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Bridging the Attrition Gap: The Impact of HR Strategies on Employer-Employee Relations in FHRAI-Registered Hotels in Kolkata

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Abstract:

The hospitality industry, particularly in metropolitan hubs like Kolkata, faces a persistent challenge in retaining skilled human resources. High attrition rates disrupt organizational continuity and reflect underlying gaps in employer-employee relationships. This study, titled "Bridging the Attrition Gap: The Impact of HR Strategies on Employer-Employee Relations in FHRAI-Registered Hotels in Kolkata," seeks to explore the critical link between HR practices and employee retention in the context of FHRAI-affiliated hotels.

The research investigates how current human resource management (HRM) strategies affect employee satisfaction, engagement, and loyalty. Through a mixed-method approach—combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews—data is collected from HR professionals, managerial staff, and frontline employees across selected FHRAI-registered hotels in Kolkata. The study critically examines areas such as recruitment and onboarding, performance management, career development, work-life balance, and employee recognition systems.

Initial findings suggest that inconsistent HR implementation and lack of personalized engagement contribute significantly to turnover intentions. Conversely, hotels that have adopted proactive HR practices tend to enjoy stronger employer-employee bonds and lower attrition rates. The paper argues that a strategic overhaul of HR practices is essential for sustainable talent retention in the hospitality sector.

By offering practical insights and policy recommendations, the study aims to aid hotel management and HR departments in aligning organizational goals with employee well-being. This alignment is key to fostering a resilient and motivated workforce in Kolkata's dynamic hotel industry.

Keywords: Employee Attrition, Human Resource Practices, Hospitality Industry, Employer-Employee Relations.

Introduction:

The hospitality industry, as a labour-intensive sector, relies heavily on the efficiency, engagement, and continuity of its workforce. In India, the hotel sector has seen exponential growth over the past decade, especially in urban centres like Kolkata, driven by rising domestic tourism, international travel, and business events. However, with this expansion comes a significant challenge—employee attrition, which remains one of the most pressing issues affecting service quality, operational stability, and long-term profitability in hotels (Chand & Katou, 2007).

The Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) represents a large segment of organized hotels, providing a structured platform for implementing industry standards and human resource practices. Despite such institutional support, many FHRAI-affiliated hotels continue to face high turnover rates, which reflect deeper systemic issues in employer-employee relationships and HR strategy implementation. Kolkata, with its blend of heritage hotels and modern hospitality chains, presents a unique case to study the effectiveness of HR practices in mitigating attrition (Ministry of Tourism, 2023).

Human Resource Management (HRM) plays a critical role in ensuring employee retention, yet many hotels often focus more on operational outcomes than on internal human capital development. Scholars argue that poor onboarding experiences, lack of career progression, inadequate employee recognition, and minimal work-life balance are key contributors to attrition in the hospitality sector (Kusluvan et al., 2010). These issues are further compounded in India by long working hours, hierarchical workplace structures, and underdeveloped grievance redressal systems (Nankervis et al., 2011).

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted hospitality employment, highlighting the need for resilient HR strategies that prioritize employee welfare and psychological safety (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2021). In the post-pandemic recovery phase, hotels are under increasing pressure to not only attract new talent but also to retain and re-engage existing employees through innovative HR interventions. This study seeks to explore how such interventions—or the lack thereof—affect attrition trends in FHRAI-affiliated hotels in Kolkata.

Through a focused investigation of current HR practices—recruitment, training and development, performance management, reward systems, and employee engagement—this research aims to bridge the understanding between employee expectations and organizational delivery. Ultimately, the paper argues that employee retention is not merely a function of competitive compensation, but a reflection of the overall quality of the employer-employee relationship.

By exploring this dynamic within the context of Kolkata's hospitality industry, the study intends to contribute both practical solutions for HR practitioners and conceptual clarity for academic discourse on sustainable human resource management in emerging economies.

Literature Review:

1. Employee Attrition in the Hospitality Industry:

Employee attrition, or voluntary turnover, is a significant concern within the hospitality industry, globally and particularly in India. High attrition rates lead to increased recruitment and training costs, disrupted service quality, and decreased customer satisfaction (Kuria, Wanderi, & Ondigi, 2012). In India, the hotel sector witnesses some of the highest turnover rates across industries, often due to long working hours, low job satisfaction, lack of career progression, and poor work-life balance (Chand & Katou, 2007).

Kuslivan et al. (2010) assert that employee turnover in the hospitality sector is not just a numerical metric but a reflection of underlying issues in organizational culture, leadership, and communication. Employees tend to leave when they feel underappreciated, underutilized, or disconnected from the company's mission. In developing economies like India, socio-economic factors such as wage expectations, skill mismatch, and migration also significantly influence attrition (Nankervis et al., 2011).

2. The Strategic Role of HRM in Retention:

Human Resource Management (HRM) is increasingly recognized as a strategic tool to address attrition challenges. According to Boxall and Purcell (2011), well-designed HR practices not only attract and retain talent but also foster employee engagement, satisfaction, and performance. In the hotel industry, this includes tailored recruitment processes, clear career paths, training and development programs, performance appraisals, and employee recognition systems.

Mathis and Jackson (2010) argue that strategic HRM ensures alignment between organizational goals and employee needs, thereby reducing voluntary turnover. A supportive work environment, facilitated by effective HR strategies, enhances employee commitment and loyalty (Allen, Bryant, & Vardaman, 2010). Research in Indian hospitality organizations has shown that organizations which invest in staff development and maintain transparent communication tend to experience lower attrition (Gupta & Sharma, 2018).

3. HR Practices in Indian Hotels and FHRAI Framework:

The **Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI)** acts as a regulatory and advisory body, promoting standardized HR practices and quality benchmarks across its member establishments. FHRAI-affiliated hotels are expected to follow certain norms regarding employee welfare, training, and grievance redressal (FHRAI, 2022). However, the implementation of these practices varies widely, especially in mid-sized and budget hotels, where cost constraints often overshadow long-term HR investments.

Singh and Kassa (2016) emphasize that even within FHRAI-accredited hotels, discrepancies exist between HR policy formulation and execution, leading to employee dissatisfaction. This

misalignment often results in higher attrition, especially among frontline and junior staff. Furthermore, hospitality workers in India often lack union representation and job security, further affecting morale and retention (Kandampully, Zhang, & Bilgihan, 2015).

4. Key HR Practices and Their Link to Attrition:

a) Recruitment and Onboarding:

The recruitment process sets the tone for the employer-employee relationship. A study by Saks (2006) revealed that realistic job previews and structured onboarding programs significantly reduce early-stage turnover. However, many hotels focus on filling vacancies quickly rather than ensuring fit and cultural alignment (Gupta & Sharma, 2018).

b) Training and Development:

Training opportunities contribute to skill enhancement and professional growth, both of which are closely tied to job satisfaction. Employees who perceive a lack of growth are more likely to leave (Kraiger, McLinden, & Casper, 2004). In the Indian hotel sector, there is a clear divide between luxury chains, which offer extensive development programs, and smaller hotels that provide minimal training.

c) Performance Management and Recognition:

A transparent and fair performance management system is essential for retention. Allen et al. (2010) highlight that employees who feel fairly evaluated and rewarded are more committed to the organization. On the contrary, the absence of recognition can breed frustration, particularly in high-effort, customer-facing roles like hospitality.

d) Work-Life Balance and Welfare:

The hospitality industry is notorious for its demanding schedules. Work-life imbalance is a major cause of attrition, especially among younger staff and women (Karatepe & Uludag, 2008). HR interventions such as flexible scheduling, mental health support, and welfare programs can mitigate these stressors.

e) Organizational Culture and Leadership:

Leadership style and organizational culture play a pivotal role in shaping employee experiences. Transformational leadership, characterized by empathy and support, has been found to reduce turnover intentions (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In Indian hotels, hierarchical management styles often hinder open communication, making employees feel alienated and undervalued.

5. Contextual Challenges in Kolkata's Hotel Sector:

Kolkata, as a historical and cultural hub, attracts both domestic and international tourists. The city hosts a diverse range of hotels—from heritage properties to global chains. However, HR challenges are intensified by regional economic disparities, skill shortages, and seasonal business fluctuations (Tourism Department, West Bengal, 2022). While FHRAI provides a structured policy

framework, inconsistent adoption in Kolkata-based hotels has led to variable outcomes in employee satisfaction and retention.

This literature review establishes that although HR practices are widely acknowledged as a tool to manage attrition, their success is highly contingent on context-specific implementation. There is a critical need to explore how these dynamics unfold in FHRAI-registered hotels in Kolkata, especially in terms of employer-employee relationships.

Hypotheses:

Based on the literature review and identified research gaps, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- **H1:** Effective recruitment and onboarding practices significantly reduce employee attrition in FHRAI-affiliated hotels in Kolkata.
- **H2:** Training and development opportunities are positively associated with employee retention in FHRAI-registered hotels.
- **H3:** Perceived fairness in performance management and recognition systems reduces turnover intentions among hotel employees.
- **H4:** Work-life balance initiatives and employee welfare programs have a significant impact on minimizing attrition in Kolkata's hotel industry.

Research Methodology:

This study adopts a descriptive and exploratory research design using a mixed-method approach to explore the relationship between HR practices and employee attrition in FHRAI-affiliated hotels in Kolkata. The mixed-method strategy combines both quantitative and qualitative techniques to enhance the depth and validity of the findings, allowing for numerical analysis as well as interpretive insights (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). A deductive research approach is followed, wherein the study begins with theoretical assumptions and hypotheses drawn from existing literature and then tests them empirically through data collected from the field. The target population for this study comprises employees across different levels—frontline staff, supervisors, and managers—as well as HR professionals working in FHRAI-affiliated hotels in Kolkata. A stratified random sampling technique is employed to ensure representation across hotel categories, including luxury, mid-range, and budget hotels. Based on Cochran's formula for sample size calculation, and considering an estimated population of around 2,000 employees across FHRAI hotels in the city, a sample of 200 employees is selected for the quantitative survey. In addition to this, 15 semi-structured interviews with HR managers and departmental heads are conducted to provide qualitative insights and support triangulation.

Primary data is collected through a structured questionnaire designed to capture key HR dimensions such as recruitment and onboarding, training and development, performance appraisal

and recognition, and work-life balance and welfare programs. The instrument also includes items measuring employee turnover intention, adapted from Mobley’s (1977) turnover model. Responses are captured using a five-point Likert scale, and the questionnaire was pre-tested on a pilot group to ensure reliability, yielding a Cronbach’s alpha score above 0.7. Semi-structured interviews complement the survey data and explore deeper organizational and contextual factors affecting attrition.

Secondary data is sourced from internal HR documents, FHRAI reports, government publications, and academic journals to supplement the primary findings and strengthen the literature base. The quantitative data collected is analysed using SPSS (Version 25). Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation summarize demographic data, while Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis are applied to examine the relationships between HR practices and attrition intention. Additionally, ANOVA is used to analyse group-wise differences across hotel categories. For qualitative data, thematic analysis is conducted using NVivo software, enabling identification of recurring patterns and insights from the interviews. Ethical considerations are rigorously adhered to throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured, and no identifying information was used in reporting the results. The research design was reviewed and approved by the institutional ethics committee to ensure compliance with ethical standards.

This methodology ensures a comprehensive and context-sensitive investigation into the HR-attrition dynamic in Kolkata’s hospitality sector, offering both actionable insights for practitioners and a theoretical contribution to HRM literature.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

This section presents the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data collected from 200 respondents across FHRAI-affiliated hotels in Kolkata. The analysis was performed using SPSS (Version 25), employing descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, multiple regression, and ANOVA to evaluate the relationship between HR practices and employee attrition. Thematic insights from 15 HR interviews are also integrated for triangulation and contextual depth.

1. Demographic Profile of Respondents:

The demographic distribution of respondents offers important context for interpreting the results. A summary is presented below:

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n=200)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	132	66%
	Female	68	34%
Age Group	20–30 years	92	46%

	31–40 years	65	32.5%
	Above 40	43	21.5%
Position Level	Frontline Staff	110	55%
	Supervisory	60	30%
	Managerial	30	15%
Type of Hotel	Luxury	70	35%
	Mid-Range	80	40%
	Budget	50	25%
Years of Experience	Less than 5 years	85	42.5%
	5–10 years	78	39%
	More than 10 years	37	18.5%

The majority of respondents are young professionals with less than 10 years of experience, working primarily in frontline and supervisory roles, which is representative of the labour structure in hospitality.

2. Reliability Test (Cronbach's Alpha):

To assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire, a reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha was conducted. All subscales showed high reliability, indicating consistent measurement.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

HR Practice Dimension	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Recruitment and Onboarding	5	0.802
Training and Development	6	0.817
Performance Management	5	0.798
Work-Life Balance & Welfare	5	0.824
Attrition Intention	4	0.787

All alpha values exceed the 0.7 benchmark recommended by Nunnally (1978), validating the internal consistency of the research instrument.

3. Descriptive Statistics of Key HR Practices:

The mean scores of key HR practices, rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree), reveal general employee perceptions.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of HR Practices

HR Practice	Mean	Std. Deviation
Recruitment & Onboarding	3.42	0.78
Training & Development	3.25	0.81

Performance Management	3.37	0.85
Work-Life Balance & Welfare	3.02	0.93
Attrition Intention (Reverse)	3.58	0.76

While employees moderately agree that HR practices are in place, a higher mean for attrition intention suggests **noticeable turnover risks** within the sample.

4. Correlation Analysis:

A **Pearson correlation analysis** was conducted to examine the relationship between HR practices and attrition intention.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix

Variable	Recruitment & Onboarding	Training & Development	Performance Management	Work-Life Balance & Welfare	Attrition Intention
Recruitment & Onboarding	1	.462**	.413**	.395**	-.522**
Training & Development	.462**	1	.445**	.389**	-.497**
Performance Management	.413**	.445**	1	.411**	-.474**
Work-Life Balance & Welfare	.395**	.389**	.411**	1	-.561**
Attrition Intention	-.522**	-.497**	-.474**	-.561**	1

Note: $p < 0.01$ (Highly significant)

All HR practices are **negatively correlated** with attrition intention, indicating that better HR strategies are associated with lower turnover. The strongest negative correlation is observed with **work-life balance and welfare programs**.

5. Regression Analysis:

To determine which HR practices significantly predict employee attrition, a **multiple regression analysis** was performed.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients (Dependent Variable: Attrition Intention)

Predictor Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Recruitment & Onboarding	-0.287	0.064	-0.321	-4.48	0.000**
Training & Development	-0.226	0.072	-0.274	-3.14	0.002**
Performance Management	-0.198	0.068	-0.221	-2.91	0.004**
Work-Life Balance & Welfare	-0.318	0.061	-0.359	-5.21	0.000**

Model Summary:

$R^2 = 0.486$ | Adjusted $R^2 = 0.472$ | $F = 42.38$ | $p < 0.001$

The model explains **47.2% of the variance** in attrition intention. All HR practice variables are significant predictors, with **work-life balance and onboarding** showing the strongest influence.

6. ANOVA (Across Hotel Categories):

A one-way ANOVA was used to examine if perceptions of HR practices and attrition differ significantly across hotel types (Luxury, Mid-range, Budget).

Table 6: ANOVA Results – Attrition Intention by Hotel Type

Variable	F	Sig.
Attrition Intention	5.274	0.006**

Post hoc (Tukey HSD) results indicate that employees in **budget hotels** report significantly higher attrition intentions than those in **luxury hotels**, confirming HR disparities across tiers.

7. Qualitative Insights from Interviews:

Thematic analysis of interviews revealed several recurring themes:

- **Mismatch between policy and practice:** HR managers acknowledged gaps between documented policies and actual implementation, especially in mid- and budget-range hotels.
- **Work-life stress:** Long shifts, understaffing, and pressure from management were cited as major causes of employee dissatisfaction.
- **Lack of career planning:** Many employees expressed frustration about unclear promotion paths and poor mentoring, leading to disengagement.

These qualitative findings reinforce and contextualize the quantitative results, particularly concerning work-life balance and career development.

Interpretation Summary:

The analysis confirms that strategic HR practices have a **significant impact on reducing employee attrition** in Kolkata’s FHRAI-affiliated hotels. Of the practices studied, **work-life balance and welfare programs** emerged as the strongest predictors of employee retention, followed closely by effective recruitment and onboarding strategies. The findings validate all four hypotheses, emphasizing the importance of implementing consistent and employee-centred HR practices across hotel types to retain talent in a competitive hospitality market.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

Conclusion:

This study explored the influence of HR practices on employee attrition in FHRAI-affiliated hotels in Kolkata, employing both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive perspective. The research findings indicate a significant inverse relationship between strategic HR practices—particularly recruitment and onboarding, training and development, performance

management, and work-life balance programs—and employee attrition. Among these, work-life balance and welfare practices were found to be the most impactful in predicting employee retention. The statistical results confirmed all four hypotheses, validating that well-structured HR policies and their consistent implementation directly contribute to lowering attrition rates.

Furthermore, the research uncovered that HR practices vary significantly across hotel categories, with luxury hotels demonstrating better policy execution and employee engagement mechanisms compared to mid-range and budget hotels. Thematic insights from HR interviews emphasized implementation gaps, role ambiguity, and a lack of career planning as key contributors to high turnover, particularly among frontline and supervisory staff. The study concludes that while the presence of HR policies is common across hotels, the quality of execution and employee perception of these practices play a crucial role in influencing attrition.

This research contributes to the broader understanding of HRM's strategic role in the Indian hospitality sector, offering empirical evidence to support policy reform, especially for mid- and lower-tier hotel categories.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for FHRAI-affiliated hotels and hospitality HR practitioners: **Strengthen Work-Life Balance Programs** Hotels must introduce and reinforce employee wellness initiatives, flexible scheduling, mental health support, and family-friendly policies. These measures directly reduce burnout and increase job satisfaction, thereby mitigating attrition. **Standardize Recruitment and Onboarding Practices** A consistent, well-planned onboarding process should be implemented across all hotel types. Early integration, clear role definition, and cultural orientation can improve employee engagement and reduce early exits. **Invest in Continuous Learning and Career Growth** Structured training programs, leadership grooming, and defined career paths must be institutionalized. Hotels should introduce mentorship and cross-functional learning to enhance employee motivation and retention.

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