

PULLING THE HEARTSTRINGS: EMPLOYER BRANDING, ENGAGEMENT, AND THE RETENTION OF MILLENNIAL TALENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

In a progressively competitive global environment, employer branding has emerged as a vital element in talent retention, especially among millennials who constitute a significant portion of the workforce. Higher education institutions contribute to knowledge advancement and the establishment of an appealing work environment for their personnel. The elevated turnover rate among millennials presents a difficulty for businesses, especially institutions. This study seeks to examine the influence of corporate branding on talent retention, utilizing employee engagement and affective commitment as mediating variables. The study used a quantitative methodology including a sample of 50 permanent staff members at XYZ University. The employed sample method is purposive sample, with data gathered using a questionnaire. Data were examined utilizing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results demonstrate that employer branding positively influences employee engagement and affective commitment. Employee engagement substantially affects talent retention, although affective commitment does not directly influence it. Furthermore, employee engagement is established as a crucial mediator in the correlation between company branding and talent retention, although affective commitment does not function as a significant mediating variable. This study underscores that effective employer branding must prioritize the enhancement of employee engagement to bolster talent retention within higher education institutions. Organizations are encouraged to cultivate an inclusive workplace, implement supporting policies, and provide career development opportunities to enhance employee engagement and loyalty.

Keywords: Employer Branding; Employee Engagement; Affective Commitment; Talent Retention

INTRODUCTION

Universities function not only as centers of education but also as key cultural institutions that integrate science, education, and culture, shaping the sociocultural landscape of society. Their primary role is to ignite students' passion for scientific exploration while equipping them with the ability to apply scientific concepts across diverse disciplines and real-world social practices (Kugai, 2023).

XYZ University has achieved the highest accreditation rating, demonstrating its credibility and high-quality education. As an institution that provides high-quality educational services, the university requires employees to support the realization of an inclusive, advanced, and high-quality education system. The employees within this institution are undoubtedly individuals with exceptional talent, contributing to the creation of a distinguished university environment. Talent management in Indonesian higher education institutions plays a crucial role in enhancing organizational performance (Ramaditya et al., 2022).

Currently, the largest segment of the workforce consists of millennials. Each generation has its own unique characteristics. The millennial generation encompasses those born from 1980 to 2000 a timeframe characterized by swift technical progress that persists in its evolution. The millennial generation is named after their experience throughout the transition into the new millennium. Simultaneously, digital technology has commenced infiltrating human existence at an accelerated rate (Asy'ari, 2022). When selecting an employer, millennials tend to seek organizations that align with their social and environmental values and offer flexibility in work arrangements (Ahluwalia, 2023).

However, one of the distinctive characteristics of the millennial generation is their tendency to change jobs frequently, leading to high turnover rates within organizations. Millennials are recognized for high employee turnover rates, frequently pursuing new opportunities and challenges. This tendency stems partly from their drive for personal development and dissatisfaction with conventional work settings. They are often vocal about their needs and preferences to management, and the abundance of job opportunities plays a significant role in their decision to switch jobs (Novisari & Dahesihsari, 2019; Saraswati et al., 2023).

As observed in the United States, the turnover rate among millennials is higher compared to other generations. This phenomenon has led to millennials being referred to as the “job-hopping” generation (Crist, 2023). This phenomenon is not only observed in the United States but also in Indonesia. A study indicates that 90% of millennial employees in Indonesia refuse to fully engage with their organizations, while 60% are only partially engaged (Bukhari et al., 2022).

The millennial generation is characterized by elevated employee turnover. The Deloitte Indonesia Perspectives (2019) indicates that the millennial generation demonstrates a significant employment turnover rate of around 10%. This is frequently seen in startups, which are popular with millennials. According to Sunarsihanto (2019), millennials enjoy speed, independence, and quick digital interactions.

A 2023 study by HR Dive revealed that over 70% of participants indicated they would resign from their positions due to an unfavorable work environment, insufficient growth opportunities, or disruptions to their work-life balance. The survey indicated that a primary factor influencing turnover is millennials' pursuit of meaningful employment that offers personal fulfilment. They consistently pursue possibilities that correspond with their values and will persist in their job search until they secure a position that fulfils these criteria (Crist, 2023).

A high personnel turnover rate can adversely affect organizational performance by breaking service continuity, impeding innovation, and generating delays in service delivery. The departure of seasoned and proficient staff might diminish production and impair the quality of services rendered (Taye & Getnet, 2020). Elevated employee turnover may result in numerous adverse effects, such as the departure of highly experienced and qualified personnel, a decrease in labor productivity, and a deterioration in service quality. This may adversely affect organizational performance and obstruct the attainment of its objectives (Miftahurrohman & Munifah, 2024).

Several factors that can reduce turnover rates include employee engagement, which can be fostered through employer branding and affective commitment. A positive perception of the employer brand directly correlates with increased employee engagement (Chawla, 2020; Drūteikienė et al., 2023). Strong affective commitment is associated with reduced turnover intentions. Employees who have an emotional attachment to their organization are less inclined to resign (Azmy et al., 2023; Gracita & Anindita, 2023; Noviyanti, 2023). Affective commitment acts as a mediating factor between employer branding and turnover intention, indicating that the reduction in turnover resulting from strong employer branding is partially influenced by higher affective commitment (Shrestha & Pokhrel, 2023; Slavković & Mirić, 2024). This study intends to evaluate how employer branding, employee engagement, and affective commitment influence talent retention at XYZ University.

Based on the study background, several research questions have been formulated to guide the investigation. These include: (1) whether employer branding positively impacts employee engagement, (2) whether employee engagement positively influences talent retention, (3) whether employer branding has a direct positive impact on talent retention, (4) whether employer branding positively affects affective commitment, (5) whether affective commitment enhances talent retention, (6) whether employee engagement acts as a mediator in the relationship between employer branding and talent retention, and (7) whether affective commitment also serves as a mediating variable in the relationship between employer branding and talent retention.

Based on the research questions, this study aims to examine and analyse the beneficial impact of employer branding on employee engagement, evaluate the positive influence of employee engagement on talent retention, assess the direct impact of employer branding on talent retention, analyse the effect of employer branding on affective commitment, evaluate the positive impact of affective commitment on talent retention, and investigate the mediating roles of both employee engagement and affective commitment in the relationship between employer branding and talent retention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employer Branding

Employer branding is essential for attracting and retaining skilled personnel, particularly in competitive sectors. It assists organizations in attaining a competitive position by presenting a brand image that expresses their values and philosophy, so promoting them as an employer of choice (Bothra, 2024; Safitri & Novianti, 2024). Employment branding shapes an organization's image and reputation, which influences job seekers' applications. A strong employer brand boosts business reputation and attracts talent. Moderating factors include organizational information on social media, emphasizing the importance of a strong digital presence in employer branding plans (Silva & Dias, 2022; Thang & Trang, 2024).

Employer branding is strongly connected to talent management, functioning as an essential component within the broader talent management framework. It primarily emphasizes

attracting and retaining talent, both of which are crucial for ensuring organizational success (Reis et al., 2021).

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is commonly defined as a positive and fulfilling work-related state of mind, marked by vigor, dedication, and absorption. It encompasses both emotional and rational aspects, including enthusiasm, passion, job satisfaction, confidence, empowerment, and a positive attitude toward work (Saks & Gruman, 2020; Turner, 2019). Employee engagement is associated with various positive organizational outcomes, such as lower turnover rates, higher productivity, improved customer service, and enhanced problem-solving abilities. Engagement increases employee loyalty and organizational commitment, thereby enhancing performance and decreasing turnover (George et al., 2020; Hai & Hanh, 2023; Melisani et al., 2024).

Affective Commitment

Affective commitment refers to the emotional bond employees develop with their organization, which drives them to actively contribute to their success. Among the different types of commitment, it is regarded as the strongest, surpassing both normative and continuance commitment in its impact on employee motivation and organizational loyalty (Abbas & Ahmed, 2023; Fonataba, 2023; Maydiantoro et al., 2021). Affective commitment acts as a mediator between job satisfaction and turnover intention, helping to decrease the probability of employees leaving the organization (Gessesse & Premanandam, 2023).

Talent Retention

Talent retention refers to an organization's capability to retain high-potential employees who are essential to its success. This process involves the implementation of talent management strategies aimed at engaging, developing, and rewarding employees, ensuring they remain committed rather than seeking better opportunities elsewhere (Amori & Becky, 2020; Giri et al., 2020).

Employee Branding and Employee Engagement

Effective employer branding improves a company's reputation (Alves et al., 2020). This can enhance employees' propensity to remain or stay dedicated to the organization (Bothra, 2024). Robust employer branding significantly contributes to attracting excellent talent to the organization (Matei, 2022). This therefore affects the retention of current personnel in the organization (R & Thampi, 2020).

H1: Employee branding positively impacts the rates of employee engagement rates.

Employee Engagement and Talent Retention

Employee engagement can also create a sense of happiness and comfort within the company, thereby reducing their desire to resign (Ngozi & Edwinah, 2022). Employee engagement is also a powerful variable used by the Human Resources Department to prevent turnover in the company (Shahzad et al., 2024). When someone has a sense of attachment to the company, they experience job satisfaction, which makes them want to stay in the company (Dhandayuthapani & Shalini, 2024).

H2: Employee engagement positively impacts the rates of talent retention.

Employer Branding and Talent Retention

Employer branding is widely acknowledged as an essential instrument for talent management, especially in attracting and retaining proficient personnel. It entails creating a brand image that embodies the organization's values and philosophy, hence fostering the development of brand ambassadors within the organization (Reis et al., 2021). Employee engagement mediates the relationship between employer branding and talent retention. Engaged employees are more inclined to see employer value propositions favorably, hence enhancing retention initiatives. Establishing emotional ties with colleagues and leaders can improve engagement, therefore aiding retention tactics (Dhandayuthapani & Shalini, 2024).

H3: Employer branding positively impacts the talent retention rates.

Employer Branding and Affective Commitment

Employer branding strategies improve affective commitment by establishing an attractive organizational image and providing benefits that align with employees' beliefs and requirements (Alves et al., 2020). Employer branding shows a positive and substantial influence on employees' organizational commitment, particularly affecting affective commitment most often (Ashariana, 2022). The influence of employer branding on affective commitment is seen across multiple sectors, including banking, IT, and education, demonstrating its extensive relevance (Ashariana, 2022; Ccorisapra-Quintana et al., 2024).

H4: Employer branding positively impacts the affective commitment rates.

Affective Commitment and Talent Retention

Affective commitment is positively associated with retention intention. Employees with an emotional attachment to their organization are more inclined to remain, as they align with the organization's objectives and ideals (Ashariana, 2022; Liu et al., 2024; Siwela & Van der Bank, 2021). Strong employer branding and nurturing organizational culture may strengthen affective commitment. When employees view their organization as an attractive workplace, their emotional attachment and dedication grow more intense, resulting in elevated retention rates (Alves et al., 2020).

H5: Affective commitment positively impacts the talent retention rates.

Employee engagement, Employer Branding and Talent Retention

Employee engagement partially mediates the correlation between employer branding and talent retention. Engaged employees are more inclined to appreciate corporate branding initiatives, hence improving retention rates (Chopra et al., 2024; Ekhsan et al., 2021; Maqfirah et al., 2024; Pradita et al., 2024). Employer branding enhances employee engagement by connecting organizational values with employee expectations, therefore cultivating a sense of belonging and commitment (Chawla, 2020; Pradita et al., 2024; Yousf & Khurshid, 2021).

Employees that are engaged and affected by strong employer branding demonstrate greater organizational commitment, a key indicator of retention. This dedication is frequently strengthened by job satisfaction and organizational identity (Bharadwaj et al., 2022; Yousf & Khurshid, 2021).

H6: Employee engagement mediates the positive impacts of employer branding on talent retention

Affective Commitment, Employer Branding and Talent Retention

Affective commitment, describing an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and engagement in the organization, serves a vital mediating function in the correlation between employer branding and talent retention. Research demonstrates that individuals exhibiting a robust affective commitment are more inclined to remain with the organization, as

they experience an emotional connection and alignment with its values and objectives (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019; Ashariana, 2022). A further study emphasized that affective commitment completely mediates the relationship between internal branding and employee engagement, hence reinforcing its essential significance in talent retention efforts (Kaur et al., 2020).

H7: Affective commitment mediates the positive impact of employer branding on talent retention.

According to the theoretical framework and prior research, this study employs a quantitative research method to examine whether employer branding influences talent retention at XYZ University, with employee engagement and affective commitment serving as mediating variables (Figure 1. Research Model).

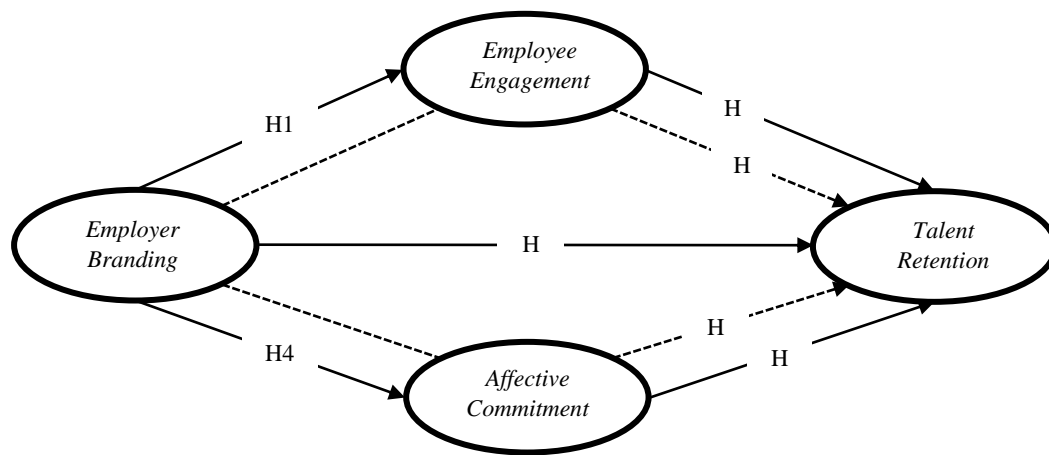


Figure 1. Research Model
Sources: Chopra et al. (2024) and Alves et al. (2020)

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a data collection technique conducted within a specific time frame. The collected data is then processed and analyzed to address the proposed research questions. It follows a quantitative approach with hypothesis testing, aiming to descriptively examine the relationships between variables within the research model.

Furthermore, the significance of these relationships is measured based on the collected data, allowing for hypothesis testing outcomes to be determined. This study used PLS-SEM approach to assess whether significant relationships exist between variables, the direction of these influences, and how these relationships function within the research model (Cepeda-Carrion et al., 2019). This study was conducted over approximately two months using the purposive sampling method for data collection. Data was collected by the distribution of questionnaires to 50 permanent employees of XYZ University. The sample has the following characteristics:

Table 1. Research Sample Profile

Criteria	Total
Gender (Woman)	37
Gender (Man)	13
Age (25-30)	23
Age (31-40)	20
Age (40-45)	7

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Outer Model Analysis

The initial step in data analysis is to examine the outer loading values in the outer model. The convergent validity test aims to ensure that the manifest variables or indicators within a construct exhibit a strong correlation. This evaluation is conducted by verifying that the outer loading values of each indicator meet the commonly accepted threshold, which is greater than 0.6 (Hair et al., 2019). In this study, the outer loading test was conducted twice because the initial test revealed the presence of invalid indicators. As a result, elimination was necessary before performing a reassessment to ensure that all remaining indicators met the validity criteria.

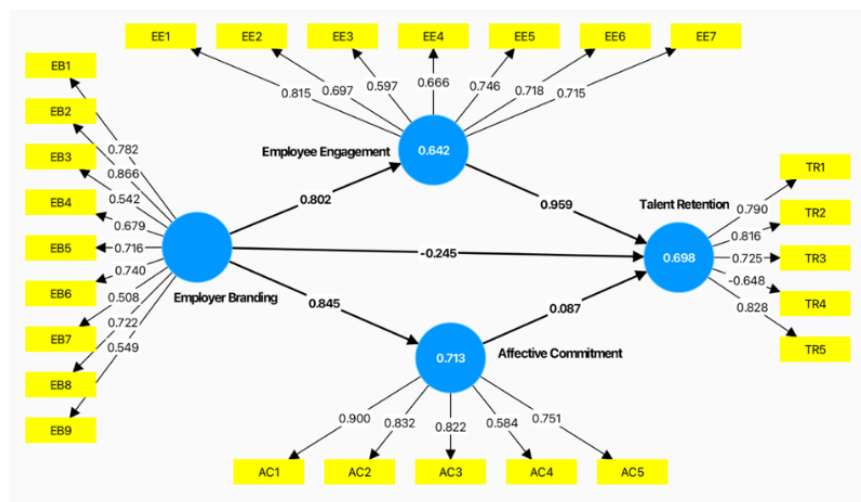


Figure 2. First Outer Loading

In the first Outer Loading results, several indicators failed to satisfy the requisite requirements, prompting the elimination of certain invalid indicators. The indicators comprise EB3, EB7, EB9, EE3, TR4, and AC4. The subsequent findings following the elimination of these markers are presented in Figure 3.

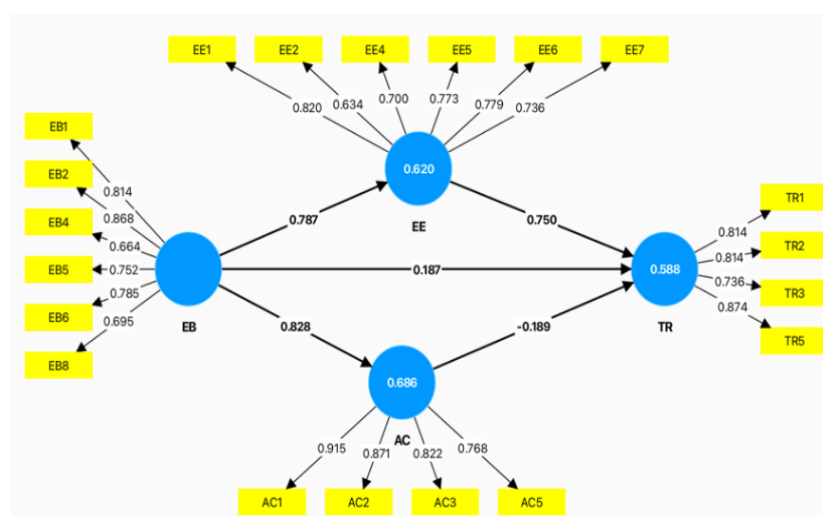


Figure 3. Second Outer Loading

The findings of the second outer loading demonstrate that all indicators have valid outer loading ratings. Of the 26 indicators, 6 were eliminated. The specifics of these scores are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Outer Loading Score

Indicator	Score	Description
EB1	0.814	Valid
EB2	0.868	Valid
EB4	0.664	Valid
EB5	0.752	Valid
EB6	0.785	Valid
EB8	0.695	Valid
EE1	0.820	Valid
EE2	0.634	Valid
EE4	0.700	Valid
EE5	0.773	Valid
EE6	0.779	Valid
EE7	0.736	Valid
AC1	0.915	Valid
AC2	0.871	Valid
AC3	0.822	Valid
AC5	0.768	Valid
TR1	0.814	Valid
TR2	0.814	Valid
TR3	0.736	Valid
TR5	0.874	Valid

All of the remaining indications were deemed acceptable after the invalid ones were removed because they satisfied the rule of thumb requirement, which requires a minimum value greater than 0.6. Therefore, the convergent validity test has been successfully passed by this study.

Reliability and Validity Test

The second stage of analysis after assessing outer loading is the evaluation of construct reliability and validity. The results of the construct reliability and validity tests in this study are presented as follows:

Table 3. Reliability and Validity Construct

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Affective Commitment	0.867	0.888	0.909	0.715
Employee Branding	0.857	0.864	0.894	0.587
Employee Engagement	0.836	0.841	0.880	0.552
Talent Retention	0.831	0.863	0.884	0.658

A variable is considered as valid if it has this requirement for construct reliability and validity, specifically: Cronbach's Alpha exceeding 0.70, Composite Reliability greater than 0.70, and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value above 0.50. As shown in Table 3, all variables in this study have Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70, Composite Reliability surpassing 0.70, and AVE values exceeding 0.50. Therefore, it can be concluded that all indicators in this research successfully meet the criteria for construct reliability and validity.

Discriminant Validity

The discriminant validity test can be conducted using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) method. The HTMT values are presented in the table below:

Table 4. Heterotrait - Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) Score

	Affective Commitment	Employer Branding	Employer Branding	Talent Retention
Affective Commitment				
Employer Branding	0.939			
Employee Engagement	0.821	0.913		
Talent Retention	0.542	0.692	0.856	

The discriminant validity test using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) method indicates that all construct pairs have values below 1 (Henseler et al., 2015). This confirms that the discriminant validity criteria have been met, ensuring that each construction is distinct from others in the model.

Inner Model Analysis

R-Square Test

The R-Square (R^2) value is used to measure the extent to which independent variables influence the dependent variables. In this study, the R-Square values are presented in the following table:

Table 5. R-Square Score

Variable	R-Square
Affective Commitment	0.686
Employee Engagement	0.620
Talent Retention	0.588

The R^2 value for Affective Commitment is 0.686, indicating that the independent variables in the model explain 68.6% of the variance in Affective Commitment, while other factors not addressed in this study account for the remaining 31.4%. Furthermore, employee engagement exhibits an R^2 value of 0.620, signifying that 38% of the variation in employee engagement is attributable to external factors not encompassed in this study model, whereas 62% of the variation may be elucidated by the independent variables affecting it.

The R^2 score for talent retention is 0.588, indicating that the predictor variables in the model explain 58.8% of the variance in talent retention, while other unexamined factors account for 41.2%. The R^2 value for affective commitment is 0.686, indicating that the independent variables in the model explain 68.6% of the variance in affective commitment, while other factors not addressed in this study account for the remaining 31.4%. Furthermore, employee engagement exhibits an R^2 value of 0.620, signifying that 38% of the variation in employee engagement is attributable to external factors not encompassed in this study model, whereas 62% of the variation may be elucidated by the independent variables affecting it. The R^2 score for talent retention is 0.588, indicating that the predictor variables in the model explain 58.8% of the variance in talent retention, while other unexamined factors account for 41.2%.

Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis testing in this study was conducted using the bootstrapping method. Through this bootstrapping test, t-statistics and p-values were examined to determine the effect of exogenous variables on endogenous variables based on their significance levels. To obtain t-statistics and p-values, the Path Coefficient calculation was performed using the Smart-PLS application, with the results presented as follows:

Table 6. Path Coefficient

	Standardized Path Coefficient	t-statistics	P Values	Notes
Employer Branding -> Employee Engagement	0.787	9.946	0.000	Accepted
Employee Engagement -> Talent Retention	0.750	5.086	0.000	Accepted
Employer Branding -> Talent Retention	0.187	1.049	0.147	Rejected
Employer Branding -> Affective Commitment	0.828	15.479	0.000	Accepted
Affective Commitment -> Talent Retention	-0.189	1.047	0.148	Rejected

Intervening Test

The intervening test in this study was conducted using the bootstrapping method, referring to the t-statistics and p-values in the specific indirect effect section. This test aims to analyze the extent to which voice behavior functions as a mediating variable between employee engagement as an exogenous variable and employee performance as an endogenous variable. The results of the specific indirect effect calculations are presented as follows:

Table 7. Specific Indirect Effect

	Standardized Path Coefficient	t-statistics	p-values	Notes
Employer Branding -> Employee Engagement -> Talent Retention	0.590	4.372	0.000	Accepted
Affective Commitment -> Employee Engagement -> Talent Retention	-0.157	1.036	0.150	Rejected

The specific indirect effect analysis results indicate that the indirect relationship between employer branding and talent retention through employee engagement has a coefficient of 0.590, with a t-statistic of 4.372 and a p-value of 0.000, signifying that this relationship is statistically significant at a 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$). This finding suggests that employee engagement significantly mediates the effect of employer branding on talent retention, implying that strengthening Employer Branding can enhance employee retention by increasing Employee Engagement.

The indirect connection among affective commitment and talent retention through employee engagement is negligible, evidenced by a negative coefficient of -0.157, an t-statistic of 1.036, and a p-value of 0.150 ($p > 0.05$). This conclusion suggests that Affective Commitment does not substantially affect talent retention through employee engagement; hence, its function in the model necessitates further examination or reassessment using a different methodology. Ultimately, these data suggest that while affective commitment may not significantly affect the same mediation pathway, employer branding is crucial for enhancing talent retention through employee engagement.

Discussion

Based on these results, the following hypotheses are concluded as follows:

1. Employer branding has a positive effect on employee engagement. With t-statistics of 9.946 and a p-value of 0.000, the initial EB-EE sample is 0.787. This suggests that effective employer branding may benefit employee engagement. Employee engagement is expected to rise at universities that make investments in institutional branding, such as through inclusive work cultures, motivating leadership, and organizational policies. Employee engagement will rise by 0.787 units for every unit increase in employer branding. This aligns with the findings of a prior study by R & Thampi (2020) and Alves et al. (2020) indicated that employee branding significantly influences employee engagement directly.

2. Employee engagement has a positive effect on talent retention. As the previous research by Ngozi & Edwinah (2022) and Dhandayuthapani & Shalini (2024) employee engagement has a positive effect on talent retention. The initial EE-TR sample size was 0.750, with a t-statistics of 5.086 and a p-value of 0.000. Employee involvement appears to improve talent retention. Because engaged employees stay longer, employee engagement dramatically enhances talent retention. Thus, firms should promote gratitude and professional advancement, especially for millennials. Talent retention increases 0.750 units for each unit of employee engagement.
3. Employer branding positively influences talent retention. With a t-statistic of 1.049 and a p-value of 0.147, the original EB-TR sample is 0.187. These findings suggest that talent retention is not significantly impacted by employer branding. Although employer branding has a major impact on employee engagement, which in turn affects retention, it has no direct effect on employee retention. This implies that employee engagement with their work and organization acts as a mediator between employer branding and retention (Chopra et al., 2024; Maqfirah et al., 2024). Another reason is that other companies offer greater chances or benefits, employees may decide to leave the company. For millennials, chances for both career and personal development are essential. Millennial talent may not be effectively retained by employers who do not prioritize career growth and learning opportunities in their branding (Ahmed et al., 2022; Shoba & Fathima, 2024).
4. Employer branding positively influences affective commitment. EB-AC's original sample size was 0.828, with a p-value of 0.000 and a t-statistic of 15.749. According to these results, employer branding greatly increases affective commitment. This result aligns with the previous research by Alves et al., (2020), Ashariana (2022) and Ccorisapra-Quintana et al. (2024). Employee affective commitment will grow by 15.749 units for every unit improvement in employer branding. When a university has a strong brand identity, its employees feel more emotionally invested.
5. Affective commitment positively influences talent retention. With a t-statistic of 1.047 and a p-value of 0.148, the initial AC-TR sample is -0.189. These results imply no discernible positive correlation between affective commitment and talent retention. Emotional attachment is not enough to retain millennials in an organization. Work-life quality perception has a big impact on organizational commitment and, in turn, turnover intentions. This link is partially mediated by affective commitment, suggesting that retention is influenced by additional elements as well (Reis et al., 2021). Another factor is that, in comparison to older generations, millennials frequently choose work-life balance and personal development over long-term organizational commitment, which can affect their retention within organizations (Hadi et al., 2024; Zahirah & Satrya, 2024). Another reason is that Affective commitment can mediate the relationship between job crafting and turnover intention, but entrepreneurial leadership increases its efficacy. This implies that affective commitment's impact on retention is significantly influenced by leadership style (Nguyen, 2022). In previous research found that Affective commitment positively influences talent retention. Nevertheless, it appears that culture is an additional component that can affect an individual's degree of affective commitment. Millennials have somewhat greater levels of affective commitment than Generation X, indicating that cultural alignment may enhance their emotional attachment to a company (Nguyen, 2022). However, organizational culture also plays a role. A supportive and engaging culture fosters improved employee performance and engagement, although it may not have a direct effect on organizational commitment (Basuki et al., 2024).
6. Employee Engagement acts as a mediating variable in the positive relationship between employer branding and talent retention. The original EB-EE-TR sample is 0.590, with a t-

statistics of 4.372 and a p-value of 0.000. Employee engagement appears to mediate the corporate branding-talent retention link. This result is related to previous research by Chopra et al. (2024), Ekhsan et al. (2021), Maqfirah et al. (2024) and Pradita et al. (2024). By increasing staff engagement, firm branding indirectly enhances talent retention. A university with engaged personnel deploys strong employer branding, which increases talent retention. Employer branding increases talent retention by 0.590 units through employee engagement, according to this study.

7. Affective commitment serves as a mediating factor in the positive relationship between employer branding and talent retention. The original EB-AC-TR sample is -0.157, with a t-statistics of 1.036 and p-value of 0.150. This suggests that affective commitment does not significantly mediate the relationship between employer branding and talent retention. Employer branding and talent retention have a complicated relationship that may entail several mediators and moderators, including organizational identity and the work environment, which might lessen the mediating influence of affective commitment (Bharadwaj et al., 2022; Kaur et al., 2020). While emotional commitment is positively impacted by employer branding, the relationship between employer branding and talent retention is not substantially mediated by affective commitment alone. Rather, affective commitment is more closely related to employee engagement and internal branding, which in turn affects work satisfaction and retention (Kaur et al., 2020; Reis et al., 2021; Yousf & Khurshid, 2021). While emotional attachment is important, institutions should prioritize an engaging work environment that provides resources and growth possibilities.

CONCLUSION

While employer branding does not have a direct effect on talent retention, the results of hypothesis testing indicate that it significantly influences employee engagement and affective commitment. Furthermore, employee engagement has a substantial impact on talent retention, underscoring its critical role in improving workforce retention. Although affective commitment does not function as a mediating variable in this context, the intervention test confirms that employee engagement serves as a strong mediator in the relationship between employer branding and talent retention.

LIMITATION

In this study, affective commitment was found not to be a significant variable in supporting talent retention levels. However, this phenomenon could not be adequately explained through quantitative analysis, suggesting the need for further exploration using qualitative methods to understand the underlying reasons behind this finding.

Additionally, another limitation of this study is the unequal gender distribution among respondents, where the number of female participants was significantly higher than male participants. This disproportionate sample distribution may have influenced the results and limited the generalizability of the findings across different gender groups.

FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATION

According to this study, Affective Commitment does not improve Talent Retention. This study should be followed up by qualitative research to determine which factors impact employee talent retention most. A qualitative approach would reveal the underlying causes of

quantitative outcomes, providing a more complete understanding of the fundamental factors of employee retention.

Further research should establish gender parity among respondents. A more representative sample would reduce bias in talent retention analyses across gender groups. Further research on these topics can yield more accurate and applicable advice for talent retention tactics.

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