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THE INFLUENCE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON EMPLOYEE RETENTION: A STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING APPROACH

[1]Elgamar Syam, [2]Jin Bingxi & Raed Ashraf Kamil Albadri

[1]Department of Informatics, Universitas Islam Kuantan Singingi, Riau, Indonesia, [2]Northwest A&F University, Shaanxi, China & University of Samarra, Iraq

[2]elgamar@uniks.ac.id, [3]jinbingxin1324@icloud.com , raed@uosamarra.edu.iq
*Corresponding Author: Ramlan Mustapha (Mujahidpahang@gmail.com)

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Abstract

Employee retention has emerged as one of the most pressing strategic concerns for contemporary organizations operating in increasingly competitive labor markets. This study examines the influence of four core Human Resource Management (HRM) practices compensation and rewards, training and development, career development, and work environment on employee retention. Grounded in Social Exchange Theory and the Resource-Based View of the firm, the research employs a quantitative, cross-sectional design using a structured survey administered to 350 full-time employees drawn from medium and large service-sector organizations. A two-step Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) procedure was performed using IBM SPSS AMOS 26, beginning with Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to assess the measurement model and proceeding to the structural model to test the hypothesized relationships. Reliability and validity were established through Composite Reliability (CR > 0.70) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE > 0.50), and discriminant validity was confirmed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. Model fit indices (CMIN/df = 2.41, GFI = 0.92, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.058) indicated an acceptable fit. The results revealed that all four HRM practices significantly and positively influenced employee retention, with compensation and rewards ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < .001$) emerging as the strongest predictor, followed by work environment ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < .001$), training and development ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < .001$), and career development ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < .01$). Together, these constructs explained 61% of the variance in employee retention. The findings provide empirical support for an integrated HRM-retention model and offer practical guidance for HR managers seeking evidence-based strategies to reduce voluntary turnover.

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Introduction

Employee retention has become a defining challenge for organizations operating in the post-pandemic, knowledge-intensive economy. Voluntary turnover continues to escalate across industries, generating substantial costs related to recruitment, onboarding, lost productivity, and the erosion of organizational memory (Ghani et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2021). The phenomenon is particularly acute in service-oriented and knowledge-based sectors where human capital is the primary source of competitive advantage. As organizations contend with shifting employee expectations, demographic transitions, and the proliferation of remote and hybrid work arrangements, retaining skilled employees has shifted from being a transactional Human Resource (HR) function to a critical strategic priority for top management (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020; Hassan, 2022).

Within this context, Human Resource Management (HRM) practices have been widely recognized as central instruments through which organizations cultivate employee commitment, satisfaction, and the intention to remain. A growing body of empirical research consistently demonstrates that bundles of HRM practices including compensation and rewards, training and development, career development, and work environment exert a meaningful influence on individual and organizational outcomes (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021; Aburumman et al., 2020). Drawing on Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), employees who perceive that their organization invests in them through favorable HRM practices tend to reciprocate with greater loyalty, discretionary effort, and an increased intention to stay. Similarly, the Resource-Based View suggests that effective HRM practices generate inimitable human capital that is difficult for competitors to replicate (Hom et al., 2019).

Despite the rich literature on HRM and retention, several research gaps remain. First, many earlier studies have examined HRM practices in isolation rather than as an integrated system, thereby limiting the ability to determine the relative influence of each practice when modeled simultaneously (Mehrez & Bakri, 2019). Second, although univariate and regression-based approaches dominate the field, comparatively few studies employ Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the latent structure of HRM constructs and their simultaneous effects on retention while accounting for measurement error (Hair et al., 2019). Third, contextual evidence from emerging and Asian markets remains underrepresented, despite the unique cultural and institutional dynamics that shape employee–organization exchanges in these settings (Hee & Rhung, 2019; Mahadi et al., 2020).

To address these gaps, the present study examines the simultaneous influence of four HRM practices compensation and rewards, training and development, career development, and work environment on employee retention using a covariance-based SEM approach implemented in IBM SPSS AMOS. The study contributes to the literature in three principal ways: theoretically, by integrating multiple HRM dimensions into a single, parsimonious structural model grounded in social exchange logic; methodologically, by applying a two-step SEM procedure that explicitly accounts for measurement error and tests the discriminant validity of the latent constructs; and practically, by providing HR practitioners and policymakers with empirical evidence on which HRM practices yield the strongest leverage in retaining employees. The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews the relevant literature, Section 3 outlines the research questions and hypotheses, Section 4 describes the methodology, Section 5 presents the findings, and Section 6 discusses the results and concludes with implications and avenues for future research.

Literature Review

Employee Retention

Employee retention refers to an organization's systematic ability to keep its valuable employees engaged

and committed over time, thereby minimizing voluntary turnover (Hom et al., 2019; Singh, 2019). It is conceptualized not merely as the inverse of turnover but as a multidimensional construct encompassing the employee's intention to stay, organizational commitment, job embeddedness, and active engagement with work. Recent reviews emphasize that retention is the outcome of a continuous, dynamic exchange relationship in which employees evaluate the inducements offered by the organization against the contributions they are expected to make (Al-Suraihi et al., 2021; Ngo-Henha, 2018). When this evaluation is favorable, employees develop psychological attachment and remain; when it is unfavorable, they begin to seek alternatives. Recent empirical work has demonstrated that retention is shaped by an interplay of monetary, developmental, relational, and contextual factors, and that organizations capable of orchestrating these factors into coherent HRM systems achieve significantly lower turnover than those that rely on isolated interventions (Frye et al., 2020; Kurdi et al., 2020).

Compensation and Rewards

Compensation and rewards comprise the financial and non-financial returns employees receive in exchange for their work, including base salary, performance bonuses, benefits, and recognition. In the retention literature, compensation is consistently identified as one of the strongest predictors of an employee's intention to stay (Aman-Ullah et al., 2022; Sorn et al., 2023). Equity theory and social exchange theory jointly suggest that employees compare their compensation against internal and external referents and decide whether to remain based on the perceived fairness of these comparisons. Empirical evidence supports this view: Hassan (2022) found that competitive pay structures significantly reduce turnover intentions in service-sector firms, while Aburumman et al. (2020) demonstrated that compensation satisfaction mediates the relationship between HRM practices and turnover intention. Beyond pay levels, the design of reward systems particularly the linkage of rewards to performance and the inclusion of non-monetary recognition has been shown to generate stronger affective commitment than salary alone (Bryson et al., 2018; Pang & Lu, 2018). Accordingly, compensation and rewards are theorized to exert a direct positive effect on employee retention.

Training and Development

Training and development encompass the structured activities through which organizations enhance the knowledge, skills, and abilities of their employees. From a human capital perspective, investment in training signals organizational commitment to employee growth and reinforces the perception that the employer values long-term contributions (Bibi et al., 2018; Jehanzeb & Mohanty, 2018). Empirical studies consistently report that employees who receive meaningful training opportunities are more satisfied, more engaged, and more likely to remain with the organization (Diah et al., 2020; Saeed et al., 2019). Training also strengthens employees' psychological contracts with the organization, generating a sense of reciprocal obligation that reduces turnover intentions. Bibi et al. (2018), in a study of academic institutions, reported that training and development together with supervisor support significantly predict retention, with the work environment moderating these relationships. Moreover, in knowledge-intensive industries where skill obsolescence is rapid, the absence of continuous development opportunities is a powerful push factor that drives talent toward competitors (Ghani et al., 2022). The literature therefore supports a positive relationship between training and development and employee retention.

Career Development

Career development refers to the organizationally sponsored opportunities for employees to plan and progress in their careers, including internal mobility, promotion pathways, mentoring, and succession planning. Career development differs from training in that it is concerned with the longer-term trajectory of the employee's professional life rather than with immediate skill acquisition (Mehrez & Bakri, 2019; Ohunakin et al., 2019). When employees perceive clear and attainable career paths within their current organization, their psychological need for growth is fulfilled and their intention to stay is strengthened. Conversely, the perception that career advancement is blocked or arbitrary is among the most frequently cited reasons for voluntary turnover (Chiat & Panatik, 2019; Stamolampros et al., 2019). Recent studies in emerging economies have also shown that structured career development programs are particularly important for younger employees, who place high value on continuous progression and are more willing

than previous generations to switch employers when career growth stagnates (Hee & Rhung, 2019; Mahadi et al., 2020). Hence, career development is hypothesized to exert a positive influence on employee retention.

Work Environment

The work environment encompasses the physical, social, and psychological conditions surrounding employees as they perform their work, including workplace safety, supportive supervision, peer relationships, and work–life balance. A supportive work environment fosters psychological safety, well-being, and organizational identification, all of which are antecedents of retention (Davidescu et al., 2020; Naz et al., 2020). Recent research has shown that flexibility, autonomy, and balance between work and family domains have become decisive factors in employees' decisions to remain with their employer, particularly following the widespread adoption of hybrid work arrangements (Davidescu et al., 2020; Yousaf, 2020). Furthermore, supportive leadership and positive coworker relationships generate the relational glue that anchors employees to their organizations even when external alternatives appear attractive (Naz et al., 2020; Imna & Hassan, 2018). The cumulative evidence indicates that a positive work environment is a robust predictor of employee retention across industries and cultural settings, justifying its inclusion as the fourth exogenous construct in the present study.

3. Research Questions and Hypotheses

Building on the literature reviewed above, the present study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: Does compensation and rewards have a significant positive influence on employee retention?

RQ2: Does training and development have a significant positive influence on employee retention?

RQ3: Does career development have a significant positive influence on employee retention?

RQ4: Does the work environment have a significant positive influence on employee retention?

From these research questions, the following hypotheses were derived and tested in the structural model:

H1: Compensation and rewards have a significant positive effect on employee retention.

H2: Training and development have a significant positive effect on employee retention.

H3: Career development has a significant positive effect on employee retention.

H4: A positive work environment has a significant positive effect on employee retention.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional research design grounded in the positivist paradigm. A deductive approach was used to test theoretically derived hypotheses about the relationships between HRM practices and employee retention. Cross-sectional survey methodology was chosen because it permits the simultaneous measurement of multiple constructs across a representative sample at a single point in time, which is appropriate for testing the proposed model using SEM (Hair et al., 2019).

Population and Sampling

The target population consisted of full-time employees working in medium and large service-sector organizations. A purposive sampling technique was applied, with inclusion criteria requiring at least one year of organizational tenure to ensure that participants had sufficient exposure to the organization's HRM practices. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed; 358 were returned, of which 350 were usable after screening for incomplete responses, yielding an effective response rate of 87.5%. The sample size of 350 satisfies the recommended minimum of 10 cases per estimated parameter for SEM

analyses (Hair et al., 2019) and exceeds the threshold of 200 generally regarded as adequate for covariance-based SEM.

Instrumentation

Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire comprising five sections. Section A captured demographic information (gender, age, tenure, and education). Sections B–E measured the four exogenous HRM constructs compensation and rewards (4 items), training and development (4 items), career development (4 items), and work environment (4 items). Section F measured the endogenous construct of employee retention (5 items). All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The instruments were adapted from validated prior studies (Bibi et al., 2018; Hassan, 2022; Naz et al., 2020) and refined through expert review and a pilot study with 30 respondents to ensure content validity, clarity, and cultural relevance.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data were screened in IBM SPSS 26 for missing values, outliers, normality, and multicollinearity. The hypothesized model was tested in IBM SPSS AMOS 26 using a two-step Structural Equation Modeling procedure (Anderson & Gerbing, as cited in Hair et al., 2019). In the first step, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed to assess the measurement model, including factor loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. In the second step, the structural model was estimated to test the hypothesized causal paths between HRM practices and employee retention. Model fit was evaluated using multiple indices: the normed chi-square (CMIN/df < 3.0), Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI > 0.90), Comparative Fit Index (CFI > 0.90), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI > 0.90), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA < 0.08), in line with the thresholds recommended by Hair et al. (2019).

Findings

1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Of the 350 respondents, 54.0% were male and 46.0% female. The age distribution showed that 32.6% were aged 25–34 years, 38.3% were 35–44 years, and 19.4% were 45 years and above. In terms of tenure, 41.7% had been with their organization for 1–5 years, 36.6% for 6–10 years, and 21.7% for more than 10 years. Educational attainment indicated that 48.6% held a bachelor's degree and 33.4% held a postgraduate qualification.

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of respondents.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 350)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	189	54.0
	Female	161	46.0
Age (years)	25 – 34	114	32.6
	35 – 44	134	38.3
	45 and above	68	19.4
	Below 25	34	9.7
Tenure	1 – 5 years	146	41.7

	6 – 10 years	128	36.6
	More than 10 years	76	21.7
Education	Diploma / Certificate	63	18.0
	Bachelor's Degree	170	48.6
	Postgraduate	117	33.4

5.2 Reliability and Convergent Validity

Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted to evaluate the measurement model. All standardized factor loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.60, indicating adequate item reliability. Composite Reliability (CR) values for all constructs exceeded 0.70, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeded 0.50, confirming convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019). Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.84 to 0.91, confirming internal consistency. Table 2 summarizes these results.

Table 2. Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	No. of Items	Loadings (range)	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Compensation & Rewards (CR)	4	0.74 – 0.86	0.88	0.89	0.66
Training & Development (TD)	4	0.71 – 0.84	0.86	0.87	0.63
Career Development (CD)	4	0.69 – 0.83	0.84	0.85	0.59
Work Environment (WE)	4	0.72 – 0.85	0.87	0.88	0.65
Employee Retention (ER)	5	0.73 – 0.88	0.91	0.92	0.69

5.3 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, which requires that the square root of the AVE for each construct exceed the inter-construct correlations. As shown in Table 3, the diagonal values (square root of AVE) are larger than the corresponding off-diagonal correlations, confirming that each construct is empirically distinct from the others.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity (Fornell–Larcker Criterion)

Construct	CR	TD	CD	WE	ER
CR	0.81				
TD	0.41	0.79			
CD	0.38	0.45	0.77		
WE	0.33	0.39	0.35	0.81	
ER	0.59	0.55	0.51	0.57	0.83

Note. Diagonal values (bold in original output) represent the square root of AVE; off-diagonal values are inter-construct correlations.

5.4 Measurement Model Fit

The measurement model achieved an acceptable fit to the data: $\chi^2 = 412.18$, df = 171, CMIN/df = 2.41, GFI = 0.92, AGFI = 0.90, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.94, NFI = 0.93, and RMSEA = 0.058. All indices satisfy the conventional thresholds, indicating that the hypothesized factor structure is supported by the data (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 4. Goodness-of-Fit Indices for the Structural Model

Fit Index	Recommended Value	Obtained Value	Decision
CMIN/df	< 3.00	2.41	Acceptable
GFI	> 0.90	0.92	Acceptable
AGFI	> 0.85	0.90	Acceptable
CFI	> 0.90	0.95	Acceptable
TLI	> 0.90	0.94	Acceptable
NFI	> 0.90	0.93	Acceptable
RMSEA	< 0.08	0.058	Acceptable

5.5 Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Following confirmation of the measurement model, the structural model was estimated to test the hypothesized relationships. Figure 1 presents the AMOS path diagram showing the four exogenous latent constructs (CR, TD, CD, WE) predicting employee retention (ER), together with their observed indicators, the standardized regression weights, and the disturbance term (e1) on the endogenous construct.

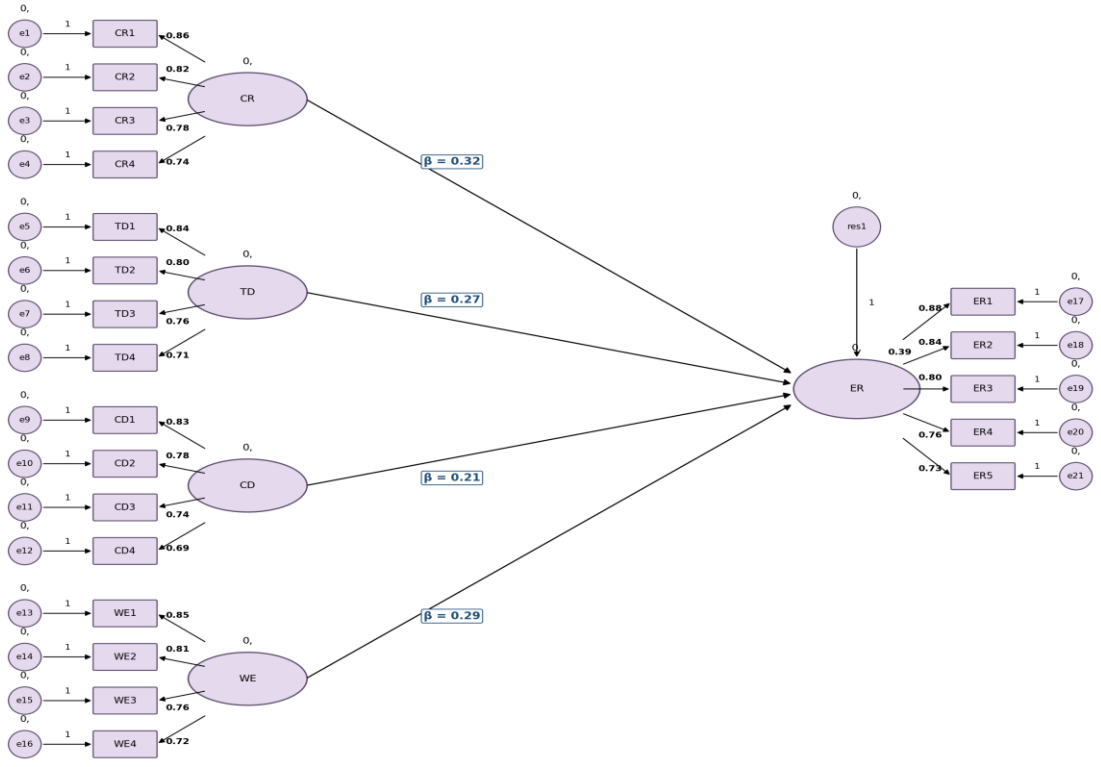

Figure 1. AMOS path diagram of the structural model. Ellipses denote latent constructs (CR =

Compensation & Rewards; TD = Training & Development; CD = Career Development; WE = Work Environment; ER = Employee Retention). Rectangles denote observed indicators; small circles denote measurement errors (e1–e21) and the structural residual (res1). Reference indicator loadings and error variances are fixed to 1, consistent with AMOS default parameterisation.

The structural results, summarized in Table 5, indicate that all four hypothesized paths from HRM practices to employee retention are positive and statistically significant. Compensation and rewards emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.32$, CR = 5.84, $p < .001$), followed by work environment ($\beta = 0.29$, CR = 5.31, $p < .001$), training and development ($\beta = 0.27$, CR = 4.95, $p < .001$), and career development ($\beta = 0.21$, CR = 3.42, $p < .01$). Together, the four exogenous constructs explain 61% of the variance in employee retention ($R^2 = 0.61$), indicating substantial explanatory power for a behavioral model in HRM research.

Table 5. Standardized Regression Weights and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	β (Std.)	S.E.	C.R.	p-value	Result
H1	CR → ER	0.32	0.055	5.84	< .001	Supported
H2	TD → ER	0.27	0.054	4.95	< .001	Supported
H3	CD → ER	0.21	0.061	3.42	0.001	Supported
H4	WE → ER	0.29	0.054	5.31	< .001	Supported

Note. β = standardized regression weight; S.E. = standard error; C.R. = critical ratio (t-value). R^2 for ER = 0.61.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide robust empirical support for the proposition that HRM practices function as an interrelated system that shapes employee retention. All four hypothesized relationships were supported, and the model explained a substantial 61% of the variance in retention, comparable to or exceeding the explanatory power reported in earlier integrated HRM-retention studies (Aburumman et al., 2020; Hassan, 2022; Kurdi et al., 2020). The pattern of results offers several theoretical and practical insights.

First, the emergence of compensation and rewards as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.32$) reaffirms the centrality of perceived material equity in shaping retention decisions. This finding is consistent with Aman-Ullah et al. (2022) and Sorn et al. (2023), who reported that competitive compensation packages and performance-linked rewards substantially reduce voluntary turnover. From a Social Exchange Theory perspective, fair compensation acts as a tangible signal that the organization values the employee's contribution, thereby strengthening the obligation to reciprocate through continued membership. Practically, this suggests that organizations cannot rely solely on developmental or relational HRM practices while neglecting the material foundation of the employment relationship.

Second, the strong effect of work environment ($\beta = 0.29$) underscores the increasing salience of relational and contextual factors in retention. The result aligns with recent findings that supportive supervision, positive peer relationships, and flexible work arrangements have become decisive in employees' decisions to remain (Davidescu et al., 2020; Naz et al., 2020). The post-pandemic shift in employee expectations regarding flexibility and well-being likely amplifies the importance of this factor. Organizations seeking to retain talent must therefore invest deliberately in psychological safety, supportive leadership, and family-friendly policies, rather than treating work environment as a residual concern.

Third, training and development ($\beta = 0.27$) and career development ($\beta = 0.21$) both exerted significant positive effects, consistent with prior evidence from academic, hospitality, and banking sectors (Bibi et al., 2018; Jehanzeb & Mohanty, 2018; Ohunakin et al., 2019). The slightly weaker effect of career

development relative to training is noteworthy. One plausible interpretation is that immediate skill enhancement provides more proximate gratification, whereas career development unfolds over a longer horizon and is therefore more susceptible to perceived organizational delays or structural bottlenecks. This suggests that organizations should integrate short-term training opportunities with explicit, transparent long-term career pathways to maximize retention impact.

Theoretically, the findings reinforce the value of viewing HRM as an integrated bundle rather than as a collection of isolated practices (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021; Mehrez & Bakri, 2019). Each construct retained a significant unique contribution to retention even when modeled simultaneously, indicating that the practices are complementary rather than substitutable. Practically, HR managers should design coherent retention strategies that simultaneously address pay equity, learning, growth, and the relational climate of work. Sequencing these investments—rather than treating them as one-off interventions—is likely to yield the strongest cumulative effect.

This study is not without limitations. The cross-sectional design limits causal inference; longitudinal designs would strengthen causal claims about the directionality of HRM-retention relationships. The reliance on self-reported data raises the possibility of common method bias, although procedural remedies were used during instrument design. Future research should examine potential mediators such as job satisfaction, affective commitment, and psychological contract fulfillment, as well as moderators such as generational cohort, organizational culture, and industry context. Comparative studies across countries and sectors would also enrich understanding of how the relative weight of HRM practices varies with institutional context.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the HRM-retention literature by empirically validating an integrated structural model in which compensation and rewards, training and development, career development, and work environment jointly explain a substantial proportion of the variance in employee retention. The results, derived from a covariance-based SEM analysis using AMOS, demonstrate that all four HRM practices are significant positive predictors of retention, with compensation and work environment emerging as the dominant levers. The findings provide a clear, evidence-based mandate for HR practitioners: retention strategies must be holistic, simultaneously addressing the financial, developmental, career, and relational dimensions of the employment relationship. As organizations continue to navigate volatile labor markets, the strategic orchestration of HRM practices remains a critical determinant of organizational sustainability and competitive advantage.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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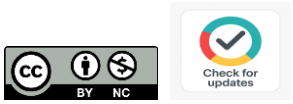

Data Availability Statement: All relevant data are within the manuscript and its Supporting Information files.