



Motivational factors and employee retention in Malaysian fashion retail: A case study research

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Abstract

Employee turnover is a persistent and costly problem for labour-intensive retail organisations, and the fashion and lifestyle segment of Malaysian retail has been particularly exposed to it. This study examines the influence of five motivational factors, financial rewards, job characteristics, career development, management support and recognition, on employee retention at Brook Corporation, a Malaysian fashion and leather goods group whose reported turnover rate rose by approximately two percentage points in 2019. Anchored in Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's two-factor theory, the study adopted a positivist philosophy, a deductive approach and a descriptive cross-sectional design. Primary quantitative data were collected through a structured five-point Likert-scale questionnaire administered to 135 employees selected by convenience sampling, and analysed in SPSS using descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha reliability testing, Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression. All five motivational factors correlated positively and significantly with employee retention ($r = .376$ to $.481$, $p < .01$). However, only three constructs — financial rewards, job characteristics and career development — met the minimum internal-consistency threshold and were retained in the regression model, which explained 27.2 per cent of the variance in retention (adjusted $R^2 = .272$; $F = 17.652$, $p < .001$). Financial rewards ($\beta = .257$, $p = .001$) and career development ($\beta = .351$, $p < .001$) emerged as significant predictors, whereas job characteristics did not ($\beta = .069$, $p = .477$). The findings suggest that in this setting a hygiene factor and a motivator operate jointly: competitive and transparent monetary rewards prevent dissatisfaction, while structured growth pathways generate the intrinsic attachment that keeps employees in place. The paper offers a practical retention agenda for fashion-retail employers and identifies measurement refinement of management support and recognition as a priority for future research.

Keywords: Employee retention, motivational factors, financial rewards, career development, job characteristics, fashion retail

Introduction

Human capital has become the decisive source of competitive advantage in service-intensive industries, and nowhere is this more visible than in fashion retail, where the quality of the customer encounter is delivered almost entirely by frontline employees. Retaining capable staff is therefore not a peripheral administrative concern but a strategic imperative. Employee retention refers to the set of policies, practices and relational conditions through which an organisation encourages competent employees to remain with it for an extended period, and it is commonly treated as the practical inverse of voluntary turnover (Nasir & Mahmood, 2018) [36]. When retention is high, organisations preserve accumulated tacit knowledge, maintain service consistency and avoid the substantial replacement costs associated with recruitment, onboarding and lost productivity.

Motivation is widely regarded as the mechanism that links human resource practice to retention outcomes. Motivation describes the internal and external forces that initiate, direct and sustain work-related behaviour, and motivated employees display stronger commitment, higher discretionary effort and lower intention to leave (Kurdi & Alshurideh, 2020) [29]. The literature conventionally distinguishes extrinsic motivators such as pay, bonuses, incentives and promotion from intrinsic motivators such as meaningful work, autonomy, recognition and developmental opportunity. Aizza Anwar *et al.* (2018) [4] demonstrate that

both categories influence retention, though not with equal force or through the same psychological route, while Shah and Asad (2018) [50] show that perceived organisational support conditions the strength of that influence.

The Malaysian retail sector provides a demanding setting in which to test these relationships. The industry is characterised by long trading hours, weekend and public-holiday rosters, comparatively modest entry-level salaries and a young workforce with a high propensity to move between employers. Hassan *et al.* (2019) [23] note that Generation Y employees in Malaysia evaluate employment not only in terms of compensation but also in terms of learning, progression and the quality of supervisory relationships, which means that retention strategies built on pay alone are unlikely to succeed on their own.

Brook Corporation, founded in 1974 and listed on Bursa Malaysia, designs, manufactures and retails leather goods, apparel, footwear and accessories across Malaysia and several regional markets through an extensive network of boutiques and department-store counters. Its business model depends on a large, dispersed and customer-facing workforce. The company's 2019 [38] annual report recorded an increase in the turnover rate of approximately two percentage points relative to the preceding year, an increase that carries direct financial consequences in the form of recruitment expenditure and repeated investment in training, and indirect consequences in the form of weakened service quality and diminished workforce morale.

Against this background, the present study investigates which motivational factors actually explain retention among Brook employees. It tests five constructs drawn from the retention literature — financial rewards, job characteristics, career development, management support and recognition — against employee retention, and interprets the results through Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's two-factor theory. The study contributes to knowledge in three ways: it supplies firm-level quantitative evidence from a Malaysian listed fashion retailer, a context under-represented in the retention literature; it compares the relative explanatory power of monetary and non-monetary motivators within a single model rather than in isolation; and it converts the statistical results into a prioritised managerial agenda that retail human resource practitioners can implement.

Problem Statement

Despite advancing automation and digitalisation in retail operations, the sector remains fundamentally dependent on people, and the difficulty of holding on to trained staff has intensified rather than eased. Organisations across industries report losing employees to dissatisfaction with salary structures, limited advancement, uncomfortable working environments, weak communication and poor supervisory relationships (Shah & Asad, 2018). Abolade (2018)^[2, 50] argues that when an organisation cannot retain its employees it also becomes unable to achieve its performance targets, because the disruption of team composition and the loss of firm-specific knowledge degrade operational capability well beyond the cost of replacement.

Evidence from large employers illustrates how deeply salary dissatisfaction is implicated in this pattern. Skelton *et al.* (2019)^[53] report that a substantial proportion of departing employees in large-scale operations cite compensation as the primary reason for leaving, while Chiat and Panatik (2019)^[13] find that a majority of employees in comparable organisations would have remained had a higher offer been made before their resignation. Fahim (2018)^[18] draws the same conclusion from the quick-service sector, where pay dissatisfaction was accompanied by a measurable decline in employee commitment. The consistency of these findings has encouraged an assumption that retention is essentially a pay problem.

That assumption is exactly what requires testing at Brook Corporation. The turnover rate reported in the company's 2019^[38] annual report increased by approximately two percentage points year on year. For a retailer whose boutique staff carry the brand experience, an increase of this magnitude imposes recurring recruitment expenditure, repeated induction and product training, temporary understaffing on the sales floor and additional supervisory workload on remaining managers. Recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce in this segment is difficult, and training replacements consumes both time and capital.

Two specific gaps motivate this research. First, most available evidence on motivational factors and retention in Malaysia is either sector-wide or drawn from banking, hospitality and manufacturing; firm-level quantitative evidence from listed fashion retailers is scarce. Second, studies frequently examine motivational factors one at a time, which makes it impossible to determine which factors retain explanatory power when they compete within a single

model. Without that comparative evidence, management at Brook has no empirical basis on which to allocate a finite human resource budget between pay increases, job redesign, training and development, supervisory capability building and recognition programmes. The problem this study addresses, therefore, is the absence of firm-specific, statistically tested evidence identifying which motivational factors most strongly explain employee retention at Brook Corporation.

Research Objectives and Hypotheses

1. Research aim

The aim of this case study is to examine the impact of selected motivational factors on the employee retention rate at Brook Corporation, and to derive evidence-based recommendations for improving retention in the Malaysian fashion retail context.

2. Research Objectives

1. To determine the impact of financial rewards on employee retention at Brook Corporation.
2. To determine the impact of job characteristics on employee retention at Brook Corporation.
3. To determine the impact of career development on employee retention at Brook Corporation.
4. To determine the impact of management support on employee retention at Brook Corporation.
5. To determine the impact of recognition on employee retention at Brook Corporation.

3. Hypotheses

Consistent with the objectives, five alternative hypotheses were formulated and tested:

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between financial rewards and employee retention at Brook Corporation.

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between job characteristics and employee retention at Brook Corporation.

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between career development and employee retention at Brook Corporation.

H4: There is a significant positive relationship between management support and employee retention at Brook Corporation.

H5: There is a significant positive relationship between recognition and employee retention at Brook Corporation.

Literature Review

1. Employee retention as the dependent variable

Employee retention is the capacity of an organisation to keep its employees for a prolonged period and to prevent avoidable voluntary exits. Nasir and Mahmood (2018)^[36] treat retention as a direct determinant of organisational competence, arguing that experience accumulated within a firm cannot be purchased externally at equivalent value. Retention delivers three principal benefits: it preserves institutional knowledge, it reduces the cost of frequent recruitment and induction, and it builds loyalty and identification that translate into service quality and

discretionary effort (Al-Suraihi *et al.*, 2021). Degbey *et al.* (2021) ^[6, 16] add a psychological dimension, showing that employees who feel a sense of ownership toward their organisation are markedly less likely to leave even when external opportunities appear.

Retention is also cumulative in its effects. Yamin (2020) ^[65] observes that when experienced employees leave, remaining staff absorb additional workload, which raises their own intention to leave and can trigger a self-reinforcing cycle of attrition. Tian *et al.* (2020) ^[59] show that leadership quality and communication moderate this cycle through organisational citizenship behaviour. In retail specifically, retention has an immediate commercial consequence, since product knowledge, customer familiarity and selling skill accumulate over time and are lost when staff turnover.

2. Financial Rewards

Financial rewards comprise base salary, bonuses, incentives, commissions, allowances, insurance coverage and profit-sharing arrangements. Alhmoud and Rjoub (2019) ^[5] demonstrate, in a Middle Eastern sample, that total rewards are significantly associated with the intention to remain, particularly where employees perceive the distribution of rewards as fair. Khalid and Nawab (2018) ^[27] argue that compensation functions most powerfully when it is coupled with participation, so that employees understand how rewards are determined. Bassey (2021) ^[9] finds that financial rewards reduce turnover and improve job performance simultaneously, while Chinyio *et al.* (2018) ^[14] show that monetary rewards raise effort among public-sector construction employees.

The evidence is not uniform. Voorberg *et al.* (2018) ^[61] report that financial incentives failed to stimulate voluntary co-production in two experimental settings, suggesting that monetary inducement does not automatically generate commitment, and Rasiah *et al.* (2020) ^[48] similarly caution that financial rewards may crowd out altruistic motives in some contexts. Herzberg's framing resolves much of this tension: pay is a hygiene factor whose absence produces dissatisfaction and departure, but whose presence does not by itself produce enduring motivation. In a retail environment with relatively compressed pay scales, however, even modest differentials can be decisive, because the alternative employer is often across the same shopping mall.

3. Job Characteristics

Job characteristics describe the structural attributes of work — skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback — that shape how employees experience their roles. Ghosh *et al.* (2015) ^[19] find that job characteristics predict turnover intention among Indian public-sector bank employees, with context satisfaction moderating the relationship. Ozturk *et al.* (2014) ^[39] report comparable results among Turkish hotel workers, where enriched job design was associated with higher job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Johari *et al.* (2018) ^[26] confirm the link between job characteristics, well-being and performance among Malaysian public-sector employees, and Grobelna (2018) ^[20] shows that job characteristics drive work engagement among hotel contact employees in Poland.

Two qualifications recur. Naseer *et al.* (2020) ^[35] find that enriched job characteristics can become hindrance stressors

when they exceed the employee's capacity or conflict with prevailing cultural values, and Coupe (2019) ^[15] observes that automation alters job characteristics in ways that may heighten job insecurity. In fashion retail, roles are often standardised around service scripts, visual merchandising standards and stock routines, which may compress the variance in perceived job characteristics and weaken their discriminating power as a retention lever.

4. Career Development

Career development covers training, skills assessment, coaching, structured progression pathways and internal promotion. Abba (2018) ^[1] reports that training and development significantly improve retention in the banking sector, and Pallangyo and Hanai (2020) ^[40] replicate that finding in Tanzanian banking. Jehanzeb and Mohanty (2018) ^[25] show that employee development raises both job satisfaction and organisational commitment, with person–organisation fit acting as a moderator, while Rahayu *et al.* (2019) ^[46] demonstrate that career training influences commitment through satisfaction. Niati *et al.* (2021) ^[37] find that motivation mediates the effect of training on work performance and career development, and Zacher *et al.* (2019) ^[66] emphasise that development is a continuous process rather than a discrete event.

Career development is important theoretically because it addresses the upper tiers of Maslow's hierarchy and functions as a Herzberg motivator: it signals that the employer values the employee's future, not merely the employee's present output. Walker-Donnelly *et al.* (2019) ^[38] note that visible progression pathways help employees construct a coherent occupational identity, which strengthens attachment. For younger retail employees, for whom a boutique role may otherwise appear transitional, a credible development pathway can convert a temporary job into a career.

5. Management Support

Management support refers to the instrumental and emotional assistance employees receive from supervisors and senior management, and it is closely related to perceived organisational support. Kurtessis *et al.* (2017) ^[30], in a meta-analytic evaluation of organisational support theory, establish that perceived support is reliably associated with commitment and reduced withdrawal. Arasanmi and Krishna (2019) ^[7] show that perceived organisational support influences retention through organisational commitment, and Purnamawati and Purba (2019) ^[45] find that organisational support reduces intention to leave. Caesens *et al.* (2017) ^[12] demonstrate that support protects employee well-being by reducing feelings of dehumanisation, and Wassem *et al.* (2019) ^[64] report that managerial support and capacity building jointly raise performance, with retention moderating the relationship. Taheri *et al.* (2021) ^[58] add that management support enables informal learning at work.

6. Recognition

Recognition is the acknowledgement of employee contribution through appraisal, praise, awards, promotion and public appreciation. Montani *et al.* (2020) ^[34] show that recognition increases behavioural involvement by enhancing the meaningfulness of work. Masri and Abubakr (2019) ^[32] link recognition to performance in research institutions,

while Walk *et al.* (2019) ^[62] demonstrate that recognition reduces turnover even among volunteers, where no monetary incentive exists. Tirta and Enrika (2020) ^[60] find that reward and recognition, together with work–life balance, influence retention among Indonesian millennials through job satisfaction. Hancock (2022) ^[22], however, offers a critical reading, warning that recognition programmes can become ritualised and lose credibility when they are detached from genuine managerial attention, and Bosire *et al.* (2021) ^[11] show that their effect is contingent on the surrounding employment-relations context.

7. Theoretical Foundation

7.1 Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Maslow's hierarchy proposes that human needs are arranged in ascending order from physiological and safety needs through belonging and esteem to self-actualisation, and that higher needs become salient as lower ones are satisfied (Hopper, 2020) ^[24]. Applied to employment, salary and job security address the lower tiers, supportive supervision and collegial relationships address belonging, recognition addresses esteem, and career development addresses self-actualisation. Ștefan *et al.* (2020) apply the framework to healthcare employees and show that performance depends on which tier is currently unmet, while Stewart *et al.* (2018) ^[55] use it to design employee cultivation strategies and Hale *et al.* (2019) ^[21] adapt it to occupational wellness. The hierarchy predicts that pay-based interventions will be effective where lower-order needs are unmet, but will yield diminishing returns once they are satisfied.

7.2 Herzberg's two-factor theory

Herzberg distinguishes hygiene factors — salary, company policy, supervision, working conditions and interpersonal relations — from motivators such as achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility and advancement. Hygiene factors prevent dissatisfaction but do not create satisfaction; motivators create satisfaction and sustained engagement (Mehrad, 2020). Chiat and Panatik (2019) ^[13, 33]

use the theory to interpret turnover intention and find that hygiene deficits are the dominant proximate triggers of exit, while motivator presence explains why satisfied employees stay. Prasad Kotni and Karuri (2018) ^[44] apply the model to retail salesforces, and Shaikh *et al.* (2019) ^[51] use it to improve employee performance in manufacturing. The two theories converge on a single practical implication: retention requires the simultaneous management of a hygiene floor and a motivational ceiling.

8. Literature Gap

Three gaps emerge from this review. First, while individual motivational factors have been examined extensively, comparatively few studies place monetary and non-monetary factors in direct competition within one regression model, which is precisely what practitioners need in order to allocate scarce resources. Second, the Malaysian evidence base is concentrated in banking, hospitality, education and manufacturing, leaving the fashion and lifestyle retail segment under-examined despite its size, its youthful workforce and its structurally high turnover. Third, construct measurement for management support and recognition varies widely across studies, and short instruments frequently fail reliability testing, which limits the comparability of findings. The present study addresses the first two gaps directly and documents the third transparently.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework positions employee retention as the dependent variable and five motivational factors as independent variables. Financial rewards operate primarily as a hygiene factor in Herzberg's terms and address the lower tiers of Maslow's hierarchy. Job characteristics, career development, management support and recognition operate primarily as motivators addressing belonging, esteem and self-actualisation. The framework therefore posits five direct paths from the independent variables to retention, as summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Conceptual framework: constructs, theoretical anchor and hypothesised path

Construct	Role	Theoretical anchor	Hypothesised path
Financial rewards	Independent	Herzberg hygiene; Maslow physiological/safety	H1: positive
Job characteristics	Independent	Herzberg motivator; Maslow esteem	H2: positive
Career development	Independent	Herzberg motivator; Maslow self-actualisation	H3: positive
Management support	Independent	Organisational support theory; Maslow belonging	H4: positive
Recognition	Independent	Herzberg motivator; Maslow esteem	H5: positive
Employee retention	Dependent	Outcome construct	—

Expressed as a regression model, the framework takes the following form, where ER denotes employee retention, FR financial rewards, JC job characteristics, CD career development, MS management support and R recognition:

$$ER = \beta_0 + \beta_1FR + \beta_2JC + \beta_3CD + \beta_4MS + \beta_5R + \varepsilon$$

Research Methodology

1. Research philosophy

The study adopts a positivist philosophy. Positivism holds that social phenomena can be observed and measured objectively and that knowledge is legitimately produced through the empirical testing of hypotheses derived from theory (Dźwigoł & Dźwigoł-Barosz, 2018) ^[17]. Positivism is appropriate here because the constructs of interest have

established operational definitions, the research questions concern the direction and strength of relationships rather than the interpretation of meaning, and the objective is generalisable, statistically testable evidence rather than contextual depth. Interpretivism was rejected because it would not produce the quantified comparison of factors that the research problem requires.

2. Research approach

A deductive approach was employed. Theory, specifically Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's two-factor theory, together with the empirical retention literature — was used to derive five testable hypotheses, which were then examined against primary data (Pandey & Pandey,

2021) ^[41]. Deduction moves from the general to the particular and is the appropriate complement to a positivist stance, in contrast to an inductive approach in which theory is generated from observation.

3. Research Design

The study uses a descriptive, cross-sectional design. Descriptive research characterises the features of a population and the associations among variables without manipulating them, and a cross-sectional design collects data at a single point in time from a defined group (Zangirolami-Raimundo *et al.*, 2018) ^[67]. This design was selected for its efficiency within the study timeframe and its suitability for examining prevailing conditions in the organisation. Its principal limitation, which is acknowledged in Section 10, is that causal direction cannot be established from cross-sectional evidence.

4. Data Collection Method

Primary quantitative data were collected through a self-administered structured questionnaire distributed to employees of Brook Corporation. Secondary data, comprising peer-reviewed journal articles, books and the company's published annual report, were used to construct the theoretical framework and to establish the practical significance of the problem. A quantitative method was selected because numerical data permit statistical testing of the hypothesised relationships, support replication and reduce the influence of researcher subjectivity on the findings.

5. Population and Sampling

The target population comprised employees of Brook Corporation across retail outlets and supporting functions. A non-probability convenience sampling technique was applied, in which respondents are selected on the basis of accessibility and willingness to participate (Bhardwaj, 2019) ^[10]. Convenience sampling was appropriate given the constraints of time and access typical of a single-organisation study, and it is widely used in applied management research (Krupnikov *et al.*, 2021) ^[28]. A total of 135 valid and complete responses were obtained and formed the analytical sample. The limitations that non-probability sampling imposes on external validity are recognised in Section 10.

6. Instrument and Measurement

The questionnaire comprised two sections. The first captured demographic information: gender, age band, highest education level and annual income band. The second measured the six constructs, each with three items, on a five-point Likert scale anchored at 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree). Likert scaling is appropriate for quantifying attitudinal responses and permits the computation of composite construct scores as the mean of their constituent items (León-Mantero *et al.*, 2020) ^[31]. Items were adapted from previously published instruments in the

retention literature so as

to preserve content validity, and were worded in plain language to suit a workforce of mixed educational background.

7. Data analysis method

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics. The analysis proceeded in four stages. Descriptive statistics summarised the demographic profile and the central tendency and dispersion of each questionnaire item. Cronbach's alpha was computed to assess the internal consistency of each construct, with the conventional interpretive bands applied (Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2020) ^[57]. Pearson product-moment correlation was used to establish the direction, strength and significance of the bivariate relationships between each independent variable and employee retention. Finally, multiple linear regression was used to determine the joint explanatory power of the independent variables and the relative contribution of each, with the model evaluated through the adjusted coefficient of determination, the analysis of variance F statistic and the significance of individual standardised coefficients (Strunk & Mwavita, 2020) ^[56]. Only constructs meeting the minimum reliability threshold were entered into the regression model, since unreliable measures attenuate and distort estimated coefficients.

8. Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary and preceded by an explanation of the purpose of the study. No personally identifying information was collected, responses were reported only in aggregate, and data were stored securely and used exclusively for academic purposes. Respondents were free to decline or to withdraw at any point without consequence, no inducement was offered, and all secondary sources are fully attributed in the reference list.

Data Analysis and Findings

1. Demographic profile of respondents

Table 2 presents the demographic characteristics of the 135 respondents. Women accounted for 58.5 per cent of the sample and men for 41.5 per cent, a distribution consistent with the gender composition typical of fashion retail and sufficiently balanced to limit concerns about gender bias. Nearly half of the respondents (48.9 per cent) were aged between 31 and 40, with a further 29.6 per cent aged between 20 and 30, so that more than three-quarters of the sample belonged to the cohort commonly identified as Generation Y. In terms of education, 43.7 per cent held STPM, diploma or equivalent qualifications, 37.0 per cent held postgraduate qualifications and 18.5 per cent held undergraduate degrees, indicating that respondents were capable of comprehending the questionnaire items. Annual income was concentrated in the RM36,001–RM60,000 band (44.4 per cent), followed by RM60,001–RM96,000 (28.9 per cent), placing most respondents within the B40 income classification (Romeli, 2022) ^[49].

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of respondents (N = 135)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	56	41.5
	Female	79	58.5
Age	Less than 19 years	2	1.5
	20 to 30 years	40	29.6
	31 to 40 years	66	48.9
	41 to 50 years	20	14.8
	51 to 60 years	7	5.2
	61 years and above	0	0.0
Education level	STPM, diploma, A-level or below	59	43.7
	Undergraduate	25	18.5
	Postgraduate	50	37.0
	PhD	1	0.7
Annual income	RM18,000 or below	2	1.5
	RM18,001 to RM36,000	19	14.1
	RM36,001 to RM60,000	60	44.4
	RM60,001 to RM96,000	39	28.9
	RM96,001 and above	15	11.1
Total		135	100.0

2. Descriptive statistics of study constructs

Table 3 reports the item-level and construct-level means and standard deviations. All construct means exceeded 4.30 on the five-point scale, indicating broad agreement with the propositions put to respondents. Employee retention recorded the highest construct mean (4.79), driven by strong agreement that retention develops an experienced workforce (4.82), builds organisational loyalty (4.80) and lowers the cost of repeated recruitment (4.76).

Among the independent variables, management support recorded the highest mean (4.61), closely followed by recognition (4.60), financial rewards (4.55) and career development (4.52), with job characteristics lowest at 4.40. Standard deviations ranged from 0.421 to 0.893, with the widest dispersion on the item concerning constant and fair feedback from seniors (SD = 0.893), which suggests that the quality of supervisory feedback is experienced unevenly across the organisation.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for questionnaire items and constructs (N = 135)

Construct and item	Mean	SD
Financial rewards (construct mean = 4.55)		
Bonus is a major reward that motivates you	4.77	0.572
Incentives motivate you to perform well	4.49	0.800
You are willing to bear stress to earn financial rewards	4.39	0.743
Job characteristics (construct mean = 4.40)		
Repetitive and complex tasks demotivate you	4.41	0.850
Task significance encourages you to stay with the company	4.47	0.761
You receive constant and fair feedback from your seniors	4.31	0.893
Career development (construct mean = 4.52)		
Career development courses help you keep improving	4.55	0.655
Your skills are assessed before development opportunities are offered	4.53	0.689
You understand the skills gaps you have	4.47	0.780
Management support (construct mean = 4.61)		
You often face stress and long working hours	4.54	0.710
You make use of the support provided by management	4.61	0.681
There should be mutual support between managers and employees	4.69	0.617
Recognition (construct mean = 4.60)		
Promotion motivates you to perform well	4.69	0.525
Your manager appreciates you when you perform well	4.72	0.542
Performance appraisal is a suitable method for retaining employees	4.70	0.577
Employee retention (construct mean = 4.79)		
Retention develops an experienced set of employees	4.82	0.421
Retention lowers the cost of frequent recruitment	4.76	0.511
Retention helps develop loyalty to the organisation	4.80	0.437

Note: Responses measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)

3. Reliability analysis

Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, interpreted against the conventional bands in which values of .70 and above are acceptable, .60 to .69 questionable, .50 to .59 poor and below .50 unacceptable. As Table 4 shows, job characteristics ($\alpha = .624$) and financial rewards ($\alpha = .610$) fell within the questionable band, career development

($\alpha = .577$) and employee retention ($\alpha = .540$) within the poor but usable band, while recognition ($\alpha = .462$) and management support ($\alpha = .363$) fell below the acceptable threshold.

Two considerations explain these values. First, alpha is sensitive to the number of items in a scale, and each construct was measured with only three items, which

depresses the coefficient even when items are conceptually coherent. Second, the item wording for management support mixed the experience of stress and long hours with the use of and belief in managerial support, so that the three items tapped related but distinct ideas. Because unreliable measurement attenuates regression coefficients and can produce misleading inferences, management support and recognition were excluded from the regression model, and their relationships with retention are reported at the correlational level only. This is a measurement limitation rather than evidence that these constructs are unimportant.

Table 4: Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients

Construct	Items	Cronbach's alpha
Job characteristics	3	.624
Financial rewards	3	.610
Career development	3	.577
Employee retention	3	.540
Recognition	3	.462
Management support	3	.363

4. Pearson correlation analysis

Table 5 reports the correlation matrix. Every independent variable correlated positively and significantly with employee retention at the .01 level. Management support recorded the strongest association with retention ($r = .481$, $p < .01$), followed by career development ($r = .468$, $p < .01$), recognition ($r = .460$, $p < .01$), financial rewards ($r = .382$, $p < .01$) and job characteristics ($r = .376$, $p < .01$). All five associations fall within the moderate range, providing preliminary support for the direction of all five hypotheses. The inter-correlations among the independent variables are also informative. Job characteristics and career development were strongly associated ($r = .624$, $p < .01$), as were job characteristics and management support ($r = .597$, $p < .01$) and career development and management support ($r = .588$, $p < .01$). This clustering indicates that employees who perceive their work as well designed also tend to perceive strong developmental and supervisory provision, which is consistent with these practices being bundled in the same operating units. It also signals a degree of shared variance among predictors, which is relevant when interpreting the regression results, where overlapping predictors can suppress individual coefficients.

Table 5: Pearson correlation matrix (N = 135)

	FR	JC	CD	MS	R	ER
FR	1	.346**	.288**	.459**	.233**	.382**
JC	.346**	1	.624**	.597**	.449**	.376**
CD	.288**	.624**	1	.588**	.515**	.468**
MS	.459**	.597**	.588**	1	.506**	.481**
R	.233**	.449**	.515**	.506**	1	.460**
ER	.382**	.376**	.468**	.481**	.460**	1

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). FR = financial rewards; JC = job characteristics; CD = career development; MS = management support; R = recognition; ER = employee retention.

5. Multiple regression analysis

Multiple linear regression was conducted with employee retention as the dependent variable and financial rewards, job characteristics and career development as predictors. As shown in Table 6, the model produced a multiple correlation of $R = .537$ and an adjusted R^2 of .272, indicating that the three predictors jointly explain 27.2 per cent of the variance

in employee retention, leaving 72.8 per cent attributable to factors outside the model. The analysis of variance confirmed that the model is statistically sound, $F(3, 131) = 17.652$, $p < .001$.

Table 6: Model summary and analysis of variance

Statistic	Value
R	.537
R ²	.288
Adjusted R ²	.272
Std. error of the estimate	.282
Regression sum of squares (df = 3)	4.214
Residual sum of squares (df = 131)	10.423
Total sum of squares (df = 134)	14.637
Mean square (regression)	1.405
F	17.652
Significance of F	.000

Note: Predictors: (constant), career development, financial rewards, job characteristics. Dependent variable: employee retention

Table 7 reports the individual coefficients. Career development emerged as the strongest predictor ($B = .222$, $\beta = .351$, $t = 3.699$, $p < .001$), followed by financial rewards ($B = .159$, $\beta = .257$, $t = 3.251$, $p = .001$). Job characteristics did not reach significance ($B = .036$, $\beta = .069$, $t = .713$, $p = .477$). The non-significance of job characteristics should be read in light of its strong correlation with career development ($r = .624$): once developmental provision is accounted for, the incremental contribution of perceived job design becomes negligible, which suggests that the two are experienced by employees as part of the same package rather than as independent levers.

Table 7: Multiple regression coefficients

Model	B	Std. error	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	2.910	.262	—	11.100	.000
Financial rewards	.159	.049	.257	3.251	.001
Job characteristics	.036	.051	.069	.713	.477
Career development	.222	.060	.351	3.699	.000

Note: Dependent variable: employee retention.

The estimated regression equation is therefore: $ER = 2.910 + 0.159(FR) + 0.036(JC) + 0.222(CD)$. Substantively, a one-unit increase in perceived career development is associated with a 0.222-unit increase in employee retention, holding the other predictors constant, while a one-unit increase in financial rewards is associated with a 0.159-unit increase.

6. Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis decisions were made on the basis of the regression results for the three reliably measured constructs. H1 and H3 are supported: financial rewards and career development each exert a significant positive influence on employee retention. H2 is not supported, since job characteristics did not contribute significantly once the other predictors were controlled. H4 and H5 could not be tested inferentially because management support and recognition failed the reliability threshold and were excluded from the regression; both nevertheless show significant positive bivariate correlations with retention, so the appropriate conclusion is that the evidence is inconclusive rather than negative. Table 8 summarises the outcomes.

Table 8: Summary of hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Correlation with ER	Regression result	Decision
H1: Financial rewards → retention	$r = .382^{**}$	$\beta = .257, p = .001$	Supported
H2: Job characteristics → retention	$r = .376^{**}$	$\beta = .069, p = .477$	Not supported
H3: Career development → retention	$r = .468^{**}$	$\beta = .351, p < .001$	Supported
H4: Management support → retention	$r = .481^{**}$	Excluded ($\alpha = .363$)	Inconclusive
H5: Recognition → retention	$r = .460^{**}$	Excluded ($\alpha = .462$)	Inconclusive

Note: $** p < .01$ (2-tailed).

The results deliver a clear and theoretically coherent message: retention at Brook Corporation is explained jointly by one hygiene factor and one motivator. Financial rewards establish the conditions under which employees will consider staying, and career development supplies the reason for them to do so.

The significance of financial rewards ($\beta = .257$) aligns with Alhmoud and Rjoub (2019) and Bassey (2021) ^[5, 9], and with the wider evidence that compensation dissatisfaction is a leading proximate cause of voluntary exit (Skelton *et al.*, 2019) ^[53]. In a retail labour market where, comparable roles are available within the same shopping centre, even modest pay differentials are material. The demographic profile reinforces this reading: most respondents fall within the B40 income classification, so lower-order needs in Maslow's terms remain salient and pay retains motivational force that it might lose in a higher-income sample. Notably, the item on bonuses attracted the highest mean of any independent-variable item (4.77), suggesting that variable, performance-linked pay is perceived as particularly meaningful.

Career development emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .351$), exceeding financial rewards in explanatory weight. This corroborates Abba (2018), Jehanzeb and Mohanty (2018) and Pallangyo and Hanai (2020) ^[1, 25, 40], and carries an encouraging practical implication: the most powerful retention lever available to the company is also one that can be built through internal structuring rather than through unlimited expenditure on salaries. In Herzberg's terms, development is a genuine motivator, and in Maslow's terms it addresses esteem and self-actualisation needs that pay alone cannot reach. For a workforce dominated by employees aged 20 to 40, visible progression converts a boutique position into a career trajectory.

The non-significance of job characteristics requires careful interpretation. At the bivariate level the relationship with retention was positive and significant ($r = .376, p < .01$); it disappeared only under simultaneous control. Given the strong correlation between job characteristics and career development ($r = .624$), the most plausible explanation is shared variance rather than irrelevance, a pattern consistent with Ghosh *et al.* (2015) ^[19], who find that the job-characteristics effect operates through context satisfaction. The standardised nature of retail roles may also compress variation in perceived job design, reducing its discriminating power. The finding should be read as evidence that job redesign alone is unlikely to shift retention unless it is embedded within a developmental structure.

The exclusion of management support and recognition is the most consequential measurement outcome of the study. Both recorded the highest bivariate correlations with retention ($r = .481$ and $r = .460$ respectively) and the highest construct means, yet both failed the reliability threshold. The management support scale in particular conflated the experience of stress and long working hours with the availability and use of managerial assistance, which are

conceptually distinct. The correlational evidence, combined with the meta-analytic findings of Kurtessis *et al.* (2017) ^[30] and the results of Arasanmi and Krishna (2019) ^[7], gives good reason to expect these constructs to matter substantially once they are measured with longer, validated instruments. Management should not infer from their exclusion that supervisory support and recognition are unimportant.

Finally, the adjusted R^2 of .272 indicates that roughly three-quarters of the variance in retention lies outside this model. Work-life balance (Bahar *et al.*, 2022) ^[8], leadership style (Ohunakin *et al.*, 2019; Tian *et al.*, 2020) ^[38, 59], organisational culture, peer relationships, commuting burden and external labour-market conditions are all plausible omitted determinants. A modest explained variance is common in single-firm attitudinal research and does not invalidate the significant paths identified, but it does caution against treating the model as a complete account of retention.

Recommendations

1. Recommendations for practice

The following actions follow directly from the results and are ordered by the strength of the supporting evidence.

1.1 Build a structured and visible career development architecture

Because career development was the strongest predictor, it warrants first priority. Brook should publish role-by-role competency frameworks for boutique and support positions, so that every employee can see what distinguishes a sales associate from a senior associate, an assistant manager and a boutique manager. Skills-gap assessments should precede the allocation of training rather than follow it, since respondents already reported that their skills are assessed before development is offered (mean = 4.53) and this practice should be formalised and made consistent. Internal promotion should be the default for supervisory vacancies, with externally filled roles requiring justification, and each employee should hold a documented development plan reviewed at least twice yearly.

1.2 Make the financial reward structure competitive and transparent

Financial rewards remain a significant predictor and require a defensible floor. The company should benchmark salaries annually against comparable Malaysian retail employers, publish the basis on which bonuses and incentives are calculated so that employees can connect effort to reward, and consider shortening the bonus cycle from annual to quarterly, given the strong endorsement of bonuses in the data. Non-cash financial benefits such as medical coverage, staff purchase discounts and sponsored certification extend the value of the package without proportionate increases in payroll.

1.3 Strengthen supervisory capability

Although management support could not be tested inferentially, it showed the strongest bivariate correlation with retention and the widest dispersion on the feedback item, indicating uneven practice across locations. Brook should equip boutique managers with practical training in coaching, feedback and workload management, introduce a short structured monthly one-to-one conversation between each manager and each team member, and include retention and team-climate indicators in managers' own performance reviews so that people outcomes are treated as part of the managerial role rather than as an optional extra.

1.4 Formalise recognition and feedback

Recognition was strongly endorsed by respondents, with the appreciation item recording a mean of 4.72. To avoid the ritualisation that Hancock (2022) ^[22] warns against, recognition should be specific, timely and connected to observable behaviour. Practical mechanisms include relaying customer compliments to named staff at weekly team briefings, a peer-nomination scheme with a modest quarterly award, and public acknowledgement of internal promotions across the network so that progression is visible to all employees.

1.5 Increase operational transparency

Employees who understand how the business is performing feel implicated in its success. Sharing store-level sales performance, customer-count trends and campaign results at regular intervals, at a level of detail appropriate to the audience, converts abstract corporate objectives into shared goals and reinforces the belonging and esteem needs identified in the theoretical framework.

1.6 Redesign work within a developmental frame

Since job design did not operate independently of development, task variety and job rotation should be introduced explicitly as developmental instruments rather than as ends in themselves. Rotating associates through visual merchandising, inventory control and customer relationship activities broaden skill while building the competency portfolio required for advancement, and repetitive routine should be reviewed where it can be automated or redistributed.

2. Recommendations for future research

- Re-measure management support and recognition using longer, previously validated multi-item instruments, and re-estimate the full five-predictor model.
- Adopt a probability sampling frame across all Brook outlets to improve representativeness and permit generalisation beyond the achieved sample.
- Use a longitudinal or time-lagged design linking survey responses to subsequent actual turnover records, so that causal direction can be established and self-reported intention replaced by observed behaviour.
- Test job satisfaction, organisational commitment or perceived organisational support as mediating variables, and examine generation, tenure and role as moderators.
- Extend the model to include work-life balance, leadership style and organisational culture, given the substantial unexplained variance in the present model.

- Replicate the study across several Malaysian fashion retailers to determine whether the observed pattern is firm-specific or sector-wide.

Limitations

Four limitations qualify the findings. First, the reliability coefficients for several constructs were below conventional thresholds, a consequence of three-item scales, and two constructs had to be excluded from inferential testing; conclusions concerning management support and recognition are therefore provisional. Second, convenience sampling within a single organisation limits generalisability to other firms and sectors, and may over-represent employees who were accessible and willing to respond. Third, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference: the analysis establishes association, not direction, and reverse causation cannot be ruled out. Fourth, all data were self-reported at a single point in time, which introduces the possibility of common-method variance and social-desirability bias, a concern reinforced by the consistently high means observed across all constructs.

Conclusion

This study set out to determine which motivational factors explain employee retention at Brook Corporation, a Malaysian fashion and lifestyle retailer facing a rising turnover rate. Using survey data from 135 employees and analysis in SPSS, it found that all five motivational factors examined — financial rewards, job characteristics, career development, management support and recognition — correlate positively and significantly with employee retention. When reliably measured constructs were tested simultaneously in a regression model, career development and financial rewards emerged as significant predictors, together with job characteristics explaining 27.2 per cent of the variance in retention.

The central contribution is the demonstration that retention in this setting depends on the joint operation of a hygiene factor and a motivator. Competitive and transparent financial rewards establish the conditions under which employees will consider remaining, satisfying the lower-order needs that are salient for a predominantly B40-income workforce; structured career development supplies the intrinsic reason to remain, addressing the esteem and self-actualisation needs that compensation alone cannot reach. That career development exceeded financial rewards in explanatory weight is the study's most actionable result, since developmental architecture can be built through deliberate internal design rather than through unbounded payroll growth.

The findings also carry a methodological lesson. The two constructs with the strongest bivariate association with retention, management support and recognition, were precisely those that could not be tested inferentially because of weak measurement. This underlines the importance of instrument validation in applied retention research and identifies the clearest priority for subsequent work.

For practitioners in Malaysian fashion retail, the implication is that retention strategy should be built on two pillars simultaneously rather than on either alone. Paying competitively without offering a future produces employees who stay only until a better offer arrives; offering a future without paying competitively produces employees who cannot afford to stay. Managed together, and reinforced by

capable supervision and credible recognition, these levers give a retailer a realistic prospect of retaining the experienced, knowledgeable and loyal workforce on which its service proposition ultimately rests.

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