

Reward Strategy, Employee Development Towards Employee Retention Through Job Satisfaction as an Intervening Variable and SOPs as a Mediation Variable in Line with SDGs No.10 to Reduce Inequality

Supardi ^{a,1,*}, Sriyono ^{b,2}, Muhammad Ashar ^{b,3}

^a Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Jl. Mojopahit, Celep, Kec. Sidoarjo, Kabupaten Sidoarjo, Jawa Timur 61271, Indonesia

^b Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Jl. Mojopahit, Celep, Kec. Sidoarjo, Kabupaten Sidoarjo, Jawa Timur 61271, Indonesia

¹ supardi@umsida.ac.id*; ² sriyono@umsida.ac.id

* corresponding author

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ABSTRACT

It examined the relationship between objective rewards and development methodologies and employee retention, mediation of job satisfaction, and mediation by standard operating procedures (SOP). This study specifically relates to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 10, which seeks to reduce inequality whereby just and fair retention practices create an environment inclusive and fair work. The methodology for this research was quantitative - surveys were used as the main instrument for the collection of data. The data were collected from 92 respondents at the Asam-Asam PLTU in Tanah Laut Regency, South Kalimantan. Path analysis was used for testing the formulated hypotheses. Performance appraisal results revealed that employee rewards and development methodologies influence job satisfaction and employee retention. Job satisfaction is a major encroaching variable because higher job satisfaction increases the likelihood that employees will stay in the organization. Furthermore, the implementation of transparent and equitable SOPs mediated the relationship between management strategies and employee retention, thereby ensuring that organizational practices were coherent and minimizing disparities among employees. These results imply that effective employee retention depends not only on financial incentives but also on perceptions of fairness and equal opportunity, which are facilitated by robust SOP. In summary, it recommends that for the organizations to attain higher employee retention rates, they'll have to measure accordance with SDG 10 by instituting systematic reward and development strategies under transparent SOPs, targeted at comprehensive job satisfaction improvement.

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1. Introduction

Employee retention is influenced by a variety of factors that organizations must understand to maintain a stable workforce. Key aspects include financial incentives, career development

opportunities, and the overall work environment. By addressing these factors, organizations can increase employee satisfaction and commitment, ultimately leading to increased retention rates. As stated by several researchers, the need to provide financial rewards and compensation in the form of competitive salaries and benefits is very important to retain employees, because it directly impacts job satisfaction and loyalty. Organizations that offer attractive remuneration frameworks are more likely to retain skilled personnel [1].

PLTU Asam-Asam in Tanah Laut Regency, South Kalimantan implements career development and training. In line with Opportunities for professional growth, such as training and career advancement, significantly affect retention [2]. Employees are more likely to stay with organizations that invest in their development and provide a clear career path [3]. Work Environment and Organizational Culture strongly influence Employee Retention as a positive work environment, characterized by supportive relationships with colleagues and management, increases employee retention [4]. Whereas an organizational culture that promotes inclusivity and respect is essential to foster employee loyalty [1].

Recognition of employee contributions and effective performance management practices are essential for maintaining engagement and commitment [5]. Whereas Organizations that implement a strong reward and recognition system see higher retention rates [5]. While these factors are crucial for retention, it's also important to consider that some employees may leave for personal reasons or external opportunities that are more aligned with their career goals. As such, organizations must remain adaptable and responsive to the evolving needs of their workforce. As per Hierarchy Theory, Maslow's needs can significantly improve human resource management (HRM) by aligning employee motivation with organizational goals. This theory argues that meeting employee needs from basic physiological to self-actualization can lead to increased job satisfaction and retention [6]. HRM can leverage this framework to create a supportive work environment that effectively meets these needs. Retention Indicators are a) physiological needs (salary, benefits), b) security (job security), c) social (good relationships with colleagues), d) rewards (recognition of performance), to e) self-actualization (opportunities to develop and reach their full potential).

An effective reward strategy is essential to improve employee motivation and performance in the organization. By implementing a well-structured reward system, organizations can foster a culture of recognition and reward, which directly correlates with increased employee engagement and productivity. The following sections outline the key aspects of how rewards strategies can achieve these outcomes. Types of Rewards by providing Financial Rewards in the form of monetary incentives such as bonuses and salary increases have been proven to significantly increase employee motivation and performance [7]. Non-Financial Rewards in the form of recognition programs, career development opportunities, and a supportive work environment also play an important role in increasing job satisfaction and loyalty [8], [9]. Organizations that adjust their rewards strategies to meet employee preferences tend to see higher levels of motivation and commitment [10].

In contrast, while rewards strategies are effective, they must be balanced with appropriate disciplinary actions to ensure a holistic approach to employee management. This dual strategy can help maintain discipline while still promoting motivation and performance. Researchers in measuring reward strategies using Social Exchange Theory: This theory sees the relationship between employees and the organization as a process of mutual exchange [11]. The indicators of the reward strategy are a) Salary and Wage Levels, b) Performance-Based Incentives, c) Benefits and Benefits, d) Recognition and Appreciation, e) Work Environment.

Employee development is essential for organizations that aim to improve performance and productivity. By investing in training and development programs, organizations can significantly improve employee skills, motivation, and overall work efficiency. This multifaceted approach not only encourages individual growth but also contributes to the organization's competitive advantage in the market. Skills and Competency Enhancement in line with researchers are: a) Employee development programs focus on improving technical and non-technical skills, such as leadership and communication [12]. b) Training methods, including remote and AI-based training, have been shown to improve productivity and job performance [13], [14].

Increases Motivation and Job Satisfaction: a) Well-structured development initiatives lead to higher employee satisfaction and motivation, which is essential for maintaining a productive workforce [15]. b) Employees who feel supported in their development are more likely to contribute

positively to the organization's goals [16]. Organizational Efficiency and Competitive Advantage: a) Effective employee development strategies result in increased organizational efficiency and innovation, providing competitive advantage [15]. b) Regular evaluation of development programs ensures continuous improvement and alignment with organizational goals [12].

Instead, some organizations may overlook the importance of employee development, instead focusing on short-term profits. This can lead to a stagnant workforce and reduced competitive capacity in the long run, highlighting the need for a balanced approach to employee growth and organizational strategy. The application of Albert Bandura's (SLT) social learning theory in employee development programs can significantly improve self-efficacy and employee performance. By utilizing observational learning, self-regulation, and cognitive processes, organizations can create an environment that encourages learning and motivation. This approach not only enhances the individual's abilities but also contributes to the overall effectiveness of the organization [17]. Employee Development Indicators are: a) Increased sales, b) Increased output per employee, c) Decreased error rate, d) Decreased recruitment costs, e) Decreased operational costs.

Job satisfaction is influenced by a variety of factors, including motivation, work environment, and organizational culture. Companies can leverage job satisfaction theory to increase employee motivation by implementing strategies that address these key aspects. Key Factors Affecting Job Satisfaction: a) Motivation: There is a strong correlation between motivation and job satisfaction, where motivated employees tend to be more satisfied with their jobs [18], [19]. b) Work environment: A positive work atmosphere, characterized by supportive management and collaboration, significantly increases job satisfaction [20]. c) Compensation and Benefits: Fair and equitable compensation, along with comprehensive benefits, plays a crucial role in increasing employee satisfaction [21], [22]. d) Career Development Opportunities: Providing an avenue for skill development and career advancement fosters a sense of loyalty and satisfaction among employees [18]. Application of Job Satisfaction Theory: a) Specific Approaches: Organizations should adopt tailored strategies that take into account individual differences in motivational needs and job satisfaction preferences [18]. b) Continuous Improvement: Regular assessments of employee satisfaction and motivation levels can help organizations adjust their strategies effectively [19]. c) Incentive Mechanisms: Implementing fair incentive policies can stimulate employee enthusiasm and loyalty, further increasing job satisfaction [22].

While these strategies can significantly improve job satisfaction, it's important to recognize that not all employees can respond in the same way to these interventions. Individual differences in values and expectations can lead to varying levels of satisfaction, which requires a nuanced approach to employee engagement. Indicators of job satisfaction are: a) Attitude towards Work, b) Attitude towards Salary, c) Attitude towards Superiors and Colleagues, d) Attendance Rate, e) Performance and Productivity.

Implementing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in an organization offers many benefits that improve operational efficiency, consistency, and quality. SOPs serve as structured guidelines that streamline processes, reduce errors, and ensure compliance with industry standards. The following sections outline the main advantages of implementing SOPs. [23]. While the benefits of SOPs are significant, some organizations may struggle with their implementation due to a lack of awareness or resources. This can lead to inconsistent application and reduced effectiveness, highlighting the need for ongoing training and support in SOP management. [24]. The success of SOP implementation is not only measured by its existence, but also by how effective the SOP is in influencing organizational performance [25]. Here are some indicators that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of SOPs: a) Increased Time Efficiency, b) Decreased Error Rate, c) Increased Productivity, d) Employee Compliance Rate, e) New Employee Adaptability.

Problem formulation: 1) Does the reward strategy have a direct impact on employee retention? 2) Does employee development have a direct influence on employee retention? 3) What is the role of job satisfaction in mediating the relationship between reward strategy and employee retention? 4) What is the role of job satisfaction in mediating the relationship between employee development and employee retention? 5) Do SOPs moderate the relationship between reward strategies and employee retention? 6) Do SOPs moderate the relationship between employee development and employee retention?

Rewards strategies play a crucial role in improving job satisfaction and employee retention by aligning organizational goals with employee needs and preferences. An effective reward system, which includes both financial and non-financial incentives, can significantly improve motivation, engagement, and overall workplace morale. The following sections outline key aspects of how reward strategies contribute to these outcomes. Types of Reward Strategies: a) Financial Rewards: Bonuses, salary increases, and profit-sharing plans directly impact employee motivation and performance, leading to higher retention rates [26]. b) Non-Financial Rewards: Recognition programs, professional development opportunities, and work-life balance initiatives fulfill intrinsic motivations, fostering long-term loyalty and satisfaction [27], [28].

Impact on Job Satisfaction: a) Alignment with Employee Values: Customized reward strategies that reflect employees' personal values and culture increase job satisfaction and engagement [26]. Feedback and Continued Recognition: Regular recognition of employees' contributions boosts morale and reinforces a positive work environment [26]. Reducing Turnover Intention: a) Motivation as a Mediator: Effective reward management increases motivation, which in turn reduces turnover intentions, creating a more stable workforce [29]. Equality in the Reward System: The perceived fairness in the award is essential; An unfair system can lead to dissatisfaction and increased turnover [26]. While rewards strategies are essential for improving job satisfaction and retention, it's important to recognize that they should be part of a broader organizational culture that values employee input and well-being. A holistic approach that combines rewards with supportive management practices can yield the best results.

The integration of mediation and intervention variables to understand the role of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in improving job satisfaction and retention is a complex process that involves examining various organizational and individual factors. The given study explores these different aspects of integration, highlighting the importance of leadership, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction as key mediators in the relationship between organizational practices and employee outcomes. These studies collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of employee retention and satisfaction, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach that considers mediation and intervention variables.

1) Mediation Variables

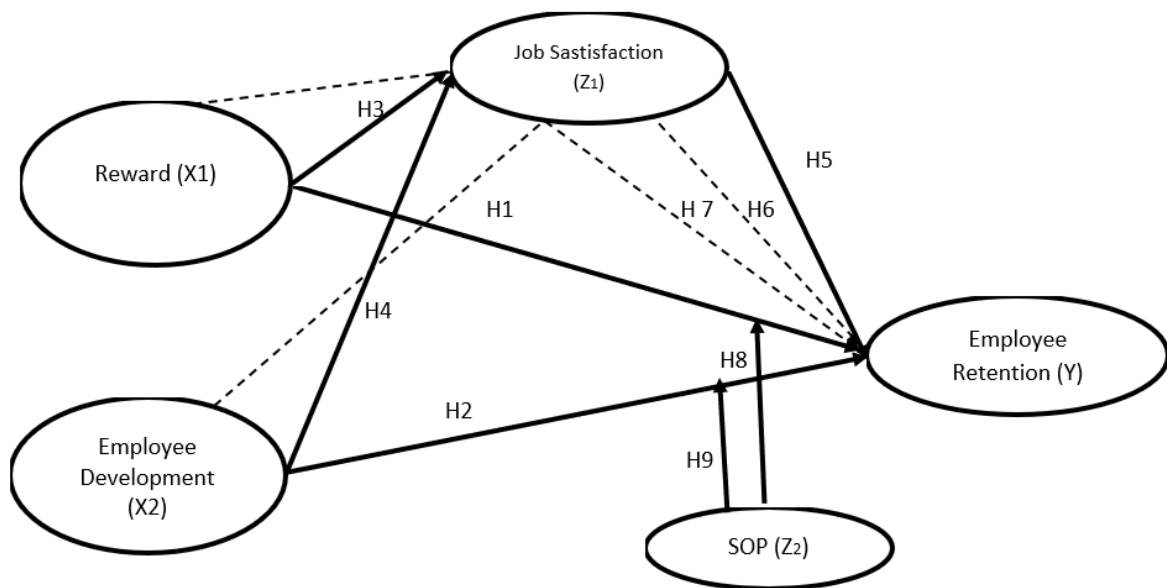
Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment: Both are identified as important mediators in the relationship between leadership practices and employee retention. For example, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) positively affects job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which in turn affects employee intent and retention [30]. Coping strategies: In a flexible work environment, coping strategies mediate the relationship between job resources and employee retention, suggesting that a supportive work environment improves job satisfaction and retention through effective stress management [31].

2) Intervention Variables

Role Stress: The application of the ASCA National Model in school counseling suggests that role ambiguity and non-conformity mediate the relationship between model implementation and job satisfaction, suggesting that clear role definitions can improve job satisfaction [32]. Organizational Socialization and Oversight: These factors predict organizational commitment and job satisfaction, which are critical to reducing turnover intentions, highlighting the role of organizational culture and leadership in shaping the employee experience [33].

While the study provides valuable insights into the mediating variables and interventions that affect job satisfaction and retention, they also suggest that the dynamic nature of these relationships warrants ongoing research. The nature of the work environment and evolving leadership style require ongoing examination of how these variables interact to influence employee outcomes. This perspective encourages organizations to adopt a systems approach, considering individual and organizational factors in their strategies to improve job satisfaction and retention.

Conceptual Frame Work



2. Method

This study employed a survey method with a quantitative approach. This approach was chosen because the study aimed to examine the influence between variables through hypothesis testing based on numerical data obtained from respondents. The survey method is used with the distribution of questionnaires as the main data collection instrument.

The population in this study is all employees who work in the organizations studied, with a total of 92 people. Given the population size of less than 100 respondents, this study used census (total sampling) techniques, so that the entire population was used as a research sample. Thus, the data obtained can describe the condition as a whole without any bias due to sample selection. Data analysis was carried out using a Structural Equation Modeling approach based on Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS software.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

Based on the results of the analysis using Partial Least Square (PLS), a structural model was obtained that describes the influence between research variables, namely Reward, Employee Development, SOP, Job Satisfaction, and Employee Retention. This model shows the contribution of each construct to endogenous variables, either directly or indirectly. In the outer part of the model, the indicators of each variable are displayed along with the loading factor value which is all above 0.70, so it can be concluded that the indicator has good convergent validity. Meanwhile, in the inner model, the coefficient of the path that connects the constructs is drawn, making it easier to see the direction and strength of the influence between variables.

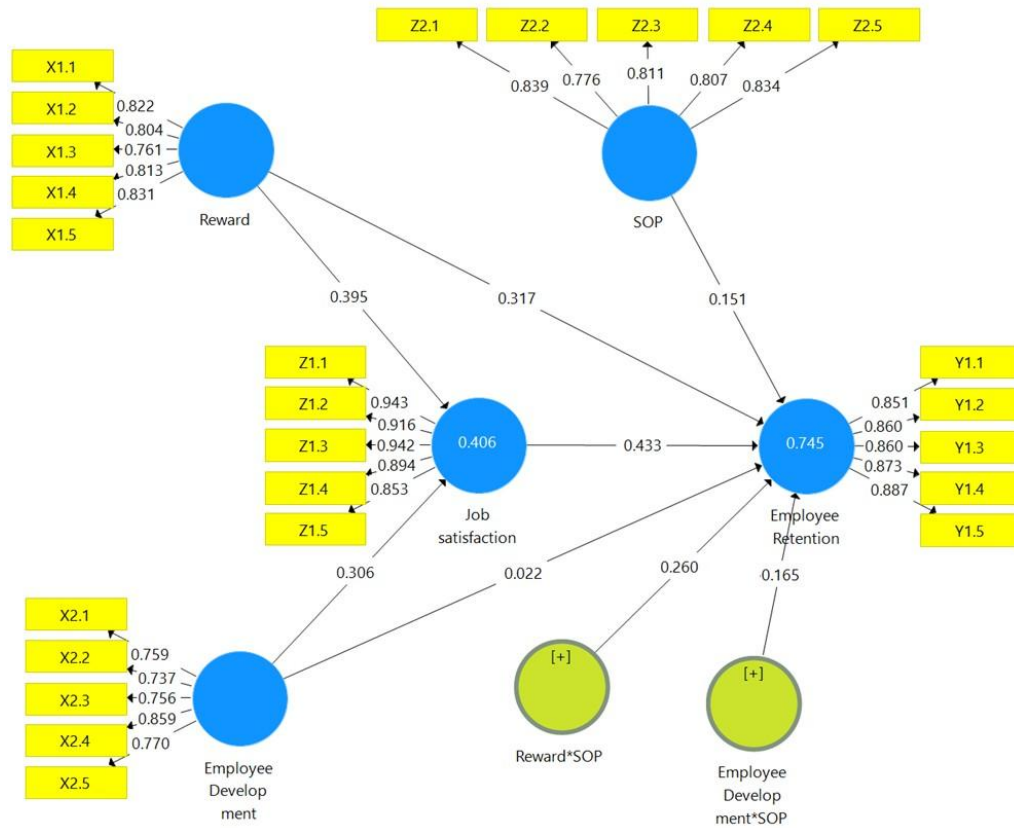


Fig. 1. Hasil SmartPLS

Figure 1 shows that the Reward variable is measured through five indicators (X1.1 – X1.5) with loading factor values ranging from 0.761 to 0.831, which means that all indicators are valid in representing the Reward construct. Likewise, Employee Development is measured through five indicators (X2.1 – X2.5) with loading factor values between 0.737 to 0.859, which shows that the contribution of indicators is quite strong. The SOP variable has five indicators (Z2.1 – Z2.5) with a loading factor between 0.776 to 0.839, while Job Satisfaction is measured by five indicators (Z1.1 – Z1.5) with a very high loading factor value, ranging from 0.853 to 0.943, indicating a very reliable measurement. Furthermore, the Employee Retention variable is also proven to be strong because the five indicators (Y1.1 – Y1.5) have a loading factor between 0.851 to 0.887.

Table 1. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Variable	Path Coefficients	T Statistics	P Values	Result
H1	Reward -> Employee Retention	0.317	2.510	0.012	Significant
H2	Employee Development -> Employee Retention	0.022	0.292	0.771	Insignificant
H3	Reward -> Job Satisfaction	0.395	3.512	0.000	Significant
H4	Employee Development -> Job Satisfaction	0.306	2.585	0.010	Significant
H5	Job Satisfaction -> Employee Retention	0.433	5.955	0.000	Significant
H6	Reward -> Job Satisfaction -> Employee Retention	0.171	3.159	0.002	Significant (indirect)
H7	Employee Development -> Job Satisfaction -> Employee Retention	0.132	2.368	0.018	Significant (indirect)
H8	Reward * SOP -> Employee Retention	0.260	2.087	0.037	Significant
H9	Employee Development * SOP -> Employee Retention	0.165	1.230	0.219	Insignificant

^a. Source: Data processed, 2025.

Based on the results of the hypothesis test, H1 shows that rewards have a positive and significant effect on employee retention with a path coefficient of 0.317, T Statistic of 2.510, and a p-value of 0.012. This proves that the better the reward system provided by the company, the higher the tendency of employees to stay in the organization. This finding is in line with motivational theory which emphasizes the importance of rewards as a driving factor for employee retention. H2, employee development does not have a significant effect on employee retention with a path coefficient of 0.022, T Statistic of 0.292, and a p-value of 0.771. These results indicate that although employee development is important, it is not strong enough to directly influence employees' decisions to stay in the organization.

H3 proves that rewards have a significant effect on job satisfaction, with a path coefficient of 0.395, T Statistics 3.512, and a p-value of 0.000. This means that rewards that match employee performance are able to increase their job satisfaction. Meanwhile, H4 is also proven to be significant, where employee development has an effect on job satisfaction (path coefficient 0.306, T Statistics 2.585, p-value 0.010). Thus, both rewards and employee development play an important role in increasing job satisfaction.

Furthermore, H5 shows that job satisfaction has a significant effect on employee retention with a path coefficient of 0.433, T Statistics 5.955, and p-value 0.000. This confirms that job satisfaction is a major factor that influences employees' decision to stay at the company.

In H6, rewards have a significant effect on employee retention through job satisfaction with a path coefficient of 0.171, T Statistics 3.159, and p-value 0.002. Likewise with H7, employee development has a significant effect on employee retention through job satisfaction with a path coefficient of 0.132, T Statistics 2.368, and p-value 0.018. These findings confirm that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between employee rewards and development on employee retention.

H8 showed a significant influence of reward and SOP interaction on employee retention with a path coefficient of 0.260, T Statistics 2.087, and p-value 0.037. This means that the effectiveness of rewards in increasing employee retention will be stronger if supported by the implementation of good SOPs. On the other hand, H9 was not significant, where the interaction between employee development and SOPs on employee retention resulted in a path coefficient of 0.165, T Statistics 1.230, and a p-value of 0.219. This indicates that SOPs have not been able to strengthen the relationship between employee development and employee retention.

3.2. Discussion

Rewards have an important role in increasing employee retention because they are able to provide a sense of appreciation and recognition for the contributions they have made. The rewards provided by companies, both in the form of financial rewards such as salaries, bonuses, and incentives as well as non-financial rewards such as awards, self-development opportunities, and a supportive work environment, have been proven to increase job satisfaction and reduce employees' desire to leave the organization. A fair and transparent reward system creates a sense of fairness and appreciation, which ultimately minimizes turnover intention. These findings are in line with Herzberg's motivational theory which emphasizes rewards as a factor for maintaining job satisfaction. The results of this study support Kiliç [34] finding that rewards have a positive relationship with employee retention. Rewards play an important role in lowering the turnover intention rate [35]. Thus, the better the reward system implemented, the higher the tendency of employees to stay in the organization and make their best contributions.

The results of the hypothesis test showed that employee development had no significant effect on employee retention. This means that even if the organization provides training and development programs, it does not necessarily make employees choose to stay. This can happen because employees may view self-development as an opportunity to find a better job elsewhere. Employee development can affect retention, but the effect is highly dependent on the employee's emotional bond with the company. These findings are consistent with Ahmed's research which states that training and development do not always have a significant impact if they are not accompanied by supporting factors such as compensation and job satisfaction [36].

Rewards have been shown to have a positive and significant influence on job satisfaction. These results indicate that employees will feel more satisfied if they receive rewards commensurate with

performance. The satisfaction that arises from rewards includes both financial and non-financial aspects, such as bonuses, recognition, or symbolic awards. The results of this study are supported by Danish and Usman [37] and Hafiza et al. [38] supports these results, showing that rewards play a major role in shaping employee job satisfaction. Similar findings were also put forward by Malik et al. who stated that adequate rewards are able to increase employee morale and satisfaction [39].

Employee development has been shown to have a significant effect on job satisfaction. This indicates that opportunities to improve competencies through training, education, and career development can increase feelings of satisfaction at work. Employees who get development tend to feel more valued and motivated. Previous research by Elnaga & Imran proves that training and development are directly related to job satisfaction [40]. Likewise, a study conducted by Jehanzeb & Bashir states that employee development contributes to increased motivation and job satisfaction [41].

The results of the study show that job satisfaction has a significant influence on employee retention. This means that the higher the job satisfaction felt, the more likely employees are to stay in the company. Job satisfaction includes compensation factors, work environment, recognition, and relationships with colleagues. The Hom et al. study confirms that job satisfaction is a major predictor of employee retention [42]. Karatepe research also shows that employees who are satisfied with their jobs have a higher commitment to staying in the organization [43].

Rewards have been proven to affect employee retention indirectly through job satisfaction. In other words, the rewards given by the company are able to increase employee job satisfaction, which in turn makes them more loyal and less easily left the organization. This shows that job satisfaction plays an important role as a mediator. The research of Islam et al. supports this result by showing that rewards increase retention through job satisfaction [44]. Similar results were also found by Aktar et al. where job satisfaction strengthened the relationship between reward and employee retention intent [45].

Employee development has a significant effect on retention through job satisfaction. This confirms that although development does not directly affect retention, the impact is felt after increasing employee job satisfaction. Development programs make employees feel more competent and valued, thus increasing their loyalty. These findings are in line with Chew & Chan who found that career development increases job satisfaction and ultimately impacts retention [46].

The results show that rewards combined with SOPs have a significant effect on retention. This means that the reward system will be more effective in increasing employee loyalty if it is supported by clear and consistent operational procedures. The SOP serves as a guideline that emphasizes fairness in awarding rewards. The implementation of SOPs in the reward system can increase employee trust in the Company [47]. In line with that, a study conducted by Li et al [48] proves that rewards provided systematically through SOPs are able to increase employee retention.

Employee development moderated by SOPs has no significant effect on retention. This indicates that standard operating procedures do not sufficiently strengthen the relationship between employee development and retention. It is possible that employees view development as a personal gain, rather than as the main reason to stay. These results are different from the research of Bhattacharya et al. [49] which states that SOPs can amplify the influence of development on retention, but comes close to the findings of Memon et al. [50] explaining that training and development do not always have a significant impact on retention if work environment and compensation factors are not supportive.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis, this study concludes that the reward variable is proven to have an important role in increasing employee retention, both directly and indirectly through job satisfaction. This shows that giving the right rewards can increase loyalty and reduce employees' intention to leave the organization. Meanwhile, employee development does not have a significant effect on retention directly, but is able to influence retention through increased job satisfaction. These findings confirm that job satisfaction plays a crucial mediating variable in the relationship between rewards, employee development, and retention. In addition, the results of the study prove that job satisfaction is a dominant factor that directly affects employee retention. This means that the higher the level of job satisfaction, the greater the likelihood of employees staying in the company.

Rewards combined with SOPs have also been shown to strengthen employee retention, while SOP-moderated employee development does not have a significant impact. This shows that the existence of SOPs is more effective when combined with a reward system compared to employee development programs. Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of companies to balance reward strategies, employee development, and the implementation of SOPs in an effort to increase job satisfaction and retain employees. The results of this study also contribute to the development of human resource management literature, especially regarding the role of rewards, job satisfaction, and SOPs in building employee loyalty.

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