

THE EFFECT OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND *WORK-LIFE BALANCE* PROGRAMS ON EMPLOYEE RETENTION WITH MOTIVATION AS AN INTERVENING VARIABLE AT PT PLN (PERSERO) ULP KOTANOPAN

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to assess how career development initiatives and work-life balance impact employee retention, with motivation as an intermediary variable at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan. Quantitative methods were used through a survey, with a sample of 54 employees. The analysis used Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The results show that motivation significantly and positively influences employee retention. Furthermore, career development initiatives and work-life balance were shown to significantly increase employee motivation. Although career development initiatives did not have a significant direct effect on retention, they did influence it indirectly through motivation. Conversely, work-life balance directly and positively influences employee retention, as well as through motivation. Thus, motivation is an important intermediary factor in increasing employee retention. These results are expected to guide management in developing HR policies to improve employee retention.

Introduction

Human resources are a vital element in determining how successfully an organization achieves its goals. In today's globally connected and technologically advanced world, the HR function extends beyond simply implementing policies; it also acts as a catalyst for innovation and enhances an organization's competitiveness. Businesses must not only recruit skilled personnel but also ensure their retention to foster loyalty, dedication, and motivation for optimal performance. This need makes employee retention a key objective in contemporary HR management, as high retention rates signal stability and efficiency within the organization. Conversely, low retention rates often highlight problems in HR practices, such as a lack of career development opportunities, an unbalanced workload, or reduced employee motivation. High employee turnover results in recruitment and training expenses, while potentially disrupting operations and impacting staff morale.

A crucial element influencing employee retention is career development initiatives. These initiatives involve an organization's commitment to helping employees plan and advance their career paths through training, promotions, job rotations, and skill enhancement. Dessler (2019) notes that well-structured career development programs can improve employee confidence, skills, and job satisfaction. Employees who perceive opportunities for advancement within the organization are more likely to stay, while those who perceive a lack of growth options often seek alternatives elsewhere.

In addition to career development, achieving work-life balance is also crucial for employee retention. Greenhaus & Allen (2017) state that work-life balance refers to an individual's ability to manage work and personal obligations without significant conflict. Employees who achieve this balance generally experience higher satisfaction, reduced stress, and stronger loyalty to their company. On the other hand, a lack of balance can lead to burnout, increased stress, and ultimately, the decision to leave the organization.

The interplay between career development and work-life balance on employee retention is not always straightforward. Work motivation often serves as a mediating factor. According to Robbins and Judge (2018), motivation is an internal drive that shapes an individual's effort, focus, and persistence in achieving goals. Employees who feel supported through career development and maintain a healthy work-life balance tend to experience increased motivation, which in turn results in higher productivity, satisfaction, and loyalty to the company. Therefore, motivation can serve as a mediating variable that enhances the effects of career development and work-life balance on employee retention.

PT PLN (Persero), the state-owned electricity provider, plays a crucial role in driving national economic growth. In its operations, PLN faces challenges in retaining skilled and experienced staff to ensure service quality, particularly at the Kotanopan Customer Service Unit (ULP), where employees face heavy workloads, demands for fast and accurate service, and a broad and diverse regional context. These circumstances necessitate effective HR management strategies to maintain employee dedication and motivation. Implementing specific professional growth initiatives will enable employees to feel valued and envision a brighter future, while establishing a work-life balance helps workers manage the demands of their work alongside their personal lives, enabling them to work with greater focus and satisfaction. If these two elements are effectively addressed and combined with increased motivation, it is expected that employee retention at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan will increase. Therefore, this study was conducted to examine how career development and work-life balance affect employee retention, with motivation as an influencing factor, while also assisting human resource management strategies in fostering a productive, harmonious, and sustainable work environment.

Problem Formulation

1. Does the career development program have a positive and significant effect on Employee Retention at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan?

2. Does Work-life balance have a positive and significant effect on Employee Retention at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan?
3. Does the career development program have a positive and significant effect on Motivation at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan?
4. Does Work-life balance have a positive and significant effect on Motivation at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan?
5. Does Work motivation have a positive and significant effect on Employee Retention at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan?
6. Does the career development program have a positive and significant effect on Employee Retention through Work motivation at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan?
7. Does Work-life balance have a positive and significant effect on Employee Retention through Work motivation at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan?

Research Objectives

1. To test and analyze the effect of the Career development program on Employee Retention at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan.
2. To test and analyze the effect of Work-life balance on Employee Retention at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan.
3. To test and analyze the effect of the Career development program on Motivation at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan.
4. To test and analyze the effect of Work-life balance on Motivation at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan.
5. To test and analyze the effect of Work motivation on Employee Retention at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan.
6. To test and analyze the effect of the Career development program on Employee Retention through Work motivation at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan.
7. To test and analyze the effect of Work-life balance on Employee Retention through Work motivation at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan.

Literature Review

Employee Retention

According to Bidisha and Mukulesh (2019), employee retention is the company's ability to create a pleasant and supportive work environment so that employees have the desire to remain within the organization. According to Mathis and Jackson (2017), employee retention is the organization's effort to retain competent employees to continue working and contributing over the long term.

Indicators of Employee Retention

According to Mathis and Jackson (2017), indicators of employee retention are:

1. Job satisfaction
2. Commitment to the organization
3. Career development opportunities
4. Good relationships with coworkers and superiors
5. Comfortable and supportive work environment

Factors Influencing Employee Retention

Factors influencing employee retention generally include several main aspects, namely:

1. Compensation and Benefits
2. Job Satisfaction
3. Leadership
4. Career Development
5. Organizational Culture
6. Work-Life Balance
7. Interpersonal Coworker Relationships
8. Employee Ownership and Engagement

Career Development Program

According to Mondy and Martocchio (2016), career development is a series of activities carried out by the organization to help employees plan and develop their careers to meet both personal needs and organizational goals. According to Hasibuan (2017), career development is the process of improving an individual's work ability carried out through education, training, and work experience so that employees can achieve higher career levels according to their potential and the organization's needs.

Indicators of Career Development Program

Referring to Mondy and Martocchio (2016), career development indicators include:

1. Job promotion opportunities
2. Training and competency development
3. Clear career planning
4. Organizational support for career development
5. Feedback on employee performance

Work-Life Balance

According to Sirgy and Lee (2018), work-life balance is a condition where a person is able to allocate time, energy, and commitment in a balanced manner between work responsibilities and personal life to achieve overall well-being. According to Greenhaus and Allen (2017), work-life balance is the extent to which an individual is able to balance roles in work and personal life without causing conflict between the two.

Indicators of Work-Life Balance

According to Greenhaus and Allen (2017), work-life balance indicators consist of:

1. Time balance between work and personal life
2. Involvement balance in work and family
3. Satisfaction balance between work and personal life

Work Motivation

According to Luthans (2019), motivation is the internal and external drive that generates employee enthusiasm to behave effectively in achieving organizational goals. According to Robbins and Judge (2018), work motivation is the process that explains the

intensity, direction, and persistence of a person in achieving specific goals within the organization.

Indicators of Work Motivation

According to Robbins and Judge (2018), work motivation indicators include:

1. Intensity in performing tasks
2. Behavioral direction aligned with organizational goals
3. Persistence in completing work
4. Readiness to achieve targets
5. Active involvement in work

Conceptual Framework

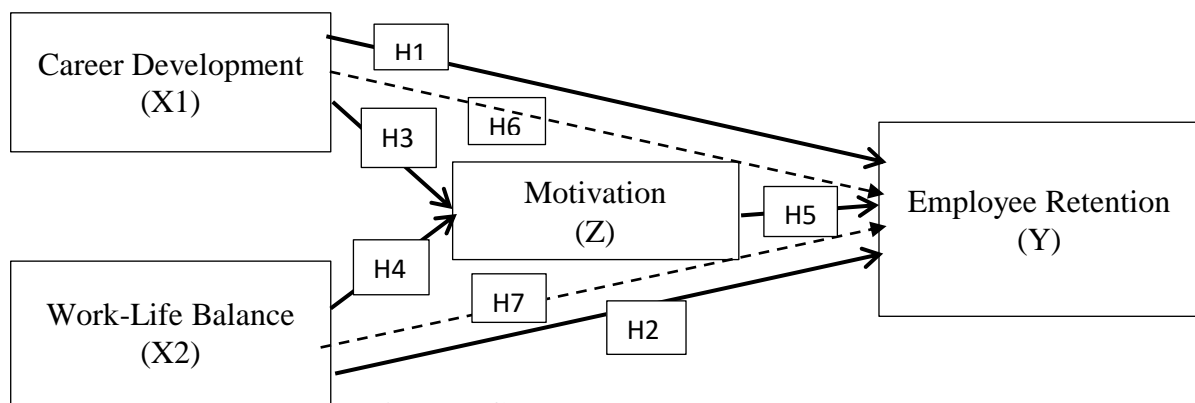


Figure I Conceptual Framework

Research Hypotheses

1. The career development program has a positive and significant effect on Employee Retention at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan.
2. Work-life balance has a positive and significant effect on Employee Retention at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan.
3. The career development program has a positive and significant effect on Motivation at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan.
4. Work-life balance has a positive and significant effect on Motivation at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan.
5. Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on Employee Retention at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan.
6. The career development program has a positive and significant effect on Employee Retention through Motivation at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan.
7. Work-life balance has a positive and significant effect on Employee Retention through Motivation at PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan.

Method

Research Type

According to Sugiyono (2019), quantitative research method is a method used to research a specific population or sample with the aim of testing predetermined hypotheses,

using numerical data and analyzed statistically. This research uses an associative quantitative approach because it aims to determine the influence between variables, namely the influence of career development programs and work-life balance on employee retention with motivation as an intervening variable.

Research Location and Time

This research was conducted at PT PLN (Persero) Customer Service Unit (ULP) Kotanopan, Mandailing Natal Regency, North Sumatra, Jl. Lintas Medan, Padang Bulan, Kotanopan District, Mandailing Natal Regency, North Sumatra 22994. The research time was carried out from November to December 2025.

Research Population and Sample

According to Sugiyono (2017), population is the generalization area consisting of objects or subjects that have certain characteristics determined by the researcher to be studied and concluded. The population in this study were all employees of PT PLN (Persero) ULP Kotanopan, totaling 54 people (the number is adjusted to actual data at the research location). According to Arikunto (2019), if the population number is less than 100 people, it is better to take all as research samples. Therefore, the sample for this study was determined using saturated sampling (census sampling), where the entire population is used as the research sample, because the number of employees is relatively limited and still possible to be studied in its entirety so the number of samples used is 54 people.

Data Types and Sources

Data Types

Research data can be classified into two categories: quantitative data, which consists of numbers and can be analyzed statistically, and qualitative data, which includes descriptive information such as employee working conditions or company profiles (Sanusi, 2017). This research relies on quantitative data collected in numerical form through questionnaires.

Data source

Data sources are classified into two types: primary data collected directly from respondents through questionnaires, and secondary data sourced from documents, reports, or official materials that provide additional support for the research (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019).

Method of collecting data

Data collection techniques are crucial in research because they aim to gather the necessary information (Sugiyono, 2020). In this study, data was collected using various methods:

1. Surveys to collect feedback from participants about research variables.
2. Document review to collect secondary data such as organizational structure, workforce size, and other important details.
3. Literature review by examining relevant theories, articles, and academic texts related to the research variables.

Data Analysis Methods

This study used data analysis following the Partial Least Squares (PLS) technique with SmartPLS software version 3.0. PLS is a variance-based approach used to examine the relationship between hidden variables and their indicators, as well as the relationship between latent variables within a research framework (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2019). PLS-SEM is ideal for exploratory and forecasting research, can handle relatively small sample sizes, and does not require normal data distribution, making it very suitable for developing theory (Hair et al., 2019).

As stated by Ghazali and Latan (2019), analyzing data using SmartPLS consists of two main phases: assessing the measurement model (outer model) and assessing the structural model (inner model). The steps for data analysis with SmartPLS 3.0 are detailed as follows:

Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

The external model evaluates how well the indicators can represent the latent variables. Testing the external model includes:

1. Convergent Validity
 - a. Evaluated by the loading factor value (> 0.70) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE > 0.50).
 - b. Higher factor loading values indicate stronger representation of the construct by the indicators (Hair et al., 2019; Ghazali & Latan, 2019).
2. Discriminant Validity
 - a. Assessed by cross-loading and the Fornell-Larcker Criteria, ensuring that the correlation of the indicator to its construct is greater than the correlation of other constructs (Hair et al., 2019; Ghazali & Latan, 2019).
3. Construct Reliability
Determined using Composite Reliability (> 0.70) and Cronbach's Alpha (> 0.70) to confirm the internal consistency of indicators in a construct (Hair et al., 2019; Ghazali & Latan, 2019).

Structural Model Evaluation (Deep Model)

The deep model focuses on examining the relationship between latent variables based on research theory and hypotheses. Evaluation of the deep model is carried out through:

1. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)
 - a. The R^2 value reflects how much the independent variable explains the dependent variable.
 - b. $R^2 \geq 0.67$ is considered strong, 0.33 as moderate, and 0.19 as weak (Hair et al., 2019).
2. Predictive Relevance (Q^2)
It is used to measure the predictive capacity of a model; Q^2 values greater than 0 indicate good predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2019).
3. Model Suitability (Goodness of Fit/GoF)
This assesses how well the model fits the data, calculated by the square root of the average of AVE and R^2 (Ghazali & Latan, 2019).
4. Significance and Hypothesis Testing (Bootstrapping)

- a. The bootstrapping method is used to evaluate the level of significance of the relationship between latent variables.
- b. A t-statistic value of 1.96 or greater ($p < 0.05$) indicates a significant relationship (Hair et al., 2019).

Results and Discussion

External Model Analysis

External model evaluation involves determining how well a model meets validity and reliability standards. This assessment is performed by examining factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), discriminant validity, and composite reliability.

Loading Factor

The loading factor serves as the first step in confirming the validity of a model. An indicator is considered valid if its loading factor value exceeds 0.6; if it falls below this criterion, it is considered invalid and requires modification of the research model (Husein, 2015). To understand how external model analysis is applied in this study, see the figure below:

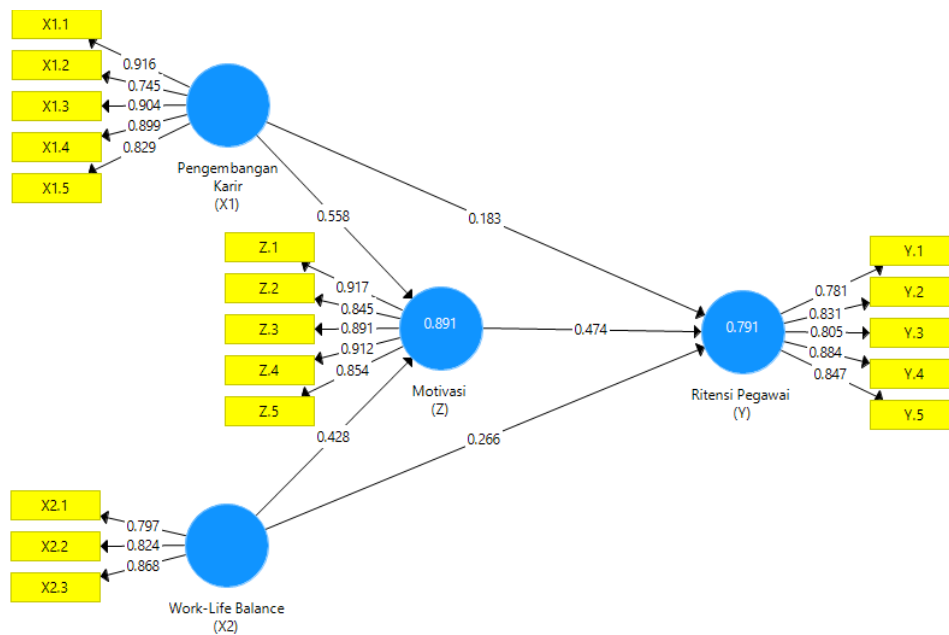


Figure 2. Outer Model

Source : Smart PLS 3.3.3

Based on the graph presented above, each latent variable shows a loading factor of 0, while the manifest variable shows a loading factor of 0.7. This indicates that all indicators and loading factor values have met validity requirements. The regression analysis for this study is detailed as follows:

substructure 1

$$Z = b1X1 + B2X2 + e1$$

$$Z = 0.558 + 0.428 + e1$$

For substructure 2

$$Y = b_2 X_1 + b_2 X_2 + b_5 Z + e_2$$

$$Y = 0.183 + 0.266 + 474 + e_2$$

Table 1. Outer Loadings

	Motivation (Z)	Career Development (X1)	Employee Retention (Y)	Work-Life Balance (X2)
X1.1		0.916		
X1.2		0.745		
X1.3		0.904		
X1.4		0.899		
X1.5		0.829		
X2.1				0.797
X2.2				0.824
X2.3				0.868
Y.1			0.781	
Y.2			0.831	
Y.3			0.805	
Y.4			0.884	
Y.5			0.847	
Z.1	0.917			
Z.2	0.845			
Z.3	0.891			
Z.4	0.912			
Z.5	0.854			

Source : Smart PLS 3.3.3

According to Table 1, each indicator in each variable shows an outer loading value exceeding 0.70, allowing the indicator to be considered valid and reliable for assessing its construct. The Career Development indicator (X1) shows a significant impact, indicated by the highest outer loading value of 0.916 on X1.1. The Work-Life Balance variable (X2) is also accurately assessed, with outer loading values between 0.797 and 0.868. In the case of the Employee Retention variable (Y), all indicators have high outer loading values, with Y.4 recording the highest value of 0.884. On the other hand, the Motivation variable (Z) shows excellent measurement ability, indicated by the highest outer loading value of 0.917 on Z.1. Thus, all indicators should be retained for further evaluation as they have met the convergent validity criteria.

Discriminant Validity

In addition, discriminant validity testing was conducted using the Fornell-Larcker Criteria and the AVE value for each reflective indicator. These two assessments were used

to confirm that the variables in this study were valid and that each construct could effectively differentiate itself from other constructs.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity

	Motivation _(Z)	Career Development_(X1)	Employee Retention_(Y)	Work-Life Balance_(X2)
X1.1	0.883	0.916	0.759	0.804
X1.2	0.766	0.745	0.765	0.649
X1.3	0.768	0.904	0.681	0.706
X1.4	0.753	0.899	0.659	0.664
X1.5	0.733	0.829	0.710	0.721
X2.1	0.607	0.682	0.685	0.797
X2.2	0.654	0.529	0.634	0.824
X2.3	0.913	0.819	0.759	0.868
Y.1	0.795	0.719	0.781	0.649
Y.2	0.801	0.713	0.831	0.726
Y.3	0.645	0.685	0.805	0.626
Y.4	0.677	0.684	0.884	0.689
Y.5	0.701	0.657	0.847	0.781
Z.1	0.917	0.816	0.764	0.899
Z.2	0.845	0.865	0.697	0.742
Z.3	0.891	0.800	0.789	0.810
Z.4	0.912	0.796	0.844	0.762
Z.5	0.854	0.761	0.780	0.719

Source : Smart PLS 3.3.3

According to Table 2, the findings from the discriminant validity test indicate that each indicator displays the largest loading value on the specific construct it assesses when compared to other constructs. This is seen in the indicators of Career Development (X1.1–X1.5), Work-Life Balance (X2.1–X2.3), Employee Retention (Y.1–Y.5), and Motivation (Z.1–Z.5), all of which show the strongest relationship with the corresponding variables. Therefore, it can be concluded that all constructs in the research framework meet the criteria of discriminant validity, allowing each variable to effectively define its indicators without overlapping measurements between constructs.

Composite Reliability

In composite reliability assessment, each variable is measured using its reliability value. A variable is considered reliable if its value exceeds 0.60; values between 0.60 and 0.70 indicate questionable reliability. Some measures used to evaluate the reliability and validity of research include Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), as shown in the following table:

Table 3. Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Motivation _(Z)	0.930	0.947	0.782
Career Development_(X1)	0.911	0.934	0.741
Employee Retention _(Y)	0.887	0.917	0.690
Work-Life Balance_(X2)	0.776	0.869	0.689

Source : Smart PLS 3.3.3

According to Table 3, all research variables showed Cronbach's Alpha scores exceeding 0.70 and composite reliability scores higher than 0.70, confirming their reliability. Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each variable was above 0.50, indicating that all constructs met convergent validity criteria. Thus, the variables Motivation, Career Development, Employee Retention, and Work-Life Balance can be used for additional analysis as they meet established standards for reliability and validity.

Inner Model Analysis

Structural model (internal model) assessment is conducted to confirm the accuracy and reliability of the model being developed. Some evaluations included in the internal model assessment are:

Coefficient of Determination (R²)

The R² evaluation is applied to the dependent variable to measure the model's ability to explain variation in the dependent variable (Ghozali, 2014, p. 183). The results from SmartPLS 3.0 related to the R² value are shown as follows:

Table 4. R Square Results

	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Motivation _(Z)	0.891	0.886
Employee Retention_(Y)	0.791	0.778

Source : Smart PLS 3.3.3

According to Table 4, the R Square value for the Motivation (Z) variable is 0.891, which means that 89.1% of the change in Motivation can be explained by the independent variables in the model, while the remaining 10.9% is due to other influences not included in the model. The adjusted R Square value is 0.886, indicating that the model has very strong explanatory power. On the other hand, the R Square value for Employee Retention (Y) is 0.791, indicating that the variables included in the model can explain 79.1% of the difference in Employee Retention. With an adjusted R Square of 0.778, this indicates that the model is considered strong and effective in explaining the dependent variable.

Hypothesis Testing

After the internal model evaluation is complete, the next phase involves examining the relationships between latent variables based on the research hypotheses. This analysis is performed by examining the T-statistic and P-value. A relationship is considered

significant if the T-statistic exceeds 1.96 and the P-value is less than 0.05. The following details the findings of the direct influence coefficients between variables

Table 6. Path Coefficients and Path Coefficients

	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Results
Motivation_(Z) -> Employee Retention_(Y)	0.474	2,360	0.009	Accepted
Career Development_(X1) -> Motivation_(Z)	0.558	6,665	0,000	Accepted
Career Development_(X1) -> Employee Retention_(Y)	0.183	1,051	0.147	Rejected
Work-Life Balance_(X2) -> Motivation_(Z)	0.428	4,972	0,000	Accepted
Work-Life Balance_(X2) -> Employee Retention_(Y)	0.266	1,909	0.028	Accepted
Career Development_(X1) -> Motivation_(Z) -> Employee Retention_(Y)	0.264	2,152	0.016	Accepted
Work-Life Balance_(X2) -> Motivation_(Z) -> Employee Retention_(Y)	0.203	2,083	0.019	Accepted

Source : Smart PLS 3.3.3

1. The Influence of Motivation on Employee Retention
 The test results show that motivation has a positive effect on employee retention with a coefficient of 0.474 and a p-value of 0.009. Therefore, the hypothesis is validated, meaning that increased employee motivation correlates with increased employee retention.
2. The Influence of Career Development on Motivation
 Career development significantly increases motivation, as evidenced by a coefficient of 0.558 and a p-value of 0.000. Thus, the hypothesis is validated, indicating that effective career development increases employee motivation.
3. The Impact of Career Development on Employee Retention
 Career development does not significantly affect employee retention, as indicated by a coefficient of 0.183 and a p-value of 0.147. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected, indicating that career development fails to directly affect employee retention.
4. The Influence of Work-Life Balance on Motivation
 Work-Life Balance significantly increases Motivation, with a coefficient of 0.428 and a p-value of 0.000. Thus, the hypothesis is confirmed, implying that a positive work-life balance increases employee motivation.
5. The Impact of Work-Life Balance on Employee Retention

- Work-Life Balance positively and significantly influences Employee Retention, as indicated by a coefficient of 0.266 and a p-value of 0.028. Therefore, the hypothesis is confirmed, indicating that increased work-life balance is associated with increased employee retention.
6. The Influence of Career Development on Employee Retention through Motivation
Career Development positively and significantly influences Employee Retention through Motivation, as indicated by a coefficient of 0.264 and a p-value of 0.016. Therefore, the hypothesis is confirmed, confirming that Motivation acts as a mediating variable in this relationship.
 7. The Influence of Work-Life Balance on Employee Retention through Motivation
Work-Life Balance positively and significantly influences Employee Retention through Motivation, as indicated by a coefficient of 0.203 and a p-value of 0.019. Therefore, the hypothesis is supported, indicating that Motivation mediates the effect of work-life balance on employee retention.

Conclusion

After analyzing the research findings, the researchers reached several conclusions. The findings of this study are outlined below:

1. Employee motivation has a positive and significant impact on increasing employee retention.
2. Career development positively and significantly influences employee motivation.
3. Career development does not significantly impact employee retention.
4. Work-life balance positively and significantly influences employee motivation.
5. Work-life balance has a positive and significant impact on employee retention.
6. Career development affects employee retention by increasing motivation.
7. Work-life balance affects employee retention through motivation.

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