

## Assessing the Mediating Role of Talent Engagement between Talent Development and Retention

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### Abstract

*This study attempts to examine the impact of talent development on retention and the mediating effect of talent engagement between talent development and retention. The study analysed 450 samples of top, mid, and lower-level officers working in pharmaceutical companies of Bangladesh. Data were collected using google form. Structural Equation modelling (SEM) was employed using AMOS to test the research framework. Talent development was connected positively with both retention and engagement. The positive relationship between talent engagement and retention was also accepted. Furthermore, the mediating impact of talent engagement between talent development and retention was found significant. The findings may be helpful for practitioners to comprehend the importance of taking care of talents that foster high engagement and would ultimately contribute to retaining talents to gain sustainable competitive advantages. If managers can develop talents properly, they may tend to attach to the company for a longer period of time.*

**Keywords:** Talent engagement, talent development, talent retention, and SEM.

### 1. Introduction

Talents are the key resources to an organization as they execute the strategic plans of the organization. Talent refers to the people with skills, abilities, and knowledge who are highly required to achieve organizational objectives (Ali & Guha, 2018). Proper utilization of talents depends on appropriate management of them. Talent management is a systematic process of developing talents within the organization and retain them for the future betterment of the organization (Maamari & Alameh, 2016). It is very important now-a-days for the organization as human works like a strategic component for the organization (Baran & Sypniewska, 2020). Talents make the organization successful and facilitate to gain sustainable competitive advantages. Hence, it is important for organizations to retain them properly to get the best use of productivity. The organizations need to focus on their appropriate talent development which will ensure their engagement both physically and psychologically.

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Talent engagement in the fullest sense helps the organization to retain talents. The satisfaction and improvement of employees' skills ensure high engagement that leads to the organization towards greater success (Kumar & Mathimaran, 2017).

Organizations having a good image in society become great due to their talent retention strategy which has got a universal concern (Imam et al., 2017). The adoption of different techniques to retain the talented employees may inspire the growing talents to work much better for the organization as they achieve the strategic goals of the organization. An appropriate retention strategy builds confidence among the employees through giving feedback on their performance (Ghansah & Edward, 2011). Retention is very crucial not only for the case of productivity but also for future sustainability (Veloso et al., 2014). The newer employees get confidence while experiencing the senior counterparts for a longer period of time (Tepayakul & Rinthaisong, 2016). The organizations invest much time in talent retention and their appropriate management for the success of the organization (Isfahani & Boustani, 2014). Thus, retention of talented and prospective candidates for a longer period of time brings upheaval to the organization (Bhatnagar, 2007).

Organizations can regard those people as very talented individuals who can contribute to the organizational goal for a long term having a strong conviction of potential (Baqutayan, 2014). With the focus of reaping long term interests, the organizations like to hire and retain the most talented employees (Baloch & Ansar, 2018). Appropriate human resource management keeps trust in employees' contributions that ultimately leads the employees towards greater satisfaction and higher engagement within the organization (Isfahani & Boustani, 2014). The organizations can nurture their employees well and may have better possibility to defend against the worst economic situation (Khatri et al., 2010). Organizations need to develop innovative ideas and constructive solutions to manage their talents and face future contingencies (Dimitrov, 2015).

Talent engagement is directly connected to the employees' perceptions of the relevant factors within the organization (Veloso et al., 2014). The organization can better engage their employees when they justify with the term of retaining those talented employees to achieve organizational goals (Baloch & Ansar, 2018). Employees are highly engaged in their job related assignments because of the employer's attitude and also for their positive mindset (Kular et al., 2008). Higher engagement maximizes organizational profit by improving the efficiency and self-efficacy of talents that ultimately reduce turnover intention (Oehler & Adair, 2019; Islamet al., 2020).

An insignificant number of studies have been done in the context of the interconnection among three components of talent management including talent development, engagement, and retention whereas talent engagement is a mediator. Though a few studies (Collings et al., 2011; Gandz, 2006; Matongolo et al., 2018; Ott et al., 2018; Simon et al., 2015; Shah & Beh, 2016; Tlaiss et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2015) have been

conducted in some developed countries, a developing country like Bangladesh has little research works on their linkages. So, the present study has addressed this research gap and has tried to come up with a clear picture of these issues.

The study has reviewed the literature at the very outset to relate and discuss the previous studies. Then, a research framework is developed to present the hypothesized relationships. The next section has described the methodology focusing on the instrument, sample, sampling technique, data analysis techniques and tools. Then, results present the relationship of these three constructs-talent development, engagement and retention. Finally, the study has presented discussion and suggested some future research directions.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Talent Retention**

In this age of globalization and workforce mobility, talent retention has become a challenging job for many organizations. Specially, talents have more opportunities for external exposure than before (Ott et al., 2018). Organizations cannot just hire and place qualified employees when needed. Because of the talent shortage, it has become difficult to attract and retain talented employees (Festing & Schäfer, 2014). That is why employees with knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) have become a vital source of competitive advantage (Ali et al., 2020; Matongolo et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2015). Talented human resources, if retained properly, ensure organizational sustainability and economic growth (Ali, 2020). Furthermore, investment in talent development becomes fruitful if talents are retained (Tlaiss et al., 2017). In talent retention process, developing qualified employees is an important factor (Pandita & Ray, 2018).

### **2.2 Talent Development**

Talent development, a part of talent management has become an increasingly discussed topic of strategic human resource management (Ali et al., 2020; Collings et al., 2011). It refers to the development of an elite brand of people (Ali et al., 2020; Barlow, 2006). As talent acquisition from the external sources has proven as a weak strategy for the organizations that focuses on long term goal (Garavan et al., 2012). That is why organizations of the modern world are giving significant importance to the internal talent development approach which in turn provides them competitive advantages (Lepak & Snell, 1999). In addition, organizations are undertaking talent development activities to ensure succession planning, zero outages which in turn increase the reputation of the organization as a talent magnet (Gandz, 2006). Developing talent is a long- term investment that requires the development of a successful system for any organization (Ali et al., 2020; Martindale et al., 2010).

## 2.3 Talent Engagement

The term engagement was first used by Kahn (1990) in his paper published in the Academy of Management Journal. Kahn (1990) defined engagement as “the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances”. Thus, engagement refers to involvement, efficacy and energy (Shah & Beh, 2016). Talent engagement is one of the key factors for the success of any organization. It is because engaged employees ensure better productivity with efficient utilization of resources (Ali et al., 2020; Rani & Reddy, 2014). Engaged talents stay intellectually and emotionally loyal to the organization and thus help to achieve organizational goal/s. Engaged talents attract talents, ensure lower turnover, develop knowledge base, and hence give the organization a competitive advantage (Simon et al., 2015).

## 3. Hypotheses Development and Research Framework

### 3.1 Talent Development and Engagement

The organization sometimes spend much of their amount to bear the expense for recruiting new employees that inspires the organization to focus on appropriate talent development (Isfahani & Boustani, 2014). Talent development involves actual talent identification, proper recruitment and selection, overall development and long term retention for valuing the organization (Tepayakul & Rinthaisong, 2016). Some scholars have argued about the linkages between talent development and talent engagement (Fajčíková et al., 2016). However, a significant relationship has been found between talent development and engagement (Ali et al., 2020). Thus, most of the organizations try to ensure competitive pay rate, improved training and development, clear appraising of the employees' performances and a more positive picture of promotion for their talented employees (Khatri et al., 2010). The appropriate HR policies always give special focus on adopting required talent and their proper maintenance within the organization (Maamari & Alameh, 2016). Appropriate talent development accelerates the higher engagement of talents (Sastry, 2013). Thus, the following hypothesis is posited:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Talent development is positively related to talent engagement.*

### 3.2 Talent Development and Retention

Talent development is a systematic process of applying each individual domain for the growth of the organization and their personal interest (Ali & Guha, 2018; Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Appropriate talent development enhances the possibility of long-term talent retention (Mishra et al., 2019). When the employees find that organization is one of the factors for their talents' growth, they like to own the surroundings (Maamari & Alameh, 2016). Despite having the argument on the relationship between talent development and their retention, many prudent researchers have expressed their view in favour of their strong connection (Tepayakul & Rinthaisong, 2016). Talent retention

depends on the employer's feelings towards the talents and their concerns (Oehler & Adair, 2019). The positive environment which is one of the vital components of talent development leads towards the actual talent retention (Kumar & Mathimaran, 2017). When a particular employee passes a certain period of time within the organization, it really helps the organization to bring the fullest talent from an employee (Baran & Sypniewska, 2020). Talent who really owns the organization tries to deploy his best for the betterment of the organization (Veloso et al., 2014). The knowledge and skills of employees work as competitive advantage which triggers the organization to secure and retain skilled employees (Kumar & Mathimaran, 2017). Organizations need to bear huge expenses while training and orienting their new employees (Sudhakaran & Senthilkumar, 2019), hence, retaining them is vital. Therefore, talent retention stems from the proper and systematic process of talent development (Zoebe-Ur-rahman et al., 2020). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Talent development is positively related with talent retention.*

### **3.3 Talent Engagement and Retention**

The engagement of talents in their jobs influences the sustainability of their intention to stay with the organization (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Though some researchers have argued about the relationship between talent engagement and retention (Bhatnagar, 2007). However, a great number of researchers have agreed on their strong relationship (Soane et al., 2013). Talents feel much engaged while experiencing their leaders' attributes and strong determination to achieve the goal (Oehler & Adair, 2019). Employees like to deploy much efforts when they feel really engaged with the organizational culture (Baran & Sypniewska, 2020). Strong informal communication helps employees to be better engaged with the organization (Kular et al., 2008). Highly engaged talents are more attached to the organization both emotionally and cognitively (Ali et al., 2020; Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Talents who feel completely engaged in the environment do not pursue other job opportunities (Soane et al., 2013). They show clear respect to the organizational philosophies (Macey & Schneider, 2008) and tend to stay longer with the organization. Therefore, the following hypothesis is posited:

*H<sub>3</sub>: Talent engagement is positively related to talent retention.*

### **3.4 Talent Engagement as a Mediator**

Talents perceive opportunities for skill development and career growth as very influential factors that help them to own the organization and its culture (Kumar & Mathimaran, 2017). To retain talents, the organization requires to analyse the macro-economic factors and the respective employees' expectations regarding career growth (Veloso et al., 2014). The majority of the researchers have found a positive relationship between talent retention and engagement (May et al., 2004). However, there remains a mediating relationship among talent development, talent engagement and talent retention (ONDAY, 2016). To implement the corporate objectives of the organization,

they usually want to retain the right people having specific skills and abilities and a proper sense of business operation (Ibidunniet al., 2016). A proper retention strategy improves the mental attachment of an employee that ultimately reflects in their performances (Khatri et al., 2010). So, the organization needs to understand the importance of talent retention and thus formulate a strategy to retain the potential employee for organizational sustainability (Zoeb-Ur-rahman et al., 2020). Sometimes, talent development affects directly to talent engagement both physically and mentally, and it puts an impact on talent retention in the long run (Oehler & Adair, 2019). Their interdependency works faster in a positive organizational culture that nurtures employees’ emotions as human beings (ONDAY, 2016). Mishra et al. (2019) found the connection of talent development with the psychological attachment and more importantly the linkage with retention. Hence, the present study hypothesizes the mediating relationship in the following manner:

*H4: Talent engagement mediates the relationship between talent development and talent retention.*

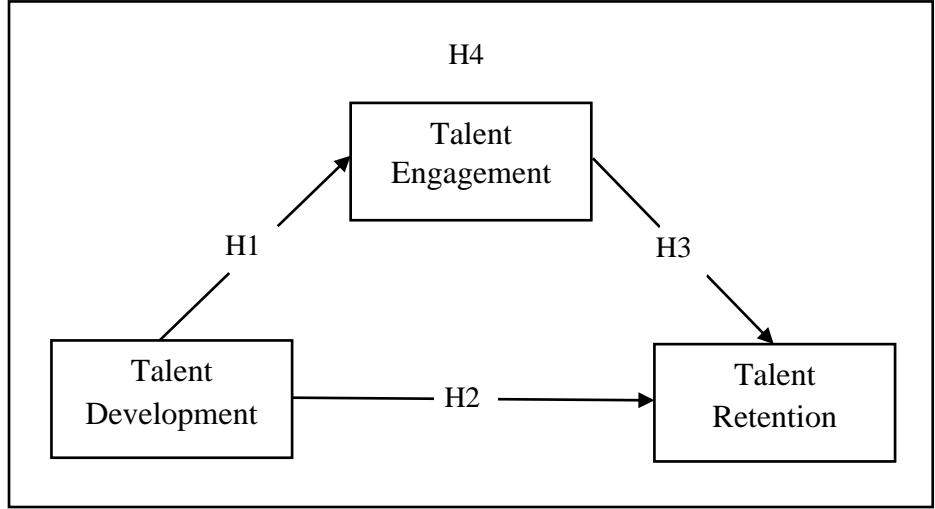


Figure 1. Research Framework

4. Methodology

4.1 Sample

The current research is cross-sectional in nature which considers talent retention as an endogenous variable, talent development as an exogenous variable and talent engagement as a mediating variable. Google form was sent to 500 participants and the response rate was 90% as 450 respondents of pharmaceutical companies filled the given form. Therefore, the sample size was enough for multivariate analysis (Jackson, 2001).

Convenience sampling was used to collect data. Data were collected from the respondents of the pharmaceutical companies located in Dhaka city as 75.39% of total pharmaceutical companies are located inside the capital (BBS report, 2018).

#### **4.2 Measures**

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data which consists of three sections. The first section covers five items of talent retention which were adapted from Kyndt et al. (2009). The second section consists of five items for talent development adapted from Chami-Malaeb and Garavan (2013). The third section contains nine items of talent engagement collected from Bakker and Schaufeli (2003). A five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree=1 to strongly agree=5) was deployed to measure the items. Google form was used to gather data and a formal mail was sent to respondents to give an overview of the research purpose.

#### **4.3 Data Analysis Technique**

Structural Equation Model (SEM) was used to assess the hypothesis. SEM is a second-generation data analysis technique that allows researchers to test the relationship of multiple variables together. It includes measurement and structural models. The measurement model is used to assess the reliability and validity of the study whereas the structural model is used to examine the relationship among the constructs (Ali & Himel, 2019; Hair et al., 2019). In the present study, AMOS 21 was used to run SEM and SPSS 20 was used to calculate descriptive statistics and correlation. AMOS is a covariance-based (CB) approach of SEM. It has two important parts- basic and graphics which enhance the usability of this software (Byrne, 2012).

### **5. Results**

#### **5.1 Statistical Description**

A descriptive framework of the variables was used to assess the extent of adopting three strategies of talent management. The mean score of talent retention, talent development and talent engagement is consecutively 4.013, 3.972 and 3.957. The result revealed the correlation matrix of the variables and the outcomes were satisfactory. The direction of the correlation between talent retention and talent development is positive and the correlation coefficient value (0.655) indicated a strong association. The correlation between talent retention and talent engagement has been found positive and the correlation coefficient value (0.717) demonstrated a strong association. Finally, the correlation coefficient value for talent development and talent engagement was 0.636 which supports the strong positive relationship between them.

**Table 1: Correlation Matrix and Descriptive Statistics**

Constructs	Talent retention	Talent development	Talent engagement	Mean	Std. Deviation
Talent Retention	1			4.013	0.802
Talent Development	0.655**	1		3.972	0.793
Talent Engagement	0.717**	0.636**	1	3.957	0.674

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

**5.2 Structural Equation Model**

**5.2.1 Measurement Model**

Results of the measurement model are presented in Table 2 which contains factor loading, Cronbach’s alpha, average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR). Factor loading above 0.50 is accepted and if it is higher than 0.70, it indicates the ideal loading (Hair et al., 2019). One item (TE9) was deleted due to low factor loading. The factor loading in the present study ranged from 0.606 to 0.833 which means none of the factor’s loading was less than 0.60. The results revealed that the standardized factor loading for all the items was at an acceptable level and most of the items were at an ideal state. The minimum value of Cronbach’s alpha should be 0.60 which is mostly used to assess the reliability of the constructs (Hair et al., 2019). Cronbach’s alpha of talent retention, development and engagement were respectively 0.888, 0.846 and 0.890 and all constructs satisfy the minimum criteria. The minimum AVE should be above 0.50 whereas 0.70 should be the lower boundary of CR (Hair et al., 2019). The value of AVE ranges from 0.512 to 0.614 and the lowest value of CR is 0.846 whereas the highest value is 0.890. Hence, it could be claimed that the study met the reliability and validity criteria.



**Table 2: The items' factor loading and the constructs ' Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , AVEs and CRs**

Constructs	Items	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Talent Retention	TR1	0.790	0.888	0.888	0.614
	TR2	0.762			
	TR3	0.802			
	TR4	0.786			
	TR5	0.781			
Talent Development	TD1	0.716	0.846	0.853	0.539
	TD2	0.698			
	TD3	0.692			
	TD4	0.740			
	TD5	0.678			
Talent Engagement	TE1	0.633	0.890	0.892	0.512
	TE2	0.777			
	TE3	0.770			
	TE4	0.833			
	TE5	0.665			
	TE6	0.733			
	TE7	0.682			
	TE8	0.606			

### 5.2.2 Structural Model

Multiple indicators can provide a comprehensive picture of model fit (Hair et al., 2019). In the present study, seven indicators were used to decide on the model fit. Table 3 demonstrated that the scholarly suggested value and the actual model fit of the present

model.  $\chi^2/df=2.376$  which was below 3.00 whereas the value of GFI, AGFI, CFI and NFI was greater than 0.90. Furthermore, the score of RMSEA=0.055 and RMR=0.033 was far less than the recommended value. Therefore, it can be asserted that this model satisfied the model fit measures suggested by Hair et al. (2019) and Malhotra and Dash (2016).

**Table 3: Model Fitness**

Goodness of Fit Measures	$\chi^2/df$	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	RMSEA	RMR
Recommended Value	$\leq 3.00$	$\geq 0.90$	$\geq 0.90$	$\geq 0.90$	$\geq 0.90$	$\leq 0.08$	$\leq 0.10$
Structural Model	2.376	0.929	0.906	0.961	0.935	0.055	0.033

Note: N = 450; GFI = Goodness-of-Fit Index; AGFI = Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index;NFI = Normed Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; RMR = Root Mean Square Residual

Sources: Bagozzi and Yi (1988); Browne and Cudeck (1993); Hoang et al.(2006).

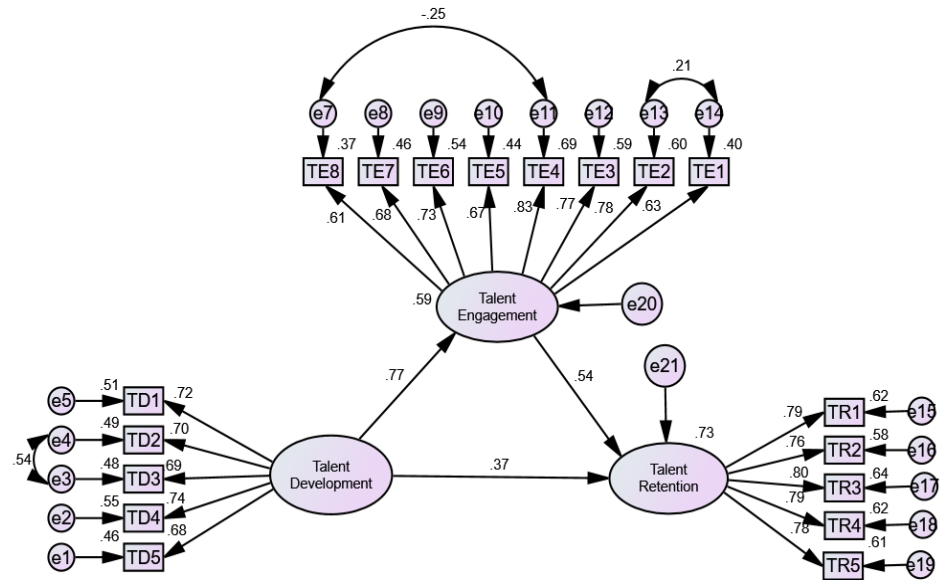


Figure 2. Structural Model

The standardized estimate of the correlation between talent development and engagement was 0.769 and the  $p$  value was less than 0.001 which denoted a significant positive relationship. Hence, hypothesis 1, the positive impact of talent development on talent engagement, was accepted. The results revealed that the standardized estimate of talent development and retention was 0.371 and the  $p$  value was less than 0.001 which supported the positive association, thus, hypothesis 2 was supported. The study also supported the positive influence of talent engagement on talent development (hypothesis 3) as the standardized estimate was 0.536 and the  $p$  value was less than 0.001. In this study, talent engagement satisfies the condition and demonstrated the statistically significant mediating influence between talent development and retention (LL = 0.290, UL = 0.545). Thus, the result showed that there was a significant indirect relationship between talent retention and talent development where talent engagement played the mediating role. Hence, hypothesis 4 was supported, thus, all the hypotheses were empirically proved.

**Table 4: Results of Hypothesis Testing**

Hypothesis	Direct Path	Std. estimate	Unstd. estimate	S.E.	C.R.	$P$ value	Decision
H1	TD--->TE	0.769	0.767	0.063	12.260	***	Supported
H2	TD--->TR	0.371	0.429	0.081	5.314	***	Supported
H3	TE--->TR	0.536	0.621	0.079	7.885	***	Supported

Note: TD= Talent Development, TE= Talent Engagement, TR= Talent Retention

**Table 5: Standardized Indirect Effect**

Hypothesis	Indirect Path	Std. estimate	95% LL	95% UL	$P$ value	Decision
H4	TD--->TE--->TR	0.412	0.290	0.545	0.000	Partial mediation

## 6. Discussion

The current study attempted to identify the relationship between talent development and retention and to assess the mediating role of talent engagement between them. The study found the positive impact of talent development on talent engagement which was congruent with the previous studies (Ali et al., 2020; Fajčíková et al., 2016; Khatri et al., 2010; Sastry, 2013). When talents are developed, they tend to involve more in the work. People who know how to do the task like to deploy their efforts than those who do not

have any clear idea about the task. Moreover, talents with more knowledge and skills are engaged more physically, cognitively and emotionally. The second finding was that talent development is an important indicator of talent retention. A similar finding was also supported by past studies (Maamari & Alameh, 2016; Mishra et al., 2019; Kumar & Mathimaran, 2017). Skilled employees tend to adhere to the work as they know the job. When talents get the opportunity to learn and grow, they find future career growth in the organization. As a result, they may have the minimum tendency to quit the job and find another organization to start a new career.

The third finding focusing on the relationship between talent engagement and talent retention was found significant. Previous studies (Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Osborne & Hammoud, 2017; Soane et al., 2013) showed the consent with the similar outcome. Highly engaged talents like to devote themselves for the betterment of the organization and they try their level best to achieve the objectives. As they are committed and devoted to the work, they like the task which ultimately creates a positive relationship with the organization. Consequently, engaged talents like to serve the organization for a longer period. The last finding supported the mediating effect of talent engagement between talent development and talent retention. This finding indicates that talent engagement is a significant mediator between talent development and retention. Such sort of mediating effect was found in the earlier studies (Mishra et al., 2019; Oehler & Adair, 2019). When talents receive proper training and get opportunity for development that foster to enhance their job-related knowledge (Islam et al., 2020). The more the talents are knowledgeable, the more they are engaged. Engaged talents become emotionally attached to the organization that reduces their turnover intention. Therefore, it is logical to claim the mediating effect of talent engagement between talent development and retention.

## **7. Theoretical and Practical Implications**

This study has several theoretical implications. First, this study has enriched the existing literature on talent development, engagement and retention. In this study, the researchers have extended their understanding related to how talent development and talent engagement are important for successful talent retention. This study suggested that companies that focus on talent development and talent engagement can be in a stronger position to retaining their talent. Hence, this study has enriched the existing talent retention disclosure. Second, to the best of the authors' knowledge, this study used a unique model considering talent engagement as a mediator.

This study has practical implications too. This study suggested that if talents are developed properly, they may tend to attach to the organization for longer. So, managers should focus on talent development and engagement to retain them in the organization for a longer period of time. Finally, the study can help the practitioners to comprehend the importance of taking care of talents that foster high engagement and ultimately contribute to holding talents to gain sustainable competitive advantages.

## 8. Limitations and Future Research Direction

Although this study provided several theoretical and practical implications, it was not free from limitations. First, this study had considered only the employees of pharmaceutical companies as the respondents. Further, these companies were located in the capital city of Bangladesh. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalized. Future studies should consider other manufacturing industries and other cities. Second, the nature of this study is cross-sectional. Therefore, future studies should be longitudinal or experimental based to confirm the hypotheses of this study. Third, this study only looked at the effect of talent development on talent retention. But there are other factors that might influence talent retention like work-life balance, working environment, the leadership style of boss, job security, freedom and autonomy of works, and so on. Future studies may consider these issues to conduct future research.

## 9. Conclusion

The paper attempted to determine the connections among talent development, engagement and retention within the organization. Using AMOS, SEM was applied on 450 samples that covered the employees at three levels working in pharmaceutical companies in Bangladesh. The results supported that talent development significantly contributes to retaining talents through engaging them. Better talent development helps the organization to ensure greater talent engagement which in turn contributes more retention of talents. Employees like to give their level best when they find opportunities of development. Hence, management needs to create an environment of talent development for retaining the best possible talents. Finally, the organizations should focus on adequate initiatives to develop talents for ensuring engagement and retention of the high potential workforce.

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