Hotel Management Students' Perspectives on Employee Turnover: Insights for Retention Strategies

Arun A [1], D. Gunaseelan[2]

[1] Research Scholar, Department of Hotel Management and Catering Science, Jamal Mohamed College, (Autonomous), Trichy 620020
[2]Assistant Professor, Department of Hotel Management and Catering Science, Jamal Mohamed College (Autonomous), Trichy 620020

Abstract—**Employee turnover continues to be a critical challenge in the hospitality industry, impacting service quality, operational costs, and organizational culture. This study explores the perspectives of hotel management students—future industry professionals— on the causes, consequences, and potential solutions related to employee turnover. Using a structured questionnaire distributed among 315 final-year hotel management students across five institutions, the research gathered insights into perceived organizational factors, job satisfaction elements, leadership practices, and career expectations that influence employee retention. The findings reveal that lack of career growth, poor work-life balance, insufficient recognition, and ineffective management practices are primary contributors to turnover intentions. Students emphasized the importance of mentorship programs, transparent career pathways, supportive leadership, and wellness initiatives in reducing attrition rates. This paper offers valuable recommendations for hoteliers and HR managers to design employee-centered retention strategies, aligning them with the aspirations and expectations of the emerging workforce. Understanding student perceptions can bridge the gap between academic preparation and industry realities, fostering a more sustainable and committed hospitality workforce.**

Index Terms—**Career Development; Employee Retention; Employee Turnover; Hospitality Industry; Workforce Sustainability**

I INTRODUCTION

Employee turnover has long been recognized as a critical challenge within the hotel and hospitality industry worldwide. The sector's inherently labor-intensive nature, coupled with its dependence on consistent service quality, makes workforce stability a cornerstone for business success.[1] Hotels have historically struggled with high employee turnover rates, which often surpass those found in other service sectors. Research indicates that global turnover rates in hospitality can range from 30% to 70% annually, with the Asia-Pacific region frequently reporting even higher figures.[2] In India, the hospitality sector is rapidly expanding post-pandemic, driven by increased domestic and international tourism, but this growth has intensified the competition for skilled and committed employees. Despite robust expansion, attracting and retaining a talented workforce remains an unresolved concern for hotel human resource departments.[3]

Several factors contribute to the persistence of high turnover in the hotel industry. Extended and irregular working hours, emotional labor, high-pressure environments, limited entry-level compensation, and insufficient opportunities for career progression collectively create dissatisfaction among employees.[4] Moreover, issues such as inadequate recognition, lack of effective communication from management, and absence of a clear career trajectory have been cited in numerous studies as significant drivers of attrition. Organizations such as the World Travel and Tourism Council and the Global Hospitality Insights reports have consistently highlighted these systemic challenges.[5] Hotels that fail to address these issues not only incur high recruitment and training costs but also face diminished service quality and weakened brand reputation.[6]

The attitudes and career aspirations of young professionals entering the hospitality workforce are shifting dramatically. Studies on emerging workforce trends show that Generation Z and Millennials prioritize work-life balance, mental well-being, ethical workplace practices, and continuous personal growth over traditional notions of job loyalty. [7] Hotel management students, who represent the immediate future of the industry, increasingly perceive hotel careers as stressful and temporary.[8] Research conducted internationally and in India suggests that many students contemplate exiting the industry within a few years of entering, if better opportunities offering greater work satisfaction arise elsewhere. This disconnects between industry expectations and the aspirations of young talent poses a significant threat to the sustainable growth of the hotel sector.[9]

Evolving workforce dynamics, becomes essential to understand the perspectives of hotel management students regarding employee turnover and the effectiveness of current retention strategies employed by hotels.[10] Their insights can offer valuable direction for hotel HR departments and policymakers to reframe their approaches toward employee engagement and long-term retention.[11] The primary focus of this study is to investigate the underlying factors that influence student perceptions of turnover, evaluate how students view existing organizational efforts to retain employees, and explore the relationship between specific turnover factors such as compensation, work environment, and career development, and their intention to stay within the hospitality industry. By examining these dimensions, the study aims to propose informed and actionable retention strategies that resonate with the values and expectations of the future hospitality workforce.

II MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study employed a quantitative, descriptive research design to explore hotel management students' perspectives on employee turnover and retention strategies within the hospitality industry. A structured survey questionnaire was developed as the primary data collection tool, incorporating both closed-ended and Likert-scale-based questions to capture nuanced opinions regarding work expectations, turnover intentions, and perceptions of organizational support systems. The questionnaire was formulated after an extensive review of scholarly articles, industry reports, and prior empirical studies focused on workforce dynamics in the hotel sector. It was also validated by a panel of academic experts and hospitality HR practitioners to ensure its relevance, clarity, and reliability.

The survey targeted students pursuing undergraduate and postgraduate hotel management programs across several reputed hospitality institutes and universities in India. Convenience sampling was utilized, given the practical limitations of accessing a geographically widespread population within a limited timeframe. A total of 420 students were invited to participate, and after screening for completeness and consistency, 392 valid responses were included in the final analysis, yielding a high response rate of approximately 93.3%. The demographic profile of respondents was also recorded, covering variables such as gender, age, academic year, and prior industry internship experience, to enable a more detailed subgroup analysis.

Data collection was conducted over a three-month period through both online platforms (Google Forms) and offline survey administration in classroom settings. Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to; participation was entirely voluntary, anonymity was assured, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. The survey included sections on perceived reasons for employee turnover, satisfaction with various hotel employment aspects (such as salary, growth opportunities, work-life balance, and managerial support), and willingness to pursue long-term careers in the hospitality industry.

The collected data were statistically analyzed using SPSS software (Version 26.0). Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, and percentages were calculated to summarize the overall trends in student responses. Inferential statistical techniques, including Chi-square tests, Independent Samples t-tests, and Correlation analysis, were employed to examine relationships between demographic variables and perceptions related to turnover and retention strategies. In addition, multiple regression analysis was used to identify the most influential factors predicting students' turnover intentions. Reliability of the scale items was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, which demonstrated a high internal consistency with an alpha value of 0.88. These rigorous statistical analyses ensured that the findings would be both robust and meaningful, contributing to the broader understanding of how future hospitality professionals perceive workforce challenges and solutions.

III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results derived from the survey conducted among hotel management students regarding their perspectives on employee turnover and possible retention strategies. The data was analyzed to understand demographic patterns, perceptions of turnover factors, willingness to stay in the hospitality sector, and key influences on retention. The findings are presented below along with detailed interpretations.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	210	53.60
	Female	182	46.40
Age Group	18–22 years	248	63.30
	23–26 years	144	36.7
Academic Program	Undergraduate	282	71.90
	Postgraduate	110	28.10

Internship Experience	Yes	320	81.60
	No	72	18.40

The demographic profile indicated a near-equal gender representation among participants, with a slight majority of male respondents (53.6%). A substantial proportion of respondents (63.3%) were between 18 and 22 years of age, suggesting that most were still in the early academic phase of their careers. Furthermore, the majority were pursuing undergraduate degrees (71.9%), while 28.1% were postgraduates, indicating a good mix of early-stage and advanced students. Notably, a significant 81.6% of students reported having completed at least one industry internship, suggesting a strong exposure to real-world hotel operations at an early stage of their career development.

Table 2. Students' Perceptions of Turnover Factors

Turnover Factor	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Low Salary and Benefits	41.8	38.5	12	6.1	1.6
Lack of Career Advancement	45.2	36.7	10.5	6.9	0.7
Poor Work-Life Balance	39	35.7	15.1	8.4	1.8
Ineffective Management Practices	34.4	40.8	16.3	7.4	1.1
High Workload and Stress	43.9	39.2	10	5.4	1.5

The students identified multiple causes for employee turnover in the hospitality industry. The most prominent reasons included lack of career advancement opportunities (81.9% agreement) and high workload and stress (83.1% agreement). Salary and benefits dissatisfaction were also strongly perceived (80.3% agreement), demonstrating that monetary concerns continue to play a central role. Poor work-life balance and ineffective management practices were also significant, highlighting the operational and managerial gaps that students fear encountering. These findings reflect the realities documented in broader industry literature, where turnover is often tied to both financial and psychosocial factors, rather than one-dimensional causes.

Table 3. Willingness to Continue in Hospitality After Graduation

Response Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Very Likely	92	23.50%
Likely	115	29.30%
Neutral	87	22.20%
Unlikely	61	15.60%
Very Unlikely	37	9.40%

When students were asked about their willingness to continue working in the hospitality industry after graduation, only 52.8% expressed a positive inclination (very likely or likely). A notable portion of students (22.2%) remained neutral, indicating uncertainty about their career trajectory, while 25% expressed unlikely or very unlikely responses. These statistics indicate a concerning trend: despite academic training, many students hesitate to commit to long-term careers in hospitality, potentially because of the challenges they perceive or have experienced during internships.

Table 4. Factors Influencing Retention Intentions (Regression Analysis)

Predictor Variable	Beta Coefficient	p-value	Significance
Salary and Benefits	0.32	0	Significant
Career Development	0.45	0	Significant
Work-Life Balance	0.29	0.002	Significant
Management Support	0.22	0.01	Significant
Stress Management Programs	0.18	0.015	Significant

The multiple regression analysis confirmed that career development opportunities had the strongest predictive influence on retention intentions ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$), followed by salary and benefits ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.001$). Work-life balance, management support, and availability of stress management programs also showed significant positive effects. This underlines the importance of providing clear career progression paths, competitive remuneration, and an emotionally

supportive work culture to retain young talent. The results are consistent with emerging HRM practices globally, where employee engagement and well-being have become pivotal strategic elements.

Table 5: Impact of Internship Experience on Retention Intentions

Variable Pair	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p)
Internship Experience vs. Retention Intention	0.38	0

There was a moderate positive correlation between internship experience and retention intention (r = 0.38, p < 0.001). Students who had completed internships reported stronger intentions to stay in the hospitality industry, likely because internships provide them with realistic job expectations, hands-on skills, and organizational familiarity. However, the strength of this correlation also suggests that the quality of internships matters greatly: poor or exploitative internship experiences could just as easily drive students away from the sector.

The findings from this study bring forth critical insights into the mindsets of future hospitality professionals. Financial dissatisfaction, career stagnation, and poor work-life balance emerge as the most feared realities that discourage students from pursuing long-term careers in the hotel industry. Conversely, the potential for career growth, strong support systems, and stress management initiatives have the power to significantly enhance retention. The role of internships is notably influential, reinforcing the need for hotels and hospitality organizations to design structured, mentored, and rewarding internships that genuinely prepare students for a dynamic but demanding industry. Unless hotels actively address these challenges, they risk losing valuable young talent to other industries offering better perceived stability, growth, and work conditions.

IV. CONCLUSION

The present study provides critical insights into the perspectives of hotel management students toward employee turnover and the factors influencing their career intentions within the hospitality industry. The findings highlight that despite a strong academic foundation and practical internship experiences, a significant proportion of students remain hesitant about pursuing long-term careers in the sector. Key reasons cited for potential turnover include limited career advancement opportunities, dissatisfaction with salary and benefits, poor work-life balance, high levels of stress, and ineffective management

practices. These perceptions align with broader industry concerns that have long plagued hospitality human resource management across global contexts.

Importantly, the study establishes that career development opportunities, competitive remuneration, supportive management practices, and structured stress management programs significantly influence retention intentions among students. Furthermore, positive internship experiences appear to moderately enhance students' commitment to the industry, underscoring the importance of early professional exposure in shaping career trajectories.

The hotel industry's Human Resource departments must recognize these concerns and strategically implement comprehensive retention initiatives tailored to the evolving expectations of new-generation professionals. Addressing these issues is not merely about improving workplace satisfaction; it is essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the hospitality workforce. By investing in structured career paths, promoting work-life balance, improving leadership practices, and offering attractive compensation, the hospitality sector can better retain motivated, skilled, and passionate individuals who are currently preparing to enter the industry. Failure to act risks exacerbating existing turnover challenges and losing a generation of well-trained talent to alternative industries offering more perceived security and growth.

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