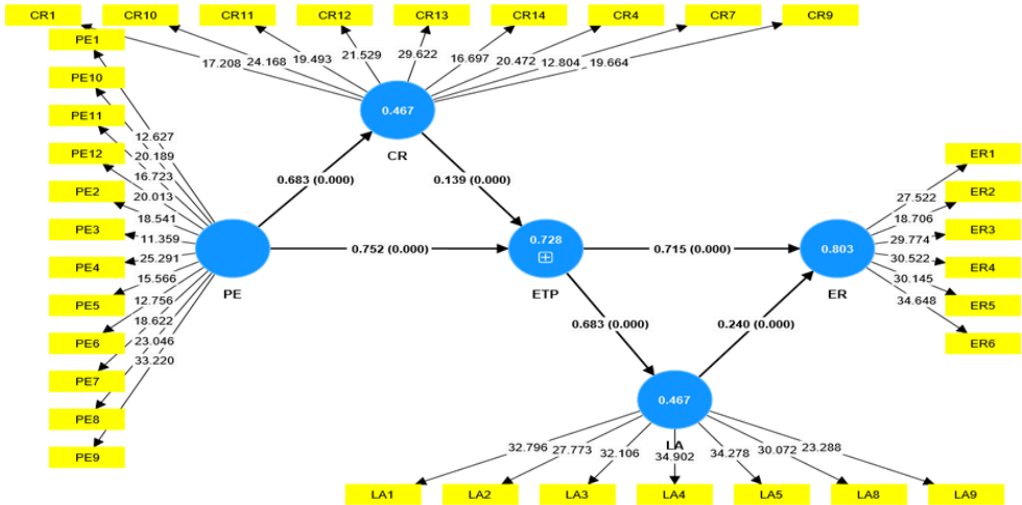


Figure 2: Results

### 4.4 Model Evaluation

The R-squared adjusted value ( $R^2_{adj}$ ) aims to measure how much influence the independent latent variable has on the latent dependent variable (Nasution et al., 2020). Table 5 indicates that the  $R^2_{adj}$  value in the study is higher than 0.02 and that the impact of PE on the study variables (i.e., CR is 0.465, ETP is 0.726, LA is 0.467, and ER is 0.802) is good, so the model is a good fit. According to Hair et al. (2020), the SRMR must be less than 0.08; the SRMR in the study was 0.078. The NFI value must range from 0.9 to 1.00; in the study, it was 0.976, so it is good. The  $Q^2_{predict}$  values indicate that all the values are higher than 0.350; therefore, the impact of PE for all four variables is large.

Table 5: Study Model Evaluation

Variables	$R^2_{adj}$	SRMR	NFI	$Q^2_{Predict}$	$Q^2$ Effect
Perceived Employability					
Career Resilience	0.465			0.458	Large
Employee Task Performance	0.726	0.078	0.976	0.715	Large
Learning Agility	0.467			0.490	Large
Employee Retention	0.802			0.594	Large

Note: SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual); NFI (Normed Fit Index);  $Q^2$  for Predictive Relevance.

### 5. Discussion

The findings of this research supported the idea that PE correlates positively with ETP. This discovery concerning the initial research hypothesis indicates that employees

with high PE might show high in-role performance, irrespective of how they perceive their relationship quality with the organization. This outcome could be attributed to individuals prioritizing the protection of their self-image over their connection with the organization, as personal development includes knowledge, abilities, background, and characteristics that contribute to a solid self-image (Rodrigues et al., 2022). The distinctiveness of the study is that it integrates several mediators, including CR and LA, contributing to the integral understanding of their interactions. Rodrigues et al. (2022) and Shaikh et al. (2019) also established a positive relationship between PE and ETP. To an even greater degree, this study has sought to investigate mediation analysis for the roots and indirect effects of these mechanisms, thus painting a more subtle picture.

This study also proposes that the ETP directly and significantly affects ER (Second hypothesis). Our findings show evidence that ETP plays a crucial role in enhancing ER in the Saudi service sector, consistent with Nguyen's (2020) conclusions on the Vietnamese workforce. Nguyen (2020) advised that business managers should focus on training and development policies to enhance ETP, ultimately boosting job satisfaction and retention rates. Ibrahim et al. (2021) explained employee engagement, task identity, and job satisfaction have a direct and significant influence on ER. In line with the findings of Nguyen et al. (2021) and Cerdin et al. (2022), who identified the direct impact of ETP on ER, this study specifies sequential mediation, shedding more light on the complex interactions affecting retention and emphasizing the role of intermediary factors.

Our results suggest that ETP mediates the relationship between PE and ER (Third hypothesis). This finding needs to be supported by the literature, where according to Martin et al. (2021), organizations need to have policies that focus on keeping valuable employees who possess strong skills and core competencies. Nevertheless, the most efficient employees would be the initial ones to willingly depart the company without suitable human resources (HR) procedures.

Our findings support the mediation role of CR in the relationship between PE and ETP (Fourth Hypothesis). CR is a key internal asset that assists individuals in organizing their career paths and effectively utilizing external resources, ultimately enhancing their ability to secure employment and thrive in their professional endeavors (Rossier et al., 2017). By focusing on mediating the role of CR in the relationship between PE and ETP, this study also considers the effect of CR, ETP, and LA. Cantante-Rodrigues et al. (2021) have established the positive influence of CR on job performance and ER. However, this study takes a new and holistic approach to the study of resilience, integrating it with other mediators to test their combined effect on ETP and ER, particularly in the dynamic economy of Saudi Arabia. This novel approach is sure to grab the interest of the academic community.

The fifth hypothesis of this research was also approved, indicating that an employee's CR affects ER through the mediation effect of ETP. Cantante-Rodrigues et al. (2021) verified that their resilience impacts the ETP in helping professions. Furthermore, job engagement is connected to resilience. Individuals with high levels of resilience are happier and more involved in their work than those with lower resilience levels, resulting in improved performance among highly engaged ones. Additionally, research shows that work engagement can partially account for resilience and job performance.

Another interesting finding in this research is the approved role of LA in mediating the relationship between ETP and ER (Sixth hypothesis). The study explores the role of LA between ETP and ER, underlining that continuous learning and adaptability are critical elements in ER strategies. Furthermore, Ismayajati and Widhianingtanti (2023) relate LA with performance and ER. However, this integration within a broad mediation model adds some novelty to enhancing retention. Highly skilled agile employees are frequently driven to enhance their job performance by integrating their knowledge with new experiences. Additionally, they have a strong commitment to their job, improved employee relations, and can effectively adapt to organizational changes (Kumar et al., 2023).

Our last hypothesis was also verified; it suggests that PE impacts ER through the sequential mediation of CR, ETP, and LA. The novelty of the study lies in the sequential mediation between PE and ER and the context. Different authors discussed the sequential linkage between some of these variables. Hadiono (2023) highlighted the importance of factors within the organizational context, such as the learning and development climate, in encouraging and supporting LA. This has a measurable impact on individual professional attitudes like ETP and ER. In addition, it was found that both HR systems increase employee ER through organizational climate and business strategy involving ETP and LA. Milani et al. (2021) emphasized recognizing LA as a key personal trait in ETP, readiness for change, and adaptability to uncertainty, impacting CR and growth in an evolving workplace.

## **6. Implications and further research**

### **6.1 Academic Implications**

The results of this study demonstrate the relationship between PE, ETP, CR, LA, and ER, which significantly impact organizational behavior, especially in Saudi Arabia. The influence of PE on ETP indicates focusing on improving PE to increase and enhance workforce effectiveness in Saudi Arabia through the contribution of different industries to improving career opportunities. The study highlights the importance of ETP as a mediator between PE and ER and its significant impact in Saudi Arabia. Further research is recommended to understand how ETP can help retain skilled employees in different industries.

The meditation of CR on the relationship between PE and ETP shows that resilience is an important element in developing an individual's career. These findings require more research to improve and develop CR, especially in the face of rapid economic changes. The results of this study also imply that the quick ability to learn and adapt might be important to explain the impacts of ETP on ER and could enhance future studies for the development of LA among employees and include it in the leadership development plans, given the rapid change in the business environment in Saudi Arabia.

The study's setting in Saudi Arabia offers a new perspective on PE and ER and emphasizes the importance of human resource practices that fit the local culture. This new and different perspective is crucial to understanding the complexity of these relationships, and conducting similar studies could enrich our standing and enhance our sense of importance in the research.

## 6.2 Theoretical Implications

This study investigates the influence of PE on CR, LA, TP, and ER and the dynamic relationship between them within the framework of SET. According to SET, people engage in social relationships based on the expectation of reciprocity and mutual benefit (Blau, 1964). PE stimulates job performance by enhancing ETP and helping behavior, and employees with high PE are likely to foster their resources by performing well. Therefore, employees with high PE may invest in creativity, as employers highly value it (Philippaers et al., 2016). Employees who perceive themselves as highly employable expect mutual benefit from their organizations, which critically impacts employees' behaviors.

Organizations reward high ETP in many ways, which makes employees feel valuable in return for their effort and might enhance ER. This mutual exchange relationship supports the SET by demonstrating its significance in retaining employees and suggesting the wide usefulness of SET in understanding retention strategies that are related to performance. The mediation impact of ETP presents the sequential exchanges in SET and acts as a connecting link between PE and ER, aligning with the concept in SET that immediate exchanges, such as task performance, can have an impact on long-term relational outcomes like retention.

CR and LA may enhance employees' ability to adapt to the changes and requirements of the organization. As a result, retention might be seen as a return for their efforts and adaptability.

The SET emphasizes the importance of the personal characteristics of employees in effective workplace interactions. This suggests that an individual's capabilities and differences influence the balance and outcomes of exchanges within employment relationships.

The sequential mediation of CR, ETP, and LA represents a complex approach where PE impacts ER, suggesting gathered exchange processes to increase effectiveness in employment outcomes by connecting various attributes and behaviors. This model shows that ER is influenced by different connected exchanges and how complicated exchange relationships are in organizational settings.

Applying SET to the study findings confirms its relevance to the development of modern organizations, suggesting that its expansion could include some factors that act as essential elements of exchange processes, like employability, resilience, and learning capabilities. This wider application can help develop more human resource practices and theories that distinguish factors that influence ER and ETP in Saudi Arabia.

## 6.3 Practical Implications

The study findings provide practical implications regarding HRM and strategies of organizational development in Saudi Arabia, which enhance ETP and ER through the involvement of PE, CR, and LA and develop a sense of usefulness in the study. The effective motivation for employees to perform better within their organization, which leads to career improvement, begins by investing in continuous skills development and training programs, providing employees opportunities for professional development, and enhancing their PE, which can influence their ETP. Organizations should develop a good



rewards system related to their performance to make them feel valued and motivated to improve their ETP levels, thus increasing their desire to stay with the organization.

HR practitioners should focus on enhancing PE at various employee levels. This would be realized through a detailed career development program that enables continuous skill development, coaching, career development, and learning resources. The availability of clear career paths should be outlined so that employees see some tangible future with the organization. This transparency and support in career growth can highly enhance employees' belief in their employability, contributing to increased performance and retention.

ETP would be the other area of key improvement. A sound performance management system is needed that focuses on feedback, goal setting, and performance review. HR professionals should also invest in outcome-driven training programs that provide the relevant technical, soft, and leadership skills and knowledge needed for a particular role. It can improve the overall ETP by properly training and supporting its employees. HR professionals are essential in providing CR training in stress management, mindfulness, and other effective coping mechanisms. Employee CR can be enhanced by providing a supportive work environment with openness, flexibility, and balance. Resilient employees can bear the difficulties and work efficiently, ensuring greater retention.

Equally important is encouraging LA. Organizations and HR professionals must facilitate access to many types of learning, such as online courses, workshops, and seminars, that support a culture of lifelong learning. Cross-functional projects stimulate participants with their richness in different skills and flexibility. Thus, HR professionals ensure employees remain enthusiastic, flexible, and committed to their organization by supporting continuous LA. These findings need to be integrated into the overall HR strategy. The development and implementation of PE, ETP, CR, and LA initiatives should be guided by data-driven decision-making. Regularly, the effect of the programs on ER should be assessed through employee feedback, performance reviews, and attrition rates to make any informed adjustments to make them very effective. Such strategic and holistic approaches, which address all these areas comprehensively, will ensure maximum retention of employees and the overall success of any organization.

Moreover, organizations need to create a retention culture where recognition and rewards are essential parts of the work environment. HR professionals play a key role in designing and implementing programs that identify employee contributions and accomplishments, thereby enhancing their feelings of value within the organization. By fostering PE, CR, LA, and ETP, HR practitioners can create a supportive, dynamic, and engaging work environment that can pay off for long-term retention.

#### **6.4 Future Directions and Limitations**

The findings of this study investigate the significant correlation between PE, ETP, CR, LA, and ER in the service sector of Saudi Arabia. This study has some limitations that future research may consider. The first one is concerned with research limitation, that the study centered around employees who work in service sector, where it can be applied on other sector as manufacturing. Second, the study is conducted on Saudi Arabia industry; to generalize the study's findings, future research may implement them on different organizations of other countries. Third limitation is concerned with methodology

design, the study used a cross-sectional quantitative design and conducted an online survey of employees; to solve this problem the future research should conduct longitudinal studies and use different methods as interviews with employees and managers, which may help to develop new models.

## 6.5 Conclusion

This study largely contributes by clarifying the complex relationships between PE, ETP, CR, LA, and ER. It also underscores the mediating role of CR and LA in the PE-employee outcome link. This study shows that CR leads to increasing ETP and consequent retention. Further, it introduces LA as another mediator, explaining that the employee, when he is a fast learner and can adapt himself better in new situations, is likely to perform better and stay committed to the organization. Hence, inclusion of the mediators in the analysis provides a most comprehensive model for catching sequential mediation effects of CR on the ETP and LA. This sequential mediation framework of PE provides in-depth insights into the dynamic processes that link ER and emphasizes the importance of a healthy work environment, CR, LA, and employee high performance. This stream of contributions is relevant in the rapidly emerging economic and technological dynamics in which organizations today are to realize ways that improve adaptability and engagement from employees. The study endorses previous studies on PE and ER and contributes to the literature by proposing a complete view that attempts to explain the mediating factors of driving these relationships. The study also highlights the fact that in the competitive and ever-changing environment of Saudi Arabia there is a need for HR practitioners that develop integrated strategies toward employee development that handles activities for enhancing individual and organizational outcomes.

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