

## Career Development, Compensation, and Organizational Culture as Predictors of Employee Retention: The Mediating Role of Organizational Commitment in the Fire and Rescue Service of Bandar Lampung

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### ABSTRACT

Employee retention is strategically important in public safety organizations because operational continuity depends on employees who are technically competent, committed, and willing to remain in the organization. This study examines the effects of career development, compensation, and organizational culture on employee retention through organizational commitment at the Fire and Rescue Service of Bandar Lampung, Indonesia. The study used a quantitative explanatory design with 100 respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS. The measurement model met the requirements for convergent validity, discriminant validity, and internal consistency reliability. The structural model shows that career development has a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment and employee retention. Compensation has no significant effect on organizational commitment but has a positive and significant effect on employee retention. Organizational culture has a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment but does not directly affect employee retention. Organizational commitment positively affects employee retention and mediates the effects of career development and organizational culture on employee retention; however, it does not mediate the effect of compensation. The R-square value for employee retention is 0.796, indicating that the model explains 79.6% of the variance in retention. These findings suggest that retention in a public safety agency can be strengthened through clearer career pathways, appropriate compensation, and organizational commitment built by a supportive organizational culture.

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**Keywords:** career development; compensation; organizational culture; organizational commitment; employee retention; SEM-PLS

### INTRODUCTION

Human resources are a critical organizational resource because public service performance depends on the availability, competence, and continuity of employees who perform core functions. This issue is especially salient in fire and rescue services, where employees must respond to emergency situations, maintain readiness, and coordinate under conditions that can involve substantial operational and safety risks. In this context, employee retention is not merely an administrative concern but an operational capability that supports service continuity and institutional reliability.

The Fire and Rescue Service of Bandar Lampung is responsible for fire prevention, fire suppression, emergency rescue, hazardous-material handling, fire-protection inspection, incident investigation, and related emergency operations. The agency also maintains fire stations and supporting infrastructure across the city. Based on the source manuscript, the agency recorded 188 fire cases in 2025, with most cases associated with electrical short circuits, and reported a response-time achievement below seven minutes, a minimum service standard achievement of 100%, and fire-service coverage of 94%. These operational characteristics strengthen the relevance of employee retention because service delivery depends on employees who remain available, skilled, and committed.

Retention research generally argues that employees remain in an organization when they perceive valued returns, supportive relationships, development opportunities, fair rewards, and an organizational environment that reinforces attachment. Targeted retention studies identify job satisfaction, extrinsic rewards, organizational commitment, organizational prestige, and constituent attachments as important reasons for staying (Hausknecht et al., 2009). Evidence-based retention management also emphasizes that retention strategies should be grounded in the causes of turnover and staying behavior rather than relying on generic assumptions (Allen et al., 2010).

This study is grounded in Social Exchange Theory, which views employment as a reciprocal relationship between employees and organizations (Homans, 1958; Blau, 1964). From this perspective, employees who receive valued career opportunities, adequate compensation, and a supportive culture may feel a reciprocal obligation to remain committed and continue contributing to the organization. Perceived organizational support theory extends this logic by explaining how supportive organizational actions can foster favorable employee attitudes and behaviors (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Although career development, compensation, and organizational culture have frequently been examined in human resource management, their combined effects on employee retention through organizational commitment remain important in public safety organizations. Fire and rescue employees work under distinctive conditions characterized by readiness, collective action, discipline, and public service orientation. Therefore, this study aims to examine whether career development, compensation, and organizational culture influence employee retention directly and indirectly through organizational commitment at the Fire and Rescue Service of Bandar Lampung.

## **Literature Review and Hypothesis Development**

### **1. Social Exchange Theory and Organizational Support**

Social Exchange Theory explains organizational relationships as reciprocal exchanges in which employees compare the benefits and costs of their relationship with the organization (Homans, 1958; Blau, 1964). In employment relationships, the organization provides resources such as career opportunities, rewards, security, training, and supportive work norms, while employees respond through commitment, performance, and willingness to remain. The theory is appropriate for this study because career development, compensation, and organizational culture can be interpreted as organizational investments that may trigger reciprocal commitment and retention.

Perceived organizational support further explains that employees develop beliefs about whether the organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). When organizational practices are perceived as supportive and fair, employees are more likely to develop positive attitudes. This mechanism is relevant for explaining organizational commitment as a mediating construct between human resource practices and employee retention.

## **2. Career Development**

Career development refers to organizational and individual efforts that increase employees' capabilities, clarify future roles, and provide opportunities for progression. Human resource management literature treats employee development and career opportunities as instruments for strengthening workforce capability and supporting long-term organizational competitiveness (Noe et al., 2019). In public safety organizations, career development is particularly relevant because emergency-response duties require continuous training, competency enhancement, and readiness for more complex responsibilities.

Employees who perceive clear career pathways and development opportunities are likely to view the organization as investing in their future. Such perceptions can increase organizational commitment and reduce the intention to leave. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed: H1. Career development has a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment; H4. Career development has a positive and significant effect on employee retention.

## **3. Compensation**

Compensation includes financial and non-financial returns received by employees for their contribution to the organization. Compensation management concerns the strategic design of pay, benefits, incentives, and other rewards to attract, motivate, and retain employees (Gerhart et al., 2020). In high-risk public service occupations, compensation is important because employees expect rewards that are commensurate with work demands, risk exposure, and responsibility.

From a social exchange perspective, appropriate compensation signals organizational recognition. However, compensation may affect retention through both calculative and attitudinal pathways. It may directly encourage employees to remain because leaving would reduce economic and welfare-related benefits, but it may not always create emotional attachment. The study therefore tests the following hypotheses: H2. Compensation has a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment; H5. Compensation has a positive and significant effect on employee retention.

## **4. Organizational Culture**

Organizational culture refers to shared assumptions, values, norms, and patterns of behavior that guide how members perceive and respond to organizational problems. Schein and Schein (2017) define culture as a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solves external adaptation and internal integration problems. In fire and rescue services, culture is reflected in discipline, team coordination, safety orientation, readiness, responsibility, and solidarity.

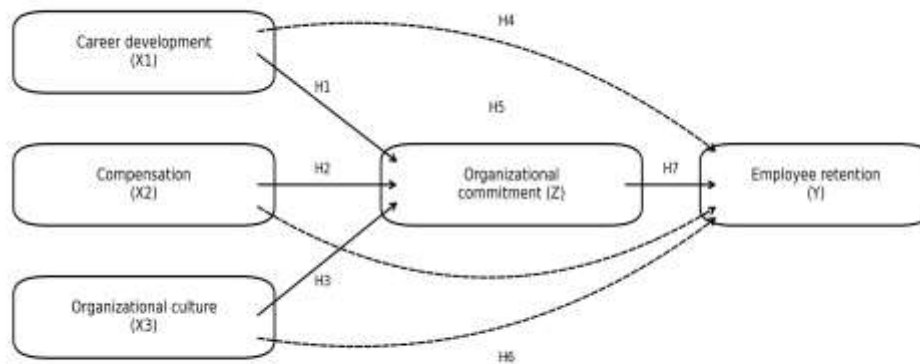
A strong and supportive organizational culture can increase the sense of belonging and shared identity. Nevertheless, culture may not always directly influence employees'

decision to remain unless it is internalized as organizational commitment. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed: H3. Organizational culture has a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment; H6. Organizational culture has a positive and significant effect on employee retention.

### 5. Organizational Commitment and Employee Retention

Organizational commitment is a psychological state that characterizes the employee's relationship with the organization and has implications for the decision to continue membership. Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model distinguishes affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Affective commitment reflects emotional attachment, continuance commitment reflects perceived costs of leaving, and normative commitment reflects a perceived obligation to remain.

Employee retention refers to an organization's ability to encourage valuable employees to remain. Retention is shaped by both economic and psychological factors, including rewards, career development, work environment, commitment, and social attachment (Hausknecht et al., 2009). Employees with stronger organizational commitment are expected to have a higher willingness to remain. Organizational commitment may also explain why career development and culture translate into retention. Accordingly, this study proposes: H7. Organizational commitment has a positive and significant effect on employee retention; H8a. Organizational commitment mediates the effect of career development on employee retention; H8b. Organizational commitment mediates the effect of compensation on employee retention; H8c. Organizational commitment mediates the effect of organizational culture on employee retention.



Solid arrows indicate paths to and from the mediator; dashed arrows indicate direct effects on retention.

**Figure 1. Conceptual framework and hypotheses**

## METHOD

### 1. Research Design and Setting

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research design. The design was selected because the study aims to explain causal-predictive relationships among career development, compensation, organizational culture, organizational commitment, and employee retention. The research setting was the Fire and Rescue Service of Bandar Lampung, Indonesia. The unit of analysis was individual employees of the agency.

The population comprised employees of the Fire and Rescue Service of Bandar Lampung. The sample consisted of 100 respondents selected using purposive sampling. The inclusion of purposive sampling was based on the need to obtain respondents who understood the agency's work processes and were able to evaluate the research constructs.

### 2. Data Collection and Measurement

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The instrument was developed from indicators in the source manuscript and refined into construct-specific indicators. Career development was represented by promotion opportunities, education and training, job rotation, career planning, and organizational support. Compensation was represented by work achievement, development opportunity, loyalty, supervisor/mentor support, promotion opportunity, and work experience. Organizational culture was represented by innovation and risk taking, attention to detail, outcome orientation, people orientation, team orientation, proactiveness, and stability. Employee retention was represented by job satisfaction, compensation and benefits, work environment, work relationships, career development, and organizational commitment. Organizational commitment was represented by affective, continuance, and normative commitment.

**Table 1. Operational definition and indicators of constructs**

Construct	Indicators retained from the source manuscript
Career development	Promotion opportunities; education and training; transfer/job rotation; career planning; organizational support.
Compensation	Work achievement basis; development opportunities; loyalty; supervisor/mentor support; promotion opportunity; work experience.
Organizational culture	Innovation and risk taking; attention to detail; outcome orientation; people orientation; team orientation; aggressiveness/proactiveness; stability.
Employee retention	Job satisfaction; compensation and benefits; work environment; work relationships; career development; organizational commitment.
Organizational commitment	Affective commitment; continuance commitment; normative commitment.

### 3. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM is appropriate for prediction-oriented models and for estimating relationships among latent constructs with multiple indicators (Hair et al., 2022).

SmartPLS was used to estimate the measurement and structural models (Ringle et al., 2024).

The measurement model was evaluated using outer loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). Outer loadings above 0.70 are preferred, while loadings above 0.60 may be accepted when construct reliability and AVE meet the required criteria. Convergent validity was assessed using AVE, with values above 0.50 indicating that a construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, with values above 0.70 considered acceptable. Discriminant validity was assessed using HTMT, with values below 0.90 indicating adequate discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015).

The structural model was evaluated using R-square, path coefficients, t-statistics, p-values, and specific indirect effects. Hypotheses were considered supported when t-statistics exceeded 1.96 and p-values were below 0.05. Because the data were collected using self-report questionnaires at a single point in time, common method bias remains a methodological consideration in interpreting the findings (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Measurement Model

The measurement model evaluation indicates that the retained indicators adequately measure their intended constructs. All outer-loading values were above 0.60, and most exceeded the preferred threshold of 0.70. Therefore, all indicators were retained for the structural analysis.

**Table 2. Outer-loading results**

Code	Construct	Loading	Decision
PK1	Career development	0.773	Valid
PK2	Career development	0.793	Valid
PK3	Career development	0.792	Valid
PK4	Career development	0.741	Valid
KP1	Compensation	0.757	Valid
KP2	Compensation	0.718	Valid
KP3	Compensation	0.687	Valid
KP4	Compensation	0.773	Valid
BO1	Organizational culture	0.774	Valid
BO2	Organizational culture	0.736	Valid
BO3	Organizational culture	0.773	Valid
BO4	Organizational culture	0.822	Valid
KO1	Organizational commitment	0.819	Valid
KO2	Organizational commitment	0.802	Valid
KO3	Organizational commitment	0.737	Valid
KO4	Organizational commitment	0.834	Valid
RP1	Employee retention	0.800	Valid
RP2	Employee retention	0.802	Valid
RP3	Employee retention	0.821	Valid
RP4	Employee retention	0.806	Valid

Construct reliability and convergent validity were also satisfactory. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values exceeded 0.70 for all constructs, and AVE values exceeded 0.50. These results indicate that the constructs have acceptable internal consistency and convergent validity.

**Table 3. Construct reliability and convergent validity**

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE	Decision
Career development	0.861	0.857	0.601	Reliable and valid
Compensation	0.879	0.824	0.540	Reliable and valid
Organizational culture	0.894	0.859	0.603	Reliable and valid
Organizational commitment	0.892	0.876	0.638	Reliable and valid
Employee retention	0.888	0.882	0.652	Reliable and valid

Discriminant validity was assessed using HTMT. All HTMT values were below 0.90. Therefore, the constructs are empirically distinct and the model satisfies discriminant-validity requirements.

**Table 4. HTMT results**

Construct	PK	KP	BO	KO	RP
PK	1.000	0.577	0.505	0.637	0.579
KP	0.577	1.000	0.850	0.665	0.695
BO	0.505	0.850	1.000	0.703	0.737
KO	0.637	0.665	0.703	1.000	0.859
RP	0.579	0.695	0.737	0.859	1.000

## 2. Structural Model

The structural model explains a moderate proportion of organizational commitment and a substantial proportion of employee retention. Career development, compensation, and organizational culture explain 50.4% of the variance in organizational commitment. Career development, compensation, organizational culture, and organizational commitment explain 79.6% of the variance in employee retention.

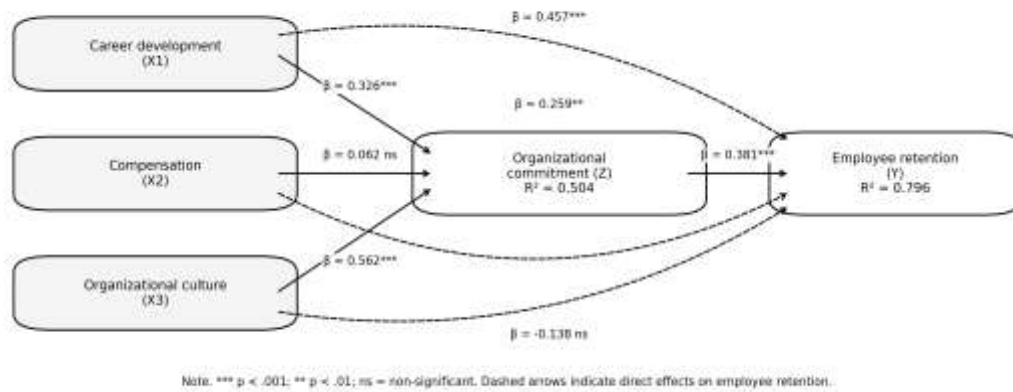
**Table 5. R-square results**

Endogenous construct	R-square	Adjusted R-square	Interpretation
Organizational commitment	0.504	0.488	Moderate
Employee retention	0.796	0.788	Substantial

The direct-effect results show that career development positively and significantly affects organizational commitment ( $\beta = 0.326, p < 0.001$ ) and employee retention ( $\beta = 0.457, p < 0.001$ ). Compensation does not significantly affect organizational commitment ( $\beta = 0.062, p = 0.389$ ), but it positively and significantly affects employee retention ( $\beta = 0.259, p = 0.001$ ). Organizational culture positively and significantly affects organizational commitment ( $\beta = 0.562, p < 0.001$ ), but it does not significantly affect employee retention directly ( $\beta = -0.138, p = 0.172$ ). Organizational commitment positively and significantly affects employee retention ( $\beta = 0.381, p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 6. Direct effects**

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path coefficient	t-statistic	p-value	Decision
H1	Career development → Organizational commitment	0.326	3.912	0.000	Supported
H2	Compensation → Organizational commitment	0.062	0.866	0.389	Not supported
H3	Organizational culture → Organizational commitment	0.562	6.960	0.000	Supported
H4	Career development → Employee retention	0.457	5.000	0.000	Supported
H5	Compensation → Employee retention	0.259	3.571	0.001	Supported
H6	Organizational culture → Employee retention	-0.138	1.376	0.172	Not supported
H7	Organizational commitment → Employee retention	0.381	3.677	0.000	Supported



**Figure 2. Structural model results**

### 3. Mediation Effects

The mediation analysis indicates that organizational commitment mediates the effect of career development on employee retention (indirect effect = 0.134,  $p = 0.007$ ). Organizational commitment does not mediate the effect of compensation on employee retention (indirect effect = 0.023,  $p = 0.399$ ). Organizational commitment mediates the effect of organizational culture on employee retention (indirect effect = 0.228,  $p = 0.001$ ). These results suggest that career development and organizational culture can strengthen retention through commitment, whereas compensation operates primarily through a direct retention pathway in this model.

**Table 7. Specific indirect effects**

Hypothesis	Indirect relationship	Indirect effect	t-statistic	p-value	Decision
H8a	Career development → Organizational commitment → Employee retention	0.134	2.679	0.007	Supported
H8b	Compensation → Organizational commitment → Employee retention	0.023	0.843	0.399	Not supported
H8c	Organizational culture → Organizational commitment → Employee retention	0.228	3.254	0.001	Supported

**Table 8. Summary of hypothesis testing**

Hypothesis	Relationship	Result
H1	Career development → Organizational commitment	Supported
H2	Compensation → Organizational commitment	Not supported
H3	Organizational culture → Organizational commitment	Supported
H4	Career development → Employee retention	Supported
H5	Compensation → Employee retention	Supported
H6	Organizational culture → Employee retention	Not supported
H7	Organizational commitment → Employee retention	Supported
H8a	Career development → Organizational commitment → Employee retention	Supported
H8b	Compensation → Organizational commitment → Employee retention	Not supported
H8c	Organizational culture → Organizational commitment → Employee retention	Supported

## Discussion

### 1. Career Development, Commitment, and Retention

The findings show that career development significantly increases both organizational commitment and employee retention. This result supports Social Exchange Theory because career development can be interpreted as a valued organizational investment that encourages reciprocal attachment and willingness to remain. In the context of the Fire and Rescue Service, career development may include technical training, certification, rotation, promotion opportunities, and clearer competency pathways. Such mechanisms are particularly important in emergency services where employees must maintain readiness and specialized capabilities.

The significant mediation effect through organizational commitment further indicates that career development strengthens retention not only by offering future opportunities but also by building psychological attachment. Employees who perceive development opportunities are more likely to see the organization as a place where they can progress and contribute over time. This finding is consistent with retention literature emphasizing development opportunities and organizational commitment as reasons employees stay (Hausknecht et al., 2009).

## **2. Compensation, Commitment, and Retention**

Compensation has a positive and significant direct effect on employee retention but does not significantly affect organizational commitment. This finding suggests that compensation works mainly as a direct economic and welfare-related retention factor. For fire and rescue employees, compensation may be interpreted as recognition of work demands, readiness, and risk exposure. Appropriate compensation can therefore increase the perceived benefits of staying in the organization.

However, compensation does not appear to create organizational commitment in this model. This is theoretically plausible because compensation can reduce leaving intentions through calculative considerations without necessarily producing emotional attachment or normative obligation. The non-significant mediation result reinforces this interpretation: compensation affects retention directly rather than through organizational commitment. Therefore, compensation policies should be maintained as a retention instrument, but they should be complemented by non-monetary practices that build commitment.

## **3. Organizational Culture, Commitment, and Retention**

Organizational culture significantly affects organizational commitment but does not directly affect employee retention. This pattern indicates that culture becomes important when it is internalized into commitment. In fire and rescue work, culture is likely reflected in discipline, teamwork, solidarity, safety orientation, and readiness. A culture that reinforces shared identity can increase employees' sense of belonging and commitment, especially when tasks require trust and coordination.

The significant indirect effect of organizational culture on retention through organizational commitment explains why the direct effect is not significant. Culture may be too broad to influence the decision to remain unless employees translate shared values into psychological attachment. This finding is consistent with organizational culture theory, which emphasizes that culture shapes members' shared meanings and behavioral expectations over time (Schein & Schein, 2017).

## **4. Organizational Commitment as a Retention Mechanism**

Organizational commitment significantly increases employee retention. Employees who feel emotionally attached, perceive costs of leaving, and experience a sense of obligation are more likely to remain in the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In the Fire and Rescue Service, commitment may be strengthened by a sense of public service, pride in emergency-response work, team solidarity, and perceived organizational support.

The results highlight organizational commitment as a key psychological mechanism. Career development and organizational culture contribute to retention when they strengthen commitment. Compensation, by contrast, contributes directly. This distinction is important for human resource policy because retention cannot rely on a single intervention. Sustainable retention requires a portfolio of policies combining career systems, fair rewards, supportive culture, and commitment-building practices.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that career development, compensation, organizational culture, and organizational commitment are important predictors of employee retention at the Fire and Rescue Service of Bandar Lampung. Career development has positive and significant effects on organizational commitment and employee retention. Compensation directly improves retention but does not significantly influence organizational commitment. Organizational culture strengthens organizational commitment but does not directly influence retention. Organizational commitment positively affects retention and mediates the effects of career development and organizational culture on retention.

The model explains 79.6% of the variance in employee retention, indicating strong explanatory power. The findings suggest that retention in public safety organizations can be enhanced through clear career pathways, appropriate compensation, and a commitment-oriented culture.

### Implications

#### Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to human resource management literature by demonstrating the differentiated pathways through which career development, compensation, and organizational culture influence employee retention in a public safety organization. The results support Social Exchange Theory by showing that organizational investments can create retention either through psychological commitment or through direct perceived benefits.

The findings also refine the role of organizational commitment as a mediator. Commitment mediates the effects of career development and organizational culture, but not compensation. This suggests that not all human resource practices influence retention through the same attitudinal mechanism.

#### Practical Implications

The Fire and Rescue Service of Bandar Lampung should strengthen career-development programs through transparent promotion criteria, competency mapping, technical training, leadership development, and job rotation that supports operational readiness. These practices can increase both commitment and retention.

Compensation should be aligned with job risk, workload, emergency readiness, and welfare needs. Since compensation directly affects retention, a review of compensation fairness, allowances, benefits, and risk-related incentives may help reduce turnover intention and support employee stability.

Organizational culture should be managed as a commitment-building instrument. Leaders should reinforce discipline, safety, teamwork, mutual trust, and public service values through communication, role modelling, recognition, and internal routines that strengthen employees' sense of belonging.

### Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limits causal inference because data were collected at one point in time. Second, the use of self-report questionnaires can increase the risk of common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Third, the sample was limited to one public safety agency in Bandar Lampung, so the

findings may not be generalizable to other regions, private-sector organizations, or different types of public institutions.

Future research should consider longitudinal designs, multi-source data, larger samples, and comparisons across public safety agencies. Future studies may also include additional mediators or moderators such as job satisfaction, perceived organizational support, leadership style, work-life balance, perceived risk, and public service motivation.

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