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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Review of Employee Retention Strategies in Travel Companies

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Abstract
Employee retention presents a significant challenge within human resource management, particularly in the travel industry, characterized by intense competition in the labor market, ongoing digital transformation, and shifting employee expectations. This study aims to analyze and synthesize the existing literature on strategies for employee retention by evaluating the roles of training, reward systems, and work-life balance, as well as their interrelations with work motivation and organizational commitment. A qualitative approach was adopted utilizing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology. Relevant articles published between 2019 and 2025 were identified, screened, evaluated, and synthesized in accordance with PRISMA guidelines. The findings reveal that competency-based training, equitable reward systems, and effective work-life balance policies are essential strategic practices that enhance employee motivation, bolster organizational commitment, and improve retention rates. Moreover, work motivation and organizational commitment act as critical psychological mechanisms elucidating how strategic human resource management practices influence employees' decisions to remain with an organization. This study proposes a conceptual model that integrates the Resource-Based View (RBV), Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), and Social Exchange Theory (SET) to offer a more comprehensive understanding of employee retention within the travel industry. The findings contribute to the advancement of human resource management literature and provide practical insights for organizations aiming to design sustainable employee retention strategies that enhance competitiveness and long-term performance.

Keywords
Employee Retention; Training Strategy; Reward System; Work-Life Balance; Strategic Human Resource Management.

1 | INTRODUCTION

The travel industry in Indonesia has witnessed a robust recovery in the post-COVID-19 era. Jakarta and Bogor, two prominent economic and tourism hubs, reported an 11.3% increase in travel business activities between 2022 and 2023 (BPS, 2024). According to the Jakarta Provincial Tourism Office, domestic and international travel bookings through travel agencies surged by 15% in 2023, reflecting a resurgence in tourism demand and business opportunities. Despite this positive trend, the industry continues to confront significant human resource management challenges, particularly in retaining skilled employees. Glints Indonesia (2024) reported that employee turnover in the tourism sector across the Greater Jakarta metropolitan area reached 31% in 2024, up from 26% the previous year. Experienced and competent employees increasingly seek positions with organizations that offer more competitive compensation packages, career development opportunities, and healthier working environments. These trends indicate that many travel companies have yet to implement effective human resource practices that foster long-term employee loyalty and retention.

The high turnover rate is associated with several interrelated organizational challenges. First, employees often experience job dissatisfaction due to insufficient recognition of their performance and contributions (Haitao, 2022; Mohd Zin *et al.,* 2023). Second, the lack of continuous training and professional development programs limits employees' opportunities to enhance their competencies and career prospects (Shazia Sadiq, 2024). Third, noncompetitive reward systems diminish employee motivation and negatively impact perceptions of organizational fairness (Shazia Sadiq, 2024). Additionally, poor work-life balance significantly heightens work-related stress, particularly during peak tourism seasons when workloads intensify. Limited organizational support for employees' psychological well-being further undermines work motivation (Robbins & Judge, 2019). Furthermore, transactional organizational cultures, characterized by limited inclusiveness and weak interpersonal relationships, contribute to low organizational commitment (Al-Madi *et al.,* 2017; Loor-Zambrano *et al.,* 2022). The absence of clear career advancement pathways leads to professional stagnation, while ineffective leadership hampers the development of an organizational culture that encourages employee engagement, commitment, and loyalty.

Previous studies consistently demonstrate that training, reward systems, and work-life balance are critical determinants of employee motivation and organizational commitment (Shazia Sadiq, 2024). Employee motivation serves as a fundamental driver of positive workplace behavior and organizational performance (Robbins & Judge, 2019), while organizational commitment strengthens long-term employment relationships and reduces employees' intentions to leave the organization. Nevertheless, most prior studies have examined these variables independently or have focused solely on direct relationships between two or three constructs. Very limited research has comprehensively investigated how training strategies, reward systems, and work-life balance simultaneously influence employee retention through the mediating roles of work motivation and organizational commitment, particularly within the travel industry, where service pressure, customer interaction, and employee turnover are significantly higher than in many other sectors.

This limitation highlights an important research gap. Existing literature generally emphasizes isolated relationships among human resource management practices without adequately considering the complexity of service-oriented organizations such as travel companies. Moreover, empirical evidence focusing specifically on travel agencies operating in highly competitive urban regions such as Jakarta and Bogor remains scarce. These organizations function in a dynamic business environment characterized by seasonal demand fluctuations, intensive customer service expectations, and highly mobile labor markets, rendering employee retention a particularly critical strategic issue. The current state of the literature indicates that training, reward systems, and work-life balance have emerged as the three most widely recognized Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) practices for enhancing employee retention over the past five years. Numerous studies report positive relationships between training and work motivation, reward systems and job satisfaction, and work-life balance and employee loyalty. For instance, Shazia Sadiq (2024) identified these three practices as key determinants of employee motivation and retention. However, most existing research continues to investigate each practice separately, providing only a fragmented understanding of the mechanisms through which employee retention is developed.

Based on the literature review, several important research gaps remain. First, previous studies predominantly examine the direct effects of training, reward systems, or work-life balance on employee retention without simultaneously considering the interactions among these three strategic human resource practices. Second, research investigating work motivation and organizational commitment as mediating variables remains fragmented, limiting the understanding of the psychological mechanisms linking human resource practices with employee retention. Third, the majority of empirical studies have been conducted in manufacturing, education, healthcare, and banking sectors, while research focusing on travel companies, particularly those operating in metropolitan areas such as Jakarta and Bogor, remains extremely limited. Given the unique operational characteristics, customer service demands, and workforce dynamics of the travel industry, findings from other sectors may not be fully generalizable.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrated approach to employee retention by simultaneously examining three key strategic human resource management practices—training strategy, reward system, and work-life balance—and evaluating their influence on employee retention through the mediating roles of work motivation and organizational commitment. Unlike previous studies that investigate these variables independently, this study develops a comprehensive conceptual framework that captures the interrelationships among these practices within a single integrated model. Consequently, the study contributes not only to the advancement of human resource management theory but also provides practical insights for travel companies seeking to design more effective and sustainable employee retention strategies.

The practical significance of this study is further underscored by the human resource challenges currently faced by travel companies in Jakarta and Bogor. Over the past two years, employee turnover has continued to rise, adversely affecting operational stability and service quality. Job dissatisfaction stemming from inadequate recognition, limited professional development opportunities, and poor work-life balance has substantially diminished employee loyalty. Simultaneously, declining work motivation and weak organizational commitment have further accelerated employee turnover. As employees in service industries directly influence customer experiences and organizational competitiveness, maintaining a stable and committed workforce has become a strategic priority.

Preliminary observations and previous literature identify several key managerial issues contributing to low employee retention, including inadequate continuous training programs, ineffective reward systems, poor work-life balance leading to stress and burnout, insufficient employee motivation, weak organizational commitment characterized by limited emotional attachment and loyalty, high turnover among younger and entry-level employees, the absence of an integrated strategic model linking training, rewards, and work-life balance with employee retention, and limited managerial understanding of the mediating roles of motivation and organizational commitment in retaining employees. Accordingly, this literature review aims to analyze and synthesize previous research on employee retention strategies within travel companies by examining the roles of training strategies, reward systems, and work-life balance in improving employee retention through work motivation and organizational commitment. Furthermore, the study seeks to identify recent developments in the literature (state of the art), highlight existing research gaps, and propose a conceptual model that provides a theoretical foundation for future empirical research and practical guidance for human resource management policies in the travel industry.

2 | BACKGROUND THEORY

2.1 Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View (RBV) is one of the most influential theories in strategic management, positing that an organization's sustainable competitive advantage hinges on its ability to effectively develop and manage valuable internal resources. According to Barney and Hesterly (2019), organizations achieve sustainable competitive advantage when they possess resources that are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and non-substitutable (VRIN). Resources exhibiting these characteristics enable firms to create superior value while limiting competitors' capacity to replicate their strategic capabilities. Extending this perspective, Mishra et al. (2019) argue that human resources represent one of the most critical strategic assets, as employees' knowledge, competencies, experience, and organizational expertise are inherently difficult for competitors to imitate or replace. Consequently, organizations that successfully attract, develop, and retain talented employees are better positioned to sustain long-term organizational performance.

Recent developments in RBV have expanded the theory beyond tangible assets and technological capabilities to emphasize the strategic importance of intangible resources, particularly human capital and employees' psychological capabilities. Zehir et al. (2020) contend that organizational investments in employee competency development, work motivation, and organizational commitment bolster human capital and ultimately enhance sustainable competitive advantage. Similarly, Fainshmidt et al. (2019) identify Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) practices—including employee training, reward systems, and work-life balance initiatives—as valuable intangible resources that contribute to organizational resilience and long-term competitiveness. These practices not only improve employees' skills and productivity but also foster stronger emotional attachment, engagement, and commitment, thereby reducing turnover intentions and supporting organizational sustainability.

In the present study, the Resource-Based View serves as the overarching theoretical framework to explain how training strategies, reward systems, and work-life balance function as strategic organizational investments in human capital. These human resource management practices are anticipated to enhance employees' work motivation and organizational commitment, which subsequently strengthen employee retention. From the RBV perspective, employee retention is not merely an operational human resource outcome but a strategic capability that reflects an organization's effectiveness in developing and preserving a workforce that embodies valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources. Accordingly, retaining talented employees becomes a critical mechanism through which travel companies can maintain sustainable competitive advantage in an increasingly dynamic and competitive tourism industry.

2.2 Reward System

A reward system refers to the set of financial and non-financial incentives provided by an organization to recognize and appreciate employees' contributions and performance achievements. According to Putra and Sari (2021), rewards represent organizational recognition granted to employees in return for their contributions, encompassing both monetary compensation and non-monetary forms of appreciation. Beyond acknowledging employee performance, reward systems are designed to enhance work motivation, reinforce positive behaviors, and support the retention of high-performing employees. Ningsih and Suharto (2020) describe the reward system as a strategic human resource management instrument that enables organizations to attract, motivate, and retain talented employees while strengthening their commitment to organizational goals. Likewise, Prasetyo and Haryanto (2022) argue that a fair, transparent, and well-structured reward system significantly enhances job satisfaction and promotes harmonious employer–employee relationships. Employees who perceive organizational rewards as equitable are more likely to develop trust in the organization, demonstrate stronger engagement, and remain committed over the long term. Furthermore, Lestari and Hakim (2023) emphasize that an effective reward system contributes not only to individual performance improvement but also to greater team effectiveness and overall organizational productivity. Susanti and Firmansyah (2020) further note that rewards extend beyond financial compensation to include recognition programs, promotion opportunities, professional development through training, career advancement, and flexible work arrangements. These non-financial rewards have become increasingly important as employees seek meaningful work experiences, opportunities for growth, and improved work-life integration.

Recent studies suggest that integrating both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards produces stronger motivational outcomes than relying solely on financial incentives. Wibowo and Kartika (2021) found that the combination of intrinsic rewards such as recognition, personal achievement, and career development—with extrinsic rewards—including salary, bonuses, and benefits—has a more substantial positive impact on employee motivation. Additionally, Hermawan and Putri (2023) highlight that employees' perceptions of fairness in reward allocation are critical determinants of organizational loyalty and retention. In response to ongoing digital transformation and changing workforce expectations, Ananda and Rizky (2024) observe that many organizations are adopting more flexible, technology-enabled reward systems tailored to the preferences of younger generations, particularly Millennials and Generation Z. From the perspective of the Resource-Based View (RBV), the reward system represents a strategic organizational investment aimed at retaining valuable human capital. By recognizing employees fairly and consistently, organizations strengthen work motivation, enhance organizational commitment, and reduce employees' intentions to leave. Consequently, an effective reward system serves not only as a mechanism for improving employee performance but also as a strategic capability that supports long-term employee retention and sustainable competitive advantage.

2.3 Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance refers to an individual's ability to effectively manage and balance work responsibilities with personal and family life, allowing both domains to coexist harmoniously. According to Putri and Suharti (2021), work-life balance is the capacity to fulfill professional and personal obligations in a balanced manner, thereby minimizing conflict between work and non-work roles. As organizations increasingly recognize employee well-being as a strategic priority, work-life balance has emerged as a key component of sustainable human resource management and employee retention. Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates the positive impact of work-life balance on both employee and organizational outcomes. Arifin et al. (2020) found that employees who experience a healthy balance between their work and personal lives exhibit higher productivity, greater job satisfaction, and stronger organizational loyalty. Similarly, Nurdin and Pratama (2022) reported that organizations implementing flexible work arrangements achieve significantly higher employee retention rates than those relying solely on traditional workplace practices. These findings suggest that work-life balance initiatives not only enhance employee well-being but also contribute directly to organizational performance and long-term workforce stability.

Damayanti and Rahmawati (2023) conceptualize work-life balance as comprising five key dimensions: time balance, workplace flexibility, role harmony, organizational support, and stress management. Together, these dimensions enhance employees' psychological well-being, enabling them to perform more effectively while maintaining healthy personal lives. Supporting this perspective, Setiawan and Lestari (2024) argue that work-life balance strengthens employees' social and family relationships, thereby reducing work–family conflict and improving overall quality of life. Furthermore, Hidayah and Santoso (2021) found that organizations promoting work-life balance develop a more positive employer image, particularly among Millennials and Generation Z, who increasingly value flexibility, well-being, and meaningful work experiences when selecting and remaining with an employer. From the perspective of the Resource-Based View (RBV), work-life balance represents a strategic organizational investment in human capital and employee well-being. By implementing policies that support employees' ability to balance professional and personal responsibilities, organizations foster higher levels of work motivation, strengthen organizational commitment, and improve long-term employee retention. Consequently, work-life balance should be viewed not merely as an employee welfare initiative but as a strategic capability that enhances organizational resilience, supports sustainable competitive advantage, and enables travel companies to retain valuable human resources in an increasingly competitive business environment.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework provides a structured model that illustrates the relationships among the variables examined in a study. It serves as a theoretical guide for understanding, explaining, and analyzing the research phenomenon by integrating relevant theories with empirical evidence. Typically, a conceptual framework specifies how independent variables, dependent variables, and mediating or intervening variables interact to explain the proposed relationships within the research model. Based on the theoretical review and empirical findings discussed in the preceding sections, this study develops a conceptual framework that examines the relationships among training strategy, reward system, and work-life balance as strategic human resource management practices, work motivation and organizational commitment as mediating variables, and employee retention as the ultimate outcome variable. The proposed framework is intended to provide a comprehensive theoretical foundation for understanding the mechanisms through which strategic human resource management practices contribute to employee retention in travel companies.

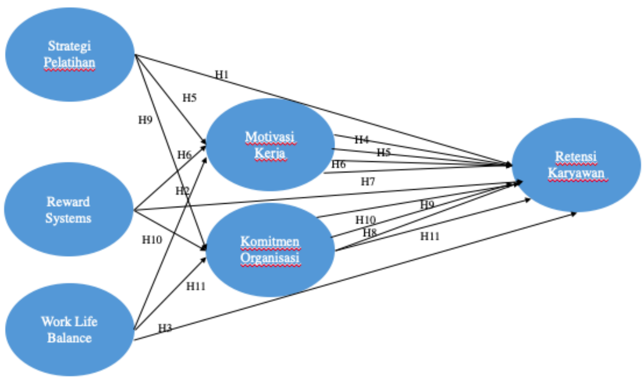

Figure 1. Research Model

3 | METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research approach utilizing the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to develop a comprehensive understanding of employee retention strategies in travel companies by examining the roles of training strategies, reward systems, and work-life balance, while considering the mediating influences of work motivation and organizational commitment. A qualitative approach was selected because the objective of this study is not to test causal relationships among variables, as is common in quantitative research, but rather to synthesize, interpret, and critically evaluate findings from previous studies. Through this approach, the study aims to generate a deeper conceptual understanding of the evolving body of knowledge in the field of human resource management. The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology was chosen for its rigorous, transparent, and replicable procedure for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing existing research evidence. According to Snyder (2019), literature reviews serve to integrate findings from multiple studies, enabling researchers to develop theoretical syntheses, identify research gaps, and propose future research directions. Similarly, Paul and Criado (2020) emphasize that a systematic literature review extends beyond summarizing previous studies by critically evaluating theoretical developments, methodological approaches, and empirical findings, thereby generating more robust scholarly contributions.

The review process followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines developed by Page et al. (2021). The review consisted of four sequential stages: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion of studies. During the identification stage, relevant literature was retrieved from several internationally recognized academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, Wiley Online Library, and Google Scholar as a supplementary source. Employing multiple databases ensured comprehensive literature coverage and enabled a broad assessment of developments in employee retention research.

The literature search was conducted using combinations of keywords directly related to the research topic, including employee retention, training strategy, reward system, work-life balance, work motivation, organizational commitment, human resource management, and travel industry. These keywords were combined using Boolean operators (AND and OR) to maximize the retrieval of studies relevant to the research objectives. All retrieved references were subsequently managed using reference management software to eliminate duplicate records and facilitate the literature screening process. The selection of articles was based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria required that studies: (1) were published in reputable national or international peer-reviewed journals; (2) were published between 2019 and 2025 to capture recent developments in the literature; (3) investigated one or more of the study variables, namely training, reward systems, work-life balance, work motivation, organizational commitment, or employee retention; (4) employed clearly described research methodologies that ensured scientific rigor; and (5) were available in full-text format to enable comprehensive analysis. Conversely, editorials, conference proceedings, industry reports, opinion articles, and publications lacking direct relevance to the research topic were excluded from the review.

Studies meeting the inclusion criteria were analyzed using content analysis, following the approach proposed by Krippendorff (2019). This analytical technique facilitated the identification of key concepts, relationships among variables, emerging research patterns, and theoretical developments associated with employee retention strategies. The analysis was conducted through a systematic process of coding, categorization, interpretation, and synthesis, enabling a comprehensive understanding of how training strategies, reward systems, work-life balance, work motivation, organizational commitment, and employee retention are interconnected within the existing literature. In addition to content analysis, this study employed thematic analysis, following the framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2021), to organize the reviewed studies into meaningful thematic categories. The thematic analysis followed six sequential phases: familiarization with the literature, generation of initial codes, identification of themes, review of themes, definition and refinement of themes, and interpretation of the findings. This approach enabled the identification of dominant research trends, similarities and differences across empirical findings, and unresolved issues that warrant further scholarly investigation.

To ensure the quality and credibility of the review, each selected article was critically evaluated based on its methodological rigor, relevance to the research objectives, publication quality, and contribution to both theory and practice in human resource management. The findings were then synthesized and presented using a descriptive and narrative approach, allowing the study to identify the state of the art, existing research gaps, and the novelty of the proposed research. These synthesized findings subsequently informed the development of a conceptual model of employee retention for travel companies that integrates training strategies, reward systems, work-life balance, work motivation, and organizational commitment within a unified theoretical framework. Through this systematic approach, the study is expected not only to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of employee retention research but also to make a meaningful conceptual contribution by proposing a theoretical framework that can serve as a foundation for future empirical studies and support the development of strategic human resource management policies within the travel industry.

4 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Training Strategy in Enhancing Employee Retention

The findings of the literature review indicate that training strategy is one of the most consistent Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) practices contributing to improved employee retention. Studies published over the past five years consistently demonstrate that organizational investment in employee competency development not only enhances technical capabilities but also strengthens employees' perceptions of organizational support (Perceived Organizational Support POS). These positive perceptions foster greater organizational loyalty and increase employees' willingness to remain with their organizations. From the perspective of the Resource-Based View (RBV), training represents a strategic investment in human capital, enabling organizations to develop resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN). Consequently, organizations that continuously invest in employee development are more likely to achieve sustainable competitive advantages than those relying primarily on physical assets or technological resources.

Alrazehi et al. (2021) found that training and development positively influence job satisfaction, which subsequently enhances employee retention within the banking sector in Yemen. Their findings suggest that training does not necessarily exert a direct effect on employee retention; instead, its effectiveness is largely mediated by employees' perceptions of increased job satisfaction. This indicates that successful training initiatives depend not only on their frequency but also on the extent to which employees perceive them as meaningful and beneficial for their professional growth. Similarly, Jehanzeb and Mohanty (2022) reported that organizations offering continuous learning and development opportunities exhibit significantly higher levels of employee engagement than those focusing primarily on financial compensation. Employees perceive participation in training programs as evidence of organizational commitment to their career development, strengthening emotional attachment and organizational loyalty. Consequently, training serves not only as a mechanism for enhancing technical competence but also as a catalyst for building positive reciprocal relationships between employees and their organizations.

Nguyen et al. (2023) further demonstrated that competency-based training has a stronger impact on employee retention than conventional training approaches. Training programs designed around specific job competencies significantly improve employees' technical skills, self-efficacy, and work motivation. As employees gain confidence in their abilities and perceive continuous professional growth, they experience higher job satisfaction and become more committed to remaining within the organization. Supporting these findings, Aboramadan et al. (2023), in their study of public-sector organizations in the Middle East, concluded that training enhances organizational commitment by strengthening employees' perceptions of organizational support. Employees who are provided with continuous learning opportunities perceive that the organization values their contributions, thereby fostering stronger emotional attachment. This enhanced affective commitment ultimately reduces employees' intentions to leave the organization. The rapid advancement of digital technologies has also transformed organizational training practices. Singh et al. (2024) reported that the adoption of digital learning, blended learning, microlearning, and Learning Management Systems (LMS) significantly improves training effectiveness by offering greater flexibility and accessibility. Digital learning enables employees to develop competencies at their own pace while allowing organizations to deliver training more efficiently and adapt rapidly to technological developments and evolving customer demands. Such flexibility is particularly important in travel companies, where employees often work under dynamic schedules, high mobility, and fluctuating operational demands.

Furthermore, Kim and Park (2024) found that investment in employee training positively influences organizational loyalty through increased psychological empowerment. Employees who are given opportunities to enhance their competencies feel more valued and perceive stronger career prospects within the organization, thereby reducing their intention to seek employment elsewhere. These findings reinforce the view that training constitutes a strategic mechanism for establishing long-term employment relationships. More recently, Alshaikh et al. (2025) demonstrated that the effectiveness of training strategies is strongly influenced by top management support and organizational culture. Training programs that are systematically designed, supported by committed leadership, and integrated into career development systems significantly enhance work motivation, organizational commitment, and long-term employee retention. In contrast, organizations that treat training merely as an administrative requirement are unlikely to achieve meaningful improvements in employee loyalty.

Overall, the synthesis of previous studies suggests that the effectiveness of training strategies depends not only on the frequency of training activities but also on the alignment between individual competency needs and organizational strategic objectives. Training programs developed through comprehensive Training Needs Analysis (TNA) consistently produce greater improvements in employee competence than generic training initiatives. These findings highlight the importance of identifying competency gaps before designing employee development programs to ensure that training investments generate meaningful value for both employees and organizations. Beyond improving employee competencies, the literature consistently demonstrates that training plays a critical role in shaping the psychological contract between employees and organizations. Opportunities to participate in professional training, certification programs, seminars, and continuing education are perceived as organizational investments in employees' long-term career development. Such perceptions enhance employees' sense of appreciation, strengthen trust in the organization, and foster higher levels of affective commitment. From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, organizational investment in employee development is reciprocated through stronger loyalty, greater organizational commitment, improved productivity, and a stronger intention to remain with the organization.

Within the travel industry, training strategies possess distinctive characteristics compared with those in manufacturing or public-sector organizations. Because service quality depends heavily on employee competence, training extends beyond technical skill development to encompass service excellence, interpersonal communication, negotiation skills, customer complaint handling, digital literacy, electronic reservation systems, digital marketing, and knowledge of global tourism trends. These competencies directly influence customer experience and ultimately determine organizational competitiveness in an increasingly dynamic tourism market. Changing workforce demographics also influence the effectiveness of organizational training strategies. Millennials and Generation Z increasingly regard continuous learning opportunities, career development, flexible learning arrangements, and professional certification as critical factors when choosing and remaining with an employer. Organizations that fail to satisfy these expectations are more likely to experience higher employee turnover, even when offering competitive financial compensation. Consequently, training has evolved into an essential component of employer branding, enabling organizations to position themselves as employers that actively support employee growth and career advancement. Nevertheless, the literature also identifies several challenges in implementing effective training strategies. Many organizations continue to perceive training as a cost center rather than a strategic investment, resulting in reduced training budgets during periods of financial uncertainty. Moreover, training effectiveness is frequently evaluated solely through participant satisfaction rather than through measurable changes in employee behavior, performance, or organizational productivity. Such limitations prevent organizations from fully realizing the strategic benefits of employee development initiatives.

4.1.2 Reward System in Enhancing Employee Retention

The synthesis of recent international studies demonstrates that the reward system has become one of the most influential strategic practices in human resource management for enhancing employee motivation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee retention. Over the past decade, the concept of organizational rewards has undergone a substantial transformation. Whereas rewards were traditionally associated primarily with financial compensation, such as salaries, bonuses, and monetary incentives, contemporary research suggests that reward systems have evolved into holistic frameworks integrating both financial and non-financial rewards. This paradigm shift has been driven largely by changing workforce expectations, particularly among Millennials and Generation Z, who increasingly value career development opportunities, workplace flexibility, organizational recognition, and a supportive work environment alongside competitive compensation.

Alrazehi et al. (2021) found that an effective reward system positively influences job satisfaction, which subsequently enhances employee retention. Their study revealed that rewards distributed in a fair and transparent manner strengthen employees' positive perceptions of the organization, thereby fostering long-term organizational loyalty. Conversely, organizations that implement inconsistent or inequitable reward practices are more likely to experience higher levels of turnover intention because employees perceive that their contributions are not adequately recognized or appreciated. Similarly, Suprayitno (2024) reported that competitive compensation packages, combined with work-life balance initiatives and career development opportunities, significantly improve employee retention. These findings indicate that reward systems should not be viewed in isolation but rather as integral components of a broader strategic human resource management framework. Employees are more likely to remain loyal when organizational rewards are complemented by opportunities for personal growth and a supportive work environment.

Agarwal and Gupta (2022) further demonstrated that organizations adopting a Total Reward Strategy achieve significantly higher employee retention than those relying solely on financial compensation. A comprehensive reward strategy encompasses competitive salaries, performance bonuses, healthcare benefits, promotion opportunities, career advancement, employee recognition, and flexible work arrangements. According to their findings, combining these financial and non-financial elements generates greater job satisfaction because it simultaneously addresses employees' economic needs and psychological aspirations. Comparable findings were reported by Khalid et al. (2023), who emphasized that non-financial rewards—including employee recognition, appreciation from supervisors, opportunities for professional training, and career promotion—are equally important as financial incentives in enhancing employee motivation. Their research suggests that employees seek more than financial rewards; they also desire acknowledgment of their contributions and meaningful recognition of their achievements. When organizations successfully fulfill these expectations, employees develop stronger emotional attachment and greater organizational commitment.

Bibi et al. (2023) further identified organizational justice as a critical determinant of reward system effectiveness. Employees evaluate not only the amount of reward they receive but also its fairness relative to their contributions and compared with the rewards received by their colleagues. When reward allocation is perceived as equitable, employees demonstrate significantly higher levels of job satisfaction, motivation, and organizational commitment. Conversely, perceptions of inequity often result in dissatisfaction, workplace conflict, and increased turnover intention. The ongoing digital transformation has also reshaped organizational reward practices. Rao and Prasad (2024) explained that technological advancements have facilitated the emergence of digital reward systems, enabling organizations to provide personalized and flexible recognition through digital platforms. These systems include real-time recognition programs, point-based reward mechanisms, digital badges, employee recognition platforms, and performance-based incentive systems with transparent monitoring capabilities. Such innovations have been shown to increase employee participation, strengthen intrinsic motivation, and cultivate a more engaging and performance-oriented organizational culture.

Kim et al. (2025) further observed that the effectiveness of reward systems is strongly influenced by organizational leadership style. Organizations characterized by transformational leadership tend to utilize reward systems more effectively than those operating under predominantly transactional leadership approaches. In transformational settings, rewards are perceived not merely as economic incentives but also as meaningful recognition of employees' contributions toward achieving organizational objectives. Consequently, reward systems become important mechanisms for strengthening psychological bonds between leaders and employees. Overall, the literature indicates that reward systems exert a broad influence on organizational behavior. Beyond increasing work motivation, effective reward systems foster a stronger sense of belonging, enhance affective organizational commitment, improve job satisfaction, and reduce employees' intentions to leave the organization. These findings are consistent with Social Exchange Theory, which argues that relationships between employees and organizations are built upon reciprocal exchanges. When organizations recognize and reward employee contributions fairly, employees reciprocate through greater loyalty, higher productivity, and stronger organizational commitment. From the perspective of the Resource-Based View (RBV), reward systems represent strategic investments aimed at retaining valuable human capital. Organizations capable of designing reward systems that are fair, transparent, and oriented toward employee development are more successful in retaining highly competent employees than organizations focusing primarily on cost efficiency. Therefore, reward systems should be regarded not merely as compensation mechanisms but as long-term strategic investments that contribute to sustainable competitive advantage.

Within the travel industry, reward systems possess unique characteristics that distinguish them from those in manufacturing or public-sector organizations. Employee performance in travel companies is evaluated not only by sales achievements but also by service quality, customer satisfaction, complaint resolution, relationship management with business partners, and the overall customer experience. Consequently, effective reward systems should extend beyond financial bonuses to include service excellence awards, innovation awards, international training opportunities, professional certifications, and transparent career advancement programs. Such comprehensive recognition strengthens intrinsic motivation while reinforcing employees' commitment to the organization. Despite these benefits, the literature also highlights several challenges in reward system implementation. Many organizations continue to adopt standardized reward practices without considering differences in employee characteristics, career stages, or individual preferences. However, research consistently demonstrates that employees' reward preferences vary according to age, organizational culture, career level, and job characteristics. Younger employees generally value workplace flexibility, continuous learning opportunities, and career development, whereas senior employees tend to prioritize income stability, healthcare benefits, and long-term career security. Consequently, organizations are increasingly encouraged to adopt personalized reward systems that accommodate diverse employee expectations and maximize retention outcomes.

4.1.3 Work-Life Balance in Enhancing Employee Retention

The synthesis of recent international studies indicates that work-life balance (WLB) has emerged as one of the most influential determinants of employee retention across a wide range of industries. The transformation of work practices following the COVID-19 pandemic, the rapid adoption of digital technologies, and the expansion of flexible working arrangements have fundamentally reshaped employees' expectations of their employers. Employees no longer remain with an organization solely because of competitive financial compensation; they increasingly value organizations that enable them to balance professional responsibilities with personal and family life. Consequently, work-life balance has become a core component of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), contributing significantly to employee loyalty, psychological well-being, and long-term workforce retention.

Costa et al. (2024) developed a strategic talent retention framework for technology-based organizations and identified work-life balance as one of the strongest determinants of employees' decisions to remain with their employers. In addition to competitive compensation, their study highlighted workplace flexibility, psychological safety, supportive organizational climates, and opportunities to maintain a healthy balance between work and personal life as critical factors influencing employee retention. These findings suggest that organizations should view work-life balance not merely as an employee welfare initiative but as an essential component of their long-term talent retention strategy. Similarly, Mosquera and Soares (2025) found that structured onboarding programs, when combined with work-life balance policies, foster stronger long-term relationships between employees and organizations. Their study demonstrated that positive onboarding experiences enhance employees' sense of organizational belonging, improve psychological well-being, and significantly reduce voluntary turnover during the early stages of employment. These findings underscore the importance of integrating work-life balance initiatives into broader human resource management practices from the very beginning of the employee lifecycle.

Hussain et al. (2025) likewise reported that healthy work environments and organizational policies supporting work-life balance significantly enhance employee commitment and retention. From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, employees perceive organizational concern for their well-being as a form of organizational support, which they reciprocate through greater loyalty, stronger work engagement, and long-term organizational commitment. Consequently, work-life balance benefits not only individual employees but also provides substantial strategic advantages for organizations by promoting workforce stability and reducing turnover. Further evidence was provided by Sahed (2025), who found that the work environment strengthens the relationship between human resource management practices—including training, compensation, and performance appraisal—and employee retention. Organizations that cultivate environments supportive of work-life balance enhance the effectiveness of their overall HRM strategies in retaining talented employees. These findings indicate that work-life balance should not be viewed as an isolated practice but rather as a complementary element that reinforces other strategic human resource initiatives.

The Indeed Work Wellbeing Report (2025) further emphasizes that employee well-being is influenced by four key dimensions: happiness, purpose, job satisfaction, and stress management. Organizations capable of fostering these dimensions consistently achieve higher levels of employee retention and organizational productivity than those neglecting employees' psychological well-being. These findings reinforce the notion that work-life balance extends beyond regulating working hours and encompasses the overall quality of employees' work experiences. Likewise, research published by the International Workplace Group (2025) revealed that hybrid work arrangements and workplace flexibility have become among the most influential factors affecting employees' decisions to join and remain with an organization. Flexible working arrangements were found to improve job satisfaction, reduce burnout, strengthen work-life balance, and ultimately contribute to higher employee retention.

Recent studies examining post-pandemic work patterns have also highlighted the importance of social integration in achieving effective work-life balance. Research involving multinational technology companies found that remote working arrangements, when not accompanied by adequate organizational integration and social support, may increase turnover risk, particularly among newly recruited employees. Conversely, organizations that successfully combine workplace flexibility with meaningful social interaction and organizational connectedness experience significantly higher employee retention. These findings suggest that work-life balance should be understood holistically as the integration of flexible work arrangements, organizational support, and positive workplace relationships. Overall, the literature consistently demonstrates that work-life balance exerts a significant positive influence on work motivation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee retention. Employees who successfully balance their professional responsibilities with their personal lives generally experience lower stress levels, better mental health, higher productivity, and stronger organizational loyalty. Conversely, poor work-life balance often leads to emotional exhaustion, work-family conflict, reduced job satisfaction, and increased turnover intention.

From the perspective of the Resource-Based View (RBV), work-life balance represents a strategic organizational investment in building healthy, productive, and sustainable human capital. Organizations capable of creating supportive work environments that prioritize employee well-being are better positioned to retain highly qualified employees because they cultivate valuable human resources that are difficult for competitors to replicate. Therefore, work-life balance should be regarded not merely as an employee welfare program but as a strategic organizational capability that contributes directly to sustainable competitive advantage. Within the travel industry, implementing work-life balance initiatives is particularly important because of the sector's unique operational characteristics. Employees frequently work irregular schedules, weekends, public holidays, and extended service hours while managing high customer interaction and operational demands. These conditions expose employees to elevated levels of occupational stress and emotional fatigue if not supported by appropriate organizational policies. Consequently, travel companies should implement initiatives such as flexible scheduling, equitable shift rotation, mental health programs, family-friendly policies, and digital technologies that improve operational efficiency. Such initiatives not only enhance employee well-being but also strengthen work motivation, organizational commitment, and long-term employee retention. The literature also suggests that employees increasingly evaluate organizations based on the extent to which they support overall quality of life rather than solely on financial compensation. Modern employees seek workplaces that promote flexibility, autonomy, psychological safety, and personal fulfillment. Organizations that successfully integrate these elements into their human resource strategies are more likely to establish strong employer brands, attract highly talented individuals, and retain valuable employees in increasingly competitive labor markets.

4.2 Discussion

The findings of this systematic literature review demonstrate that training strategies, reward systems, and work-life balance constitute the three most influential dimensions of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) in enhancing employee retention. Rather than operating independently, these practices interact synergistically to create an integrated human resource management system that strengthens employee commitment and organizational sustainability. Consistent with Cooke, Dickmann, and Parry (2022), the findings suggest that organizations implementing integrated SHRM practices achieve higher levels of employee retention because such practices simultaneously improve employee capability, motivation, and organizational attachment. Consequently, employee retention should be viewed not as the outcome of a single HR initiative but as the product of a comprehensive and strategically aligned human resource management system.

From the authors' perspective, these findings reflect a significant shift in the philosophy of human resource management. Traditional organizations primarily regarded employees as operational resources, with management focused on maximizing labor efficiency and minimizing employment costs. Contemporary organizations, however, increasingly recognize employees as strategic assets that require continuous investment and long-term development. This perspective aligns closely with the Resource-Based View (RBV) proposed by Barney and Hesterly (2019), which argues that sustainable competitive advantage is created through strategic resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. Human capital that is continuously developed through training, supported by equitable reward systems, and maintained through employee well-being initiatives becomes an organizational capability that competitors cannot easily replicate. Therefore, investments in employee development should be considered long-term strategic investments rather than operational expenditures.

The review further indicates that training contributes to employee retention not only by improving technical competencies but also by strengthening work motivation, organizational commitment, and employees' confidence in their future career prospects. Noe et al. (2021) argued that competency-based training enhances both individual performance and organizational commitment by equipping employees with skills that directly support organizational objectives. Similarly, Alrazehi et al. (2021) found that the influence of training on employee retention is largely indirect, operating through increased job satisfaction rather than through direct effects alone. These findings suggest that organizations should move beyond evaluating training solely by participation rates or completion statistics. Instead, training effectiveness should be assessed based on its contribution to career development, psychological empowerment, and employees' perceptions of organizational support. This perspective is particularly relevant for travel companies, where service quality depends heavily on employee competence and customer interaction. Employees who continuously develop their professional capabilities are better prepared to respond to changing customer expectations, technological innovations, and the increasing complexity of tourism services. Consequently, integrating training programs with career development pathways, professional certification, leadership development, and digital capability enhancement may significantly strengthen employee commitment while simultaneously improving organizational competitiveness.

The literature also demonstrates that contemporary reward systems extend far beyond traditional financial compensation. Modern employees increasingly evaluate organizations based on the overall value proposition they receive, including career advancement opportunities, recognition, workplace flexibility, learning opportunities, and organizational appreciation. Studies by Figueiredo et al. (2025) and Larik and Mahar (2025) consistently indicate that organizations implementing Total Reward Systems experience substantially higher levels of employee satisfaction and retention because they address both economic and psychological employee needs. From the authors' perspective, this transformation reflects evolving workforce expectations, particularly among Millennials and Generation Z. Unlike previous generations, younger employees frequently prioritize meaningful work experiences, continuous learning, organizational recognition, and flexible career opportunities alongside competitive salaries. As a result, organizations should reconsider traditional compensation models by integrating financial rewards with personalized recognition programs, career development opportunities, international training, flexible working arrangements, and transparent promotion systems. Such comprehensive reward strategies contribute not only to employee retention but also to employer branding and long-term organizational attractiveness.

Work-life balance emerged as another critical determinant of sustainable employee retention. The literature consistently demonstrates that organizations promoting flexibility, psychological well-being, supportive leadership, and healthy working environments experience significantly lower turnover intentions than organizations focusing exclusively on financial incentives. These findings are particularly significant in the post-pandemic workplace, where employees increasingly prioritize autonomy, flexibility, and mental well-being alongside career advancement. For travel companies, these issues are especially relevant because employees often work under irregular schedules, seasonal demand fluctuations, extensive customer interactions, and considerable emotional labor. Without appropriate organizational support, these working conditions may lead to burnout, emotional exhaustion, and declining organizational commitment. Therefore, organizations should implement comprehensive work-life balance initiatives, including flexible scheduling, equitable workload distribution, employee assistance programs, mental health support, family-friendly policies, and digital technologies that improve operational efficiency while reducing unnecessary work-related stress.

An important contribution emerging from this literature review concerns the role of work motivation and organizational commitment as psychological mechanisms linking HRM practices to employee retention. Previous quantitative studies have frequently treated these variables merely as mediators within statistical models. However, the present review suggests that motivation and organizational commitment should be understood more broadly as dynamic psychological processes through which employees interpret organizational support and determine whether to maintain long-term employment relationships. This interpretation is strongly supported by Social Exchange Theory, which explains that reciprocal relationships develop when employees perceive organizational investments as genuine expressions of support and appreciation. Organizations that provide meaningful learning opportunities, equitable reward systems, supportive leadership, and healthy work environments encourage employees to reciprocate through stronger organizational commitment, increased work engagement, improved performance, and greater loyalty. Thus, employee retention should be understood as the cumulative outcome of continuous reciprocal exchanges rather than as a direct consequence of isolated HR policies.

5 | CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

This study analyzed and synthesized the evolution of employee retention strategies in travel companies through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). The findings indicate that employee retention results from the interaction among multiple Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) practices, specifically training strategies, reward systems, and work-life balance. Work motivation and organizational commitment serve as key psychological mechanisms that enhance employee loyalty and long-term attachment to the organization. Training has evolved into a strategic investment in sustainable human capital development, aligning with organizational needs and supporting digital transformation. Effective training initiatives significantly enhance work motivation, strengthen organizational commitment, and improve perceptions of organizational support. Consequently, training should be viewed as a strategic tool for employee retention rather than merely an operational activity. Reward systems have shifted from a focus on financial compensation to a comprehensive total reward approach, integrating financial incentives with non-financial recognition and career development opportunities. The effectiveness of these systems relies on perceptions of fairness and transparency. Organizations that implement equitable reward systems are more likely to retain competent employees and strengthen commitment. Work-life balance is highlighted as a strategic component of modern HR management, especially post-pandemic. Organizations promoting a healthy balance through flexible arrangements and support initiatives report higher employee loyalty and retention. This balance not only benefits mental health but also enhances productivity and resilience. The study reinforces the Resource-Based View (RBV), illustrating that human resources are strategic assets capable of generating competitive advantage through integrated SHRM practices. It contributes to literature by combining perspectives from SHRM, Social Exchange Theory, and Organizational Behavior. Practically, travel companies should adopt holistic HR management strategies integrating competency-based training, fair reward systems, and work-life balance policies to enhance motivation and commitment. Future research should empirically test the proposed framework across various industries and contexts to refine its applicability and understanding of employee retention strategies in modern workplaces.

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