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**Age Well, Work Well: Relationship of Healthy Aging with Career Commitment and Bridge Employment Intentions among Pre-Retirees**

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Samia Khalid<sup>1\*</sup>, Arooj Arshad<sup>2</sup>**Abstract**

Old age is considered an achievement to complete the milestones of one's life. However, the aging population presents significant economic, social, and health challenges. There is a need to address these challenges by focusing on bridge employment after retirement and considering healthy aging an essential part of later life. This correlational research aims to study the relationship between healthy ageing, career commitment and bridge employment intention among pre-retirees. Sample of 308 older employees ( $M = 57.79$ ,  $SD = 1.88$ ) was selected from government educational sector of Lahore, Pakistan by using non probability purposive sampling technique. The measure included Attitudes to Ageing Questionnaire, The Occupational Commitment Scale, and Bridge Employment Intention Scale. Results indicate a significant positive relation of healthy aging with career commitment ( $r = .27$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and bridge employment intention ( $r = .17$ ,  $p < .05$ ) of pre-retirees. Inversely, employee's education has significant negative relationship with healthy ageing ( $r = -.12$ ,  $p < .05$ ), career commitment ( $r = -.19$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and bridge employment intention ( $r = -.29$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Further, the mediation analysis through Hayes process macro model 4 revealed that career commitment mediates the relationship between healthy aging and bridge employment intention. The study provides a valuable insight and suggested that the organizations should value experienced employees for institutional growth and implement flexible work arrangements, continuous learning opportunities and health and wellness programs to promote work after retirement.

**Keywords:** Bridge Employment Intention, Career Commitments, Healthy Ageing, Pre-Retirees

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**Introduction**

There is a growing change in ageing population all over the world (Gu et al., 2021). World population prospects by United Nations (2017) proposed that individuals in this age will comprise at least 25% of the

global population by 2050. Furthermore, a remarkable enhancement in healthcare and lifestyle has led to an intriguing phenomenon: approximately one in every four individuals aged 65 today is expected to suppress the age of 90 (Donner et al., 2015; O'Sullivan, 2004). This demographic transformation has brought about a fundamental reevaluation of the concept of retirement.

An employee's decision to work after retirement is influenced by a wide range of personal and social factors, including gender, number of dependents, educational level, family and marital status, employee's health condition, social relations and available resources to continue any work. Sewdas et al. (2017) concluded that older men are more likely to engage in bridge employment than

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older women. Demou et al. (2017) found that good mental and physical health (healthy ageing) and a desire to stay employed are important reasons for bridge employment in old age.

Healthy aging gained significant attention as WHO (2021) declared this decade (2020 – 2030) of healthy aging for older adults and define that "Healthy aging is the process of nurturing and sustaining the functional capacity necessary for well-being in later life." This definition adopts a holistic perspective on well-being, encompassing older employees' individualized outcomes like satisfaction, happiness and a sense of meaningfulness in life. It is believed that healthy aging plays a crucial role in career commitment and shaping employees' decisions regarding bridge employment by influencing their perceptions of work-related challenges and opportunities (Nilsson et al., 2023; Wang & Shi, 2014).

Career Commitment can be defined as employees' devotion and attachment to their career related work and professional identity. This type of dedicated commitment to their work makes them more inclined to explore bridge employment options and preserving their connection to the workforce (Feldman & Beehr, 2011). A study conducted by Wang et al. (2016) observed that career commitment is positively correlated with healthy aging; employees with healthy aging possess more favorable attitudes toward their work. Feldman and Beehr (2011) further support this notion by proposing that older employees with healthy aging are more inclined to remain active in the workforce. Thus, healthy aging is key to continue the career after even after retirement that commonly called bridge employment.

To understand intention towards bridge employment, it is essential to consider the interplay between internal and external factors directly connected with an employee's career commitment. De Wind et al. (2018)

highlight that Work commitment and employee health-related factors independently influence the decision to work after retirement. In Pakistan, where social and familial structures emphasize intergenerational support, the health and economic stability of pre-retirees significantly influence their decision to remain in the workforce. The lack of comprehensive pension schemes and social security (Zafar et al., 2023) further exacerbates the need for bridge employment. Additionally, research suggests that healthy aging interventions not only enhance physical and mental well-being but also improve career commitment and willingness to engage in bridge employment (Hafeez et al., 2023). In line with these observations, the present study underscores the importance of aligning organizational policies and personal aspirations with the principles of healthy aging. By contributing to the academic discourse, this study intricately explores the relationship between healthy aging, career commitment, and intentions towards bridge employment. It provides a framework for crafting a more age-inclusive, productive, and fulfilling future for older employees in the era of healthy aging.

### **Theoretical Background**

The Hobfoll (1989) concept of conservation of Resource theory (COR) proposed that health itself is a critical resource that helps employees retain their ability to work and engage in meaningful activities (Bon & Shire, 2022). When employees feel that their health resources are secure, they are more likely to exhibit a higher level of career commitment and show motivational intention towards bridge employment.

### **Rationale**

Globally, people, after retirement, face a variety of vulnerabilities, such as insufficient financial resources, uncertainty regarding their health, and the need for assistance. Pensions guarantee economic stability,

entitlements, and respect for the elderly. Nevertheless, over 50% of employees who have reached the age at which they are eligible for a pension have yet to receive one. Pakistan ranks 95th overall in the income security sector, the second lowest in this category (Abdullah, 2021). In Pakistan, elderly employees can address these challenges with the help of bridge employment and employment after retirement only possible with healthy ageing. Thus, present study is an effort to explore how healthy ageing play a critical role in career commitment and intention towards bridge employment among pre retirees.

### **Objectives**

- To find out the relationship among healthy aging, career commitment and bridge employment intention among pre-retirees
- To explore the mediating role of career commitment in the relationship between healthy ageing and bridge employment intention among pre-retirees

### **Hypotheses**

H1: There will be a significant positive relationship among healthy aging, career commitment and bridge employment intention among pre-retirees

H2: Career Commitment will mediate the relationship between healthy ageing and bridge employment intention among pre-retirees

### **Method**

#### **Research Design**

To explore the relationship of study variables, a correlational research design was used, which helped provide a broader

perspective on the factors influencing a particular outcome. This design examines the strength and direction of relationships between variables without manipulating any of them, allowing for the identification of potential associations rather than causal links.

### **Sample and Sampling Strategy**

Targeting pre-retirees before their retirement proved challenging. Therefore, using a non-probability purposive sampling technique. Using G-Power method, a sample of 308 pre-retirees ( $M= 57.79$ ,  $SD= 1.88$ ) was selected from different government educational institutes in Lahore, Pakistan, due to its diverse and representative population of educational professionals, making it an ideal setting for examining pre-retirement intentions. The study was approved by the Ethical Review Committee (ERC) of Riphah institute of Clinical and Professional Psychology (RICPP, RIU) with approval number 070373 on 25th December 2023.

### **Inclusion Criteria**

To maintain uniformity, Employees between the ages of 55 and 60 years, working at least 8 hours/day in government universities and colleges, with at least a graduation degree (15% graduates, 55% masters and 31% above masters) in any subject were considered eligible for participation.

### **Exclusion Criteria**

Employees engaged in part-time employment, concurrently engaged in any form of business with their government job or utilizing a long leave (at least one year) during their entire service tenure (due to any reason) were excluded.

**Table 1***Demographics Characteristics of the Study I Variables (N= 308)*

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>f (%)</b>	<b>M(SD)</b>
Gender		
Female	154 (50)	
Male	154 (50)	
Age (in years)		57.80 (1.88)
55-58	202 (66)	
59- 62	106 (34)	
Participant Monthly Income (Pkr)		173620.20 (190939.89)
Total Work Experience		27.76 (2.59)
Total working hrs./day		9.43 (1.18)
Extra Working hrs./ day		1.43 (1.18)

**Measures**

Standardized scales were used to measure the study variables. As the sample consisted of educated employees, the scales were administered in English language.

**Attitudes to Ageing Questionnaire**

The present study adopted a Chinese version of the attitudes to ageing Questionnaire named AAQ-BC introduced by Gao et al. (2024). It has 12 items extracted from original scale and scored on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 = strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, and 5 = strongly agree." Higher scores on the AAQ indicate a higher level of successful aging. The alpha reliability of the scale is .80. and sample items include "I see old age mainly as a time of loss" and "It is a privilege to grow old."

**The Occupational Commitment Scale**

To measure career commitment among pre-retirees, the occupational Commitment scale (Blau, 1985) was used that have 11 items. The full scale provides a comprehensive score of career commitment. It is a 5-point Likert scale which includes 5 strongly agree, 4 agree, 3 Disagree, 2 strongly disagree, and 1 no idea/ opinion. The following items are reverse coded: 1, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11. The reliability of this scale is ranging from 0.79 to 0.86. Sample items include "If I could, I would go into a different occupation" and "I

can see myself in my occupation for many years."

**The Bridge Employment Intention Scale**

The Bridge Employment Intention Scale, developed by Lahlouh et al. (2019), was used to understanding employees' intentions and attitudes toward continuing employment after retirement. It has four items, and utilizing a five-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, and 5 = strongly agree. The reliability of the scale is .74. Sample items include "I am open to considering employment opportunities after formal retirement" and "I believe bridge employment can provide a meaningful continuation of my career." In this scale, item number four was reverse-coded.

**Demographic Information Sheet**

The sample's demographic profile encompassed several vital factors, including gender, age, marital status, family structure, education, participants' income, current and total work experience, daily and additional working hours.

**Procedure**

After receiving an authorization letter, participants were selected based on inclusive criteria. Upon obtaining participants' consent and establishing rapport, they were provided a demographic information form and a comprehensive questionnaire. To

accommodate the participants, they were given flexible time to fill out the forms, and efforts were made to approach them during their non-working hours. Out of 430 questionnaires distributed, 370 were returned by participants. However, 48 returned questionnaires needed to be completed, resulting in a 75% return rate. To test the study hypothesis descriptive statistics, correlational research design and Hayes process macro model 4 were used through SPSS.

### Ethical Considerations

The research followed the American Psychological Association (APA) ethical guidelines, including the approval of the Riphah Institute of Clinical and Professional Psychology's ethical review committee (ERC). Informed consent forms and participant information sheets, including the purpose and procedure, were provided to all research participants. Participants were assured that their data would remain confidential and be used solely for research. The integrity of the data was maintained, and the results were reported genuinely without any manipulation.

## Results

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Coefficient of Study Variables (N=308)*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>α</i>
HA	3.75	.87	1.33 -5	.93
CC	3.72	.87	1.9 - 5	.93
BEI	3.61	1.04	1- 5	.91

*Note.* HA= Healthy Ageing, CC=Career Commitment, BEI= Bridge Employment Intention

Results in Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients for the study variables, including Healthy Aging

(HA), Career Commitment (CC), and Bridge Employment Intention (BEI), based on a sample of 308 pre-retirees.

**Table 3**

*Pearson Product Moment Correlation between Demographics and Study Variables (N= 308)*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
1. HA	3.75	.87	-					
2. CC	3.72	.87	.27*	-				
3. BEI	3.61	1.04	.13*	.39**	-			
4. Age	57.79	1.88	.12*	-.06	.01	-		
5. Gdr	1.50	.50	.01	.07	-.03	-.09	-	
6. Edu	2.17	.65	-.12*	-.19**	-.29**	.04	-.05	-

*Note.* \* p<.05; \*\* p<.01, HA= Healthy Ageing, CC=Career Commitment, BEI= Bridge Employment Intention, Gdr= gender (1= male, 2= female), Edu= education

Results indicates a significant positive correlation of healthy aging with career commitment, bridge employment intention and age, while negatively correlated with employees' education. Employees' career

commitment has a significant positive correlation with bridge employment intention and a significant negative correlation with employees' education. Bridge employment

has a significant negative correlation with employees' education of pre-retirees.

**Table 4**

*Mediating role of Career Commitment in Relationship between Healthy ageing and Bridge Employment Intention (N= 308)*

Variables	Effect	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	95% CI	
					UL	LL
Healthy Aging- > Career Commitment		.06	4.96	.001	.16	.38
Career Commitment- > Bridge Employment Intention		.07	7.25	.001	.34	.61
Healthy Ageing- > Bridge Employment Intention		.07	.32	.75	-.12	.15
Direct	.02	.06			-.11	.15
Indirect	.13	.04			.05	.21

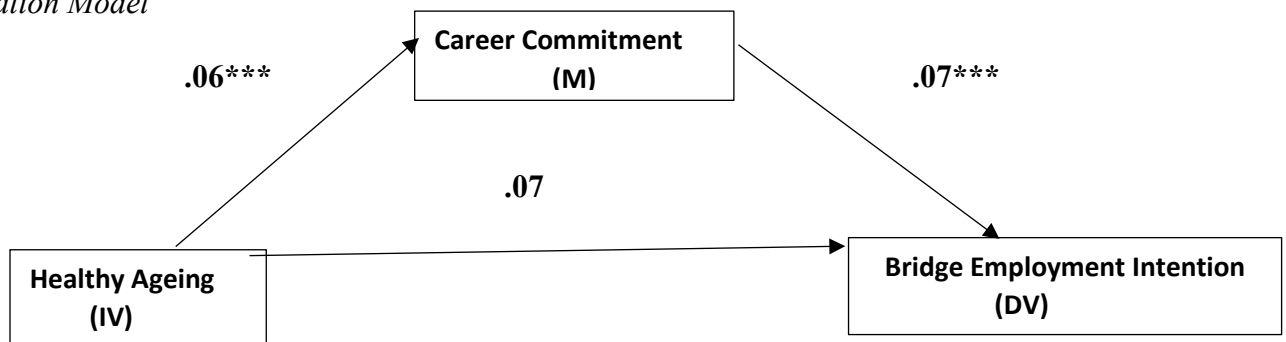
Note. \*\*\*  $p < .001$

The results indicate a significant impact of healthy ageing on career commitment, while insignificant impact on bridge employment intentions among pre-retirees. In case of mediation analysis, the findings indicate partial mediation with a 9% variance which

indicates that healthy aging is a significant predictor of bridge employment intention in presence of career commitment among pre-retirees, as analyzed using Hayes Process Macro (2018).

**Figure 1**

*Mediation Model*



## Discussion

The study investigates the relationship among healthy ageing, career commitment and intention towards bridge employment among pre-retirees working in government sectors of Lahore, Pakistan. Results indicate high alpha reliability with a significant value of kurtosis and skewness.

The study hypotheses results indicate that healthy aging showed a significant positive correlation with career commitment and bridge employment intention, consistent with

previous research, which implies that employees who have a positive perception of their healthy aging are more inclined to maintain their dedication to their careers and contemplate the possibility of working (Potocnik, 2017; WHO, 2021) even after retiring. Results also suggest that employees who maintain good health are more likely to stay committed to their careers and consider continued employment post-retirement (Zhan et al., 2019). Nilsson et al. (2023) suggested that a sustainable and healthy

working life in old age is positively related to an employee's health. This relationship is supported by the Job Demand-Resources model, which posits that personal resources, such as health, enhance work-related outcomes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The relationship of study demographics indicates that age positively correlates with healthy ageing, and education has a significant negative relation with healthy ageing. This indicates that higher education levels may lead to increased job demands and stress, potentially detracting from healthy ageing. Employees with advanced education might prioritize career advancement over health, impacting their overall well-being negatively.

Results through mediation analysis indicate the positive correlation between healthy ageing and bridge employment intention in the presence of career commitment aligns with the notion that healthy employees dedicated to their careers will likely seek continued engagement in the workforce, even after formal retirement (Feldman & Beehr, 2011). This finding underscores the importance of fostering a culture of commitment and engagement among healthy employees to promote their willingness to participate in bridge employment. Nie et al. (2021) and Wang et al. (2011) suggested that as employees age, those who perceive themselves as being in good health and leading an active lifestyle more committed to their career and consider bridge employment as a way to remain involved, sustain social relationships, and continue making valuable contributions to society (Nie et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2011). A study conducted by Mazumdar et al. (2024) discovered that employees with a strong commitment to their jobs are more likely to engage in bridge employment. Their profound dedication to their careers motivates them to continue working even after reaching the typical retirement age. Research by Feldman and

Beehr (2011) suggests that employees with high levels of career commitment are more likely to consider bridge employment as a means to transition gradually while preserving their sense of purpose and attachment to their professional identity. In conclusion, the literature supports that career commitment is pivotal in shaping individuals' attitudes toward retirement if they are healthy ageing.

### **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

The study relied on self-reported data, possibly subject to social desirability bias. Objective measurement of study variables could provide more robust findings in the future. Cultural and demographical measurements should have been explored in future studies. Further, the study was based on government employees working in Lahore city. In contrast, employees in other cities with multiple professional backgrounds, including government, semi-government and private sectors, should be included in future studies. Finally, Future research could explore the buffering role of other variables, such as social support, resilience, and coping strategies, that are ignored in the present study.

### **Conclusion**

Present study helps to understand the role of healthy ageing to sustain the career commitment and to enhance the intention towards bridge employment among pre-retirees. The findings reveal that there is a strong connection among healthy aging, career commitment and a higher likelihood of bridge employment in old age. Promotion of healthy aging can enhance employees' engagement in their careers and their willingness to pursue flexible work options as they approach retirement. Furthermore, career commitment partially mediates the relationship between healthy aging and bridge employment intentions, accounting for 9% of the variance. Results help to

highlights the crucial role of healthy ageing in old age for career commitment and in the transition to bridge employment.

### Implications

The present study findings encouraging older employees to adopt healthy ageing practices, such as a healthy nutritious diet and regular exercise for physical and mental health support for prolong career commitment. At the organizational level, management should focus on healthy aging-related activities to enhance career commitment and bridge employment. Offering opportunities promoting health and wellness, flexible work engagements and continuous learning opportunities for older employees can help them maintain their career commitment, thus making bridge employment a viable and attractive option for extending professional life.

### Contribution of Authors

Samia Khalid: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft  
Arooj Arshad: Methodology, Writing - Reviewing & Editing, Supervision

### Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest declared by the authors.

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### Data Availability Statement

The datasets of the current study are not available publicly due to ethical reasons but are available from the corresponding author [S.K.] upon the reasonable request.

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