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The Influence of Human Resource Practices, Inclusive Leadership, and Digital Competence on Employee Engagement and Retention in the Hospitality Industry: A SEM-PLS Approach

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Abstract

This study investigates the direct effects of human resource practices, inclusive leadership, and digital competence on employee engagement, job satisfaction, and retention intention in the hospitality industry. Grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, the research aims to provide a multidimensional understanding of how organizational support and digital adaptability shape key employee outcomes in service-intensive contexts. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey was conducted with 312 hospitality employees across Indonesia. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) via SmartPLS 4. The measurement model was assessed for validity and reliability, followed by an evaluation of the structural model to test the proposed hypotheses. The results confirm that human resource practices, inclusive leadership, and digital competence each have significant positive effects on employee engagement, job satisfaction, and retention intention. Moreover, both engagement and satisfaction were found to be strong predictors of employees' intent to stay. These findings highlight the importance of integrating psychosocial and digital resources within human capital strategies. This study extends the existing literature by incorporating digital competence and inclusive leadership as key antecedents of employee outcomes—areas that remain underexplored in hospitality research. It also addresses a geographical gap by focusing on an emerging market context. The study offers theoretical integration of SET and JD-R models and provides actionable insights for organizations seeking to enhance workforce sustainability in a post-pandemic, digitally evolving service landscape.

Keywords: Human Resource Practices, Inclusive Leadership, Digital Competence, Employee Engagement, Job Satisfaction, Retention, Hospitality Industry, SEM-PLSc

A. INTRODUCTION

The global hospitality industry is undergoing a profound transformation fueled by technological advancements, rapidly shifting customer expectations, and intensified workforce challenges—many of which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Chong et al., 2023; Kong et al., 2021). As service organizations strive to maintain excellence amidst talent shortages, rising burnout, and high employee turnover, strategic human resource management (HRM) has emerged as a central pillar for sustaining organizational resilience and employee well-being. Empirical research highlights that burnout, often triggered by excessive job demands and limited autonomy, significantly undermines performance and engagement in hospitality settings (Chong et al., 2023). Leadership styles that emphasize trust and support—such as ethical and servant leadership—have demonstrated their potential to alleviate stress and enhance commitment (Zia et al., 2023). Furthermore, the pandemic has intensified job insecurity and psychological strain among hospitality workers, underscoring the urgency for HRM strategies that holistically address mental health, retention, and workforce sustainability (Bufquin, 2020; Dsouza et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2021; Johnson & Park, 2020).

In the Southeast Asian context, particularly in Indonesia, the hospitality sector is poised for rapid growth driven by rising tourism activity and government-backed economic initiatives (Ardiansyahmiraja & Rahayu,

2023; Ekowati et al., 2023; Susanto et al., 2022). However, this growth trajectory is paralleled by persistent labor market inefficiencies, including high attrition, low employee engagement, and a growing skills mismatch—particularly among younger generations (Akeh, 2021; Andrianto & Susanto, 2023; Atan et al., 2021). These issues are compounded by the slow adoption of inclusive leadership practices and the underutilization of digital tools in HRM systems (Aguiar-Quintana et al., 2021; Metarini & Rusilowati, 2023). The pandemic has further exposed structural weaknesses in workforce infrastructure, reinforcing the need for HR interventions that emphasize psychological safety, digital integration, and flexible work policies (Kasbuntoro, 2022; Meilianti et al., 2022; Sönmez et al., 2020; Widodo, 2023).

Despite extensive research linking traditional HRM practices to job satisfaction and leadership styles to organizational performance (Karatepe, 2013; Kim et al., 2019), relatively few studies have examined the synergistic influence of inclusive leadership and digital competence within integrated HR frameworks—especially in the post-pandemic hospitality sector (Berber et al., 2022; Im & Koh, 2023). Inclusive leadership, which prioritizes psychological safety, employee voice, and diversity, has been recognized as a catalyst for improving motivation, commitment, and flexible work design (Aboobaker & Zakkariya, 2023; Božović et al., 2021). Meanwhile, digital competence enables organizations to enhance recruitment, communication, training, and feedback mechanisms in alignment with the expectations of a digitally literate workforce (Liu-Lastres et al., 2022; Salem et al., 2022). As organizational success becomes increasingly dependent on adaptability, the integration of inclusive leadership and digital readiness is vital for mitigating burnout and fostering long-term employee retention(C.-L. Chen & Chen, 2021; Cuc et al., 2022; Jones et al., 2023; Moyo et al., 2022).

To anchor this investigation, the present study employs the Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model to explore how inclusive leadership and digital competence interact with human resource practices to shape employee engagement and retention. SET emphasizes reciprocity in employee–organization relationships, positing that perceived support fosters greater organizational commitment—particularly critical in service-intensive environments (Q. Chen & Liu, 2022; Shamsudin et al., 2023; Sukumaran & Lanke, 2020). In parallel, the JD-R Model underscores the balance between job demands and available resources in determining engagement and well-being (Hamid et al., 2020; C. Wang et al., 2023). Inclusive leadership provides the emotional and psychological resources necessary for employee resilience (Ahmed et al., 2020; Akarsu et al., 2020), while digital competence offers technical resources that help employees adapt to the evolving operational demands of the hospitality industry (Y. Chen & Yan, 2022; C. Wang et al., 2023). Together, these frameworks offer a comprehensive theoretical foundation for understanding HRM's role in navigating post-pandemic workforce challenges.

Emerging literature has emphasized the growing importance of integrating leadership inclusivity and digital capabilities into contemporary HRM approaches, particularly in dynamic service industries such as hospitality (Humairah et al., 2023; Urbini et al., 2021). Inclusive leadership—characterized by empathy, diversity appreciation, and participative decision-making—has been linked to increased organizational citizenship behavior and reduced turnover in high-pressure environments (Beurden et al., 2020, 2022). In tandem, digital competence has become indispensable in facilitating employee adaptability, service innovation, and customer satisfaction in increasingly tech-mediated workplaces (Jarrar, 2022; Kumar, 2021; Saad et al., 2021). Nevertheless, empirical studies that integrate both constructs into a unified structural model within the hospitality HRM domain remain limited. Recent findings suggest that when digital tools are combined with inclusive leadership practices, organizations can enhance employee engagement through clearer value communication, participatory feedback systems, and a more cohesive workplace culture (Amir et al., 2022; Nurbaiti, 2021).

This study offers a novel contribution by developing and empirically validating an integrated model that examines the joint effects of human resource practices, inclusive leadership, and digital competence on employee engagement, job satisfaction, and retention intention in the post-pandemic hospitality context. By

focusing on Southeast Asia, with a particular emphasis on Indonesia, this research addresses a notable geographical and conceptual gap. Unlike previous studies that treat these constructs in isolation, this study adopts a multi-dimensional, theory-driven approach grounded in SET and JD-R to provide actionable insights for building resilient, adaptive, and high-performing hospitality workforces in an era of digital and cultural transformation.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Human Resource Practices and Employee Outcomes

In the hospitality industry—where service delivery is labor-intensive, emotionally charged, and directly influenced by frontline staff performance—effective Human Resource Practices (HRP) are critical to sustaining workforce engagement, satisfaction, and retention. HRP encompasses a broad set of organizational policies and practices, including recruitment, development, performance management, and employee support mechanisms. Given the sector's dependency on human capital, organizations must strategically deploy HRP to foster employee commitment, well-being, and performance. The Social Exchange Theory (SET) offers a foundational lens to understand the relationship between HRP and employee outcomes. According to SET, when employees perceive that their organization invests in their development, treats them fairly, and supports their well-being, they are more likely to reciprocate through greater engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty (Eisenberger et al., 2020; Kilroy et al., 2022). In hospitality, where employees frequently interact with customers and bear the emotional burden of service work, such reciprocal relationships are particularly vital. High-quality HR practices—especially those focusing on career development and supervisory support—have been shown to strengthen affective commitment and reduce turnover intentions while simultaneously enhancing job satisfaction and service delivery (Alola & Alafeshat, 2020; J. He et al., 2021; Vossaert et al., 2021).

Complementing SET, the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model provides a dual-path framework in which HR practices act as essential job resources that counterbalance high job demands, such as emotional labor, long shifts, and performance pressures (Dwivedi et al., 2021). By providing resources such as training, autonomy, feedback, and growth opportunities, HRP enables employees to maintain motivation, reduce burnout, and enhance work performance. In fact, developmental HR systems have been linked to greater organizational citizenship behaviors—particularly valuable in service-oriented environments like hospitality, where discretionary effort can significantly elevate the customer experience (Liu et al., 2022). The role of inclusive leadership also intersects meaningfully with HR practices in influencing employee outcomes. Inclusive leaders cultivate environments that prioritize openness, fairness, and recognition of diverse perspectives. When combined with effective HR systems, such leadership can enhance employees' sense of belonging and meaning at work, reinforcing their engagement and organizational commitment. Given that hospitality workers often operate in high-pressure, multicultural environments, leadership that fosters psychological safety and inclusion becomes a vital complement to HRP.

Despite theoretical support for these linkages, empirical studies exploring the combined effects of HR practices and leadership on engagement and retention in the hospitality sector remain scarce. This gap is especially pertinent in the post-pandemic context, where employee well-being, adaptability, and loyalty are increasingly central to organizational sustainability. A deeper empirical exploration of how HRP influences key employee outcomes can yield strategic insights for hospitality firms navigating workforce volatility and aiming to strengthen their human capital advantage (Boğan, 2021). The integration of Social Exchange Theory and the JD-R Model offers a robust theoretical foundation for understanding the impact of Human Resource Practices on employee attitudes and behaviors. When supported by inclusive leadership and strategically aligned with organizational goals, HRP can serve as powerful levers for enhancing engagement, satisfaction, and retention—thereby contributing to long-term competitiveness and service excellence in the hospitality industry.

Hypotheses

H1: Human resource practices have a positive effect on employee engagement.

H2: Human resource practices have a positive effect on job satisfaction.
H3: Human resource practices have a positive effect on employee retention intention.

Inclusive Leadership as a Social Resource

Inclusive leadership, defined by openness, fairness, and the empowerment of employees through valuing diversity and active engagement, plays an increasingly vital role in high-contact service environments such as the hospitality industry. Leaders who adopt inclusive behaviors create a culture of belonging and trust, enabling employees to feel seen, heard, and valued. This leadership style is particularly influential in labour-intensive sectors, where employees' emotional connection to their work environment directly affects service quality and organizational performance. From the lens of Social Exchange Theory (SET), inclusive leadership enhances employees' perceptions of organizational support, which fosters reciprocal behaviors such as engagement, loyalty, and commitment (P. Bao et al., 2021; H. Wang et al., 2021). When employees perceive that their leaders genuinely care about their well-being and embrace their contributions, they are more likely to invest themselves emotionally and cognitively in their work. This dynamic is reinforced in the hospitality context, where frontline service workers regularly face emotional labor and high-performance expectations. Within the framework of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, inclusive leadership functions as a crucial social resource that helps buffer the negative impact of job demands. By fostering fairness, voice, and psychological safety, inclusive leaders reduce emotional exhaustion and enhance job satisfaction(P. Bao et al., 2021; B. He et al., 2021). As a result, employees are better equipped to manage service pressures and are more likely to remain engaged and committed in their roles.

Empirical research supports the role of inclusive leadership in driving positive employee outcomes. For instance, (Katsaros, 2022) found that inclusive leadership increases employees' sense of belonging, which subsequently motivates participation in organizational change initiatives. Similarly, (Jolly & Lee, 2020) demonstrate that inclusive leadership enhances employee voice, empowering individuals to express ideas and concerns—an essential dynamic in hospitality settings where frontline input directly shapes service delivery. The concept of psychological safety further explains the psychological mechanism underlying these relationships. (Vakira et al., 2022) argue that inclusive leadership fosters a climate in which employees feel safe to share ideas without fear of retribution, thus encouraging greater engagement and satisfaction. (Ashmawy, 2023) further suggests that psychological safety moderates the relationship between inclusive leadership and work commitment, with supportive leadership increasing team cohesion and efficacy. From a JD-R perspective, inclusive leadership provides employees with the interpersonal resources needed to navigate the emotional demands of customer-facing roles. (Wu & Li, 2023) found that inclusive leadership reduces emotional exhaustion and boosts job satisfaction, reaffirming its role as a protective factor in stressful work environments. Moreover, (G. Zhang & Zhao, 2023) reveal that inclusive leadership promotes work engagement, which in turn supports innovative behaviors—underscoring the broader impact of inclusive leadership on both individual and organizational outcomes. Inclusive leadership serves as both a psychological resource and a relational support mechanism that directly contributes to employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention in the hospitality sector. Grounded in the dual frameworks of SET and JD-R, inclusive leadership offers a powerful tool for organizations aiming to enhance employee well-being, foster loyalty, and ensure resilience in high-pressure service environments.

Hypotheses

H4: Inclusive leadership has a positive effect on employee engagement.
H5: Inclusive leadership has a positive effect on job satisfaction.
H6: Inclusive leadership has a positive effect on employee retention intention.

Digital Competence and Work Adaptability

In the digital age, digital competence has emerged as a pivotal capability in the hospitality industry, especially as organizations face growing pressure to adapt to rapid technological change. Defined as employees' ability to effectively utilize digital tools, platforms, and systems for task execution, communication, and adaptation to evolving technologies, digital competence has become integral to service excellence and organizational agility. As the hospitality sector increasingly embraces digital transformation across operations, marketing, and HR functions, the digital proficiency of employees is no longer optional—it is strategic. From the perspective of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, digital competence functions as a core job resource that enhances productivity, reduces task-related stress, and enables smoother workflows, particularly under conditions of high job demands (Maghrifani et al., 2022). Employees equipped with digital skills are better positioned to navigate complex service interactions, streamline administrative tasks, and adapt to dynamic technological requirements. This not only improves operational efficiency but also contributes to emotional well-being by minimizing frustration and uncertainty linked to digital change.

Concurrently, Social Exchange Theory (SET) provides an important framework for understanding how organizational investment in digital upskilling fosters employee commitment and satisfaction. When employees perceive that their organization values their growth by providing training and opportunities to develop digital competencies, they are more likely to reciprocate with increased engagement, loyalty, and intention to stay (Barišić et al., 2021; X. Zhang et al., 2022). SET underscores that these reciprocal relationships are rooted in perceived fairness and organizational support, which are amplified when employees feel adequately prepared to succeed in digitally enabled workplaces. Empirical studies reinforce the value of digital competence in shaping positive employee outcomes. Research suggests that employees with strong digital skills exhibit higher levels of engagement and productivity, especially when their roles involve direct interaction with digital systems to enhance customer experiences (Cazan, 2020). Organizational investment in digital training and development has been linked to improved job satisfaction and reduced turnover as employees gain confidence and alignment with digital workflows (Kasbuntoro, 2022; Raković et al., 2022). These investments not only bridge skill gaps but also foster a culture of adaptability and innovation.

The COVID-19 pandemic served as an accelerant to digital transformation, highlighting the critical importance of digital competence as organizations were forced to digitize services, communications, and operational processes at unprecedented speed. Companies that implemented comprehensive digital strategies reported improvements in employee engagement, performance, and retention, underlining the strategic value of digital readiness (Iskandar, 2023). Employees' ability to adapt to digital tools and systems has since become a key determinant of organizational resilience and workforce sustainability. Digital competence represents both a technical and psychological enabler within modern hospitality organizations. Through the dual lenses of JD-R and SET, digital skills not only function as a protective factor against workplace stress but also reinforce positive organizational climates through perceived investment in employee growth. As the sector continues to evolve in response to technological disruption, prioritizing digital competence can catalyze enhancing employee engagement, satisfaction, and long-term retention.

Hypotheses:

H7: Digital competence has a positive effect on employee engagement.

H8: Digital competence has a positive effect on job satisfaction.

H9: Digital competence has a positive effect on employee retention intention.

Engagement and Satisfaction as Drivers of Retention

Employee engagement and job satisfaction are among the most critical attitudinal outcomes influencing an individual's decision to remain within an organization. In the hospitality industry—characterized by high levels of service demands, emotional labor, and workforce volatility—these constructs become essential for addressing persistent challenges related to turnover and employee retention. Engaged employees are

emotionally and cognitively invested in their roles, often exhibiting discretionary behaviors that support organizational effectiveness. Meanwhile, job satisfaction reflects the degree to which employees feel that their values and expectations align with the organization's culture and practices, reinforcing their motivation to remain. Within the framework of Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964), the quality of relationships between employees and the organization plays a central role in shaping these outcomes. When employees perceive that the organization genuinely values their contributions and well-being, they are more likely to reciprocate with loyalty, commitment, and sustained performance (Kaya & Karatepe, 2020). Research indicates that leadership approaches rooted in support and empathy—such as servant or inclusive leadership—can significantly influence engagement and satisfaction by enhancing perceived organizational support (Kaya & Karatepe, 2020; Vakira et al., 2022). In hospitality contexts, where interpersonal interactions are frequent and emotionally charged, such perceptions of support are essential for fostering a climate of trust and stability.

SET further highlights the importance of psychological safety in driving positive work attitudes. Employees who feel safe to express ideas and who believe that their well-being is a priority are more likely to demonstrate high engagement and lower turnover intentions. This is particularly relevant in high-stress service environments, where employees continuously manage customer expectations and emotional challenges (Vakira et al., 2022). The presence of trust, recognition, and fairness within the organizational culture becomes a powerful driver for long-term employee retention. Complementing SET, the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model emphasizes the balance between job demands—such as workload, service pressures, and emotional intensity—and the availability of job resources, including managerial support, autonomy, and developmental opportunities. In environments with high job demands like hospitality, sufficient job resources serve as critical buffers that sustain motivation and prevent burnout (S. Bao & Jolly, 2023).

For example, managerial support and leadership behaviors that promote psychological empowerment have been shown to increase both engagement and job satisfaction, thereby lowering employees' intention to leave. Empirical findings also reinforce the link between engagement, satisfaction, and retention. (Douglas & Roberts, 2020) found that employees who have accumulated workplace resources over time, including experience and autonomy, tend to report higher engagement levels, which subsequently translate into greater job satisfaction and retention. Similarly, providing opportunities for work-life balance has emerged as another crucial job resource in hospitality. (Aufa et al., 2023) demonstrated that flexible scheduling and supportive HR policies contribute to employee satisfaction and are strongly correlated with lower turnover intentions in hotel settings. The implications for management are clear. In order to address ongoing turnover challenges in the hospitality industry, organizations must prioritize engagement and satisfaction through supportive leadership, skill development, psychological empowerment, and culturally responsive work environments. This is particularly important for retaining younger generations of workers who value inclusivity, digital fluency, and meaningful workplace experiences (Onyango et al., 2022). By investing in these areas, organizations can build a more resilient and committed workforce, essential for long-term service excellence and organizational sustainability.

Hypotheses

H10: Employee engagement has a positive effect on employee retention intention.

H11: Job satisfaction has a positive effect on employee retention intention.

C. METHODS

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to investigate the direct effects of human resource practices, inclusive leadership, and digital competence on employee engagement, job satisfaction, and retention intention within the hospitality industry in Indonesia. Grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, the research adopted a deductive approach, utilizing Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) for hypothesis testing. The population of this study consisted of employees working in hotels, resorts, and tourism service organizations across Indonesia. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on three criteria: full-time employment status in the

hospitality sector, minimum tenure of six months in their current organization, and involvement in customer-facing or service-related roles. Data were collected through an online, self-administered questionnaire distributed via professional networks, hospitality forums, and industry-related social media groups. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and informed consent was obtained before completing the survey. The instrument included previously validated multi-item scales adapted from established studies to ensure contextual relevance. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Constructs included human resource practices (e.g., training, development, support), inclusive leadership (e.g., openness, fairness, recognition), digital competence (e.g., confidence in using digital tools), employee engagement (e.g., energy and dedication at work), job satisfaction (e.g., contentment with job roles), and retention intention (e.g., willingness to stay with the organization). Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4. The evaluation process involved two stages: the first assessed the measurement model by testing internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability), convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted), and discriminant validity (Fornell–Larcker and HTMT criteria). The second stage evaluated the structural model through path analysis, examining R^2 values, effect sizes (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). Bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples was performed to determine the statistical significance of each hypothesized path.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Respondent Profile

A total of 312 valid responses were collected from employees working in various hospitality establishments across Indonesia, including hotels, resorts, and travel service providers. The demographic profile of the respondents reflects a diverse workforce across age, gender, job positions, educational backgrounds, and tenure, which supports the generalizability of the findings within the hospitality sector.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 312)

Demographic	Category	Frequency	(%)
Gender	Male	144	46.2
	Female	168	53.8
Age	18–25 years	62	19.9
	26–35 years	132	42.3
	36–45 years	91	29.2
	> 45 years	27	8.7
Education	Diploma	66	21.2
	Bachelor's Degree	207	66.3
	Postgraduate Degree	39	12.5
Job Position	Frontline/Operational	170	54.5
	Supervisor/Managerial	102	32.7
	Senior/Executive	40	12.8
Tenure in Current Organization	< 1 year	70	22.4
	1–3 years	111	35.6
	4–6 years	88	28.2
	> 6 years	43	13.8

Source: Research data, 2023

As shown in Table 1, the sample consisted of 168 females (53.8%) and 144 males (46.2%), indicating a relatively balanced gender distribution. In terms of age, the majority of respondents (42.3%) were between 26–35 years old, followed by 29.2% aged 36–45, and 19.9% aged 18–25, while a smaller proportion (8.7%) were aged 46 and above. Regarding educational background, most participants held a bachelor's degree (66.3%), with diploma graduates accounting for 21.2% and the remaining 12.5% holding a postgraduate degree. Occupational roles were distributed as follows: 54.5% worked in operational/frontline positions, 32.7% in supervisory or middle-management roles, and 12.8% in senior or executive positions. In terms of tenure, 35.6%

had been employed at their current organization for 1–3 years, 28.2% for 4–6 years, 22.4% for less than 1 year, and 13.8% for more than 6 years.

Measurement Model

The measurement model was assessed to evaluate the reliability and validity of the reflective constructs. The assessment followed a four-step procedure: indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Indicator reliability was evaluated using standardized outer loadings. All indicators met the recommended threshold of ≥ 0.70, indicating satisfactory reliability. A few items with loadings between 0.60–0.70 were retained due to their theoretical relevance and acceptable composite reliability. Construct reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR). As shown in Table 2, all constructs met the minimum thresholds of 0.70 for CA and 0.70 for CR, indicating high internal consistency. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was used to evaluate convergent validity. All AVE values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50, demonstrating that each construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators.

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	C-Alpha	CR	AVE
Human Resource Practices (HRP)	0.84	0.88	0.58
Inclusive Leadership (INL)	0.86	0.90	0.62
Digital Competence (DIC)	0.82	0.87	0.60
Employee Engagement (ENG)	0.85	0.89	0.66
Job Satisfaction (JSAT)	0.83	0.88	0.63
Retention Intention (RET)	0.81	0.86	0.67

Source: Research data, 2023

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio). For the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the square root of AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with other constructs, indicating adequate discriminant validity. For the HTMT analysis, all values were below the conservative threshold of 0.85, confirming that constructs are empirically distinct from one another.

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	DIC	ENG	HRP	INL	JSAT	RET
Digital Competence	0.77					
Employee Engagement	0.62	0.81				
Human Resource Practices	0.55	0.59	0.76			
Inclusive Leadership	0.60	0.65	0.63	0.79		
Job Satisfaction	0.57	0.68	0.60	0.66	0.79	
Retention Intention	0.50	0.67	0.54	0.61	0.70	0.82

Source: Research data, 2023

All HTMT values were below the threshold of 0.85, confirming discriminant validity among the constructs.

Table 4. HTMT Ratios

Construct Pair	HTMT Value
Human Resource Practices – Employee Engagement	0.68
Human Resource Practices – Job Satisfaction	0.63
Human Resource Practices – Retention Intention	0.61
Inclusive Leadership – Employee Engagement	0.72
Inclusive Leadership – Job Satisfaction	0.71
Digital Competence – Employee Engagement	0.66
Digital Competence – Job Satisfaction	0.64
Employee Engagement – Retention Intention	0.74
Job Satisfaction – Retention Intention	0.76

Source: Research data, 2023

Structural Model

After establishing the validity and reliability of the measurement model, the structural model was assessed to evaluate the relationships between latent constructs. This evaluation involved examining the path

coefficients (β), coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2) using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. The R^2 values indicate the amount of variance in the endogenous constructs explained by their predictors. According to (Hair et al., 2019), R^2 values of 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 are interpreted as weak, moderate, and substantial, respectively. As shown in Table 5, the R^2 values for employee engagement, job satisfaction, and retention intention suggest that the model has moderate to substantial explanatory power.

Table 5. R^2 Values

Endogenous Construct	R^2 Value	Interpretation
Employee Engagement	0.52	Moderate
Job Satisfaction	0.58	Moderate
Retention Intention	0.66	Substantial

Source: Research data, 2023

Path coefficients (β) were assessed to test the strength and direction of relationships between constructs. The significance of each path was evaluated using t-statistics and p-values obtained through bootstrapping. Results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	Human Resource Practices → Engagement	0.29	5.21	< 0.001	Supported
H2	Human Resource Practices → Job Satisfaction	0.25	4.73	< 0.001	Supported
H3	Human Resource Practices → Retention Intention	0.18	3.46	< 0.001	Supported
H4	Inclusive Leadership → Engagement	0.32	6.02	< 0.001	Supported
H5	Inclusive Leadership → Job Satisfaction	0.28	5.14	< 0.001	Supported
H6	Inclusive Leadership → Retention Intention	0.22	3.88	< 0.001	Supported
H7	Digital Competence → Engagement	0.27	5.03	< 0.001	Supported
H8	Digital Competence → Job Satisfaction	0.26	4.85	< 0.001	Supported
H9	Digital Competence → Retention Intention	0.21	3.96	< 0.001	Supported
H10	Engagement → Retention Intention	0.30	5.45	< 0.001	Supported
H11	Job Satisfaction → Retention Intention	0.35	6.11	< 0.001	Supported

Source: Research data, 2023

The effect size (f^2) was used to assess the relative contribution of each exogenous construct to the R^2 value of the dependent variable. Values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effects, respectively. All predictors demonstrated at least small to medium effect sizes, indicating their meaningful contribution to explaining the endogenous constructs. Additionally, predictive relevance (Q^2) values—calculated using the blindfolding procedure—were all greater than zero, confirming the predictive validity of the model.

Discussion

The results of this study provide robust empirical support for the proposed structural model, affirming the significance of human resource practices, inclusive leadership, and digital competence as antecedents of employee engagement, job satisfaction, and retention intention within the hospitality sector. Grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, the findings underscore the central role of organizational support mechanisms and personal resources in shaping attitudinal and behavioral outcomes among hospitality employees. The positive effect of human resource practices (HRP) on engagement, satisfaction, and retention aligns with SET's premise that reciprocal relationships are fostered when organizations invest in employee development, fair treatment, and well-being. Employees who perceive HR systems as supportive are more likely to respond with enhanced commitment and loyalty. Simultaneously, from the JD-R perspective, HRP functions as job resources that buffer against the negative effects of job demands, thereby promoting motivational states such as engagement and satisfaction. This finding reinforces the strategic importance of well-designed HR systems in high-demand service environments.

The results also reveal that inclusive leadership significantly contributes to employee engagement, job satisfaction, and retention intention. This supports the growing body of evidence that inclusive leadership enhances psychological safety, perceived fairness, and interpersonal respect—factors that are especially critical in emotionally intensive and culturally diverse workplaces like hospitality. By acknowledging employee voice and fostering an environment of trust, inclusive leaders play a vital role in strengthening relational ties within the organization, consistent with SET assumptions. Moreover, inclusive leadership serves as a social resource under the JD-R framework, mitigating emotional strain and enhancing employees' affective experiences at work. The significant influence of digital competence on all three outcome variables reflects the evolving nature of work in the post-pandemic digital economy. Employees with higher levels of digital fluency are more adept at navigating operational systems and digital service platforms, leading to greater efficiency and reduced work-related stress. As posited by JD-R, digital competence represents a personal resource that enhances adaptability and performance. Concurrently, SET suggests that employees interpret organizational investment in digital upskilling as a sign of commitment to their professional growth, thereby increasing satisfaction and retention. Finally, the findings confirm that employee engagement and job satisfaction are critical predictors of retention intention. Both constructs mediate the relationship between organizational inputs and employee outcomes, serving as core psychological mechanisms through which human capital strategies influence long-term workforce stability. These results affirm prior research in HRM and hospitality, highlighting the necessity of cultivating positive employee experiences to mitigate turnover in high-churn industries.

Theoretical Contributions

This study offers several theoretical advancements. First, it integrates Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and the Job Demands–Resources Model to provide a multidimensional explanation of how organizational, leadership, and technological factors jointly influence employee attitudes and behavioral intentions. This theoretical integration moves beyond traditional HRM models by incorporating both psychosocial and digital capabilities as key constructs. Second, the inclusion of inclusive leadership and digital competence as antecedents contributes to expanding the nomological network of predictors relevant to employee retention—areas that remain underdeveloped in hospitality literature. Third, the study addresses a contextual gap by focusing on Indonesia's hospitality sector, providing valuable insights from an emerging market perspective and enhancing the external validity of Western-based HRM theories.

Managerial Implications

The findings yield important implications for hospitality practitioners. First, hospitality organizations should invest strategically in HR systems that prioritize employee development, feedback, recognition, and well-being. These investments serve not only operational goals but also promote affective commitment and retention. Second, fostering inclusive leadership at all managerial levels is essential for building trust and psychological safety—conditions that are particularly vital in frontline service settings where employees manage emotional labor daily. Third, as digital transformation accelerates, enhancing digital competence through continuous learning and support systems is critical for equipping employees to adapt effectively to evolving technological demands. Beyond technical functionality, digital skill-building signals organizational care, reinforcing the psychological contract between employers and employees. Finally, organizations should adopt data-informed HRM practices, using employee engagement and satisfaction metrics to tailor retention strategies to workforce expectations, especially those of younger, digitally fluent, and diversity-conscious generations.

E. CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on human resource management and organizational behavior in the hospitality industry by empirically examining the effects of human resource practices, inclusive leadership, and digital competence on employee engagement, job satisfaction, and retention intention.

Drawing upon Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, the findings affirm that supportive HR systems, inclusive leadership behaviors, and digital skills function as critical organizational and personal resources that shape employee attitudes and influence retention outcomes. All proposed hypotheses were supported, indicating that human resource practices, inclusive leadership, and digital competence significantly enhance employee engagement and job satisfaction, which in turn positively influence the intention to stay within the organization. These results are particularly salient for the hospitality sector, where high employee turnover remains a persistent challenge. By demonstrating that organizational investments in people and technology lead to tangible improvements in employee retention, this study provides both theoretical validation and practical guidance for workforce sustainability in service-intensive industries.

Future Research Directions

Although this study offers valuable insights, it is not without limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to infer causality among the variables. Future studies may adopt a longitudinal approach to examine how employee attitudes and behaviors evolve in response to organizational interventions. Second, the study relied on self-reported data, which may introduce common method bias. Subsequent research could incorporate multi-source data, such as supervisor ratings or behavioral metrics, to enhance objectivity. Third, while the study focused on Indonesia's hospitality industry, the findings may not be fully generalizable to other cultural or industrial contexts. Comparative studies across different countries or regions would help assess the model's applicability in diverse settings. In addition, future research may explore moderating variables such as organizational culture, generational differences, or leadership style variations to understand boundary conditions of the observed relationships better. Lastly, the role of digital transformation in shaping employee experience warrants deeper exploration. Future investigations could examine specific dimensions of digital maturity, such as AI integration, remote work systems, or e-learning platforms, and how they interact with HRM practices and leadership approaches in influencing employee outcomes.

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