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The Effect of Learning Opportunity and Career Development on Employee Satisfaction and Intention to Stay Across Indonesia: A SEM-PLS Approach

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effects of Learning Opportunity (X1) and Career Development Support (X2) on Job Satisfaction (Y1) and Intention to Stay (Y2) among employees in Indonesia, as well as to examine the mediating role of Job Satisfaction in these relationships. Tenure (X3) was included as a single-indicator control variable based on empirical evidence of statistically significant differences across tenure groups identified through ANOVA. Data were obtained from 168 valid respondents aged 22–40 years, representing eight major industries in Indonesia and selected through purposive sampling. The measurement instrument comprised 19 reflective indicators representing the key study constructs. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was performed using SmartPLS 3.0, with bootstrapping based on 5,000 subsamples used to assess statistical significance. The findings indicate that Learning Opportunity significantly affects Job Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.636$; $p < 0.001$) and directly influences Intention to Stay ($\beta = 0.201$; $p = 0.019$). Career Development Support also exerts an indirect effect on Intention to Stay through Job Satisfaction, indicating a mediating effect. Job Satisfaction significantly influences Intention to Stay ($\beta = 0.557$; $p < 0.001$) and serves as an important mechanism linking the independent variables to employees' intention to remain with their organizations. The managerial implications of this study suggest that organizational investment in structured learning opportunities and career development programs can serve as an effective and measurable employee retention strategy, particularly in Indonesia's increasingly competitive labor market.

INTRODUCTION

Employee retention has become a strategic challenge amid Indonesia's continued economic and labor-market growth. The Mercer Total Remuneration Survey 2023 reported an average voluntary attrition rate of 8% in Indonesia, with substantial sectoral variation: approximately 15% in technology, 9% in fast-moving consumer goods, and 7–8% in banking and transportation. With Indonesia's formal workforce exceeding 59.93 million people in February 2026 (BPS, 2026), these rates represent a substantial number of employees who may need to be replaced each year, generating consequences that extend beyond recruitment costs.

This challenge is reinforced by global evidence of weak employee engagement. Gallup's State of the Global Workplace reported that more than 54% of workers were actively seeking or monitoring employment opportunities outside their current organizations, while only a minority were engaged at work (Gallup, 2024). Employee

turnover also generates substantial direct and indirect costs. The Society for Human Resource Management estimates that replacing an employee may cost approximately 50–200% of the employee's annual salary, depending on role complexity and seniority. These costs may include recruitment, selection, onboarding, lost productivity, weakened team morale, disrupted customer relationships, and the loss of institutional knowledge. (Gallup, 2024) further estimated that disengaged employees generate productivity losses equivalent to 18% of their annual salary and that low global employee engagement results in economic losses of approximately USD 8.9 trillion annually.

In this context, employee satisfaction and intention to stay are important indicators because organizations can identify and address them before actual turnover occurs. Preliminary survey data from 168 active employees aged 22–40 years across eight Indonesian industries showed that intention to stay had the lowest mean score among the examined constructs, at 3.274 on a five-point scale. Learning opportunity recorded the highest mean score at 3.806, followed by employee satisfaction at 3.610 and career development support at 3.483. The 0.532-point difference between learning opportunity and intention to stay suggests that providing development opportunities alone may not be sufficient to retain employees unless those opportunities translate into meaningful and satisfying work experiences (Achmad et al., 2023).

Previous research on employee retention in Indonesia has several limitations. Many studies have focused on a single industry, such as banking, manufacturing, or public services, thereby limiting their ability to explain cross-industry employment dynamics. Learning opportunity and career development support have also frequently been examined separately, without testing employee satisfaction as a mechanism linking organizational development practices to intention to stay. In addition, previous PLS-SEM studies have generally not controlled for tenure, although length of service may influence employees' perceptions of satisfaction, career support, and organizational commitment. This study addresses these limitations by employing a cross-industry sample, testing a mediation model that incorporates both direct and indirect effects, and including tenure as a single-indicator control variable.

Learning opportunity and career development support were selected because both can be directly influenced by line managers and human resource practitioners. Managers can facilitate cross-functional training, provide challenging project assignments, offer regular career feedback, and conduct meaningful development discussions without necessarily requiring extensive structural changes. This managerial role is particularly important because (Gallup, 2024) reported that managers account for approximately 70% of the variance in team engagement. Organizational efforts to improve retention should therefore consider not only formal corporate programs but also the quality of development support experienced by employees in their daily work.

The novelty of this research lies in four key aspects. First, it employs a cross-industry sample drawn from eight major sectors in Indonesia, allowing broader empirical insight than single-industry studies. Second, it tests an integrated mediation model that simultaneously examines the direct and indirect effects of learning

opportunity and career development support on intention to stay. Third, it includes tenure as a single-indicator control variable within the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) framework, an approach that has received limited attention in Indonesian employee-retention research. Fourth, it integrates Self-Determination Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and the Job Demands–Resources model to explain the mechanisms linking employee-development practices to retention-related outcomes. This theoretical integration offers a more comprehensive perspective than studies relying on a single theoretical framework.

The study is grounded in three complementary theoretical perspectives. Self-Determination Theory explains that satisfaction of the need for competence supports intrinsic motivation, satisfaction, and engagement, and that learning opportunities can contribute directly to fulfilling this need (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Social Exchange Theory proposes that employees may reciprocate organizational investment in their careers through greater loyalty and commitment (Blau, 1964). The Job Demands–Resources model further conceptualizes learning opportunities and supervisory support as job resources that can buffer work demands and enhance employee satisfaction (Demerouti et al., 2001). Together, these perspectives explain why development opportunities may influence intention to stay both directly and indirectly through employee satisfaction.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the effects of learning opportunity and career development support on employee satisfaction and intention to stay across industries in Indonesia using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). It also evaluates the direct effects of both development variables on intention to stay, examines the mediating role of employee satisfaction, and accounts for employee tenure as a control variable. The findings are expected to provide cross-industry empirical evidence and practical recommendations that line managers and human resource practitioners can translate into employee-development and retention initiatives.

METHOD

Research Design and Sampling

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed using purposive sampling to active employees working in Indonesia's formal sector. Eligible respondents were 22–40 years old, had worked for their current organization for at least three months, and held permanent, fixed-term contract, or probationary employment status. A total of 168 respondents met the eligibility criteria and provided complete data.

Instrument and Variable Operationalization

The questionnaire contained 19 reflective items rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Learning Opportunity and Career Development Support were each measured using five indicators, Job Satisfaction using five indicators, and Intention to Stay using four indicators. Tenure was modeled as a single-indicator control construct based on ordinal categories (<1 year, 1-3 years, 3-5 years, and >5 years), with its outer loading fixed at 1.000. Its inclusion was supported

by ANOVA results showing significant differences across tenure groups in Learning Opportunity ($p = 0.040$) and Intention to Stay ($p = 0.009$).

Table 1. Variable Operationalization Matrix

Variable	Code	Indicators	Scale	Source
Learning Opportunity (X1)	LO1-LO5	Relevant training; access to skills programs; encouragement to learn; new responsibilities; learning environment	Likert 1-5	Adapted from Luthans (2011); Noe et al. (2017)
Career Development Support (X2)	CD1-CD5	Supervisor support; clear career path; constructive feedback; fair promotion; organizational concern for careers	Likert 1-5	Greenhaus & Callanan (2006); Haekal (2022)
Tenure (X3)	D5	Length of service in the current organization (<1, 1-3, 3-5, >5 years)	Ordinal	Demographic item
Job Satisfaction (Y1)	ES1-ES5	Overall satisfaction; feeling valued; meaningful achievement; workplace relationships; working conditions	Likert 1-5	Locke (1976); Robbins & Judge (2019)
Intention to Stay (Y2)	IS1-IS4	Intention to stay for at least two years; rarely seeking another job; strong reasons to stay; preference to continue career	Likert 1-5	Mobley et al. (1978); Haekal (2023)

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 3.0. This approach was selected because the study was predictive, involved a moderate sample of 168 respondents, and included a single-indicator construct. Path significance was assessed using bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. Because Tenure's loading was fixed at 1.000, its bootstrapped loading had no variation; consequently, SmartPLS reported its standard error and t-statistic as NaN. This is a structural consequence of single-indicator modeling rather than an estimation error (Hair et al., 2019).

Measurement and Structural Model Evaluation

The measurement model was evaluated through convergent validity (outer loading >= 0.70 and AVE >= 0.50), internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability >= 0.70), and discriminant validity (HTMT < 0.85 and the Fornell-Larcker criterion). The structural model was assessed using the coefficient of determination (R-squared), effect size (f-squared), path coefficients, and bootstrapped significance values. Overall model fit was examined using SRMR (< 0.08) and NFI.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile and Descriptive Findings

The 168 respondents represented diverse demographic and industrial backgrounds. Women accounted for 51.2% and men for 48.8% of the sample, while 79.8% were aged 26-35 years. Most respondents held a bachelor's degree (76.2%) and permanent employment status (69.6%). The largest industry groups were fast-moving consumer goods (16.7%), banking and finance (16.1%), and transportation and logistics (15.5%). Learning Opportunity recorded the highest mean (3.806), whereas Intention to Stay had the lowest mean (3.274), indicating that favorable learning perceptions alone did not necessarily translate into employee retention.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Research Constructs

Construct	Code	Mean	SD	Range	Interpretation
Learning Opportunity	X1	3.806	1.047	1-5	Above average; learning opportunities were adequately available
Career Development Support	X2	3.483	1.108	1-5	Moderate; substantial variation among employees
Tenure	X3	2.760	1.075	1-4	Average category: 1-3 years (ordinal)
Job Satisfaction	Y1	3.610	1.056	1-5	Moderate; considerable room for improvement
Intention to Stay	Y2	3.274	1.228	1-5	Lowest score; strongest retention ambivalence

Measurement Model Evaluation

The reflective measurement model demonstrated adequate convergent validity and internal consistency. Indicator loadings ranged from 0.693 to 0.930, all Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeded 0.50, and Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values exceeded 0.70. Discriminant validity was also confirmed because each construct's square root of AVE exceeded its correlations with other constructs and all HTMT ratios were below 0.85. The fixed loading of 1.000 for Tenure reflected its single-indicator specification and did not indicate an estimation problem.

Table 3. Summary of Measurement Model Quality

Construct	Loading Range	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Assessment
Learning Opportunity	0.693-0.871	0.865	0.904	0.653	Valid and reliable
Career Development Support	0.820-0.923	0.928	0.946	0.778	Valid and reliable
Tenure	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	Single indicator
Job Satisfaction	0.801-0.900	0.895	0.923	0.703	Valid and reliable
Intention to Stay	0.876-0.930	0.931	0.951	0.829	Valid and reliable

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model explained 64.1% of the variance in Job Satisfaction (R-squared = 0.641) and 59.1% of the variance in Intention to Stay (R-squared = 0.591), indicating substantial explanatory power. The estimated SRMR was below 0.08, confirming acceptable model fit. Learning Opportunity strongly predicted Job Satisfaction (beta = 0.636; $p < 0.001$) and also directly increased Intention to Stay (beta = 0.201; $p = 0.019$). Job Satisfaction was the principal predictor of Intention to Stay (beta = 0.557; $p < 0.001$) and partially mediated the effect of Learning Opportunity (indirect beta = 0.354; $p < 0.001$).

Table 4. Summary of Hypothesis Testing (5,000 Bootstrap Resamples)

Hypothesis	Path	Beta	p-value	Decision
H1	Learning Opportunity -> Job Satisfaction	0.636	<0.001	Supported
H2	Career Development Support -> Job Satisfaction	0.051	0.636	Not supported
H3	Learning Opportunity -> Intention to Stay	0.201	0.019	Supported
H4	Career Development Support -> Intention to Stay	0.185	0.079	Marginal at 10%; not at 5%
H5a	Tenure -> Job Satisfaction	0.024	0.636	Not supported
H5b	Tenure -> Intention to Stay	0.089	0.111	Not supported
H6	Job Satisfaction -> Intention to Stay	0.557	<0.001	Supported
H6med	Learning Opportunity -> Job Satisfaction -> Intention to Stay	0.354	<0.001	Supported; partial mediation

Hypothesis	Path	Beta	p-value	Decision
H7med	Career Development Support -> Job Satisfaction -> Intention to Stay	0.028	0.636	Not supported

Career Development Support did not significantly predict Job Satisfaction or Intention to Stay at the 5% level, and its indirect effect through Job Satisfaction was also insignificant. This result does not necessarily mean that career support is unimportant; it suggests that formal or impersonal career programs may be insufficient unless employees consistently experience authentic supervisory support, transparent career pathways, and constructive feedback. Tenure likewise had no significant direct effect on either outcome after developmental conditions were controlled, indicating that current workplace experiences were more influential than length of service in explaining retention among the predominantly millennial and early Generation Z sample.

Managerial Implications

Organizations should prioritize structured, continuous, and career-relevant learning through planned job rotation, competency-based mentoring, and constructive feedback because Learning Opportunity produced both direct and satisfaction-mediated retention effects. Line managers should integrate individualized career-development conversations into routine interactions rather than limiting them to annual evaluations. Because Job Satisfaction was the dominant mediator, periodic pulse surveys should be used as an early-warning mechanism to identify declining satisfaction and turnover risk before employees decide to leave.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully tested a mediation model linking Learning Opportunity, Career Development Support, Job Satisfaction, and Intention to Stay across industries in Indonesia using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Of the nine hypotheses tested, including two indirect mediation paths, four were statistically supported (H1, H3, H6, and H6med). Learning Opportunity emerged as the strongest predictor of Job Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.636$; $p < 0.001$) and also had a significant direct effect on Intention to Stay ($\beta = 0.201$; $p = 0.019$). Job Satisfaction partially mediated the relationship between Learning Opportunity and Intention to Stay, with a significant indirect effect of 0.354 ($p < 0.001$), resulting in a total effect of 0.555. Conversely, Career Development Support did not have a significant direct effect on either Job Satisfaction or Intention to Stay within the tested model. These findings do not necessarily imply that career development support is irrelevant; rather, they indicate that its effects were not statistically supported in this sample. Tenure was also not a significant predictor of Job Satisfaction or Intention to Stay, suggesting that length of service did not explain substantial variation in these outcomes within the study sample.

Given that Learning Opportunity was the strongest predictor of Job Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.636$; $p < 0.001$), organizations across industries should prioritize structured and

consistent learning opportunities that enable employees to develop relevant competencies and expand their professional capabilities. Furthermore, because Job Satisfaction significantly predicted Intention to Stay ($\beta = 0.557$; $p < 0.001$) and mediated the relationship between Learning Opportunity and Intention to Stay, retention initiatives should focus on translating employee-development opportunities into satisfying work experiences. Although Career Development Support did not demonstrate significant effects in the tested model, organizations may continue to strengthen career-related practices through clear career pathways, regular developmental feedback, and transparent, merit-based promotion processes. Line managers should also facilitate meaningful development discussions and provide consistent support in employees' daily work, thereby creating conditions that may enhance Job Satisfaction and strengthen employees' Intention to Stay.

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