

Analyzing Employee Engagement as a Mediator in the Relationship Between Employer Branding and Talent Retention with Job Burnout as a Moderator: A Study of International Telco Company Based in Indonesia

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Abstract

The growth of Indonesia's telecommunications sector, driven by 5G expansion and the digital economy, is key to the country's digital transformation. Effective HR management is essential for attracting skilled employees to support innovation in this industry. Employee engagement, encompassing physical, cognitive, and emotional involvement, is a critical measure of connection to the organization, while a strong employer brand enhances loyalty and retention. However, job burnout, which undermines performance, can reduce retention and increase turnover intentions, posing challenges for long term sustainability

This study aims to examine the role of employee engagement as a mediator in the relationship between employer branding and talent retention, with job burnout acting as a moderator within the company. The data for this research were obtained through a survey questionnaire administered to a sample of 192 employees. The research adopts a quantitative approach, utilizing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with Partial Least Squares (PLS) methods, analyzed using SmartPLS 3.0 software. The variables investigated in this study include employer branding (EB), employee engagement (EE), talent retention (TR), and job burnout (JB).

The results of the study reveal that employer branding has a positive and significant impact on both employee engagement and talent retention. Employee engagement also demonstrates a positive and significant effect on talent retention. Furthermore, employee engagement positively and significantly mediates the influence of employer branding on talent retention. However, job burnout has a negative and significant moderating effect on the relationship between employee engagement and talent retention. The study suggests that company should prioritize addressing job burnout as a critical factor that may affect talent retention.

Keywords: employer branding, employee engagement, talent retention, job burnout, telecommunications industry.

1. Introduction

The Indonesian government continues to drive advancements in the telecommunications sector as part of

its broader effort to accelerate national digital transformation. With the number of internet users expected to increase by 3.72% annually between 2024 and 2029, reaching 284.43 million users by 2029 (Statista, 2023) the country's digital landscape is experiencing rapid growth. This expansion is driven by factors such as greater internet penetration, the rollout of 5G networks, and the rapid rise of the digital economy. The largest telecommunications company based in Indonesia plays a central role in this transformation. This company has consistently invested in expanding its services and digital infrastructure, including fiber optic networks and 4G/5G technology. The company has been crucial in developing international subsea cables and global telecommunications services, positioning the company for competitiveness at the global level.

The company's commitment to innovation and value creation is reflected in Human Resources (HR) strategies, particularly in talent retention and employee engagement. The company integrates HR management with its business strategies, emphasizing the importance of qualified and competent human capital. The company's initiatives are structured around four main pillars: People, Culture, Organization, and Human Capital Enabler. These pillars form the foundation of programs designed to foster a positive employee experience and a supportive work environment.

A key component of company's HR strategy is its Talent Retention Program, which includes employee training, certification, and executive development. Data from the company shows a significant increase in training and development activities, with the number of training sessions rising from 26 in 2021 to 109 in 2023, alongside a steady increase in employee participation. Additionally, company offers specialized leadership coaching programs for managerial and executive-level staff, further enhancing its talent management strategy. In 2022 and 2023, company invested USD 240,000 and USD 324,000, respectively, in executive education at top global universities, underscoring its commitment to nurturing high potential employees.

Company's employee engagement and retention programs are designed to ensure long-term commitment from its workforce. According to research (Tien et al., 2024), training and development have a positive impact on employee retention. The company's employee engagement index (EEI) also shows fluctuations, with a notable decline in engagement between 2022 and 2023, potentially signaling areas for improvement in employee motivation and commitment. Additionally, the company's employee turnover rate remains low, hovering between 1.41% and 1.62% annually, which indicates successful retention efforts.

However, the company faces challenges related to the growing proportion of younger employees, particularly Generation Z, who tend to have lower organizational commitment (Marzec, 2023). This demographic shift, combined with rising levels of job burnout (41.94% in 2023), poses risks to long-term employee retention (Bai et al., 2023). Understanding and addressing these issues is crucial for sustaining company's competitive advantage and achieving organizational goals. This research explores how company's HR strategies, particularly its talent retention programs, impact employee engagement and retention, while examining the broader implications of a generationally diverse workforce and the challenges posed by job burnout.

2. Research Methodology

Based on questionnaire data collected through Google Forms, the researchers in this study utilized a quantitative methodology using smart PLS Software. This study uses a sample of 192 employees from telecommunications companies in Indonesia.

3. Literature Review

Human Resource Management

Management is both a science and an art of effectively and efficiently overseeing the process of utilizing human and other resources to achieve specific objectives (Hasibuan, 2005). In addition human resources as the efforts, skills, and abilities of individuals engaged in activities within an organization (Tampubolon, 2016). Human resources are the capacity that integrates individual cognition and physical abilities (Marnis et al., 2008). In the research by Mangkunegara (2013) human resources are viewed as the management and utilization of the available resources within individuals.

This aligns with the perspective of Torrington et al. (2020) regarding the functions of human resources, which are related to recruiting, retaining, developing, motivating, and engaging employees to sustain high performance levels. According to Kadarisman (2013), human resource management refers to the activities that organizations must undertake to ensure that employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities meet the job requirements.

The goal of human resource management, as stated by Tampubolon (2016) is to support the achievement of organizational goals, which includes selecting employees, recommending the need for new hires, conducting training and development programs, performing performance assessments, and managing work performance. Human resource specialists are responsible for training, clarifying work structures through tasks and key functions within the organization, introducing discipline and motivation, providing communication channels, and implementing health and safety policies.

Employee Engagement

Employee Engagement was the first to introduce the concept of employee engagement in the academic literature, defining it as "the utilization of oneself by organizational members in their work roles, where individuals physically, cognitively, and emotionally use and express themselves during role performance." (Chopra et al., 2023). Employee engagement serves as a metric to assess the degree to which an individual is connected to an organization. This concept is multifaceted and can be evaluated through three dimensions: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement (Shuck et al., 2017).

Behavioral engagement refers to the psychological conditions that drive the intention to act in ways that can positively influence organizational performance and outcomes. Cognitive engagement concerns the extent to which an employee understands the organization's mission and their role within it. The emotional aspect focuses on employees' attitudes toward the organization and their feelings toward the components. Research on employee engagement does not adhere to a single paradigm, as some scholars view engagement as an individual-level variable, while others examine it as an organizational-level variable (Lee et al., 2022).

Employer Branding

According to Ambler and Barrow (1996), employer branding refers to a company's promise to employees about what they can expect from the organization, as well as how the organization communicates its values, culture, and uniqueness as an employer to both external and internal audiences. Large organizations with dedicated human resources departments are more likely to adopt employer branding as part of their HR strategy, replacing the concept of "employees" with that of "internal customers". Employer branding, as a strategy to become the "employer of choice," represents a proactive approach to addressing challenges related to attracting and retaining employees by integrating product branding elements into the image of the workplace and organization (Backhaus, 2016). The employer brand refers to the "combination of functional, economic, and psychological benefits recognized by the employer"

(Martin et al., 2011).

Early research on employer branding primarily focused on employee recruitment through advertising and building a reputation as the "employer of choice" in the external labor market (Theurer et al., 2018). Deepa and Baral (2021) suggested that employer branding practices also encompass internal aspects believed to enhance employee engagement and retention. These practices can guide internal organizational processes, convey symbolic meaning, and help employees connect more deeply with the brand, thereby increasing their engagement and loyalty, while also strengthening the company's identity and values (Thomas et al., 2020). In line with Bellou et al. (2015), HR literature identifies attributes that include both concrete and abstract factors, such as effective leadership, job satisfaction, career development opportunities, a work environment in which employees feel valued, work-life balance policies, and corporate social responsibility. The three dimensions of employer branding (EB) according to Biswas and Suar (2016) include: first employer brand Equity refers to the intangible asset associated with the employer brand's associations and the level of brand awareness among both current and potential employees (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). Second, brand loyalty and engagement refer to the commitment demonstrated by employees towards the company (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Third, attraction and retention of talent by viewing employees as customers and the 'work experience' as the 'product' offered for their consideration and choice, employee satisfaction mirrors the 'strength' of the employer brand.

Talent Retention

According to Mathis and Jackson (2006) employee retention is a practice employed in managing valuable employees within a company to prevent them from leaving their positions. Talent retention refers to the efforts made by employers to retain desired employees in order to achieve business objectives (Rappaport et al., 2003). Retaining existing employees is one of the key challenges in workforce management for the future (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016). Based on the findings of Kyndt et al. (2009), it is important to consider both personal factors (such as educational level, seniority, leadership skills, and learning attitude) as well as organizational factors (such as rewards, stimulation, and work pressure) when analyzing employee retention. The dimensions of talent retention, as described in the study by Kyndt et al. (2009) are first, organizational commitment is one of the key dimensions influencing an employee's decision to remain with a company. Employees who feel emotionally, normatively, or morally bound to the organization are more likely to continue working for the company. Second, Motivation and job satisfaction are also crucial dimensions in talent retention. Employees who are satisfied with their work, whether in terms of the work environment, relationships with colleagues, or the rewards they receive, are more motivated to stay in their jobs. Third, Turnover intention refers to the intention to leave one's job. This dimension measures the extent to which employees are considering changing jobs or seeking new opportunities, and last Future potential within the company refers to the extent to which employees feel they have career growth opportunities within the organization.

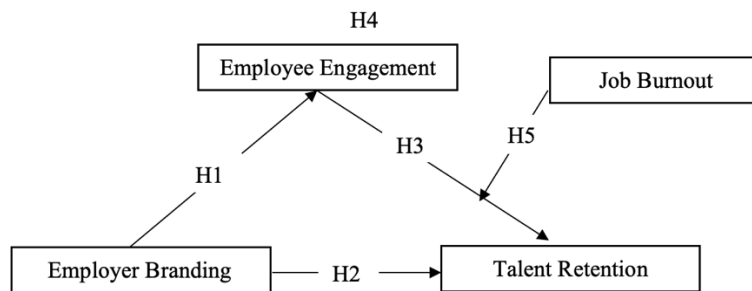
Job Burnout

Job burnout refers to chronic exhaustion that intensifies the cycle of daily work demands, daily fatigue, and self-deprecation on a daily basis. Additionally, chronic fatigue weakens the cycle of daily job resource acquisition, daily work engagement, and daily job crafting (Bakker & Costa, 2014). According to Leiter and Maslach (1997), job burnout consists of three dimensions are exhaustion, cynicism, and ineffectiveness. Exhaustion is characterized by prolonged fatigue that tends to cause employees to exhibit excessive behavior, both emotionally and physically. Employees often find themselves unable to resolve their issues and continue to feel tired and lacking in energy, even after adequate rest. Cynicism is

characterized by a cynical attitude, where employees tend to withdraw from their work environment. Employees experiencing cynicism are often distant, disengaged, and reluctant to get involved in any aspect of their workplace. This behavior can have a serious impact on work effectiveness. Ineffectiveness is characterized by feelings of helplessness and the perception that every task assigned is overwhelming. Employees experiencing ineffectiveness tend to be inefficient, exhibit a sense of incapacity, perceive all tasks as difficult, and see a decline in self-confidence, as well as in their confidence towards their colleagues.

4. Theoretical Framework

Figure 1 Theoretical Framework



The research refers to the framework established in previous studies for the variables of Employer Branding (EB), Employee Engagement (EE), and Talent Retention (TR) as outlined by Chopra et al., (2023), and the variable of Job Burnout (JB) as defined by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004).

H1: Employer Branding has a positive and significant impact on Employee Engagement.

H2: Employer Branding has a positive and significant impact on Talent Retention.

H3: Employee Engagement has a positive and significant impact on Talent Retention.

H4: Employee Engagement mediates the relationship between Employer Branding and Talent Retention.

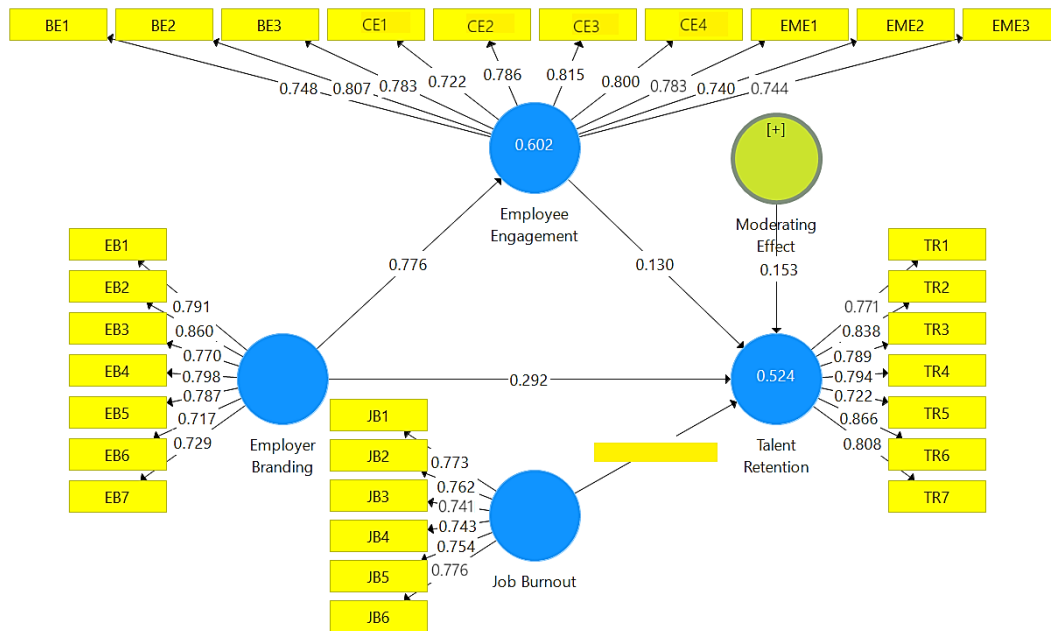
H5: Job Burnout moderates the effect of Employee Engagement on Talent Retention.

5. Result and Discussion

Results of Structural Model Testing (Outer Model)

The measurement model of the research was assessed for both validity and reliability using SmartPLS 3.0 software. To verify the accuracy of the analysis, the 30 indicators corresponding to the four research variables were evaluated. The subsequent steps outline the process used to evaluate the outer model within the SmartPLS 3.0 software.

Figure 2 Outer Model Structural Equation Modelling (Algorithm)



Convergent Validity

Indicator is considered good if its value is > 0.7, acceptable or maintainable if the value is between 0.4 and 0.6 with an increasing composite reliability, and poor, requiring removal, if the value is < 0.4 (Jr. , J. F. Hair et al., 2016). Variable construct measurement within a measurement model using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach, an indicator that measures a construct is considered significant if the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value is greater than 0.5 (Ghozali, 2014).

Table 1 Convergent Validity Values

Variable	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Critical Point	Model Evaluation
Employer Branding	0,609	>0,5	Valid
Employee Engagement	0,569		Valid
Talent Retention	0,574		Valid
Job Burnout	0,564		Valid

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), which compares the average cross construct correlations to the average within construct correlations. The valid HTMT value, according to the recommended criteria is below 0.85. If the HTMT value exceeds this threshold and it may indicate an issue with discriminating between the measured constructs (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 2 Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) Test

Variable	Employer Branding	Employee Engagement	Talent Retention
Employee Engagement	0,85	-	-
Talent Retention	0,55	0,50	-
Job Burnout	0,27	0,23	0,58

The variables indicate that all variables have values not exceeding 0.85 as shown in Table 2, meaning it can be concluded that discriminant validity has been achieved.

Reliability Test

The reliability test using Composite Reliability can be reinforced by Cronbach's Alpha values. A Cronbach's Alpha value greater than 0.7 indicates good internal consistency and suggests that the measurement instrument is sufficiently reliable for use in research (Hair et al., 2017). Below the output of the reliability test conducted by smartPLS 3.0 :

Table 3 Cronbach's Alpha dan Composite Reliability Test Result

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Evaluation
Employer Branding	0,892	0,916	Reliable
Employee Engagement	0,915	0,929	Reliable
Talent Retention	0,868	0,900	Reliable
Job Burnout	0,779	0,829	Reliable

Based on Table 3 above, the test results for Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability for all variables show values greater than 0.70. This indicates that all variables exhibit a high level of reliability test.

Results of Structural Model Testing (Inner Model)

After conducting the outer model test, the next step is to perform the inner model test to assess the research hypotheses. The inner model test is conducted by evaluating the Variance Inflation Factor, R-Square, F-Square, Q-Square, and path coefficients (Hair et al., 2017).

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

A variable can be used in a model if there is no high multicollinearity, with a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value of less than 5 ($VIF < 5$). If the VIF exceeds 5 ($VIF > 5$), the variable must be excluded or modified in the research model (Hair et al., 2017). Below the result of Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) :

Table 4 Variance Inflation Factor Result

Variable	Employee Engagement	Talent Retention
Employee Engagement	-	2.527
Employer Branding	1.000	2.667
Job Burnout	-	1.141

Based on the VIF values in the table above, it can be interpreted that the VIF is less than 5, indicating that there is no high multicollinearity present. This implies that the variables used will not cause errors in significance assessment or weight estimation.

R-Square

The R-Square value is used to assess the extent to which a specific independent latent variable influences a dependent latent variable. In measuring variability, R-Square values can range from 0 to 1, where values

of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 are considered to represent strong, moderate, and weak explanatory power, respectively, in relation to the dependent variable (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 5 R-Square values

Variable	R-Square	R Square Adjusted
Employee Engagement	0,602	0,600
Talent Retention	0,524	0,514

Based on the data in the table above, the R-Square value for the employee engagement variable is 0.602, which means that the employer branding variable influences employee engagement by 60.2%, with the remaining 39.8% being influenced by other factors not included in this study. Similarly, the R-Square value for the Talent Retention variable is 0.524, indicating that employer branding influences talent retention by 52.4%, while the remaining 47.6% is attributed to other factors outside the scope of this research.

Predictive Relevance (Q-Square)

Q-Square can indicate predictive relevance, with the following criteria: a Q-Square value of 0 indicates that the model cannot predict the target variable's values; a value between 0 and 0.2 suggests weak predictive relevance; a value between 0.2 and 0.4 indicates moderate predictive relevance; and a value greater than 0.4 signifies strong predictive relevance (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 6 Predictive Relevance (Q-Square)

Variable	SSO	SSE	$Q^2 = (1-SSE/SSO)$
Employee Engagement	276.137	142.089	0.471
Employer Branding	172.549	77.820	0.549
Talent Retention	169.332	100.148	0.409

Based on the data results in Table 6 above, the calculation of Predictive Relevance (Q-Square) indicates that the Q-Square values for each endogenous variable are greater than 0, suggesting that the model demonstrates predictive relevance (Q-Square) for these endogenous variables. The variables Employer Branding and Employee Engagement fall under the category of strong predictive relevance, while Talent Retention is categorized as having moderate predictive relevance.

F-Square

F-Square is used to calculate the magnitude of the influence between variables through Effect Size. The guidelines for F-Square values are as follows: a value of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicates weak, moderate, and strong effect sizes, respectively. Below is the table presenting the results of the Effect Size (F-Square) testing :

Table 7 F-Square Values

Variable	Employee Engagement	Talent Retention
Employee Engagement	-	0.014
Employer Branding	1.513	0.067
Job Burnout	-	0.043

Table 7 shows the Effect Size (F-Square) results, indicating that employer branding has the strongest influence on employee engagement (F-Square = 1.513, strong) and talent retention (F-Square = 0.067, strong). Job burnout has a moderate influence on talent retention (F-Square = 0.043), while employee engagement has a weak influence on talent retention (F-Square = 0.014).

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing in the inner model of PLS-SEM is conducted using bootstrapping in the SmartPLS 3.0 software. After performing the bootstrapping technique, hypothesis testing can be done by examining the t-statistic and p-value. A t-statistic value greater than 1.96 indicates a positive relationship between two variables, while a negative t-statistic indicates a negative relationship. A p-value less than 0.05 signifies that the coefficient is statistically significant and reliable (Hair et al., 2016). Below are the results of the hypothesis testing in this research:

Table 8 Hypothesis Testing Result

H	Variables	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Result
H1	EB → EE	0.776	0.776	0.044	17.672	0.000	Accepted (Significant)
H2	EB → TR	0.292	0.276	0.092	3.164	0.002	Accepted (Significant)
H3	EE → TR	0.130	0.145	0.088	2.466	0.003	Accepted (Significant)
H4	EB → EE → TR (Mediate)	0.101	0.113	0.071	2.410	0.009	Accepted (Significant)
H5	EE → JB → TR (Moderation)	-0.153	-0.149	0.074	2.068	0.039	Accepted (Significant)

H1 : Employer Branding on Employee Engagement

The results of hypothesis testing for H1 show that the t-statistic value is 17.672, which is greater than 1.96, and the p-value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted. This indicates a positive and significant influence of employer branding on employee engagement.

H2 : Employer Branding on Talent Retention

The results of hypothesis testing for H2 show that the t-statistic value is 3.164, which is greater than 1.96, and the p-value is 0.002, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, H0 is rejected and H2 is accepted. This indicates a positive and significant influence of employer branding on talent retention.

H3 : Employee Engagement on Talent Retention

The results of hypothesis testing for H3 show that the t-statistic value is 2.466, which is greater than 1.96, and the p-value is 0.003, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, H0 is rejected and H3 is accepted. This indicates a positive and significant influence of employee engagement on talent retention.

H4 : Employee Engagement Mediates the Relationship between Employer Branding and Talent Retention

The results of hypothesis testing for H4 show that the t-statistic value is 2.140, which is greater than 1.96, and the p-value is 0.009, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, H0 is rejected and H4 is accepted. This indicates a positive and significant mediating effect of employee engagement on the relationship between employer branding and talent retention.

H5 : Job Burnout as a Moderator of the Relationship between Employee Engagement and Talent Retention

The results of hypothesis testing for H5 show that the t-statistic value is -2.068, which is less than 1.96, and the p-value is 0.039, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, H0 is rejected and H5 is accepted. This indicates a negative and significant moderating effect of job burnout on the relationship between employee engagement and talent retention.

Discussion

This research shows that employer branding has a significant influence on talent retention at the company. This is supported by the previous study which found that employer branding can positively impact talent retention (Chopra et al., 2023). Furthermore, Verčič (2021) states that a strong employer branding strategy can have a significant impact on employee engagement within the company. This study provides information to the company, the implemented employer branding framework has had an impact on employee retention. This study provides information that the employer branding strategy currently implemented at company is functioning well and has had a positive impact, with employees feeling proud to be part of the company. An example of Company's employer branding implementation is the Company Global Branding Strategy, which includes the Company Employee Value Proposition (EVP), encompassing programs such as Employee Development, Working Environment, and Leadership.

Employer branding has a significant impact on talent retention at company. This is supported by the research of Chopra et al. (2023), which indicates that employer branding can influence talent retention. The findings of this study show that the employer branding framework implemented at Telin has positively affected employee retention. For example, Company's employer branding includes the design and framework of the Company Global Branding Strategy, which incorporates the Company Employee Value Proposition (EVP), containing employee retention programs. Furthermore, the company has established an Employer Brand Persona, which serves as a guideline for employees in terms of behavior (how we act), communication (how we talk), and appearance (how we look).

Employee engagement has a positive and significant impact on talent retention. This finding is supported by the research of Chopra et al. (2023), which indicates that employee engagement influences talent retention. Company's training and certification programs, and recognition of top performers have significantly enhanced talent retention. Programs like Training & Development, Executive Education, and the Employee Scholarship Program have positively influenced employee engagement and helped retain top talent.

Employee engagement as a mediation has a positive and significant effect in mediating the relationship between employer branding and talent retention. This aligns with the research by Chopra et al. (2023), which found that employee engagement partially mediates the relationship between employer branding and talent retention.

Job burnout as a moderator of the relationship between employee engagement and talent retention, has a negative impact on both employee engagement and talent retention. This study aligns with the research of Bai et al. (2023) which shows that job burnout positively affects the intention to change jobs, thereby influencing employee retention. This study supports companies measuring job burnout since 2022, emphasizing the need for management and HR to address and evaluate burnout. This approach ensures the success of programs aimed at enhancing employee engagement and reducing turnover.

6. Conclusion and Suggestion

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that employer branding has a significant positive impact on talent retention at the company. The implemented employer branding framework, including the Company Global Branding Strategy and Employee Value Proposition (EVP), has successfully contributed to employee retention, with employees feeling proud to be part of the organization. The study also highlights the importance of employee engagement in enhancing talent retention. Training programs, employee development initiatives, and recognition of top performers have significantly improved both engagement and retention. Additionally, employee engagement serves as a key mediator in the relationship between employer branding and talent retention. However, job burnout negatively impacts both employee engagement and talent retention. The study emphasizes the need for companies to measure and address job burnout, ensuring that HR and management take proactive steps to mitigate its effects. By doing so, the company can enhance employee engagement, improve retention, and reduce turnover.

Suggestions for Future Researchers

Based on the research findings, several suggestions for future research are: first, future studies should consider expanding the sample size to better represent the population. Additionally, it is recommended to use more in-depth data collection methods, such as field observations and interviews. Second, this study found a weaker significance in the relationship between employee engagement and talent retention compared to other factors. Therefore, future research should explore this variable in greater depth to better understand its impact.

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