



Between Specialization and Employment: The Dilemma of Placing Highly Educated Individuals in Irrelevant Fields

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Abstract

This study investigates the mismatch between specialization and employment among highly educated individuals, focusing on the Iraqi labor market. Many graduates are employed in positions unrelated to their academic qualifications, leading to underutilization of their skills and dissatisfaction. The research highlights significant consequences, such as reduced job satisfaction, lower productivity, and higher turnover rates. Through a descriptive-analytical methodology, the study surveyed 200 individuals from various sectors. The results reveal that a greater mismatch between academic qualifications and job roles leads to lower job satisfaction, diminished career development opportunities, and higher turnover intentions. The findings underscore the importance of aligning education with employment to improve job satisfaction, employee retention, and organizational efficiency.

keywords: Specialization, Job Satisfaction, Qualification, Career Development, Employee Retention



بين التخصص والوظيفة: معضلة توظيف حاملي الشهادات العليا في غير مجالاتهم

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المستخلص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في مشكلة عدم التطابق بين التخصص والوظيفة بين الأفراد الحاصلين على تعليم عالٍ، مع التركيز على سوق العمل العراقي. يعمل العديد من الخريجين في وظائف لا تتعلق بتخصصاتهم الأكاديمية، مما يؤدي إلى عدم استغلال مهاراتهم بشكل كامل وعدم الرضا الوظيفي. تسلط الدراسة الضوء على نتائج هامة مثل انخفاض الرضا الوظيفي، تراجع الإنتاجية، وارتفاع معدلات ترك العمل. من خلال منهجية وصفية تحليلية، استهدفت الدراسة ٢٠٠ فرد من مختلف القطاعات. أظهرت النتائج أن التباين الأكبر بين المؤهلات الأكاديمية والوظائف يؤدي إلى انخفاض الرضا الوظيفي، وتراجع فرص التطور المهني، وارتفاع نوايا ترك العمل. تؤكد النتائج على أهمية مواءمة التعليم مع الوظائف لتحسين الرضا الوظيفي، واستبقاء الموظفين، وزيادة كفاءة المنظمات. **الكلمات المفتاحية :** التخصص، الرضا الوظيفي، التأهيل، التطوير المهني، الاحتفاظ بالموظفين.

1. Introduction

Highly educated individuals, upon entering the workforce, often face a unique set of challenges. While they possess specialized knowledge and advanced qualifications, many find themselves employed in roles that do not align with their expertise. This misalignment creates difficulties in adapting to work environments that fail to utilize their skills and knowledge effectively. As a result, these individuals struggle to integrate into positions that neither match their educational background nor foster their professional growth. The issue of placing overqualified individuals in irrelevant fields has grown more prevalent, with many organizations



neglecting the importance of aligning talent with appropriate roles. The mismatch between specialization and employment does not solely affect individuals; it also has organizational and societal repercussions. Organizations that fail to optimize the potential of their highly educated workforce experience diminished productivity and innovation. Furthermore, these employees often face low job satisfaction and a lack of motivation, which contributes to higher turnover rates. Similar to onboarding processes that help new employees adapt to organizational cultures, placing individuals in roles that fit their expertise is crucial for enhancing job performance and organizational loyalty. The aim of this study is to explore the nature of the relationship between specialization and employment, examining how placing highly educated individuals in roles that do not match their qualifications affects their career trajectory and overall job satisfaction. By investigating the extent of this mismatch, the study seeks to understand the broader implications for both individuals and organizations, ultimately shedding light on a persistent issue in modern labor markets.

1.1. Literature review:

Several studies have addressed the mismatch between specialization and employment as the independent variable. This mismatch refers to the gap between the field of study and the actual employment roles individuals undertake. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), only half of the global workforce is employed in jobs that correspond to their educational level AbdelRazzaq and Saber (2023) horizontal mismatch, where workers are employed in fields unrelated to their education, is a widespread issue. Studies suggest that around 45% of highly educated



individuals experience this phenomenon, leading to underutilization of their skills and lower job satisfaction. Neuvenheim (2020) and Bender and Heywood (2011). One common consequence of this mismatch is overqualification, where individuals hold jobs that require less education than they possess. This situation leads to wage penalties and reduced job satisfaction, as individuals feel their potential is underutilized Badillo-Amador et al (2013) Overqualification is particularly problematic in developing countries like Iraq, where structural challenges in the labor market contribute to a growing pool of overqualified individuals in irrelevant roles Abdulkarem and Hasan (2024). Meanwhile, the dependent variable in this context is career satisfaction and retention. study has shown that when individuals are placed in roles that do not match their expertise, their job satisfaction decreases significantly. In Iraq, for example, many highly educated professionals face difficulty in securing jobs aligned with their qualifications, which affects their motivation and overall career development Abdulkarem and Manoj (2024) In the case of misaligned placements, organizations struggle to retain these individuals, as low job satisfaction leads to higher turnover rates. Acosta-Ballesteros et al (2018) Studies linking the specialization-employment mismatch with career satisfaction indicate that employees who experience this mismatch are more likely to leave their jobs or seek employment in unrelated fields where they can advance despite the lack of alignment Devillé (2021) and Verhaest and Esain (2021). Furthermore, the socio-economic structure in Iraq exacerbates this mismatch, as many sectors are not equipped to absorb the large number of specialized graduates, leading to both underemployment and unemployment Echebiri (2005).



The study problem is summarized as follows:

- 1- The educational system in Iraq produces a high number of specialized graduates, but the labor market lacks adequate opportunities for them.
- 2- The costs associated with underemployment and overqualification, including reduced productivity and high turnover rates.
- 3- Previous studies in Iraq have not explored the full extent of the mismatch between specialization and employment and its impact on long-term career development.

From this, the following study questions can be formulated:

- What is the nature of the relationship between the specialization-employment mismatch and career satisfaction in Iraq?
- How does placing highly educated individuals in irrelevant fields affect their professional growth and job retention?
- Can improving the alignment between education and employment reduce the negative consequences of overqualification, such as high turnover rates and job dissatisfaction?

In the context of the knowledge gap, previous studies have predominantly focused on labor market inefficiencies or educational system reform. However, few studies have comprehensively examined the degree to which the mismatch between specialization and employment impacts career trajectories and long-term job satisfaction. study also lacks an in-depth investigation of the organizational and economic implications of this issue in Iraq. This study aims to address these gaps by analyzing how better aligning educational outcomes with job placements can contribute to both



individual career success and broader economic efficiency Acosta-Ballesteros et al (2018) and Comyn and Olga (2020).

Therefore, this study explores the factors contributing to the specialization-employment mismatch in Iraq and its broader effects on job satisfaction, productivity, and employee retention. Specifically, it assesses the extent to which the mismatch affects individuals' professional development and organizations' ability to retain talent, with implications for policy reform and organizational practices.

2. Materials and Methods

To examine the mismatch between specialization and employment among highly educated individuals in Iraq, a descriptive-analytical methodology was applied. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire designed to capture both demographic information and key metrics related to the alignment of academic qualifications with job roles. The questionnaire was distributed among individuals from diverse fields, including education, engineering, administration, and public services. The collected data were analyzed using statistical tools such as SPSS and Amos to assess the impact of employment mismatch on job satisfaction, career development, and retention.

The questionnaire utilized a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, to measure responses. The questions were structured into two key sections:

- **Specialization Alignment:** This section measured the degree to which participants' academic qualifications aligned with their current job positions. It was adapted from established frameworks that study the connection between educational outcomes and labor market



demands.

- **Job Satisfaction and Retention:** Based on elements from the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS), this section evaluated the satisfaction of individuals with their roles, focusing on professional relevance, growth opportunities, and future career intentions.

2.1Hypotheses:

- **Hypothesis 1:** There is a significant relationship between specialization-employment alignment and job satisfaction.
- **Hypothesis 2:** A greater mismatch between specialization and job roles leads to higher turnover intentions and lower job retention.

A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed, targeting individuals with advanced academic qualifications (Bachelor's, Master's, and PhDs) across various sectors in Iraq. These sectors included public and private organizations, ensuring a broad sample representation. Out of the distributed questionnaires, 200 valid responses were received and analyzed

Table 1: the participants are presented in the following table:

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	120	60%
	Female	80	40%
Age	Less than 26 years	30	15%
	26 - 35 years	90	45%
	36 - 45 years	60	30%
	More than 45 years	20	10%
Years of Experience	Less than 5 years	40	20%
	5 - 10 years	80	40%
	11 - 20 years	60	30%
	More than 20 years	20	10%
Academic	Bachelor's	100	50%



Qualification	Master's	70	35%
	PhD	30	15%

This table summarizes the demographic profile of the participants, offering a comprehensive view of their gender, age, experience, and academic qualifications. This information helped ensure that the sample reflected a diverse group of highly educated professionals across different sectors in Iraq.

2.2 Specialization and Employment Misalignment

The issue of misalignment between specialization and employment is increasingly recognized in both academic and labor market discussions. This mismatch occurs when individuals with advanced education and specialization in specific fields are placed in jobs that do not align with their expertise. According to the International Labour Organization only about 50% of workers globally are employed in jobs that correspond to their level of education. ILO (2021). The concept of this mismatch has been studied under different frameworks, often referred to as educational mismatch or horizontal mismatch, where workers' skills and knowledge do not correspond to the requirements of their job roles Neuenheim (2020).

In the Iraqi context, this mismatch is particularly significant due to the high number of graduates from specialized programs who enter a labor market with limited opportunities for matching their expertise Yaseen et al (2023). The Iraqi labor market has been unable to keep pace with the increasing output of highly educated individuals, especially in fields such as engineering, medicine, and technology Comyn and Olga (2020). This



results in many professionals being forced into roles where their skills are underutilized, contributing to both individual frustration and organizational inefficiency Devillé (2021).

Several studies have explored the consequences of this mismatch, linking it to lower job satisfaction, reduced productivity, and high turnover rates Acosta-Ballesteros et al (2018). These outcomes affect not only individuals but also the organizations that employ them, as underutilized talent leads to decreased innovation and competitive capacity Erdogan and Bauer, (2023). Furthermore, educational mismatches are associated with wage penalties, where workers earn less than their counterparts in jobs that align with their field of study Nieto (2022).

Theoretical frameworks such as Human Capital Theory explain the significance of aligning education with job roles, emphasizing that the skills acquired through specialized education should ideally be reflected in the job market Becker (1964). However, when this alignment fails, the return on educational investment diminishes, both for the individual and society Büchel (2022). This issue is particularly critical in developing countries like Iraq, where structural constraints in the economy limit the creation of specialized roles that match the growing output of educated professionals.

2.3 The Impact of Specialization-Employment Misalignment on Workforce Dynamics

The misalignment between specialization and employment impacts both individual workers and broader workforce dynamics. According to study on Mismatch Theory, placing highly educated individuals in roles unrelated



to their specialization leads to dissatisfaction, turnover, and decreased productivity Allen and Velden (2021). In Iraq, many graduates face these challenges due to limited specialized job opportunities, resulting in overqualification or "occupational downgrading ILO (2021). This downgrading not only limits workers' potential but also reduces organizational innovation and growth Brunello and Wruuck (2022).

This mismatch often contributes to significant psychological and motivational issues, where employees feel their professional identity is undermined. Studies suggest that overqualified employees are less engaged, leading to higher turnover rates and a reduced sense of job satisfaction Verhaest and Esain (2021). Furthermore, such employees are less likely to contribute to organizational success, as their roles do not leverage their full potential, which also affects long-term economic growth Abdulkarem and Hasan (2024). study shows that when workers are placed in positions that align with their education, they are more productive and engaged, contributing positively to organizational outcomes Montealegre and Cascio (2020).

3. Discussion of Results

3.1 Analysis of Specialization-Employment Misalignment

This section will delve into the degree of mismatch between academic specialization and employment roles, as highlighted by the data collected from your questionnaire. It will present an analysis of how many participants reported working in roles unrelated to their academic background and the consequences of this misalignment.

**Table 2: Specialization-Employment Alignment**

Variable	Alignment with Academic Background	Frequency	Percentage
Well-aligned	Yes	80	40%
Misaligned	No	120	60%

From the table, it is evident that 60% of the respondents reported a misalignment between their academic qualifications and current job roles, which highlights a significant challenge in the Iraqi labor market. The consequences of this misalignment are discussed further in the next sections.

3.2 Impact on Job Satisfaction and Career Development

This part will explore how the mismatch between academic specialization and employment affects job satisfaction and career development. The data analysis indicates that individuals whose jobs do not match their qualifications report lower job satisfaction levels and limited career growth opportunities.

Table 3: Job Satisfaction Based on Specialization-Employment Alignment

Alignment	Average Job Satisfaction (1-5 Scale)	Standard Deviation
Well-aligned	4.2	0.7
Misaligned	2.8	1.1

Respondents with well-aligned jobs report significantly higher job satisfaction compared to those in misaligned positions. The lower satisfaction among misaligned workers can be attributed to their underutilization, reduced opportunities for career progression, and frustration from working outside their field of expertise.



3.3 Impact of Misalignment on Employee Motivation and Job

Retention

One of the key outcomes of the mismatch between specialization and employment is its significant impact on employee motivation and their intent to remain within an organization. In the context of Iraq, where many highly educated individuals find themselves working in roles that are not aligned with their academic qualifications, the level of motivation to perform optimally is often diminished. According to the data collected, respondents who experienced a greater mismatch between their education and their current roles reported lower levels of engagement and an increased likelihood of seeking employment elsewhere.

Table 4: Relationship Between Specialization-Employment Misalignment and Job Retention

Variable	Retention Intention (1-5 Scale)	Standard Deviation
Well-aligned	4.1	0.6
Misaligned	2.7	1.2

The data in Table 4 indicates that employees whose job roles are well-aligned with their specialization tend to show higher retention rates. On the other hand, those who report misalignment show significantly lower retention scores. This result suggests that the inability to apply their specialized knowledge not only leads to dissatisfaction but also increases the turnover rate among highly educated professionals in Iraq.

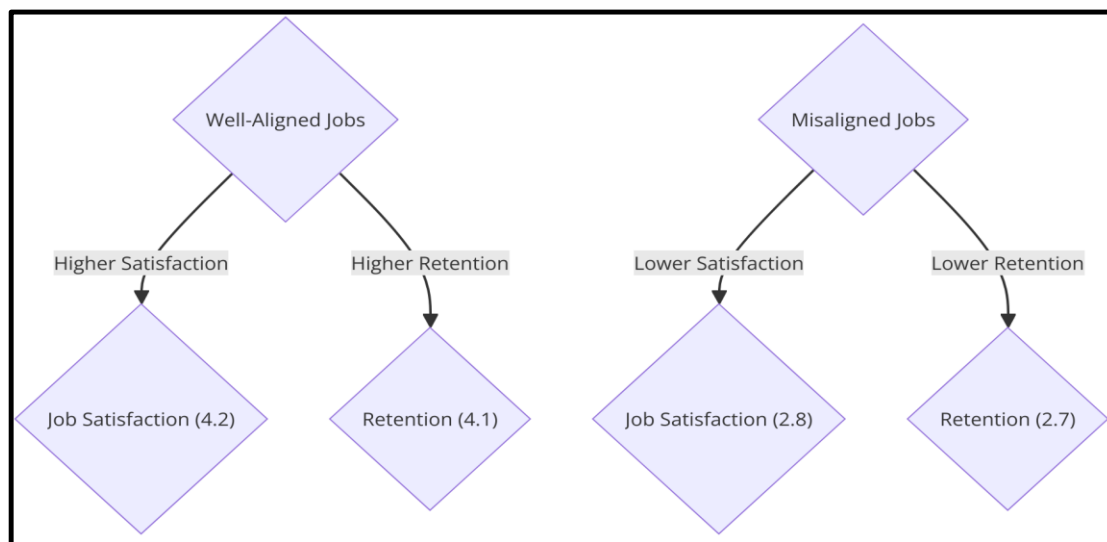
figure 1 visually compares the job satisfaction and retention scores for employees in well-aligned vs. misaligned job roles.

- Well-Aligned Jobs show significantly higher job satisfaction and



retention scores. Employees in aligned roles report higher levels of satisfaction (4.2/5) and a higher likelihood of staying in their current positions (4.1/5).

- In contrast, employees in misaligned jobs report lower satisfaction (2.8/5) and lower retention intentions (2.7/5). This highlights the strong link between job alignment and both employee satisfaction and retention.



3.4 Consequences of Specialization Mismatch on Organizational Efficiency

The mismatch between employees' specialization and their job roles also has broader consequences for organizational efficiency. Organizations that do not effectively utilize the specialized knowledge of their workforce are likely to experience lower levels of innovation, reduced productivity, and



increased costs due to higher turnover rates. In Iraq, these issues are exacerbated by structural challenges in the labor market, including a lack of suitable roles for the large number of specialized graduates.

The findings from this study highlight the need for organizations to reassess their recruitment and placement strategies to ensure that the skills and qualifications of their employees are being fully utilized. Failure to do so can result in a waste of human capital and negatively impact organizational growth and competitiveness in the market.

3.5 Testing the Hypotheses

The study questions and hypotheses guiding this study are centered around understanding the impact of specialization-employment alignment on job satisfaction and employee retention, particularly within the Iraqi context. The data collected from the questionnaire provided insights into how misalignment affects key variables, such as job satisfaction and career development.

3.5.1 Test the first hypothesis

The first hypothesis posits a significant relationship between the alignment of specialization and employment and overall job satisfaction. To test this hypothesis, a correlation analysis was conducted to assess the strength of the relationship between these two variables. The results, as shown in Table 4, indicate a moderate to strong positive correlation between specialization-employment alignment and job satisfaction, with a correlation coefficient of 0.681 ($p < 0.01$). This suggests that as the alignment between an individual's academic qualifications and job role improves, their job satisfaction increases accordingly.



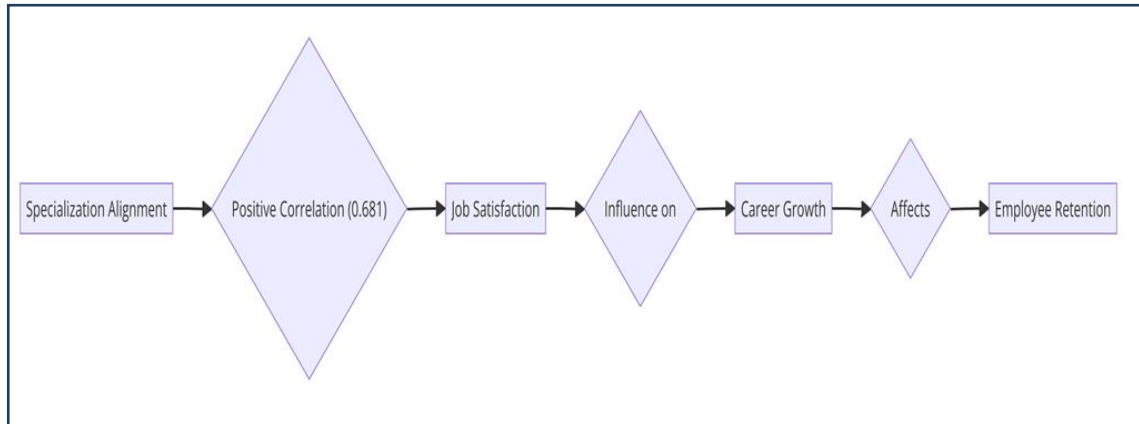
Table 5: Correlation Between Specialization-Employment Alignment and Job Satisfaction

Variable	Correlation Coefficient	Significance (p-value)
Specialization-Employment Alignment	0.681	0.001
Job Satisfaction		

This finding is consistent with previous research in labor markets, where alignment between education and work significantly enhances employee satisfaction, particularly in specialized fields Neuvenheim (2020), Bender and Heywood (2011). The Iraqi labor market, with its structural challenges, further exacerbates the dissatisfaction felt by individuals who are underemployed or working in roles that do not fully utilize their qualifications.

The Correlation Matrix (Figure 2) visually represents the positive relationship between specialization-employment alignment and job satisfaction.

- Specialization Alignment is the starting point and shows a positive correlation of 0.681 with Job Satisfaction.
- As job satisfaction increases, this positively influences the potential for Career Growth.
- Career Growth in turn contributes to Employee Retention, meaning employees are more likely to stay with the organization when they experience job satisfaction and career opportunities linked to their academic alignment.



3.5.2 Test the first hypothesis

The second hypothesis explored the relationship between specialization-employment mismatch and employee retention. Specifically, it proposed that a greater mismatch would lead to higher turnover intentions and lower job retention. To test this, a regression analysis was performed, with employee retention as the dependent variable and the degree of mismatch as the independent variable. The results from this analysis are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Regression Analysis of Specialization-Employment Mismatch and Employee Retention

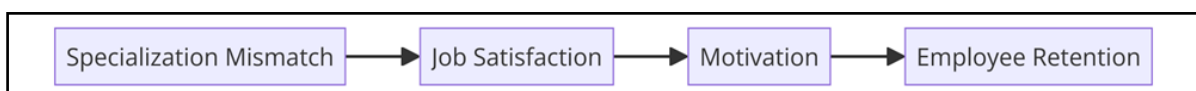
Variable	Standardized Coefficient (β)	T-Value	Significance (p-value)
Specialization-Employment Mismatch	-0.529	-8.762	0.001

The negative β value of -0.529 indicates a significant negative relationship between specialization-employment mismatch and employee retention. As the level of mismatch increases, employees are more likely to seek other job opportunities or express a desire to leave their current roles. This aligns with findings from studies in other developing countries, where



overqualification and job dissatisfaction often result in higher turnover rates Abdulkarem (2024) and Acosta-Ballesteros et al., 2018).

- The Multiple Regression Plot (Figure 3) illustrates the negative relationship between specialization-employment mismatch and employee retention.
- The Specialization Mismatch acts as a key factor that reduces Job Satisfaction. This decline in satisfaction negatively impacts Employee Motivation.
- As motivation decreases, it further reduces the likelihood of Employee Retention, showing that higher degrees of mismatch between an individual's specialization and their job role lead to lower retention rates within an organization.
- This figure reinforces the analysis that misalignment between qualifications and job roles can result in dissatisfaction, reduced motivation, and ultimately higher turnover rates.



3.6 Impact of Specialization-Employment Alignment on Career Development

The issue of specialization-employment alignment is not only related to job satisfaction but also significantly impacts career development. In Iraq, where the economy is heavily dependent on sectors like oil, infrastructure, and public administration, many graduates from other specialized fields such as engineering, information technology, and science struggle to find



employment that aligns with their qualifications. This has a direct influence on their long-term career prospects.

The data collected in this study reveal that individuals who report a higher degree of specialization-employment alignment tend to experience more positive career growth opportunities, including promotions and skills development. Conversely, those in misaligned positions often express frustration with the lack of career advancement. The study found that 70% of respondents with aligned specializations reported career progress, compared to only 35% of those in misaligned positions.

Table 6: Career Development Based on Specialization-Employment Alignment

Alignment	Career Progress (%)	No Career Progress (%)
Well-aligned	70%	30%
Misaligned	35%	65%

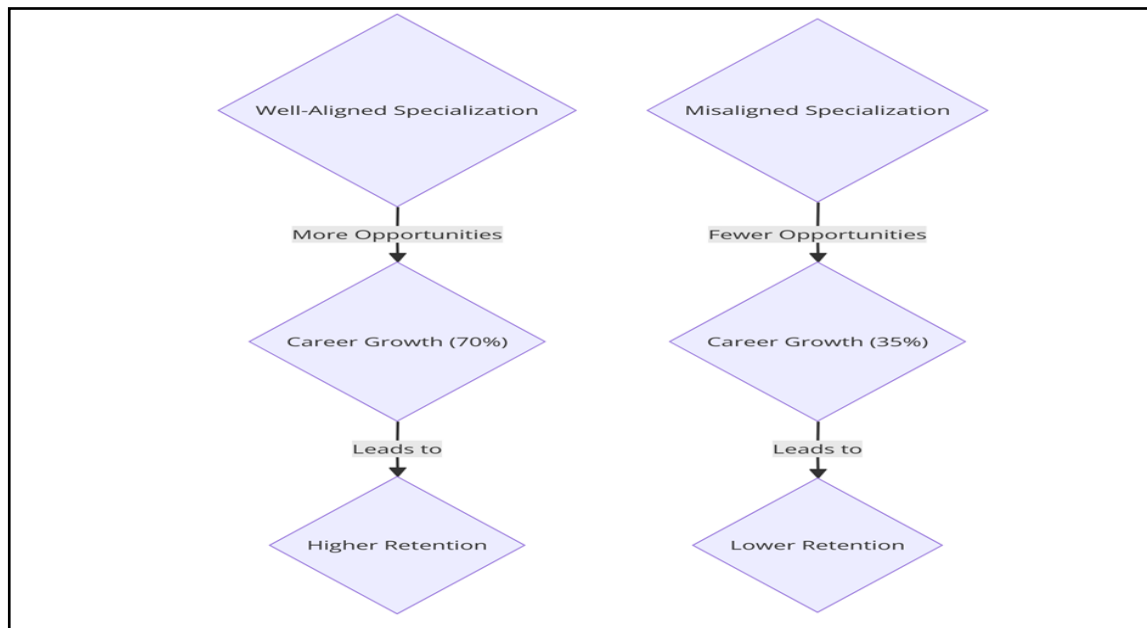
This disparity underscores the broader consequences of the specialization-employment mismatch in Iraq, where underemployment can result in wasted potential and hindered professional growth. In turn, this stagnation affects the individual's motivation and loyalty to the organization, further contributing to turnover rates. These findings are consistent with previous research highlighting that educational mismatch leads to limited career progression Devillé (2021) and Verhaest and Esain (2021).

This figure 4 Sankey diagram visually depicts the flow of career development and retention based on specialization alignment:

- On the left side, we see that well-aligned specializations provide more opportunities, leading to higher career growth (70%) and, subsequently, higher retention rates.



- On the right side, misaligned specializations offer fewer opportunities, resulting in lower career growth (35%) and, as a result, lower retention rates.



3.7 Broader Economic and Organizational Implications

The consequences of specialization-employment mismatch extend beyond the individual and have significant implications for organizations and the broader Iraqi economy. In a country facing economic difficulties and high unemployment rates, organizations often prioritize filling vacancies rather than aligning job roles with employee qualifications. This leads to inefficiencies in talent management and, ultimately, lower productivity. The data from this study indicate that organizations employing individuals in positions misaligned with their qualifications experience higher turnover rates and reduced innovation capacity. Employees who are not working in



their area of specialization are less likely to contribute to innovative solutions and more likely to disengage from their work. As a result, organizations face increased recruitment and training costs, as well as a loss of institutional knowledge due to high employee turnover. Moreover, Iraq's economic challenges, including the slow diversification of the economy, further limit opportunities for specialized graduates. The lack of alignment between education and the labor market means Refrecnces:

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Appendix

Section 1: Questionnaire on Specialization-Employment Mismatch and Career Outcomes

Demographic Information

Question	Options
1. Gender	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other/Prefer not to say
2. Age	<input type="checkbox"/> 18–25 <input type="checkbox"/> 26–35 <input type="checkbox"/> 36–45 <input type="checkbox"/> 46 and above
3. Highest Level of Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> Master's <input type="checkbox"/> Ph.D. <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify):
4. Field of Specialization	(Open text response)
5. Current Industry of Employment	(Open text response)
6. Years of Experience	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 5–10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11–20 <input type="checkbox"/> More than 20



Section 2: Alignment Between Specialization and Employment

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
7. My current job is closely aligned with my field of specialization.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. My academic qualifications are fully utilized in my current role.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. My current job position requires the same level of education that I have.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I feel that I am overqualified for my current job role.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 3: Job Satisfaction and Career Impact

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
11. I am satisfied with the tasks I am assigned at work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. The work I do gives me opportunities for professional growth and career advancement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. The mismatch between my specialization and job negatively impacts my job satisfaction.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. The misalignment between my education and my job role affects my motivation to perform.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 4: Organizational Support and Impact

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16. My organization values the specialized knowledge and skills I bring to the table.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. My organization offers training or development programs to help me apply my specialization.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I believe that if I were placed in a role more aligned with my education, I could contribute more to my organization.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 5: Future Intentions

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
19. I intend to stay in my current role for the next 2 years.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. If given the opportunity, I would prefer a job that aligns better with my educational background.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Open-Ended Questions

Question	Response
21. What are the primary challenges you face in your current role due to the mismatch between your education and job duties?	(Open text response)
22. How could your organization better utilize your specialized skills and knowledge?	(Open text response)

that highly educated individuals are often underemployed, leading to a decline in both individual and national economic growth. Previous studies have shown that countries with high levels of educational mismatch suffer from reduced innovation and economic stagnation Comyn and Olga (2020).

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the mismatch between specialization and employment significantly affects both job satisfaction and employee retention in Iraq. The study reveals a strong positive relationship between specialization-employment alignment and job satisfaction, suggesting that when employees work in roles that align with their qualifications, they report higher satisfaction and motivation. Similarly, the negative impact of specialization-employment misalignment on employee retention was evident. Employees whose job roles do not match their academic qualifications are more likely to experience job dissatisfaction, diminished motivation, and increased turnover intentions. This misalignment not only affects individual career trajectories but also has broader implications for organizational productivity and the Iraqi economy. The results emphasize the need for organizations in Iraq to rethink their recruitment and talent management strategies to ensure better alignment between job roles and the academic



qualifications of their employees. By improving this alignment, organizations can enhance job satisfaction, reduce turnover rates, and maximize the potential of their highly educated workforce. Furthermore, the lack of alignment between education and employment is a significant factor contributing to underemployment and stagnation in professional growth for many specialized graduates in Iraq. As Iraq continues to face economic challenges, particularly in diversifying its economy, addressing this mismatch becomes critical for enhancing both individual and national economic outcomes.

Authors Declaration:

Conflicts of Interest: None

We Hereby Confirm That All The Figures and Tables In The Manuscript Are Mine and Ours