


SUSTAINING RETENTION IN THE LODGING INDUSTRY: THE ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AND SELF-ESTEEM IN A POST-CRISIS LANDSCAPE

Abstract

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Purpose – This study explores the psychological mechanisms that influence employee retention in the lodging industry following the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on the conservation of resources (COR) theory, the study examines how perceived organizational support (POS) and organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) affect employees' intention to remain both within their organizations and the hospitality industry.

Methodology/Design/Approach – A serial multiple mediation model was tested using survey data from hospitality employees. The model positioned OBSE and organizational retention as mediators in the relationship between POS and industry-level retention.

Findings – The results indicate that POS significantly enhances OBSE, which in turn positively influences both organizational and industry-level retention. The findings demonstrate that resource-based psychological factors play a critical role in shaping employees' long-term commitment to the hospitality sector.

Originality of the research – This study extends HR research in hospitality by integrating OBSE as a key mediator and by distinguishing between organizational and industrial retention. It offers practical insights into post-pandemic workforce recovery strategies by emphasizing the importance of internal psychological resources.

Keywords Retention, Organization-based self-esteem, Perceived organizational support, Lodging Industry, Hotel Employee

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the global tourism and hospitality industry experienced consistent growth and expansion, with 2020 projections indicating continued momentum across all sectors (Lock, 2020). However, the COVID-19 pandemic triggered an unprecedented disruption. Government-imposed travel restrictions, social distancing measures, and economic lockdowns led to widespread layoffs, service reductions, and business closures throughout the industry (Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2020; Langford & Weissenberg, 2020). In the lodging sector, the impact was particularly severe. As of mid-2020, hotel occupancy rates in the U.S. had dropped to 48% (STR Report, 2020), and companies like Hyatt reported revenue declines exceeding 80% compared to the previous year (Hyatt Hotels Corporation, 2020). The American Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA) noted that by 2020, over 87% of hotels had implemented layoffs or furloughs (AHLA, 2020a).

By 2023, signs of recovery began to emerge. Hotel occupancy rebounded to 63.4%, approaching pre-pandemic levels (AHLA, 2022). However, workforce shortages persist as a systemic challenge. A 2024 AHLA survey reported that 76% of hotels continued to face staffing difficulties, with most increasing wages to attract talent (AHLA, 2024a; 2024b). As such, the issue of retaining talent in the hospitality industry remains a critical concern. This study aims to examine how organizational support and self-perception influence employees' intention to remain within the organization and the industry, particularly in a post-crisis environment. Experienced and competent employees are key to excellent service quality (Jex & Britt, 2014), contributing to the success of hospitality organizations. The high turnover rate has been one of the chronic concerns in the hospitality industry (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018; 2019). Given the associated high costs of turnover (Tracey & Hinkin, 2008), severe revenue shortfalls due to the pandemic (Langford & Weissenberg, 2020), and ongoing labor shortages, industry leadership must prioritize effective retention strategies.

Consequently, the current research proposes that enhancing perceived organizational support and organization-based self-esteem may serve as a strategic approach to promoting employees' intention to remain in the hospitality industry. Recent literature underscores the growing importance of psychological safety and well-being as additional factors influencing retention in the hospitality sector (Park et al., 2023). The theory of conservation of resources (COR) serves as the theoretical foundation to understand how organizational support influences employees' intention to stay via the underlying mechanisms of organization-based self-esteem (OBSE). It is posited that employees' psychological gains within the organization, namely perceived organizational support and OBSE, motivate them to preserve these valued resources by remaining with their organization or within the industry. In other words, perceived organizational support (POS) and OBSE are respectively identified as organizational and individual psychological resources to sequentially mediate the relationship to increase their intention to stay at the current organization and/or in the industry.

The purpose of the research is to understand hospitality employees' retention intention when they witness the vulnerability of their jobs or even careers by exploring its organizational and individual causes from the perspective of psychological resources. Specifically, this research looks at employees' intention to stay at two different levels: the current organization (i.e., organizational retention) and the hospitality industry (i.e., industrial retention). Accordingly, the objectives of this study are to address three questions: 1) does OBSE mediate the effect of POS on organizational retention, 2) does organizational retention mediate the effect of POS on industrial retention, and 3) how does the POS–OBSE–organizational retention intention linkage affect industrial retention? As the industry continues to recover from the pandemic, hospitality leaders will need to better understand how employees envision their future at the organization and/or in the industry. This study is grounded in the idea that employees who positively evaluate their current organizational experiences—particularly in terms of POS and OBSE—are more likely to develop future-oriented perceptions of career continuity within the same industry. By integrating organizational and industry-level perspectives, this research provides a comprehensive approach to addressing workforce retention challenges in a post-crisis landscape.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. COVID-19 pandemic in Tourism and Hospitality Industry

The COVID-19 pandemic brought significant disruptions to the global tourism and hospitality industry, stalling its growth and exposing its vulnerabilities. In the early stages of the pandemic, strict government restrictions grounded airlines, halted international travel, and enforced social distancing requirements, causing a rapid downturn in lodging and related businesses (Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2020). As of October 2020, approximately 40,000 airline workers lost their jobs following the expiration of government relief (Schaper, 2020). Air travel demand, often considered a barometer of the hospitality industry's health, declined by nearly 70% compared to pre-pandemic levels (Schaper, 2020). In the United States alone, over 8 million tourism-related jobs were lost by April 2020, with the unemployment rate in the lodging industry soaring to 51% (U.S. Travel Association, 2020). At its worst, the industry's unemployment rate far exceeded the 25% unemployment rate recorded during the Great Depression, as reported by Clausing (2020). The hotel sector, particularly, struggled to maintain operations. In July 2020, the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) reported that 87% of hotels had implemented layoffs or furloughs, and 36% could not bring back staff to full-time employment (AHLA, 2020a). U.S. hotel occupancy rates dropped to 48% in July 2020 from 73.8% in 2019 (STR Report, 2020). Financially, the industry faced significant losses; Hyatt Hotels Corporation reported a revenue decline of 80.61% in the second quarter of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019 (Hyatt Hotels Corporation, 2020).

By 2023, however, early indicators of recovery began to surface. The AHLA noted that hotel occupancy levels had reached 63.4%, still below pre-pandemic levels but showing steady improvement (AHLA, 2022). Recovery to pre-pandemic revenue levels was expected by 2024, though persistent workforce shortages pose ongoing challenges (AHLA, 2024a). In a 2024 AHLA survey, 76% of hotels reported labor shortages, with 86% increasing wages to attract staff (AHLA, 2024b). These findings underscore the industry's evolving dynamics, where recovery is contingent not only on demand restoration but also on addressing critical workforce issues (Global Hospitality Insights, 2024).

1.2. Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory

Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory argues that people engage in strategies as a way to gain, conserve, or protect their emotive and cognitive resources to cope with the stresses and strains of a job (Hobfoll et al., 2000). Furthermore, how a person copes with a stressor can lead to either resource being maintained or lost (Jex & Britt, 2014). The theory proposes that an effectual coping mechanism results in the conservation or even a net gain of resources which leads to increases in job satisfaction (Hobfoll, 1989). As an example, reaching out to supportive social networks like friends, family, and co-workers may be a positive strategy that leads to resources being conserved (McGinley & Wei, 2018). Conversely, a maladaptive coping mechanism can bring a loss spiral to fruition, making it increasingly difficult to recover and protect one's resources leading to professional burnout. The COR perspective suggests that as individuals engage in poor coping mechanisms can be a double tax on resources leading to burnout and potentially service sabotage (Lee & Ok, 2014).

1.3. Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

Employees perceive organizational support when they believe that they are valued and contributing to members of their organizations (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Perceptions of organizational support is developed based on employees' tendency to view their favorable or unfavorable treatment as an indication that the organization favors or disfavors them (Luxmi & Yodav, 2011). The positive impact of POS has been well-documented in the literature. For example, Eisenberger, Rhoades Shanock, & Wen (2020) demonstrate that POS enhances employees' commitment to the organization. As feelings of POS increase, an individual should be able to conserve more resources from loss, because of a positive association between being supported emotionally at work and well-being (Bhave & Glomb, 2016). In fact, Grandey and Diamond (2010) explain that resources can even be gained through positive guest feedback, increases in feelings of task significance, and a general increase in positive emotions through the support of an organization. Accordingly, having higher levels of POS is consistent with COR's claim that emotive and cognitive resources

can be gained and conserved (Hobfoll, 1989), and has been supported with recent empirical evidence that suggests the more supported workers are the better the personal outcomes for employees (McGinley & Wei, 2018).

POS may also lead to greater feelings that a person is a worthwhile and meaningful organizational member that is worthy of such support (Sinek, 2017). The feelings of being a valued organizational member could create a virtuous cycle that conserves resources, as people believe that they are important, meaningful, effectual, and worthwhile in an organization, they will harbor increasingly higher levels of self-esteem (Chen et al. 2012). Essentially, POS could lead to an increase in feelings of competence and value in organizations which is defined as organizational-based self-esteem (OBSE) (Pierce & Gardner, 2004). The concept of OBSE and how it relates to perceived organizational support will be discussed next.

1.4. Organization-Based Self-Esteem (OBSE)

Organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) refers to the degree to which employees perceive themselves as competent, valued, and capable of fulfilling their needs within the organizational context (Pierce, Gardner, Cummings, & Dunham, 1989; Gardner & Pierce, 1998; Brutus et al., 2000). It reflects a positive self-concept grounded in one's organizational roles and has been shown to influence work attitudes and behaviors, particularly in Western organizational settings (Carson et al., 1997; Gardner et al., 2004; Matsuda et al., 2011; Bowling et al., 2010). Specifically, Lee and Peccei (2007) demonstrate that perceived organizational support (POS) enhances an individual's OBSE. From the organizational perspective, the organization functions as a significant other whose perceived attitudes and reactions contribute to the formation of self-esteem (Van Dyne et al., 2000). Thus, how employees appraise the organization may play a key role in forming their perceived sense of organizational support, which could enhance a person's sense of OBSE. For example, when organizations provide career developmental trainings for their employees, employees tend to perceive such opportunity as organizational support, and view themselves as competent and valued, which ultimately enhances their OBSE. While POS and OBSE are distinct constructs, they should be positively related as organizations who support their workers should have workers who feel a greater sense of self-adequacy and worthiness that is associated with OBSE (Gardner & Pierce, 1998). This POS–OBSE relationship has also been validated in the hospitality context. Wang et al. (2020) found that Turkish hotel employees' perceptions of organizational support positively influenced their psychological well-being via OBSE.

Table 1: Measurement Items

Variable	Measurement Items	Source	Reliability
Perceived organizational support (POS)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The organization values my contribution to its well-being. 2. The organization fails to appreciate any extra effort from me.* 3. The organization would ignore any complaint from me.* 4. The organization really cares about my well-being. 5. Even if I did the best job possible, the organization would fail to notice.* 6. The organization cares about my general satisfaction at work. 7. The organization shows very little concern for me.* 8. The organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work. 	Eisenberger, Rhoades & Sowa (1986)	0.896
Organizational based self-esteem (OBSE)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I am taken seriously. 2. I am trusted. 3. I am important. 4. I can make a difference. 5. I am valuable. 6. I am helpful. 7. I count around here. 8. I am cooperative. 9. There is faith in me. 10. I am efficient. 	Pierce, Gardner, Cummings, & Dunham (1989)	0.948
Organizational Retention	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Within this company my work gives me satisfaction. 2. If I wanted to do another job or function, I would look first at the possibilities within this company. 3. I see a future for myself within this company. 4. If it were up to me, I would definitely be working for this company for the next five years. 5. The work I am doing is very important to me. 6. I love working for this company. 	Govaerts, Kyn-dt, Dochy, & Baert (2011)	0.896
Industrial Retention	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are you willing to stay in the hospitality industry in the future? 		0.928

* Reverse coded

1.5. Organizational Retention

Keeping talent should be an especially pressing concern for hospitality managers at present, given the significant losses in revenues due to the coronavirus pandemic (Langford & Weissenberg, 2020; Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2020), and the recovery in business levels that requires more staff to accommodate increased demand (AHLA, 2022). Additionally, the industry has lost many jobs (American Travel Association, 2020; AHLA, 2020a; 2020b) and seen reductions in overall wages due to the pandemic (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020), which could make retaining current staff difficult. Given the challenging financial situation, many hospitality companies are facing, taking on the additional costs associated with voluntary turnover (Tracey & Hinkin, 2008). It may be especially problematic in the current marketplace, and even more so when economic conditions improve even more, and firms need to hire more staff to meet demand. In many cases, managers may be unable to offer raises, bonuses, or other monetary incentives to retain or attract staff given the recent financial hardship recently experienced. As such, they should focus on alternative strategies to increase organizational retention by emphasizing controllable factors such as POS and OBSE.

As levels of both POS and OBSE increase, workers should have access to supportive networks through work and those supportive networks allow for greater conservation of resources (McGinley & Wei, 2018). Resources should be able to be conserved because, when both levels of POS and OBSE increase, so does psychological well-being (Wang et al., 2020). Given the positive outcomes discussed by both McGinley and Wei (2018), and Wang et al. (2020), it is possible that managers have the ability to create positive outcomes not only for their workers but for the organization as well. McGinley, Wei and Gao (2019) suggest that workers decide to remain or exit an organization in part due to their future-oriented perceptions regarding their ability to conserve resources in the future. As such, if an organization's managers have created the conditions to allow for positive coping mechanisms through POS and fostered high feelings of OBSE, it would be expected that workers wish to remain within their companies due to the ability to conserve their emotive and cognitive resources and their increases in psychological well-being. As such, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. Perceived organizational support is positively associated with organizational intention and that association is mediated by organization-based self-esteem.

1.6. Industrial Retention

Another topic that should be particularly critical for hospitality managers is members of the hospitality workforce changing careers and finding jobs in other industries resulting of the downturn in the hospitality business, wages, and jobs (AHLA, 2020a; 2020b; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). When members of the workforce change employers from one hospitality company to another, they take with them their knowledge, skills, and abilities; however, if they leave the industry, all their experience and talent leave with them. The hospitality industry has challenges attracting new members to the ranks, given perceptions of the industry providing low-paying jobs and high levels of work-life conflict (McGinley, Hanks, & Line, 2017). The ability of hospitality employees finding viable work alternatives in other industries is high, given at the end of the first quarter of 2022, general wages were up 5.6% year-over-year and unemployment was down to 3.6%, evidence of a tightening labor market due to rapid hiring (Mutikani, 2022). Therefore, retaining talent during the post-pandemic recovery should be of utmost importance to firm managers.

Turnover and career change are two distinct yet related constructs (Rhodes & Doering, 1983) that are sometimes predicted by the same antecedents and at other times not. The Integrated Model of Career Change Management (ICCM) posits that these organizational and personal factors—which play central roles in the decision to leave a company (Jex & Britt, 2014; Lee & Mitchell 1994; Hom & Kinicki, 2001)—are not directly related to the decision to change careers (Rhodes & Doering, 1983). In other words, determining career change is much more about evaluations of the future rather than on current conditions in the organization or with the person (McGinley, 2018; McGinley et al., 2019). Therefore, the ability of the industry to retain the hospitality workforce is made up of what workers believe their future holds in store for them. The ICCM uses this evaluation of one's current job as a way to understand future perceptions in that if an individual evaluates their current job and company satisfactorily, they are more likely to hold positive future-oriented perceptions and thus remain in the industry (Rhodes & Doering, 1983). While the intention to stay in a given organization may appear to naturally imply a continued presence in the industry, prior research in career mobility suggests that these are distinct constructs shaped by different cognitive and temporal appraisals. Drawing from the ICCM, this study views organizational retention as a proximal experience that influences future-oriented industrial retention through employees' perceptions of career continuity. Building on this idea, we acknowledge that organizational and personal factors may not directly determine career change decisions. However, they play a critical role in shaping how employees assess the viability and attractiveness of continuing their careers within the industry. When employees feel psychologically supported and competent within their organization, they are more likely to view their current situation as stable and meaningful, which in turn fosters positive, future-oriented perceptions of career continuity in the hospitality field. Accordingly, we propose the following serial mediation hypothesis, in which perceived organizational support increases employees' intention to remain in the hospitality industry, indirectly through enhanced organization-based self-esteem and organizational retention intention.

H2. Perceived organizational support is indirectly and positively related to employees' intention to remain in the hospitality industry, sequentially mediated by organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) and organizational retention intention.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Participants and procedure

An online research company was contacted to collect data from employees working in the lodging industry. The company, Centiment (<https://www.centiment.co/>), obtained samples from customer-contact employees whose job responsibilities include daily interactions with customers such as front desk clerk, restaurant servers, bell persons, shuttle bus drivers, or concierge. Through the research company, qualified participants received an invitation to participate in the survey. The data were collected at a time when the U.S. lodging industry was severely disrupted as a direct consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of hotel employees were furloughed or even laid off due to the travel restrictions and lock-down orders. Therefore, a couple of questions were added to ask if their job status was impacted by the pandemic. Among the total of 343 useable responses, 48 (17.8%) respondents who were out of employment at the time of the survey, and 25 (14%) of respondents who were higher on the organization's hierarchy (e.g., CEO, Vice Presidents, General Manager, etc.) were excluded from the analyses. Consequently, the remaining 270 samples are finally included in the analyses to examine their intention to stay at the organization or in the industry.

2.2. Instruments

The eight items of POS measures were adopted from Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986). For, OBSE, the 10-item measure developed by Pierce, Gardner, Cummings, and Dunham (1989) were used. Organizational retention was measured by six questions adopted from Govaerts, Kyndt, Dochy, and Baert (2011). Lastly, the respondents were asked to indicate their willingness to stay in the hospitality industry in the future. For all measures, five-point Likert scales were used (refer Table 1).

2.3. Data Analysis

As illustrated, a serial multiple mediator model was tested with two mediators, whereby POS increases OBSE, which in turn increase organizational retention and, industrial retention, in sequence. In the context of the study, the first estimated model included the association between POS and OBSE. Second, organizational retention was regressed on both POS and OBSE. In the third mode, POS, OBSE, and organizational retention were all included as predictors of industrial retention. The evidence for the mediation is found if the following three paths are jointly significant: the association between POS and OBSE, between OBSE and organizational retention, and between organizational retention and industrial retention.

The total, direct, and indirect effects of POS on industrial retention were examined. Model 6 of PROCESS (Hayes, 2017) was used to perform a simultaneous test of a specific indirect effect through both mediators and of specific indirect effects through each mediator alone. Hayes (2017) considers bootstrapping as the most appropriate method of assessment of indirect effects because it requires no assumptions regarding the shape of the sampling distribution of the indirect effect. An indirect effect is considered significant if the 95% confidence interval for the coefficient estimate does not include zero.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Respondent's profile

Of the 270 participants, there were more females (58.1%) than males (41.9%), and more than half were 26-45 years old (54.8%). The breakdown of age groups was: 14.1% in 18-25 years, 28.9 in 26-35 years, 25.9% in 35-45 years, 17% in 46-55 years, 12.2% in 56-65 years, and 1.9% in over 66 years. The monthly household income was distributed evenly in each category, and more than half (52.6%) of the respondents had a yearly household income of at least \$50,000 (USD). Of respondents, 79.6% have at least some college degrees. Many of them work at luxury hotels (40.7%) and 2-3 start hotels (25.6%). More detailed information is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: **Demographic Profile of the participants (N=270)**

Variables	N	%	Variables	N	%
Gender			Education		
Male	113	41.9	Up to high school	53	19.6
Female	157	58.1	Some College	75	27.8
Age (Mean=39.6)			Associate degree	37	13.7
18-25	38	14.1	Bachelor's degree	84	31.1
26-35	78	28.9	Master's degree or higher	21	9.2
35-45	70	25.9	Tenure_Industry		
46-55	46	17	Less than 6 months	9	3.3
56-65	33	12.2	6 months to 1 year	20	7.4
66+	5	1.9	1 year to 3 years	38	14.1
Income (USD)			3 years to 5 years	49	18.1
Under \$30,000	53	19.6	5 years to 10 years	63	23.3
\$30,000 - \$49,999	75	27.8	10 years and above	91	33.7
\$50,000 - \$69,999	59	21.9	Tenure_Organization		
\$70,000 - \$89,999	40	14.8	Less than 6 months	21	7.8
\$90,000 +	43	15.9	6 months to 1 year	36	13.3
Department			1 year to 3 years	65	24.1
Front office	100	37	3 years to 5 years	49	18.1
Housekeeping	29	10.7	5 years to 10 years	48	17.8
F&B	19	7	10 years and above	51	18.9
Guest service	64	23.7	Type of Business		
Marketing/Sales	14	5.2	Luxury hotel (4-5 start hotel)	110	40.7
Transportation	4	1.5	2-3 start hotel	69	25.6
Other (Casino, Security, Event coordinator, SPA, Entertainment)	40	14.8	Motel/Inn	27	10
			Resort	58	21.5
			Other	6	2.2

3.2. Hypotheses testing

H1. Perceived organizational support is positively associated with organizational intention and that association is mediated by organization-based self-esteem.

First, the results revealed a significant positive association between POS and OBSE [$b=.412, t(268)=8.904, p<.001$]. In Model 2, there was a significant positive relationship between OBSE and organizational retention [$b=.277, t(268)=3.763, p<.001$] and a significant association between POS and organizational retention [$b=.545, t(268)=8.585, p<.001$]. In Model 3, industrial retention was regressed on POS, OBSE, organizational retention. The results revealed a significant relationship between organizational retention and Industry [$b=.388, t(268)=4.704, p<.001$]. The association between OBSE and industrial retention was not significant [$b=-.044, t(268)=-.430, N.S.$]. In summary, the three paths of interests were jointly significant as shown in Table 3.

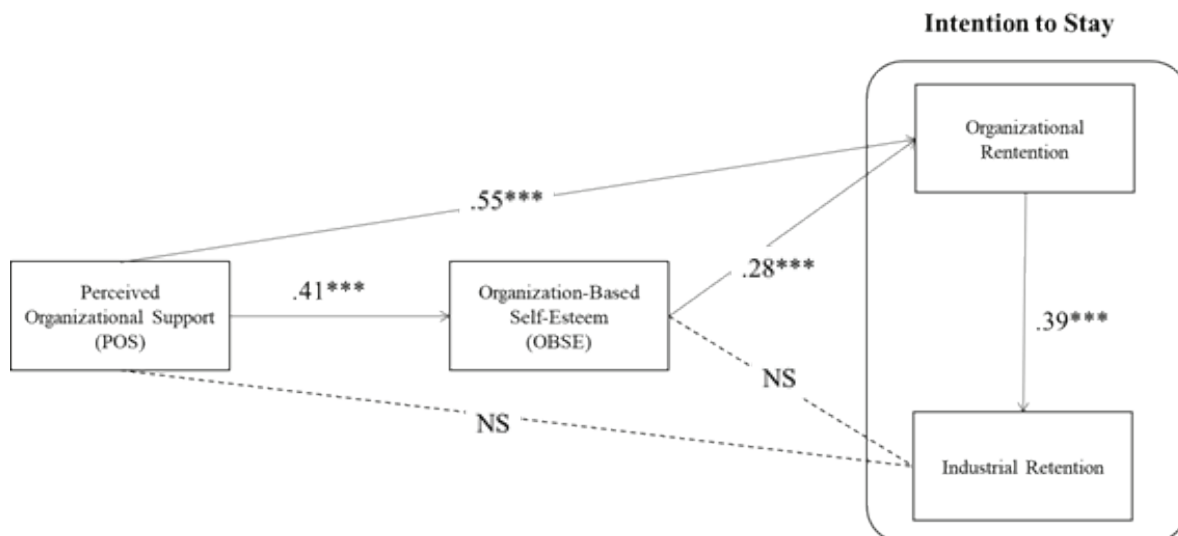
Table 3: **Sequential Mediation Model**

Antecedent	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	OBSE			Organizational Retention			Industrial Retention		
	Coeff.	SE	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	SE	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	SE	<i>p</i>
X (POS)	.412	.046	<.001	.545	.064	<.001	.025	.097	.796
M1 (OBSE)				.277	.074	<.001	-.044	.102	.668
M2 (Organizational retention)							.388	.083	<.001
Constant	2.409	.219	<.001	.079	.318	.804	2.844	.428	<.001
	R ² =.228 F(1, 268) = 79.277, p<.001			R ² =.366 F(2, 267) = 76.92, p<.001			R ² =.120 F(3, 266) = 11.584, p<.001		

H2. Perceived organizational support is indirectly and positively related to employees' intention to remain in the hospitality industry, sequentially mediated by organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) and organizational retention intention.

Furthermore, the specific indirect effect of POS on organizational retention level through OBSE was estimated as -.018. This path of influence cannot be claimed as different from zero because the bootstrap confidence interval straddles zero (-.117, .077). The second indirect effect is the specific indirect effect of POS on industrial retention through both OBSE and organizational retention in serial, with OBSE modelled as affecting organizational retention, which in turn influences industrial retention. The results indicate that the indirect effect of POS on industrial retention through OBSE and organizational retention (.044) is significantly positive, supporting H2. Importantly, this pathway suggests that employees' industry-level commitment is not simply a byproduct of organizational loyalty. Instead, it reflects a sequential cognitive process whereby positive organizational experiences enhance OBSE, which fosters organizational commitment, ultimately shaping perceptions of long-term career viability in the industry. The third specific indirect effect suggest the effect of POS on industrial retention through only organizational retention. Estimated as the product the effect of POS and on organizational retention and the effect of organizational retention on industrial retention, this indirect effect is .211 and significant as the bootstrap confidence interval is above zero (.114 to .347). The total indirect effect of POS on industrial retention was significant (β =.237) as determined by a bootstrap confidence interval that does not contain zero (.120 to .391), providing evidence for full mediation. The results of the proposed serial multiple mediator model with two mediators are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: **Effects of POS and OBSE on organizational and industrial retention**



CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The current research examined hospitality employees' intention to stay during the global COVID-19 pandemic which has put the whole industry at risk. The purpose of this study was to explore the relationships of psychological resources (i.e., POS and OBSE) on current employees' retention at two stages, i.e., organization level and industry level. Accordingly, a serial multiple mediator model was developed based on resource-based mechanism of COR (Core Occupational Adaptabilities). The results demonstrate that two organization-driven psychological resources contribute to developing employees' retention not only at the organizational level, but at the industry level as well, reinforcing the importance of POS and OBSE as critical resources in mitigating turnover.

This study enhances the theoretical understanding of HR dynamics in hospitality by identifying key psychological mechanisms that influence employee retention. First, by confirming the mediating role of organizational-based self-esteem (OBSE) in the relationship between perceived organizational support (POS) and organizational retention, this study demonstrates that employees with higher POS exhibit greater OBSE, which, in turn, enhances their intention to remain within the organization. These findings align with Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, as employees who perceive strong organizational support also report higher OBSE. Our results indicate that both POS and OBSE positively influence organizational retention, with OBSE partially mediating the relationship between POS and retention. This suggests that when employees feel supported, they develop stronger OBSE, making them more likely to stay with their organization. Notably, the partially mediated model explained a significant amount of variance even during a severe crisis in the hospitality industry. These findings further align with recent research emphasizing the role of strong workplace frameworks in enhancing career adaptability and employee resilience during challenging times. For example, studies have highlighted the importance of developing career occupational adaptability (COA) through workplace experiences (Jiang et al., 2023) and examined how workplace factors contribute to employee flourishing, potentially mitigating career instability (Peethambaran & Naim, 2025).

Additionally, in addressing the second objective of this study, our findings reveal that employees' POS leads to higher OBSE, which, in turn, influences their intention to remain in the industry. This insight offers a new perspective on how organizational support can indirectly contribute to industry-wide talent retention, particularly in the hospitality sector as it recovers from recent disruptions (Global Hospitality Insights, 2024).

The third objective was to examine whether the POS-OBSE-organizational retention link is positively related to industrial retention intention. Our results show that POS is positively associated with industrial retention, sequentially mediated by OBSE and organizational retention. Importantly, this finding does not suggest that organizational commitment automatically ensures industry-level retention. Rather, it highlights how employees' evaluations of their organizational environment shape their psychological resources (OBSE), which in turn influence their sense of long-term career continuity within the industry. This supports the ICCM framework, which posits that career retention is shaped by future-oriented perceptions rather than current organizational attachment alone. These findings underscore the interconnected nature of organizational and industry-wide retention, highlighting key pathways through which psychological resources shape employee sustainability within the industry. While organizations may focus primarily on short-term employee retention, understanding employees' long-term career decisions is crucial for the industry's overall stability. Particularly during times of crisis, when widespread job losses occur, firms will eventually need to rehire teams as business conditions improve. A strong and straightforward association between organizational and industrial retention offers both scholars and practitioners a valuable metric for assessing the severity of career shifts within the sector. If too many employees leave the industry permanently, it could lead to a "brain drain," making it more difficult for firms to rebuild their workforce in the post-crisis period.

The findings of this study offer significant implications for hospitality managers. J.W. Marriott, the founder of Marriott International, once stated, "Take care of the associates, and they will take care of your customers." This principle underscores the importance of prioritizing robust organizational support, which includes recognizing employee contributions, offering fair compensation, providing training opportunities, and fostering empowerment. Given that hospitality is a people-centric industry, cultivating an error-tolerant culture can enhance employees' perceptions of organizational support (Wang, Guchait, & Paşamehmetoğlu, 2020). A more supportive and adaptable workplace culture can, in turn, strengthen organizational-based self-esteem (OBSE) and improve employee retention (Son et al., 2020).

To address the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly heightened job instability, hospitality managers should implement proactive strategies to support employees. Structured peer-support programs, for instance, can facilitate stress management by enabling employees to share experiences and coping strategies. Additionally, virtual town halls provide a platform for employees to discuss critical concerns such as job security, workload, and career development. These initiatives encourage open communication, helping to mitigate workplace uncertainties. Moreover, such programs promote healthy coping mechanisms (McGinley et al., 2018) while reducing the likelihood of maladaptive behaviors that could deplete psychological resources (Lee & Ok, 2014).

Furthermore, this study highlights the indirect impact of organizational support on industry-wide retention. Collaborative efforts among hospitality organizations to enhance core occupational adaptability could expand the talent pool and lower turnover rates across the sector (Jiang et al., 2023; Peethambaran & Naim, 2025). Initiatives such as cross-training programs and inter-organizational mentorship schemes equip employees with valuable career skills and foster individual professional growth and long-term retention within the hospitality industry. By enhancing employees' self-esteem, hospitality firms can contribute to sustaining a skilled and committed workforce.

Despite its significant implications, this study underscores the importance of fostering organizational support and organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) to enhance employee retention at both the organizational and industry levels. While the research highlights key findings, it also suggests promising directions for future inquiry. This study implies that there are limits to what POS and OBSE will directly predict. Consistent with the ICCM that explains career-related decisions, neither the organizational-level factor of POS nor the personal level factor of OBSE had a direct association with intentions to remain in the industry. Rather, a direct link between organizational and industrial retention was observed. This linkage provides a critical barometer for understanding how workforce sustainability impacts industry health, especially during crises. Future work should test career-level factors and future-oriented perceptions that are proposed as key tenants of decisions to engage in career change, and also consider alternative roles of OBSE beyond mediation (Pierce et al., 1993). For instance, exploring how emerging factors such as remote work opportunities and digital transformation in the hospitality sector impact retention could provide additional insights (AHLA, 2024). As such more work needs to be done to test the ideas presented in the ICCM and the veracity of those ideas in the field. Future work could test career level factors and future-oriented perceptions that are proposed as key tenants of the decision to engage in career change.

Second, data collection for this study occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, across 2020 to 2021, a period marked by heightened uncertainty and anxiety as the hospitality industry faced unprecedented challenges. This timeframe allowed the study to capture the initial reactions and retention intentions of hospitality employees during the early to middle stages of the crisis, although it did not account for employees' evolving perspectives during the later stages of recovery. Future research should explore retention intentions at different stages of the pandemic and in the post-pandemic era, utilizing longitudinal data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how employee attitudes and behaviors adapt to changing circumstances.

Moreover, this study focused on customer-contact employees, who are often positioned lower in the organizational hierarchy. While their retention is critical, managerial-level employees also faced unprecedented challenges during the pandemic. Future studies could investigate the retention of managerial staff, particularly in contexts where their expertise is transferable to other industries. For instance, an experienced hotel revenue manager might pursue a career in a more stable sector like corporate finance. Understanding how to retain such talented staff is critical to prevent brain drain and sustain industry capabilities. These strategies could help address turnover and contribute to building a resilient and adaptive workforce, ensuring the hospitality industry remains competitive in a post-crisis landscape.

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