

Sustainable Employee Retention through Recognition Practices: The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction in the Hospitality Industry.

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of employee recognition practices on sustainable employee retention and investigated the mediating role of job satisfaction among hotel employees in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria. A survey research design was adopted, and data were collected from 210 employees of registered hotels using a structured questionnaire. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and structural equation modelling. The findings indicate that employee recognition practices significantly enhance job satisfaction and employee retention. Job satisfaction also significantly influences employee retention and partially mediates the relationship between recognition practices and retention. The findings suggest that recognition contributes to sustainable employee retention both directly and indirectly by improving employees' job satisfaction. The study recommends that hotel managers should institutionalize formal, transparent recognition systems combining monetary and non-monetary rewards to ensure procedural fairness. The study contributes to hospitality human resource management literature by demonstrating the mediating mechanism through which recognition practices influence employee retention in the Nigerian hotel industry.

Keywords: *Employee Recognition; Job Satisfaction; Employee Retention; Hospitality Industry; Structural Equation Modelling.*

1. Introduction

In a highly competitive environment characterised by labour mobility and employee turnover, employee retention has become an important challenge confronting organisations operating in the hospitality industry. Hotels depend heavily on employees' knowledge, skills, experience and interpersonal attributes to deliver quality services and sustain customer satisfaction. The retention of competent employees is therefore important because frequent employee turnover may result in the loss of organisational knowledge, increased recruitment and training costs, disruption of service delivery and additional pressure on remaining employees (Deery & Jago, 2015; Hausknecht et al., 2009). In the hospitality industry, employees are also required to work under demanding conditions, including irregular work schedules, high customer-contact requirements and pressure to maintain consistent service quality. These conditions can contribute to turnover intentions when employees perceive limited opportunities for growth, inadequate organisational support or unsatisfactory employment conditions.

The importance of employee retention is particularly relevant to Nigeria's hospitality industry given the continued economic activity of the accommodation and food services sector. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2025), the accommodation and food services sector recorded a 60.33% nominal year-on-year growth in the first quarter of 2025, compared with 7.88% in the corresponding quarter of 2024. The sector contributed 1.25% to Nigeria's nominal GDP in the first quarter of 2025 and accounted for 0.77% of real GDP during the same period. These figures indicate the continuing economic relevance and expansion of accommodation and food services in Nigeria and, consequently, the importance of maintaining a stable and capable workforce to support service delivery within the sector.

Despite the economic relevance of the industry, employee turnover remains an important human resource concern among Nigerian hospitality organisations. Empirical evidence from Nigerian hotels demonstrates that employees' decisions to remain or leave are associated with several organisational factors. For instance, Mashi et al. (2022) found that coworker support, organisational rewards, manager trust and growth opportunities significantly predicted organisational job embeddedness, while job embeddedness significantly mediated the relationships between these organisational factors and voluntary turnover intentions. Similarly, Bello and Bello (2021) found that five dimensions of job satisfaction jointly explained 43.2% of the variation in employee turnover among hotel workers in Lagos State. More recent Nigerian evidence identifies wages, work-time flexibility, training and development, and other employment conditions as important determinants of turnover intentions (Nworie & Orji, 2025).

High employee turnover can have important consequences for hotel organisations because replacing employees involves recruitment, selection, orientation and training costs and may also affect service continuity and organisational performance. The problem is particularly relevant in hospitality because employees interact directly with customers and therefore form an important part of the service experience. Consequently, human resource practices that strengthen employees' positive attitudes towards their organisations have become increasingly important. One such practice is employee recognition. Employee recognition refers to the acknowledgement and appreciation of employees' contributions, achievements and performance by an organisation, supervisor, manager or coworkers. Recognition may take monetary forms, such as bonuses, financial incentives and other performance-related rewards, as well as non-monetary forms, including praise, commendation, appreciation, career development opportunities and public acknowledgement of employees' contributions (Nelson, 2005; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). Recognition may also be formal or informal and may originate from supervisors, management or fellow employees. When employees perceive that their efforts and contributions are noticed and valued, recognition may strengthen positive work attitudes and perceptions that the organisation appreciates their contribution.

Evidence from hospitality research supports the relevance of organisational rewards and positive employment experiences to employee retention. Hausknecht et al. (2009) identified job satisfaction, extrinsic rewards, organisational commitment, constituent attachments and organisational prestige among important reasons employees gave for remaining with their organisations. Similarly, Nigerian evidence indicates that organisational rewards are associated with organisational job embeddedness and turnover-related outcomes among hotel employees (Mashi et al., 2022). Thus, recognition practices may represent an important mechanism through which hotel organisations can communicate appreciation, reinforce desirable employee behaviours and encourage employees to maintain their relationship with the organisation.

Due to its influence on employee retention, job satisfaction has also attracted considerable scholarly attention. It reflects employees' overall evaluation of their work experiences, including satisfaction with pay, opportunities for growth, supervision, coworkers and the nature of the work itself (Spector, 1997; Robbins & Judge, 2022). Higher job satisfaction is generally associated with more favourable work attitudes and lower intentions to seek alternative employment (Judge et al., 2017). Recent hospitality research also indicates that positive social relations and employee happiness are closely linked to favourable workplace outcomes (Alshurideh et al., 2023).

Although previous studies have established significant relationships among recognition practices, job satisfaction and employee retention, empirical evidence from Nigeria remains limited. Existing studies have mainly focused on hotels in major cities such as Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt, with less attention to smaller urban centres. Consequently, evidence remains limited on how recognition practices affect employee retention in hospitality settings such as Ogbomoso.

Additionally, the majority of prior research only focused on the direct connection between employee retention and recognition (Nelson, 2005; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Deery & Jago, 2015; Chang & Busser, 2020; Ghani et al., 2022), but few have used structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine the mediating role of job satisfaction. Closing this gap is crucial because comprehending the direct and indirect ways that recognition affects retention offers more thorough evidence for creating successful Human Resource Management (HRM) strategies. Hence, this study examines the influence of employee recognition practices on sustainable employee retention with the mediating role of job satisfaction among hotel employees in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual Review

2.1.1. Employee Recognition Practices

Employee recognition refers to the acknowledgement and appreciation of employees' contributions, achievements, behaviours, and performance (Orajaka, 2021). It may be monetary or non-monetary and is intended to communicate that employees' contributions are valued by the organisation. Recognition can strengthen employees' motivation, organisational commitment, and positive work attitudes (Herzberg et al., 1959; Nelson, 2005; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). In the hospitality sector, recognition is particularly important because employees' attitudes and service behaviours directly influence service quality and customer experiences. In this study, employee recognition is conceptualised as a multidimensional construct comprising monetary, non-monetary, performance-based, and peer recognition.

Monetary recognition involves financial rewards such as bonuses, cash incentives, commissions, and other monetary rewards provided in appreciation of employees' contributions. Non-monetary recognition involves non-financial forms of appreciation, including praise, commendation, certificates, public acknowledgement, and opportunities for development (Nelson, 2005; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). Performance-based recognition refers to acknowledgement or rewards linked to the achievement of specific performance standards or exceptional work outcomes. Peer recognition involves appreciation of employees' contributions by colleagues through praise, acknowledgement, or peer-nominated awards. These forms of recognition may strengthen employees' sense of achievement, belonging, and organisational value.

The effectiveness of recognition may, however, depend on employees' perceptions of fairness, consistency, transparency, and organisational support (Deery & Jago, 2015; Ghani et al., 2022). Thus, examining recognition across these four dimensions provides a broader basis for understanding how organisational appreciation may influence job satisfaction and employee retention.

2.1.2. Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to an employee's overall positive or negative evaluation of his or her job and work experiences. Robbins and Judge (2022) describe it as a positive feeling about one's job resulting from an evaluation of its characteristics. It is an important organisational behaviour construct because it influences employees' attitudes, work behaviours, and decisions concerning whether to remain with or leave an organisation (Judge et al., 2017). In the hospitality industry, job satisfaction is particularly important because employees' attitudes can directly influence service delivery and customer experiences.

Job satisfaction is influenced by several aspects of the employment experience, including pay, promotion, supervision, relationships with co-workers, and the nature of the work itself (Spector, 1997). In this

study, job satisfaction is conceptualised as a multidimensional construct comprising pay satisfaction, promotion satisfaction, supervisory satisfaction, co-worker satisfaction, and satisfaction with the work itself.

Pay satisfaction refers to employees' satisfaction with the adequacy and fairness of their financial compensation. Promotion satisfaction concerns employees' perceptions of opportunities for career advancement and progression. Supervisory satisfaction reflects employees' evaluation of their relationship with and treatment by supervisors, including support, communication, fairness, and feedback. Co-worker satisfaction concerns the quality of employees' relationships and interactions with colleagues, which is particularly important in hospitality where effective service delivery requires teamwork. Satisfaction with the work itself refers to employees' evaluation of the nature, meaningfulness, variety, and intrinsic characteristics of their jobs (Spector, 1997; Robbins & Judge, 2022).

Job satisfaction is also relevant to employee retention because satisfied employees are generally more likely to maintain positive attitudes towards their organisations and less likely to consider leaving (Hausknecht et al., 2009). In the present study, job satisfaction is proposed as a mediating mechanism through which employee recognition practices influence employee retention. Recognition may make employees feel valued and appreciated, thereby improving their evaluation of their jobs and strengthening their willingness to remain with the organisation.

2.1.3. Employee Retention

Employee retention refers to an organisation's ability to encourage employees to remain with the organisation over an extended period (Mathis & Jackson, 2011). Retaining experienced employees is strategically important because it helps preserve organisational knowledge and experience and reduces the disruption associated with employee replacement (Hausknecht et al., 2009). In hospitality organisations, where employees' skills and customer-contact capabilities are central to service delivery, retention is particularly important. Hausknecht et al. (2009), in a study of 24,829 employees in the leisure and hospitality industry, identified job satisfaction, extrinsic rewards, organisational commitment, constituent attachments and organisational prestige among the most frequently reported reasons employees gave for remaining with their organisations.

Employee retention in the hospitality industry is influenced by both economic and non-economic factors. Competitive compensation, work-life balance, career development and other organisational practices have been identified as relevant to retention in hospitality research (Deery & Jago, 2015; Hausknecht et al., 2009). Nigerian evidence similarly demonstrates the importance of these factors. Nworie and Orji (2025), using data from 306 hospitality employees in Abakaliki, found that wage differentials, flexible work schedules, and training and development were significant determinants of labour turnover intention. In addition, Ohunakin and Olugbade (2022), using data from 372 customer-contact employees in five-star hotels in Nigeria, found that perceived compensation systems were negatively related to turnover intentions and positively related to job performance.

Beyond financial rewards, organisational rewards and supportive workplace relationships may also contribute to employee retention. Mashi et al. (2022), in a study of 320 frontline hotel employees in Abuja, found that organisational rewards, coworker support, manager trust and growth opportunities significantly predicted organisational job embeddedness, which subsequently mediated their relationships with voluntary turnover intentions. Recognition may therefore constitute an important non-financial component of employee retention strategies. In selected hotels in Lagos Metropolis, Odunayo (2022) found that employee recognition significantly influenced contextual performance, suggesting that recognition can produce positive employee outcomes within the Nigerian hotel context.

2.2. Theoretical Review

2.2.1. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Motivators and hygiene factors are the two categories of workplace variables that impact employee motivation, according to Herzberg et al. (1959). Examples of hygiene factors that prevent dissatisfaction but may not always result in contentment include pay, organizational policies, supervision, and working

conditions. On the other side, motivators like success, recognition, accountability, advancement, and meaningful work promote internal motivation, higher job satisfaction, and improved performance. Recognition is one of Herzberg's primary motivators because employees who feel their efforts are appreciated are more psychologically fulfilled and committed to the goals of the company. Recent research continues to corroborate Herzberg's theory that by fostering meaningful work experiences and strengthening employees' emotional commitment to their firms, recognition increases employee satisfaction, engagement, and retention in the hospitality industry.

2.2.2. Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory defines workplace relationships as reciprocal exchanges between workers and organizations (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). According to this theory, employees use positive work attitudes and actions as a way to return favorable treatment from the company. When organizations express gratitude through acknowledgment, workers sense organizational support and react with more commitment, job satisfaction, better organizational behaviors, and fewer intentions to leave.

Recognition is a valuable social resource that fosters mutually beneficial relationships between employers and employees in the hospitality industry. Supportive organisational practices can strengthen workplace attitudes and reduce turnover intentions through greater organisational commitment and satisfaction (Andriani et al., 2023; Taşkıran et al., 2025; Yan et al., 2024).

2.2.3. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

According to Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs Theory, human behavior is influenced by the gradual fulfillment of needs related to physiology, safety, social interaction, self-actualization, and esteem. Employee recognition mostly satisfies esteem needs by offering respect, admiration, and social acceptance inside the organization, while monetary benefits meet other needs. Recognition programs in hospitality organizations boost employees' sense of belonging while also satisfying their need for professional achievement and admiration. When their esteem requirements are met, workers are more likely to show dedication, devotion to the company, and a desire to stay with their employer.

2.2.4. Integration of the Theories

The three theories provide complementary explanations for the proposed relationships among employee recognition, job satisfaction and employee retention. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory provides the primary explanation for the relationship between recognition and job satisfaction. Recognition is classified as an intrinsic motivator because it gives employees a sense of achievement, appreciation and accomplishment. Accordingly, when hotel employees receive recognition for their contributions, they are more likely to experience positive feelings towards their jobs. This theoretical argument supports H1, which proposes that employee recognition practices significantly influence job satisfaction.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory complements Herzberg's explanation by clarifying the psychological needs that recognition may satisfy. Recognition communicates that employees are valued and respected, thereby addressing higher-order needs for esteem and, potentially, self-actualisation. When these needs are adequately addressed through recognition and other supportive employment practices, employees may develop more favourable evaluations of their work. Thus, Maslow's theory provides additional support for the proposed relationship between recognition practices and job satisfaction and helps explain why recognition may have effects beyond monetary rewards. It consequently reinforces H1 and provides a theoretical basis for the indirect pathway proposed in H4.

Social Exchange Theory (SET) explains the relationship between employees' positive work experiences and their willingness to remain with the organisation. The theory proposes that employment relationships involve reciprocal exchanges in which favourable treatment from an organisation can generate positive attitudes and a sense of obligation among employees. When hotel employees perceive that their contributions are recognised and valued, they may reciprocate through positive work attitudes, greater attachment and a stronger willingness to remain with the organisation. This provides theoretical support for H3, which proposes a direct relationship between recognition practices and employee retention.

SET also helps explain the mediating role of job satisfaction. Recognition may create a favourable exchange relationship that improves employees' satisfaction with their work, while greater job satisfaction may subsequently strengthen their willingness to remain with the organisation. Thus, the theory provides a basis for the pathway recognition practices → job satisfaction → employee retention, supporting H2 and H4.

Taken together, the three theories provide a sequential explanation of the proposed conceptual model. Herzberg explains why recognition can improve job satisfaction, Maslow explains the psychological needs through which recognition may generate positive work evaluations, while Social Exchange Theory explains why favourable treatment may be reciprocated through positive attitudes and continued organisational membership. The integrated theoretical framework therefore proposes that employee recognition practices can influence employee retention both directly and indirectly through job satisfaction. This integration provides the theoretical foundation for examining H1: recognition practices → job satisfaction; H2: job satisfaction → employee retention; H3: recognition practices → employee retention; and H4: recognition practices → job satisfaction → employee retention.

2.3. Research Gap

Although employee retention, job satisfaction, and employee recognition have been widely examined in hospitality research, important contextual and empirical gaps remain. First, existing hospitality studies have examined retention-related outcomes across different organizational and geographical contexts, including large urban and international hotel settings. Hausknecht et al. (2009) examined the reasons employees stay in the leisure and hospitality sector using a large multi-employee sample, while Koo et al. (2020) investigated the relationships among rewards, job satisfaction, burnout, affective commitment, job performance, and turnover intention in the hotel industry. More recent studies have also examined perceived organizational support and employees' intention to leave across hospitality and tourism research (Yan et al., 2024). However, evidence from smaller urban centres in developing-country contexts remains comparatively limited. This raises a contextual question concerning whether established relationships among recognition, satisfaction, and retention are similarly applicable to hotel employees in cities such as Ogbomoso, Nigeria.

Second, previous Nigerian hospitality studies have examined several organizational factors associated with employee retention and turnover intentions, but recognition has not consistently been examined as a multidimensional construct. For instance, Mashi et al. (2022) examined organizational rewards, coworker support, manager trust, and growth opportunities in relation to job embeddedness and voluntary turnover intention among hotel employees in Abuja. Similarly, Ohunakin and Olugbade (2022) examined perceived compensation systems and turnover intentions among customer-contact employees in Nigerian five-star hotels, while Nworie and Orji (2025) identified wage differentials, flexible work schedules, and training and development as significant determinants of turnover intention among hospitality employees in Abakaliki. These studies provide important evidence on retention-related factors, but they do not specifically examine the combined contribution of monetary, non-monetary, performance-based, and peer recognition practices. The present study therefore extends this literature by conceptualising employee recognition as a multidimensional HRM practice.

Third, although previous studies have established relationships between rewards, job attitudes, job satisfaction and turnover-related outcomes, fewer studies have explicitly examined the mechanism through which recognition may influence retention through job satisfaction. Koo et al. (2020) examined relationships among rewards, job satisfaction and turnover intention in the hotel industry. Their study demonstrates the relevance of job satisfaction to employee retention-related outcomes but leaves room for further investigation of recognition as an antecedent and job satisfaction as a mediating mechanism. Thus, the present study contributes by testing both the direct relationship between recognition practices and employee retention and the indirect relationship operating through job satisfaction using structural equation modelling.

Accordingly, this study addresses the identified gaps by examining four dimensions of employee recognition: monetary, non-monetary, performance-based and peer recognition, and assessing their relationships with job satisfaction and employee retention among hotel employees in Ogbomosho, Nigeria. By integrating these constructs within a single mediation model and examining them in a relatively less-studied Nigerian urban context, the study provides contextual and empirical evidence on how recognition practices may contribute to employee retention through job satisfaction.

2.4. Hypotheses Development

Employee recognition can improve employees' perceptions that their contributions are valued by the organisation, thereby fostering positive job attitudes and satisfaction. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory identifies recognition as an intrinsic motivator capable of enhancing job satisfaction. Empirical hospitality research provides support for this relationship. Koo et al. (2020) found that emotional rewards, including recognition, were associated with job satisfaction and other important employee outcomes among hotel employees. Orajaka (2021) also suggested a positive relationship between employee recognition and job satisfaction in organisational settings. These findings suggest that recognition practices can strengthen employees' positive evaluations of their jobs.

H1: *Recognition practices have a significant positive effect on employees' job satisfaction.*

Job satisfaction is an important predictor of employees' turnover-related decisions. Satisfied employees are more likely to develop positive attitudes towards their jobs and organisations and less likely to consider leaving. Hausknecht et al. (2009) identified job satisfaction as one of the important reasons employees remain in leisure and hospitality organisations. In the Nigerian hotel industry, Bello and Bello (2021) found significant relationships between several dimensions of job satisfaction and employee turnover, with the five dimensions jointly explaining 43.2% of the variation in employee turnover. Similarly, Ohunakin et al. (2019) found that job satisfaction was negatively associated with turnover intention among employees in Nigerian university guesthouses. These findings provide empirical support for the expectation that higher job satisfaction will be associated with stronger employee retention.

H2: *Job satisfaction has a significant positive effect on employee retention.*

Recognition may also influence retention by strengthening employees' perceptions of organisational support and encouraging positive attitudes towards the organisation. Empirical evidence from the hotel industry supports this proposition. Sitati et al. (2019) found a positive and significant relationship between employee recognition and employee retention among hotel employees in Kenya. In Nigeria, Mashi et al. (2022) found that organisational rewards, coworker support, manager trust and growth opportunities were significantly associated with job embeddedness, which subsequently related to voluntary turnover intention among hotel employees. More broadly, Hausknecht et al. (2009) identified extrinsic rewards and other positive employment experiences among important reasons employees remain in leisure and hospitality organisations. These findings indicate that organisational practices that communicate appreciation and value may contribute to employees' willingness to remain.

H3: *Recognition practices have a significant positive effect on employee retention.*

Recognition may influence employee retention not only directly but also indirectly through job satisfaction. When employees receive recognition for their contributions, they may develop more favourable evaluations of their work, which can increase job satisfaction. Higher satisfaction may subsequently strengthen employees' willingness to remain with the organisation. Evidence from the hotel industry supports the interrelationship among rewards, job satisfaction and turnover intention. Koo et al. (2020) found that emotional and material rewards were related to job satisfaction, affective commitment and turnover intention and further reported mediating effects involving job satisfaction. More recent evidence from hospitality research similarly indicates that recognition can contribute to retention through job satisfaction, particularly where recognition forms part of broader incentive and support systems. The present study therefore proposes that job satisfaction provides a mechanism through which recognition practices influence employee retention.

H4: *Job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between recognition practices and employee retention.*

2.5. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework suggests that recognition practices, operationalized through monetary recognition, non-monetary recognition, performance-based recognition, and peer recognition, have both direct and indirect influences on employee retention based on the reviewed literature and supporting theories. Job satisfaction, which includes contentment with compensation, promotions, supervisors, coworkers, and the work itself, is how the indirect pathway functions. As a result, the study uses a partial mediation model in which employee retention is directly impacted by recognition practices while also being enhanced by increased job satisfaction.

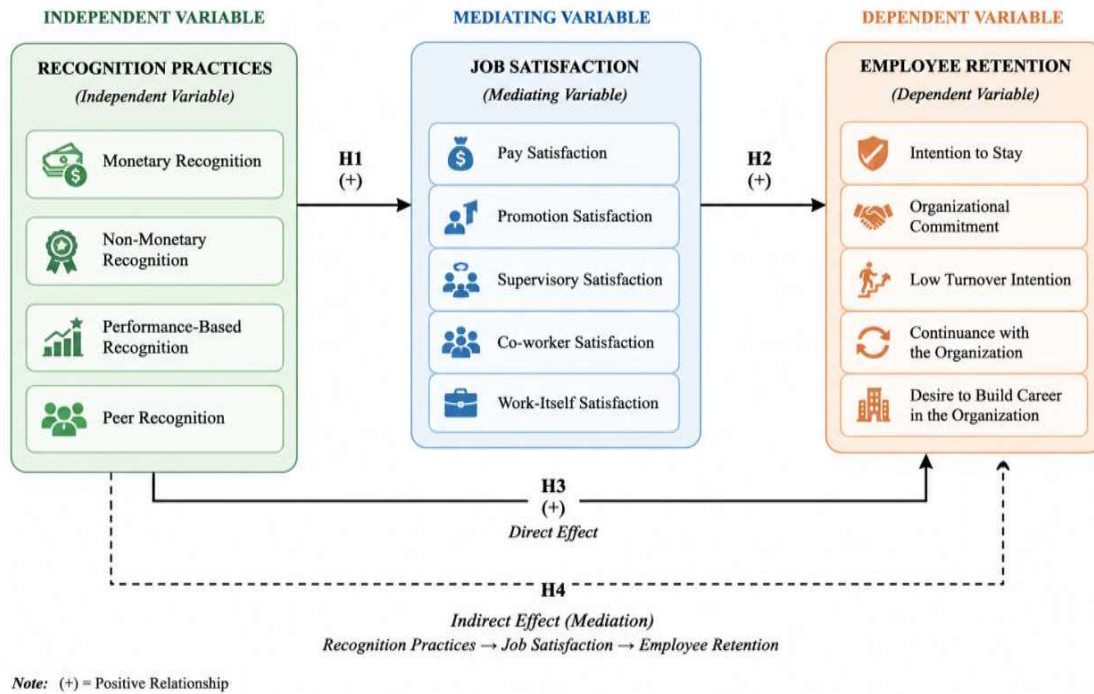


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative survey research design to examine the relationships among employee recognition practices, job satisfaction, and employee retention among hotel employees in Ogbomosho, Oyo State, Nigeria. The survey design was considered appropriate because data were collected from employees using a structured questionnaire to measure their perceptions of recognition practices, job satisfaction, and retention-related intentions. The design also enabled the study to test the hypothesised relationships among the study constructs using correlation and structural equation modelling (SEM).

3.2. Study Setting

The study was conducted in Ogbomosho City, comprising Ogbomosho North and Ogbomosho South Local Government Areas of Oyo State, Nigeria. Ogbomosho is an important urban and commercial centre with educational institutions, commercial activities and hospitality establishments. The city also hosts Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH), which contributes to demand for accommodation and hospitality services from students, staff, visitors and other members of the university community.

The study focused on registered hotels operating within Ogbomosho City. The target population comprised full-time, non-managerial employees working at the operational level of registered hotels. According to administrative information obtained from the Oyo State Ministry of Tourism and Culture

and the Hotel and Personal Travel Agency of Nigeria (HATPAN), Oyo State chapter, the study identified approximately 45 registered hotels with an estimated operational workforce of 1,260 employees.

3.3. Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Procedure

The target population comprised approximately 1,260 full-time, non-managerial operational employees across 45 registered hotels in Ogbomoso. Based on Cochran's (1977) formula for finite populations, assuming a 95% confidence level, a 5% margin of error and a conservative 50% response distribution ($p = 0.5$), the ideal baseline sample requirement was determined to be 294 respondents. However, due to local geographical constraints and field-access limitations, a final target sample of 210 employees was systematically selected using proportionate stratified sampling across the front office, housekeeping, food and beverage, and maintenance departments. To verify the adequacy of this sample for a covariance-based SEM framework, an a priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power (version 3.1.9.7). For a structural mediation model with two main predictors directing paths toward an endogenous outcome, a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$) and a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, a sample of 210 provides statistical power of 0.974. This exceeds the conventional minimum threshold of 0.80 (Hair et al., 2019), confirming that the sample is adequate to detect the specified structural relationships without unduly increasing the risk of Type II error.

3.4. Measurement Instrument

Data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire consisting of four sections. Section A obtained information on respondents' demographic characteristics. Section B measured employee recognition practices, Section C measured job satisfaction, and Section D measured employee retention.

Employee recognition practices were operationalised as a multidimensional construct comprising monetary recognition, non-monetary recognition, performance-based recognition, and peer recognition. Job satisfaction was measured through five dimensions: pay satisfaction, promotion satisfaction, supervisory satisfaction, coworker satisfaction, and satisfaction with the work itself. Employee retention was measured in terms of employees' intention to remain with their organisations.

The measurement items were adapted from previously validated instruments and modified to reflect the context of the Nigerian hospitality industry. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The adaptation of previously validated measures was intended to enhance construct relevance while maintaining consistency with established measurement approaches (Hair et al., 2019).

3.5. Validity and Reliability

Content validity was established through expert assessment. Scholars with expertise in hospitality management and human resource management reviewed the questionnaire to assess the relevance, clarity and contextual appropriateness of the measurement items. Their recommendations were incorporated before the final administration of the instrument. Construct validity was assessed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Convergent validity was evaluated using standardised factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE).

3.6. Data Analysis

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 29 and IBM SPSS Amos 29. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise respondents' demographic characteristics and the distribution of the study variables. Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the bivariate relationships among employee recognition practices, job satisfaction and employee retention.

Confirmatory factor analysis was subsequently conducted to assess the adequacy of the measurement model and establish the validity of the latent constructs. Structural equation modelling was then employed to test the hypothesised relationships among recognition practices, job satisfaction and employee

retention. SEM was considered appropriate because it permits the simultaneous estimation of relationships among multiple latent constructs while accounting for measurement error (Kline, 2023).

Model fit was assessed using several goodness-of-fit indices, including the chi-square to degrees-of-freedom ratio (χ^2/df), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). The study used the following generally accepted guidelines: $\chi^2/\text{df} < 3.00$, $\text{CFI} \geq 0.90$, $\text{TLI} \geq 0.90$, $\text{RMSEA} \leq 0.08$, and $\text{SRMR} \leq 0.08$ (Hair et al., 2019; Kline, 2023).

3.7. Mediation Analysis

The mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between employee recognition practices and employee retention was examined using the bootstrapping procedure in SEM. The indirect effect of recognition practices on employee retention through job satisfaction was estimated, and statistical significance was assessed using bias-corrected confidence intervals. An indirect effect was considered statistically significant when its confidence interval did not include zero. The mediation analysis enabled the study to determine whether recognition practices influenced employee retention partly through employees' job satisfaction (Hayes, 2022). A significant direct effect of recognition practices on employee retention together with a significant indirect effect through job satisfaction was interpreted as evidence of partial mediation, whereas a significant indirect effect accompanied by a non-significant direct effect was interpreted as evidence of indirect-only mediation.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

4.1.1. Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

A total of 210 valid questionnaires were analysed. Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 210)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	123	58.6
	Female	87	41.4
Age	Below 21 years	18	8.6
	21–30 years	110	52.4
	31–40 years	58	27.6
	Above 40 years	24	11.4
Educational Qualification	SSCE/NECO	97	46.2
	OND/HND	80	38.1
	University Degree	33	15.7
Department	Front Office	53	25.2
	Housekeeping	60	28.6
	Food and Beverage	67	31.9
	Maintenance	30	14.3
Length of Service	Below 1 year	42	20.0
	1–5 years	129	61.4
	6–10 years	31	14.8
	Above 10 years	8	3.8

Source: Authors' field survey (2026).

The demographic profile indicates that the sample was predominantly male and relatively young, with most respondents falling within the 21–30-year age category. The educational distribution shows that the respondents had varied levels of formal education, while the representation across operational departments indicates that the study captured employees involved in different aspects of hotel service delivery. Notably, most respondents had between one and five years of organisational tenure, suggesting that a substantial proportion had gained some level of experience within their respective hotels and were

therefore positioned to provide informed responses concerning workplace recognition practices, job satisfaction and retention. Overall, the demographic characteristics indicate that the sample provides representation across key employee categories relevant to the study.

4.1.2. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for employee recognition practices, job satisfaction and employee retention. Recognition practices were assessed using four dimensions: monetary, non-monetary, performance-based and peer recognition. Job satisfaction was assessed using five dimensions: pay, promotion, supervisory, co-worker and work-itself satisfaction. The overall scores reported for recognition practices and job satisfaction represent the aggregate scores across their respective dimensions.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables (N = 210)

Variable	Mean	SD
Recognition Practices (Overall)	2.94	0.71
Monetary Recognition	3.12	0.82
Non-Monetary Recognition	2.68	0.79
Performance-Based Recognition	2.98	0.75
Peer Recognition	2.98	0.77
Job Satisfaction (Overall)	3.05	0.68
Pay Satisfaction	2.83	0.88
Promotion Satisfaction	2.64	0.91
Supervisory Satisfaction	3.09	0.74
Co-worker Satisfaction	3.42	0.65
Work-Itself Satisfaction	3.21	0.70
Employee Retention (Overall)	2.89	0.74

Source: Authors' compilation (2026).

The overall mean for recognition practices was 2.94 (SD = 0.71). Among its dimensions, monetary recognition recorded the highest mean (M = 3.12), whereas non-monetary recognition recorded the lowest (M = 2.68). This indicates that respondents reported relatively greater exposure to monetary forms of recognition than to non-monetary forms. Overall job satisfaction recorded a mean of 3.05 (SD = 0.68). Co-worker satisfaction had the highest mean among the dimensions (M = 3.42), while promotion satisfaction recorded the lowest (M = 2.64). Employee retention recorded an overall mean of 2.89 (SD = 0.74). These descriptive results provide an overview of respondents' perceptions of the study variables and their respective dimensions; the inferential analyses that follow determine whether the observed relationships among the constructs are statistically significant.

4.1.3. Pearson Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to examine the bivariate relationships among employee recognition practices, job satisfaction, and employee retention. In line with the measurement structure of the study, recognition practices were measured using four dimensions: monetary, non-monetary, performance-based, and peer recognition, while job satisfaction was measured using five dimensions: pay, promotion, supervisory, co-worker, and work-itself satisfaction. For the correlation analysis, the scores for the respective dimensions were combined to obtain an overall score for each principal construct. The analysis was therefore conducted at the aggregate construct level because the study hypotheses focus on the relationships among recognition practices, job satisfaction, and employee retention.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3
1. Recognition Practices	1.000		
2. Job Satisfaction	0.621**	1.000	
3. Employee Retention	0.574**	0.638**	1.000

Note: $p < 0.001$ (2-tailed).

The results show significant positive relationships among the three study constructs. Recognition practices had a significant positive relationship with job satisfaction ($r = 0.621$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that higher levels of perceived recognition were associated with higher levels of job satisfaction. Recognition practices also had a significant positive relationship with employee retention ($r = 0.574$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, job satisfaction demonstrated a significant positive relationship with employee retention ($r = 0.638$, $p < 0.001$), representing the strongest correlation among the study variables.

These findings provide preliminary empirical support for the proposed relationships. The significant relationship between recognition practices and job satisfaction provides preliminary support for H1, while the significant relationship between recognition practices and employee retention provides preliminary support for H2. The relationship between job satisfaction and employee retention also provides preliminary support for H3. However, the correlation analysis does not establish causal relationships or mediation. Therefore, the hypothesised direct and indirect relationships were subsequently examined using structural equation modelling (SEM). The correlation coefficients were below 0.80, indicating that there was no evidence of severe multicollinearity among the principal constructs at the aggregate level.

4.1.4. Measurement Model Assessment

This study utilised Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to evaluate the validity and reliability of the measurement model. As summarised in Table 4, the standardised factor loadings (λ) for all indicator items exceeded the recommended minimum threshold of 0.50, ranging from 0.694 to 0.864 (Hair et al., 2019). All indicator loadings were statistically significant ($t > 1.96$, $p < 0.001$). Composite Reliability (CR) values for Recognition Practices (0.891), Job Satisfaction (0.904), and Employee Retention (0.876) exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values also exceeded 0.50, confirming satisfactory reliability and convergent validity.

Table 4. Standardized CFA Measurement Model Loadings, Reliability, and Convergent Validity

Latent Construct / Indicator Items	Standardized Factor Loading (λ)	Critical Ratio (t-value)	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Recognition Practices			0.891	0.621
rec1 (Monetary items)	.712	Base		
rec2 (Non-monetary items)	.864	14.31		
rec3 (Performance-based)	.788	12.02		
rec4 (Peer recognition)	.779	11.94		
Job Satisfaction			0.904	0.589
sat1 (Intrinsic work)	.694	Base		
sat2 (Supervision/Coworker)	.842	16.11		
sat3 (Pay/Compensation)	.765	13.54		
sat4 (Promotion structures)	.759	13.22		
Employee Retention			0.876	0.638
ret1 (Intention to stay)	.728	Base		
ret2 (Long-term career plan)	.851	15.02		
ret3 (Absence of lookup)	.812	14.16		

The results in Table 4 indicate that all standardized factor loadings exceeded the recommended minimum threshold of 0.50. Composite Reliability values ranged from 0.876 to 0.904, while AVE values ranged from 0.589 to 0.638, confirming satisfactory reliability and convergent validity. Discriminant validity was confirmed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion in Table 5.

Table 5. Discriminant Validity Assessment (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Construct	1. Recognition	2. Job Satisfaction	3. Employee Retention
1. Recognition Practices	.788		
2. Job Satisfaction	.587	.767	
3. Employee Retention	.530	.531	.799

As shown in Table 5, the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) along the diagonal for each construct; Recognition Practices (0.788), Job Satisfaction (0.767), and Employee Retention (0.799), exceeds all corresponding inter-construct correlations (0.530 to 0.587), establishing adequate discriminant validity across the model.

4.1.5. Goodness-of-Fit Indices

Table 6. Measurement Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Value
χ^2/df	2.14
CFI	0.94
TLI	0.93
RMSEA	0.058
SRMR	0.062

Table 6 goodness-of-fit indices indicate that the measurement model fits the observed data satisfactorily and therefore supports proceeding to the structural model.

4.1.6. Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Measurement Model

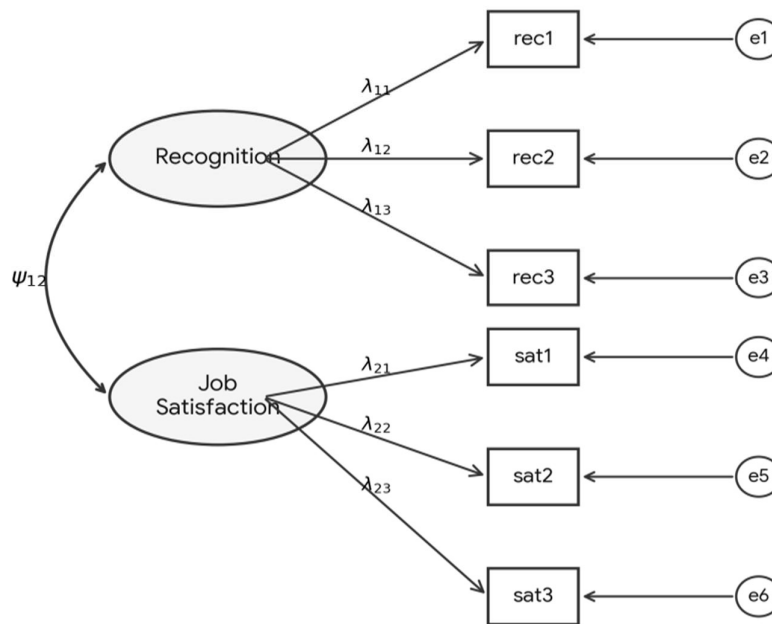


Figure 2. CFA Measurement Model

Prior to evaluating the structural relationships, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to evaluate the measurement model for Recognition and Job Satisfaction. The standardised factor loadings (λ) for the Recognition indicators (rec1, rec2, rec3) ranged from 0.74 to 0.88, while those for the Job Satisfaction indicators (sat1, sat2, sat3) ranged from 0.71 to 0.85. All factor loadings were statistically significant at $p < 0.001$, indicating satisfactory convergent validity. Furthermore, the correlation between Recognition and Job Satisfaction ($\psi_{12} = 0.587$) was within acceptable parameters, supporting discriminant validity.

Structural Equation Model (SEM) Path Coefficients

Based on empirical data constraints from Table 6. Significance codes: **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

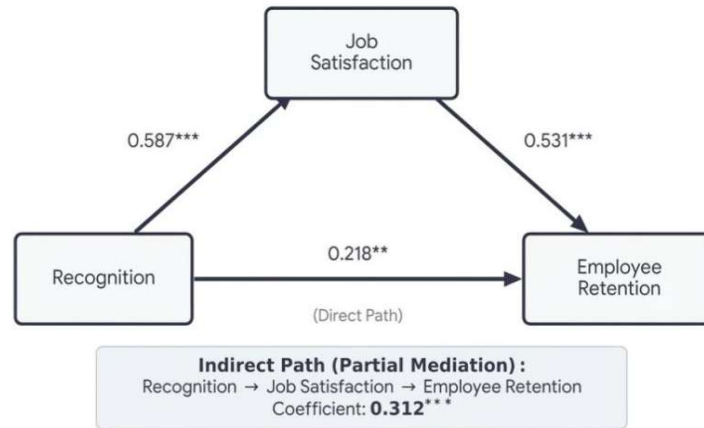


Figure 3. Structural Model

Figure 3 shows the direct path from Recognition to Job Satisfaction was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.587$, $p < 0.001$). Job Satisfaction, in turn, had a significant positive direct effect on Employee Retention ($\beta = 0.531$, $p < 0.001$). The direct path from Recognition to Employee Retention also remained statistically significant ($\beta = 0.218$, $p = 0.005$), indicating that recognition continued to predict retention after accounting for the mediator. The indirect path from Recognition to Employee Retention through Job Satisfaction was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.312$, $p < 0.001$). Because both the direct and indirect effects were significant, Job Satisfaction partially mediated the relationship between Recognition and Employee Retention. The structural model was estimated in Table 7 to test the proposed hypotheses.

Table 7. Structural Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Path	Coefficient	t-value	p-value
Recognition → Job Satisfaction	0.587	9.32	<0.001
Job Satisfaction → Employee Retention	0.531	7.48	<0.001
Recognition → Employee Retention	0.218	2.79	0.005
Recognition → Job Satisfaction → Employee Retention	0.312	5.38	<0.001

Table 7 SEM results support Hypothesis 1 by showing that recognition practices had a significant positive effect on job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.587$, $p < 0.001$). This finding is consistent with Herzberg et al. (1959), Koo et al. (2020), Nelson (2005), and Orajaka (2021), which associate recognition and positive work experiences with greater job satisfaction. Job satisfaction also significantly predicted employee retention ($\beta = 0.531$, $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 2. This result is consistent with Hausknecht et al. (2009), Chang and Busser (2020), Ohunakin et al. (2019), and Saito et al. (2025), which identify job satisfaction and employee well-being as important retention-related factors. Recognition practices had a significant direct effect on employee retention ($\beta = 0.218$, $p = 0.005$), thereby supporting Hypothesis 3. This result is consistent with Nelson (2005), Eisenberger and Stinglhamber (2011), Deery and Jago (2015), and Ghani et al. (2022), which emphasise recognition, organisational support and supportive HR practices in employee retention. Finally, the indirect effect of recognition practices on employee retention through job satisfaction was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.312$, $p < 0.001$), indicating partial mediation and supporting Hypothesis 4. The significant indirect effect also accords with Social Exchange Theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) and with hospitality research linking positive work experiences and employee well-being to retention outcomes (Ghani et al., 2022; Saito et al., 2025).

4.2. Discussion

This study examined the influence of sustainable employee recognition practices on employee retention and investigated the mediating role of job satisfaction among hospitality employees in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria. The results provide empirical evidence that recognition practices contribute to employee retention both directly and indirectly through job satisfaction. The findings support all four hypotheses and emphasise the strategic value of recognition as a human resource management practice for promoting workforce stability within the hospitality sector.

4.2.1. Recognition Practices and Job Satisfaction

The results showed that employee recognition practices significantly improved job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.587$, $p < 0.001$). Higher levels of organisational recognition were therefore associated with higher levels of job satisfaction among employees. This finding supports Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg et al., 1959), which identifies recognition as an intrinsic motivator capable of enhancing job satisfaction. These findings are also in line with Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), which contends that workers return favorable treatment from their employers with positive attitudes at work. When organisations acknowledge employees' efforts through monetary and non-monetary recognition, employees perceive stronger organisational support and respond with greater satisfaction and commitment.

Empirically, the result is consistent with Koo et al. (2020) and Orajaka (2021), which link rewards and recognition to more favourable job attitudes and job satisfaction. Deery and Jago (2015) similarly emphasise the importance of supportive human resource practices in hospitality, while Ghani et al. (2022) identify employee-centred retention strategies as important for sustaining positive workplace outcomes. Taken together, these studies reinforce recognition as an important determinant of employee satisfaction.

The results also show that among the recognition aspects, monetary recognition had the highest mean, while non-monetary recognition was rated relatively lower. This implies that hotels in the research region depend more on monetary rewards than on public recognition, employee appreciation initiatives, or symbolic appreciation. While monetary incentives are still significant, recent research in human resources indicates that combining monetary and non-monetary recognition results in more robust and long-lasting increases in employee job satisfaction.

4.2.2. Job Satisfaction and Employee Retention

The study also found that employee retention is favorably and strongly impacted by job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.531$, $p < 0.001$). Stronger intentions to stay with their organizations were also shown by workers who expressed higher levels of satisfaction with compensation, supervision, prospects for advancement, relationships with coworkers, and the nature of their employment. This finding supports the argument that satisfied employees are less likely to search for alternative employment because they perceive their organisations as meeting both their economic and psychological expectations. The finding also supports Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Maslow, 1943), which posits that individuals remain committed to organisations that satisfy their physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualisation needs.

The results also support Hausknecht et al. (2009), who identified job satisfaction as an important reason employees remain with their organisations. Similarly, Chang and Busser (2020) showed that positive work experiences and thriving are associated with hospitality career retention. Nigerian evidence from Ohunakin et al. (2019) likewise links job satisfaction with employee retention, while Saito et al. (2025) identify employee well-being as an important concern in hospitality workforce sustainability.

4.2.3. Recognition Practices and Employee Retention

This study discovered that employee retention is significantly impacted directly by recognition practices ($\beta = 0.218$, $p = 0.005$). This result shows that, regardless of job satisfaction, employees' decisions to stay with their companies are influenced by recognition. This finding supports the Social Exchange Theory, which contends that workers show loyalty and sustained membership in order to return favorable treatment from their employers. Because recognition increases their emotional tie to the company, workers who believe their employers truly recognize their contributions are less likely to look for other

jobs. The results support Nelson's (2005) claim that one of the most economical methods for enhancing employee loyalty and lowering voluntary turnover is employee recognition. It also supports the findings of Eisenberger and Stinglhamber (2011), who discovered that employees' commitment and retention are much increased by perceived organizational support. Additionally, Ghani et al. (2022) found that because recognition increases organizational commitment while lowering turnover intentions, it continues to be one of the key retention techniques used by prosperous hospitality organizations. The relatively smaller direct influence observed in the present study compared with the indirect influence suggests that recognition alone may not be sufficient to sustain long-term employee retention unless it simultaneously improves employees' job satisfaction.

4.2.4. Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

The study demonstrates that job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between recognition practices and employee retention ($\beta = 0.312$, $p < 0.001$). The simultaneous significance of the direct and indirect effects indicates partial mediation: recognition contributes to employee retention directly and also by improving employees' job satisfaction. This finding extends hospitality research by showing a plausible mechanism through which recognition can strengthen retention. It is consistent with Herzberg's view of recognition as an intrinsic motivator and with Social Exchange Theory, which explains how favourable organisational treatment can generate positive employee attitudes and reciprocal attachment. The finding is also consistent with hospitality research showing that supportive human resource practices, organisational commitment and employee well-being are relevant to retention outcomes (Ghani et al., 2022; Saito et al., 2025; Taşkıran et al., 2025). Hotel management should therefore view recognition as part of an integrated human resource strategy that strengthens both job satisfaction and workforce stability rather than as a standalone motivational tool.

4.2.5. Theoretical and Practical Implications

The study contributes theoretically by demonstrating that employee recognition, job satisfaction and employee retention are interconnected within the Nigerian hospitality context. By integrating Social Exchange Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, the study provides an integrated explanation of how recognition can influence employees' workplace attitudes and their willingness to remain with an organisation. More importantly, the findings suggest that the retention value of recognition is not limited to a direct effect; recognition can also strengthen retention by improving employees' satisfaction with their work. This provides empirical support for viewing job satisfaction as an important mechanism through which recognition practices may translate into retention outcomes.

The findings also have practical implications for hotel managers. Recognition should be treated as a systematic human resource practice rather than an occasional managerial activity. Hotels can combine monetary recognition with non-monetary appreciation, peer recognition and performance-based acknowledgement to ensure that employees' contributions are consistently valued. Managers should also strengthen supervisory support and provide transparent opportunities for career advancement, as these practices can reinforce positive employee experiences and encourage longer organisational tenure. In the Nigerian hospitality context, where maintaining experienced service employees is important for service continuity, strategically managing recognition and job satisfaction can help hotels strengthen employee retention and reduce the organisational disruption associated with employee turnover.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between employee recognition practices and employee retention among hotel employees in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria, with particular attention to the mediating role of job satisfaction. The findings demonstrate that recognition practices are important for both employees' job satisfaction and their intention to remain with their organisations. The findings further indicate that

job satisfaction provides an important mechanism through which recognition contributes to employee retention, as evidenced by the significant partial mediation effect.

The study therefore concludes that employee retention in the hospitality sector should not be addressed solely through financial rewards. A broader recognition approach that acknowledges employees' contributions through monetary, non-monetary, performance-based and peer recognition can create more favourable work experiences and strengthen employees' willingness to remain. The study extends existing hospitality literature by providing empirical evidence from Ogbomoso, a relatively less-studied Nigerian urban context, and by demonstrating the importance of considering job satisfaction as a mechanism linking recognition practices with employee retention.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that hotel managers institutionalise formal and consistent recognition programmes rather than relying on occasional or informal expressions of appreciation. Recognition criteria should be clearly communicated to employees and applied consistently to promote perceptions of fairness and credibility.

Hotels should adopt a balanced recognition system combining monetary and non-monetary forms of recognition. Monetary recognition may include performance-related bonuses and other appropriate financial incentives, while non-monetary recognition may include commendation, certificates, public appreciation, flexible work-related benefits and opportunities for professional development. This approach can enable hotels to recognise employee contributions through different forms of value rather than depending exclusively on financial rewards.

Managers should strengthen performance-based recognition by establishing transparent and measurable criteria for acknowledging employees' contributions. Employees should understand how performance is assessed and how recognition is linked to demonstrated performance. Transparent procedures can reduce perceptions of favouritism and improve employees' confidence in the recognition system.

Hotels should also encourage peer recognition by creating opportunities for employees to acknowledge colleagues who demonstrate exceptional service, teamwork, reliability and commitment. Peer-based recognition can complement managerial recognition and promote a workplace culture in which appreciation is shared across organisational levels.

Because job satisfaction plays a mediating role in the relationship between recognition and retention, managers should ensure that recognition is accompanied by broader practices that improve employees' work experiences. Particular attention should be given to fair promotion opportunities, supportive supervision, positive coworker relationships, appropriate compensation and meaningful work. Recognition is therefore more likely to contribute to retention when it forms part of a wider employee-centred HRM approach.

Finally, hotel managers should periodically evaluate the effectiveness of their recognition programmes through employee feedback, satisfaction assessments and retention indicators. Such evaluation can help managers identify which recognition practices employees value most and adjust their HRM strategies accordingly.

Declarations

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

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