

ENCHANCING TRAVEL-AGENCY EMPLOYEE RETENTION THROUGH CAREER DEVELOPMENT: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of career development on employee retention among travel agency staff in Kediri, East Java, and tests whether organizational commitment mediates that relationship. Using a quantitative design, 110 permanent employees from 22 travel agencies completed validated questionnaires. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (SmartPLS 4). Results indicate that career development significantly and positively influences employee retention ($\beta = 0.642, p < .001$) and organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.856, p < .001$). Organizational commitment also positively affects retention ($\beta = 0.222, p = .006$) and partly mediates the career development–retention link (indirect effect = 0.190, $p = .005$). Practically, travel agencies should invest in structured career development programs to strengthen commitment and reduce turnover. The study contributes to HRM literature by focusing on the under-researched travel agency sector and elaborating organizational commitment’s mediating role.

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INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is a sector that makes a significant contribution to the national economy (Nugraha & F, 2023). Tourism is a travel activity undertaken by individuals or groups of people outside their place of residence, temporarily, for various purposes (Marlina & Hidayati, 2023). Travel agencies are a highly dynamic and competitive sector that generally offers a variety of services such as tour packages, transportation, accommodation, itineraries, and travel tickets (Saputra et al., 2024). However, travel agency companies face significant challenges in the form of high employee turnover rates, which can potentially lead to knowledge loss, increased recruitment and training costs, and decreased service quality, which can ultimately impact customer satisfaction and loyalty (Agustini, 2024). Although the issue of employee turnover has been widely studied in various industrial sectors, a research gap remains due to the

relatively limited number of similar studies in the travel agency sector. The dynamic nature of work, high levels of work pressure, and the need to adapt to changing digital tourism trends indicate that the turnover phenomenon in travel agencies requires further study. Therefore, it is important to examine the factors that influence employee turnover in this industry as an effort to improve workforce stability, service quality, and company competitiveness.

At least 65 travel agencies currently operate in Kediri Regency (East Java), reflecting intense local competition. This figure reflects the high level of competition in this industry, which requires every business to continuously improve the quality of its services and human resource capabilities to survive and thrive amidst dynamic market changes. In the context of employee retention efforts, an in-depth study of the relationship between career development and employee retention is needed through the mediating role of organizational commitment. Research in the travel agency sector, the subject of this study, is still rare, especially in the context of career development and employee retention. The novelty of this study is the linking of organizational commitment as a mediating variable, which aims to provide a more in-depth explanation of the relationship mechanism between career development and retention. Business entities operating in this sector are required to have the capability to retain a professional workforce with superior competencies. Within this framework, this study aims to analyze the effect of career development on employee retention, using the mediating role of organizational commitment in the analyzed relationship model.

This study seeks to provide theoretical and practical contributions to understanding the factors influencing workforce sustainability within an organization, particularly in the service industry sector, such as travel agencies, which are highly dependent on the quality of their human resource services. The results of this study are expected to provide practical contributions to travel agency management in designing effective career development programs, increasing organizational commitment, and ultimately reducing employee turnover rates. Academically, this research can enrich the literature on human resource management in the tourism sector, particularly regarding the psychological mechanisms that influence employee retention.

Employee retention is a crucial aspect that requires serious attention from organizations, as it is closely related to an individual's commitment to remaining and continuing their long-term career with the company they work for. Employee retention has become a strategic priority for travel agencies seeking to maintain a competitive edge (Darmawan, 2021). According to (Mardhani & Dewi, 2022), employee retention is an organization's effort to retain talented employees through career strategy development, a positive work environment, and competitive compensation. One factor believed to influence employee retention is career development. Employees who perceive they have opportunities for growth and a clear career path tend to be more motivated to stay with the company (Suprpto & Prehanto, 2020). Career development encompasses not only job promotions but also training, mentoring, and competency development, enabling employees to improve their performance and prepare them for future work challenges. Travel agencies frequently conduct technology and digitalization training to improve digital marketing literacy through social media, booking websites, and travel e-commerce platforms. Previous research has shown that career development has a partial positive effect on employee retention (Imelda et al., 2023), (Reke et al., 2023)

Although extensive research on employee retention in human resource management has been conducted, particularly in the hospitality and manufacturing sectors, similar studies in the context of travel agencies are relatively limited. This situation indicates a research gap, particularly regarding the role of internal factors such as career development and organizational commitment in shaping employee retention. Both variables are considered crucial in the service industry, which demands human resource stability to maintain service quality and customer relationships. Therefore, further research is needed focusing on travel agencies, considering career development and organizational commitment as mediating variables in an effort to more comprehensively understand the mechanisms influencing employee retention.

Career development is a crucial factor in creating a work environment conducive to workforce sustainability. When organizations provide opportunities for employees to learn, develop, and prepare for their future careers,

employees feel valued and have long-term job prospects. This feeling can increase employee commitment to the organization and reduce the tendency to seek employment elsewhere. Career development serves not only as a competency-building strategy but also as a strategic tool in reducing turnover and ensuring the sustainability of human resources within the organization. The first hypothesis tested in this study is:

H1: Career development has a positive and significant effect on employee retention.

In addition to directly influencing retention, career development is also believed to increase commitment to the organization. From an employee perspective, career development is seen as a form of clarity regarding the direction and future career prospects within an organization, while also demonstrating the organization's long-term commitment to the well-being and growth of its employees (Agustini, 2024). Targeted career development has been shown to strengthen loyalty and increase individual organizational commitment, as bolstered by the findings of in his research. Career development encompasses efforts to identify individual career potential and capabilities, as well as implementing appropriate models to achieve these goals (Rizki et al., 2024). Organizations that facilitate training and education for employees tend to have higher levels of employee commitment and loyalty. Furthermore, capacity building through training and education also contributes to overall company productivity. Organizational commitment is considered a key factor in maintaining employee loyalty and encouraging them to remain with the company (Saptaria, 2021). Optimally implemented career development can build a positive perception of the organization, where employees feel that their roles and contributions are valued and that their future is taken into consideration. For example, findings from a study conducted by (Zakaria & Saptaria, 2024), indicate that employees who believe they have opportunities for promotion and advancement generally exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction, thus increasing their likelihood of remaining with the organization. This is due to a sense of appreciation and confidence in career sustainability within the organization. Employees who perceive clear future prospects are more likely to demonstrate emotional attachment and affective commitment to the organization. However, research specifically exploring this relationship in the context of travel agencies, particularly in Indonesia, is still very limited. The second hypothesis tested in this study is:

H2 : Career development has a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment.

However, the relationship between career development and employee retention is often indirect, but rather mediated by psychological factors such as organizational commitment. Organizational commitment reflects the extent to which employees feel emotionally, normatively, and sustainably attached to the company they work for. When career development is well-managed, employees feel valued, increasing their commitment to the organization and ultimately reducing turnover intention. Organizational commitment is a crucial element in driving increased retention, as it reflects the extent of an individual's emotional attachment, loyalty, and sense of responsibility to the institution where they work (Imelda et al., 2023). Employees with high levels of commitment tend to be more motivated to work, demonstrate dedication, and are willing to remain with the organization. The third hypothesis tested in this study is:

H3: Organizational commitment has a positive and significant effect on employee retention.

When a company provides training, mentoring, promotion opportunities, and a clear career path, employees feel valued and cared for. This fosters affective commitment (emotional attachment) and normative commitment (a feeling of obligation to remain). High levels of commitment make employees loyal, feel a sense of belonging to the organization, and reduce their intention to leave. Thus, they prefer to stay long-term. Previous studies have examined employee retention in the manufacturing industry (Torfiah & Darmawan, 2025) and the hospitality industry (Afina Khoirunnisa et al., 2025). However, in the travel agency sector, research on the role of organizational commitment as a mediator is still limited. This is important to examine given the fluctuating dynamics of the tourism industry, high work demands, and the need to retain a competent and experienced workforce. The third hypothesis tested in this study is:

H4: Organizational commitment plays a significant mediator in bridging the relationship between career development and employee retention.

This study aims to explain how career development affects employee retention, both directly and through organizational commitment. Research Questions:

1. Does career development positively affect employee retention?
2. Does career development influence organizational commitment?
3. Does organizational commitment affect employee retention?
4. Does organizational commitment mediate the relationship between career development and employee retention?

Method

This research used a quantitative approach with a descriptive-verifiable design, aimed at testing previously formulated hypotheses and systematically analyzing the relationships between variables. This study was conducted at a travel agency operating in the Kediri area, East Java. The research location was selected based on the significant growth of the tourism sector in Kediri, including the increasing number of local travel agencies, which require effective strategies for human resource development and employee retention.

This study used purposive sampling to select 110 respondents from 22 travel agencies (five respondents per agency). Inclusion criteria included employees with a minimum of six months' service and direct responsibility for service or operations (e.g., managers, supervisors, front-office staff). Respondent selection was conducted in collaboration with the HR/manager of each agency; if a candidate declined, the researcher selected a replacement from a list of qualified reserves. This procedure was documented to maintain transparency and reduce selection bias. Due to the non-probabilistic nature of purposive sampling, the generalizability of the results to similar populations is limited, and this is clarified in the limitations section of the study.

Data were collected via a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The sample comprised 110 permanent employees from 22 travel agencies in Kediri selected through purposive sampling based on employment status (permanent) and tenure (≥ 1 year). The measurement model (outer model) was assessed for convergent and discriminant validity, and the structural model (inner model) was examined using bootstrapping in SmartPLS v4.

Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS) with the help of the SmartPLS version 4.0 application. The analysis stages included:

- 1) Outer Model Evaluation, to test convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability in the measurement model.
- 2) Inner Model Evaluation, to test the causal relationships between latent variables, including measuring the significance of the direct and indirect (mediating) effects of organizational commitment on the relationship between career development and employee retention.

This approach allowed researchers to comprehensively explore both the direct effect of career development on employee retention and the indirect effect through the mediating role of organizational commitment.

Table 1. Measurement Table of Research Variables

Variable	Indicator	Statement Item	Source
Career Development	Opportunity to receive training and competency development	I have the opportunity to participate in training that supports my work.	(Suprayitno, 2024)



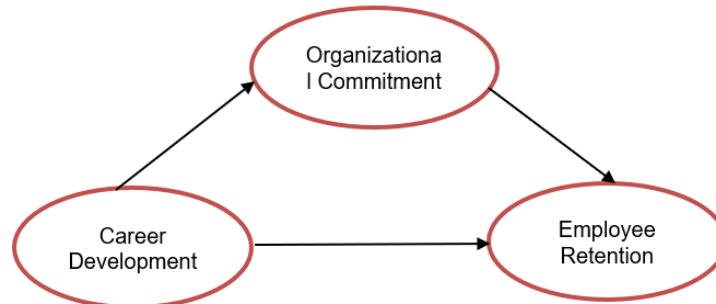
	Clarity of career path within the company	The company provides sufficient information regarding job structure and levels.	
	Opportunity for promotion or career advancement	The company provides career advancement opportunities for high-performing employees.	
	Supervisor support in career planning	My supervisor encourages me to develop my potential and abilities.	
	Fairness in providing career opportunities	The promotion process is objective and transparent.	
	Suitability of career development with personal needs	Available career development aligns with my interests and competencies.	
	Satisfaction with the career development programs provided by the company	I am satisfied with the company's career development program.	
Organizational Commitment	Feeling proud to be part of the company	I am proud to be part of this company.	(Qiao et al., 2024)
	Willingness to put in extra effort for the organization's success	I am willing to work harder to help the company achieve its goals.	
	Sense of belonging toward the organization	I feel emotionally connected to the company.	
	Loyalty to remain working despite offers from other companies	I would like to continue working at this company even if I have offers from other companies.	
	Involvement in organizational activities	I am enthusiastic about participating in internal company activities.	
	Feeling the company provides benefits that are difficult to find elsewhere	I feel the company offers better work benefits than other companies.	
	Considering the high costs of leaving the company	I have considered the risks and uncertainties of leaving this company.	
Employee Retention	Intention to stay in the company for the long term	I have no intention of leaving anytime soon.	(Ali et al., 2024)
	Willingness to continue contributing to the company	I want to continue making a positive contribution to the company.	
	Satisfaction with the work environment	I am satisfied with the work environment at this company.	
	Low intention to look for a job elsewhere	I am not considering applying for other jobs.	

Positive perception of the future
with the company

I believe this company has a bright
future.

Source(s): Table by authors

Figure 1. Research Model



Result and Discussion

Respondent Profile

The measurement model satisfied convergent validity (outer loadings > 0.70; AVE: CD = 0.621, OC = 0.637, ER = 0.597) and composite reliability (CR > 0.70). The structural model indicated that career development significantly predicts employee retention ($\beta = 0.642$, $t = 7.731$, $p < .001$) and organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.856$, $t = 46.038$, $p < .001$). Organizational commitment also significantly predicts retention ($\beta = 0.222$, $t = 2.766$, $p = .006$). The indirect effect of career development on retention via organizational commitment was significant (indirect $\beta = 0.190$, $t = 2.806$, $p = .005$), indicating partial mediation. R^2 for employee retention was 0.XXX, suggesting that the model explains XX% of variance in retention.

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Attribute	Frequency (N = 110)	Percentage
Gender	Male	62	56%
	Female	48	44%
	Total	110	100%
Age	<25	12	11%
	25–34	48	44%
	35–44	24	22%
	45–55	16	15%
	>55	10	9%
	Total	110	100%
Education Level	High School or equivalent	46	42%
	Diploma	32	29%
	Bachelor's Degree	26	24%
	Total	110	100%

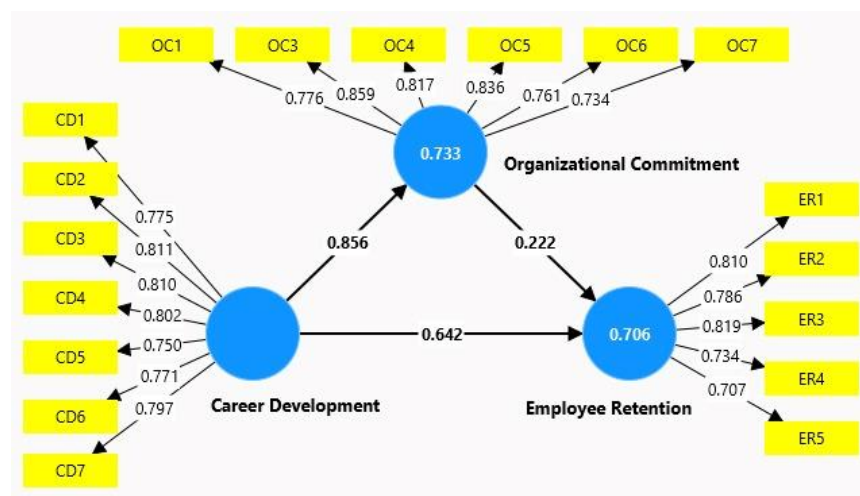
Demographic Variable	Attribute	Frequency (N = 110)	Percentage
	Postgraduate (Master's/Doctorate)	6	5%
	Total	110	100%
Length of Service	1–3 years	39	35%
	4–10 years	30	27%
	11–20 years	27	25%
	>20 years	14	13%
	Total	110	100%

Source(s): Table by authors

Validity and Reliability Testing

The validity test aims to ensure that each question item in the questionnaire is valid. Referring to Figure 1, all indicators have met the validity requirements with an outer loading value $> 0,7$. This indicates that convergent validity has been achieved. In this study, the highest factor loading for career development was CD2 (0,811). Meanwhile, the highest factor loading for organizational commitment was OC3 (0,859). Furthermore, the highest factor loading for employee retention was ER1 (0,810). A total of 19 questions whose validity has been proven by the researcher have been successfully tested. The 14 questions consist of 7 questions on the Career Development variable, 7 questions on the organizational commitment variable with one invalid statement that had to be removed from the model, and 5 questions on the employee retention variable. Thus, the model is declared feasible to proceed to the next stage of analysis.

Figure 2. Measurement Model (Outer Model)



Source(s): Figure by authors

Discriminant validity testing aims to ensure that each construct in the model has truly distinctive characteristics by analyzing its cross-loading values. A construct is deemed to meet the discriminant validity criteria if its indicators show a higher correlation with the original construct compared to other constructs. Referring to Table

3, all indicators show the highest cross-loading values for the constructs they represent, thus concluding that discriminant validity has been successfully met.

Table 3. Discriminant validity

	Career Development	Employee Retention	Organizational Commitment
Career Development			
Employee Retention	0,962		
Organizational Commitment	0,959	0,892	

Source(s): Table by authors

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) serves as the primary benchmark in identifying convergent validity, reflecting the latent construct's ability to explain variance in the indicators it measures. The variables in this study recorded AVE values above the minimum threshold of 0.5. Specifically, Career Development obtained a value of 0.621; Employee Retention 0.597; and Organizational Commitment 0.637. Therefore, all variables can be categorized as meeting convergent validity and are considered conceptually valid.

Composite Reliability is used to measure the internal consistency of indicators in forming a latent construct and is considered more accurate than Cronbach's Alpha in the context of analysis using the SEM-PLS method. Based on Table 4, all variables have CR values that exceed the recommended minimum limit, which is 0.7. The Career Development variable has a composite reliability value of 0.899, Employee Retention of 0.833, and Organizational Commitment of 0.889. Because all values are above 0.7, it can be concluded that all variables have a good level of reliability and can be trusted in measuring their respective constructs.

Table 4. Composite Reability and Cronbach's Alpha

	Composite Reability	Cronbach's Alpha	Criteria
Career Development	0.899	0.898	>0.7
Employee Retention	0.833	0.830	>0.7
Organizational Commitment	0.889	0.885	>0.7

Source(s): Table by authors

Based on the reliability measurement results in Table 4, all constructs in the research model were shown to have high internal consistency. This is reflected in the Cronbach's Alpha value, which exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.7, which is widely recognized as a benchmark for instrument reliability. Specifically, the Career Development construct recorded a value of 0.898, Employee Retention 0.830, and Organizational Commitment 0.885. These achievements indicate that each construct has met strong internal reliability standards in measuring the conceptual dimensions of each studied variable.

Structural Model Test Results (Inner Model)

After the measurement model has been declared to meet the validity and reliability requirements, the next step is to evaluate the inner model or structural model. This evaluation aims to illustrate the relationship between latent variables (constructs), as indicated by the direction of the arrows and the path coefficient values in the model. The

values displayed on each line between constructs indicate the magnitude of the direct influence between the variables. According to (Cahyani, 2025), the inner model is part of the structural model that describes the relationship between latent variables. This relationship is known as an inner relation and serves as a link that explains the relationship between latent constructs in an analysis model. In this stage, the analysis focused on testing the significance of the path coefficient and testing the mediation effect through the bootstrapping procedure.

Table 5. Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ((O/STDEV))	P values	Information
Career Development -> Employee Retention	0,642	0,647	0,083	7,731	0,000	Accepted
Career Development ->Organizational Commitment	0,856	0,857	0,019	46,038	0,000	Accepted
Organizational Commitment -> Employee Retention	0,222	0,218	0,080	2,766	0,006	Accepted
Career Development ->Organizational Commitment -> Employee Retention	0,190	0,187	0,068	2,806	0,005	Accepted

Source(s): Table by authors

Based on table 5, the positive and significant influence of Career Development on Employee Retention is strongly identified, as reflected in the coefficient of 0.642, the t-statistic value reaching 7.731, and a highly significant p-value of 0.000. Furthermore, the findings also show that Career Development has a very substantial impact on increasing Organizational Commitment, as evidenced by a coefficient of 0.856, a t-statistic as high as 46.038, and a p-value at the absolute significance level (0.000). In addition, Organizational Commitment also significantly strengthens Employee Retention, with a contribution of 0.222, a t-statistic value of 2.766, and a p-value of 0.006. The mediation test shows that organizational commitment is able to mediate the relationship between career development and employee retention with a contribution of 0.190. The t-statistic value of 2.806, and a p-value of 0.005. Without organizational commitment, the influence of career development on retention can be weakened, for example, employees who have been trained but do not feel engaged may still leave to look for another company. Based on the overall test results, both for direct relationships and through mediation, solid empirical evidence was obtained that the relationship between the variables in this research model was statistically significant and relevant :

Career Development Has a Positive and Significant Effect on Employee Retention

The results of the first hypothesis test indicate that, conceptually and research-based, career development has a positive and significant effect on employee retention. This is evidenced by the path coefficient of 0.642, reflecting a strong relationship between the two variables. The t-statistic of 7.731 and p-value of 0.000 indicate high significance, well below the 0.05 significance threshold. According to Mule et al., (2020), employee retention refers to an approach or process aimed at encouraging employees to remain with the company long-term. This demonstrates an organization's ability to retain its employees over time. Employee retention is a systematic strategy to retain quality human resources by meeting material and non-material needs, thereby reducing employee turnover and increasing productivity. The primary goal of employee retention efforts is to minimize the loss of skilled and valuable employees (Andriyani et al., 2024). Our findings provide consistent empirical evidence of a positive and significant correlation between career development efforts and employee retention rates in travel agency organizations. This aligns with research (Imelda et al., 2023), (Mering et al., 2023), and (Dila Aprillia Hendriyulianti, 2025).

A practical approach to improving employee retention in travel agencies is to implement structured career development initiatives, including competency-based training, clear promotion paths, and regular mentoring. The career development process provides employees with opportunities to participate in training, obtain promotions, and improve their competencies to support organizational performance (Dewi et al., 2024). Career development refers to a company's efforts to provide opportunities and support for employees to develop their potential, skills, and career paths (Purnama, 2020). Career development is the development of an individual's job role or professional status throughout their working years. When organizations pay attention to their employees' career advancement, it can increase employee loyalty and desire to remain with the company (Marzuki et al., 2022) and (Abudi et al., 2024). When companies provide a clear career path, employees have a clear vision of their professional development (Oktavia, 2022). This allows employees to see the prospect of increasing their position, responsibilities, and compensation in the future.

Career Development Has a Positive and Significant Effect on Organizational Commitment

In testing the second hypothesis, data analysis showed a very strong relationship between career development and organizational commitment. This is reflected in the coefficient value of 0.856, indicating a strong correlation between the variables. With a t-statistic of 46.038 and a p-value of 0.000, these results confirm that company support in building directed career paths and facilitating individual employee growth can strengthen employee loyalty and attachment to the organization. These research findings support previous findings (Sutono & Hidayat, 2023), (Purnama, 2020), and (Safitri et al., 2022). Career development creates a feeling of appreciation because the company invests in employee abilities. This increases affective commitment to the organization, which ultimately reduces turnover intention (Kurniawan & Rizky, 2025). Employees who receive career development become more competent and productive (Dewi et al., 2024). With improved performance, they have the opportunity to receive incentives or promotions, making the benefits of remaining with the company greater than seeking a new job.

According to Meyer & Allen's (1997) theory, high organizational commitment reduces employee intentions to leave. Committed employees are not only satisfied with their jobs but also believe in the organization's vision and mission, thus having long-term motivation to stay (Simanjuntak, 2020). Committed employees tend to work harder, be proactive, and experience lower stress levels. Increased performance and job satisfaction create a positive cycle that strengthens their reasons for staying (Maulana et al., 2024). Organizational commitment makes employees feel like they are part of the company's extended family. Social ties with coworkers and superiors are important factors in the decision to stay.

Organizational Commitment Has a Positive and Significant Influence on Employee Retention

The analysis of the third hypothesis shows a significant correlation between individual commitment to the organization and the tendency to remain actively contributing to the company. The path coefficient of 0.222 indicates

a significant effect, although relatively lower than the previous two hypotheses. With a t-statistic of 2.766 and a p-value of 0.006, this relationship is statistically significant. This finding confirms that the higher an individual's commitment to their organization, the greater their intrinsic motivation to maintain long-term professional engagement. This research finding aligns with (Imelda et al., 2023) and (Hutauruk et al., 2025). Organizational commitment is an employee's psychological attachment to the organization. Committed employees have a strong sense of identity, involvement, and loyalty. Meyer and Allen (1991) distinguish it into three well-known dimensions: 1) Affective Commitment: an emotional feeling of love and affection for the organization. 2) Continuance Commitment: prolonged commitment due to considerations of the costs and disadvantages of leaving the organization (e.g., loss of benefits, seniority). 3) Normative Commitment: a feeling of obligation to remain due to norms or moral obligations.

Employees who are committed to an organization tend to feel happy being part of the organization and are therefore more willing to stay, even if offers from other companies are available. Organizational commitment makes employees feel a moral obligation to remain because the company has provided opportunities, training, or benefits. This makes them more loyal, despite the temptation to move to another company (Luli et al., 2025). Given the importance of organizational commitment in increasing employee retention, travel agencies must implement appropriate strategies to increase organizational commitment, for example through communication, work motivation, reward provision, and work culture. Organizational commitment, particularly Affective Commitment, serves as the glue that keeps employees engaged. This aligns with positive social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) (Rizki et al., 2024), which explains relationships as a form of exchange. When organizations treat employees well (for example, through fairness, support, and recognition), employees feel indebted and obligated to reciprocate.

Organizational commitment plays a significant mediator in the relationship between career development and employee retention.

The data analysis of the mediating effect of organizational commitment on the relationship between career development and employee retention showed a t-statistic of 2.806 and a p-value of 0.005, indicating statistical significance. Organizational commitment acts as a psychological bridge connecting satisfaction with career development with the decision to remain employed. Career development refers to a company's efforts to provide opportunities and support for employees to develop their potential, skills, and career paths (Dewi et al., 2024). When an organization pays attention to its employees' career advancement, it can increase employee loyalty and desire to remain with the company. When a company provides training, mentoring, promotion opportunities, and a clear career path, employees feel valued and cared for. This fosters affective commitment (an emotional attachment to the company, pride and enjoyment of working for it) and normative commitment (a feeling of obligation to remain). High levels of commitment foster employee loyalty, a sense of belonging, and a reduced intention to leave. Consequently, employees are more likely to remain long-term. Organizational commitment is considered a crucial mediating variable in the relationship between career development and employee retention. When a company actively supports the career advancement of individuals within the organization, it strengthens employees' loyalty and emotional ties to the institution, ultimately increasing their likelihood of long-term retention. Previous research shows that effective career development can strengthen organizational commitment (Imelda et al., 2023) and contribute to increased employee retention (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

By understanding this mediating role, travel agency management should focus not only on providing training or promotion opportunities but also on building an inclusive and supportive organizational culture, so that career development outcomes truly strengthen employee engagement. Furthermore, organizations can create transparent communication about career paths, so employees feel the company is committed to their futures, and regularly measure the level of organizational commitment to ensure that career development programs truly impact retention (Muttaqien, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that career development significantly enhances employee retention in travel agencies, both directly and indirectly through organizational commitment. Practically, travel agencies should institutionalize career pathways, invest in regular training, and strengthen managerial support to foster commitment and reduce turnover. Limitations include the cross-sectional design, reliance on self-reported measures, and data limited to Kediri region; therefore, future studies should employ longitudinal or mixed-methods designs across multiple regions and include additional predictors such as compensation and organizational culture.

Based on the data analysis, important interrelated findings were obtained that support the research model. First, organizational commitment demonstrated a positive and significant direct influence on employee retention. Second, career development was shown to significantly contribute to strengthening organizational commitment. Third, career development had a direct positive impact on employee retention. Finally, organizational commitment acted as a significant mediating variable in strengthening the causal relationship between career development and employee retention. These findings confirm that career development not only directly impacts retention but also indirectly through organizational commitment.

This study emphasizes the importance of career development strategies in strengthening employee commitment and retention, which impacts operational efficiency and business sustainability in the travel agency sector. These findings provide a foundation for companies implementing career development programs (training, promotions, mentoring) to increase loyalty and reduce turnover. HR managers can design policies that emphasize strengthening organizational commitment by providing clear career opportunities, recognition, and employee involvement in decision-making.

This study use of quantitative methods, which may limit in-depth understanding of psychological or organizational culture that influence retention. Future researchers could use mixed methods with interviews or qualitative studies to delve deeper into employee experiences. In addition, adding other variables such as job satisfaction, leadership, organizational culture, or compensation systems to get a more comprehensive model.

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