

A Study on the Employee Attrition and Retention Strategies at Holiday Inn, Chennai

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Abstract: Employee attrition represents one of the most persistent and costly challenges confronting the global hospitality industry, where service delivery quality is inseparably linked to workforce stability and employee commitment. This study empirically examines the determinants of workforce turnover and evaluates the effectiveness of existing retention practices at Holiday Inn Chennai OMR IT Expressway, an InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) brand property. Adopting a descriptive research design, primary data were gathered from 100 employees across multiple operational departments through a structured questionnaire. Statistical analysis encompassed percentage analysis, Chi-Square testing, and Karl Pearson's Correlation. The findings establish that poor work-life balance (70% rated it Poor or Very Poor), inadequate recognition (70% experience it rarely or never), and limited career advancement opportunities are the predominant attrition drivers, with 70% of respondents having actively considered resignation. Chi-Square analysis confirms a statistically significant association between retention preferences and strategy review frequency (chi-squared = 73.63, df = 16, p = 0.010). Correlation analysis reveals a moderate-to-strong positive relationship between training adequacy and work-life balance satisfaction ($r = 0.632$, $p < 0.01$). The study concludes that an employee-centric human resource strategy— incorporating flexible scheduling, structured recognition, career development pathways, and periodic strategy reviews — is essential for reducing attrition and sustaining competitiveness in the hospitality sector.

Keywords: Employee attrition, retention strategies, hospitality industry, job satisfaction, work-life balance, Holiday Inn, turnover determinants, human resource management.

1. INTRODUCTION

The hotel industry is one of the most labour-intensive segments of the global economy, where service excellence is fundamentally contingent upon a stable, motivated, and skilled workforce. Employee attrition — the progressive depletion of human capital through voluntary resignations, retirements, or terminations — imposes substantial financial and operational burdens on hospitality organisations. These burdens manifest in escalating recruitment and training expenditures, degraded institutional memory, disrupted team dynamics, and ultimately, a deterioration in guest satisfaction indices.

Holiday Inn Chennai OMR IT Expressway, operating under the globally recognised IHG Hotels and Resorts umbrella, is situated in one of Chennai's most commercially vibrant corridors. The property serves a diverse clientele ranging from corporate travellers and conference delegates to leisure guests and event participants. Despite robust brand support and adherence to IHG's global service protocols, the property — like much of the Indian hospitality sector — contends with persistent challenges in retaining a committed workforce. This study is motivated by the need to move beyond anecdotal understanding and provide empirically grounded insights into the specific drivers and remedies of attrition at this establishment.

The study makes a dual contribution: it generates context-specific evidence on attrition dynamics within an international hotel brand operating in a metropolitan Indian market, and it offers practical, data-driven retention recommendations directly applicable to HR practitioners and hotel management.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The scholarly examination of employee attrition and retention has generated a substantial body of theoretical and empirical knowledge. Price (1977) was among the first to establish a systematic framework, identifying wage levels, job satisfaction, and organisational integration as foundational determinants of turnover. Mobley (1982) subsequently developed a process model demonstrating that dissatisfaction initiates a sequential cognitive journey culminating in the exit decision. Porter and Steers (1983) highlighted the moderating role of organisational commitment, establishing that affectively bound employees are significantly less likely to resign.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1997) remains highly influential, distinguishing hygiene factors

— including compensation, physical conditions, and supervisory practices — which prevent dissatisfaction, from motivators such as recognition, achievement, and growth opportunities that actively foster loyalty. The theory's central insight — that salary improvements alone cannot secure retention — finds strong corroboration in the present study's findings. Mitchell et al. (2001) introduced the concept of job embeddedness, comprising interpersonal links, organisational fit, and perceived sacrifice upon departure, which redirected scholarly focus from exit push-factors to the anchor mechanisms that keep employees engaged.

Within the hospitality literature, Deery and Jago (2015) documented the deleterious effects of extended shift patterns, chronic occupational stress, and inadequate work-life balance on workforce stability — observations that directly anticipate the current study's findings. Kossivi et al. (2016) and Kumar and Mathimaran (2017) further established the centrality of career advancement opportunities and recognition systems in attrition management. Contemporary research by Dutta and Banerjee (2022) advocates for digital HR systems, employee wellness programmes, and flexible working models as effective instruments for reducing attrition in the post-pandemic operational environment.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a descriptive research design, which is well-suited to characterising the perceptions, attitudes, and behavioural intentions of a bounded organisational population with respect to attrition and retention. The design enables systematic description of workforce patterns across demographic and departmental sub-groups.

3.2 Sampling and Data Collection

A **simple random sampling** technique (probability sampling) was employed to select 100 employees from the total workforce of Holiday Inn Chennai during the three-month study period (January–March 2026). In this method, every employee across departments such as Front Office, Housekeeping, Food and Beverage, HR/Admin, and other support units had an equal chance of being selected, ensuring fairness and minimizing selection bias. A structured questionnaire consisting of 20 items was used to collect primary data, focusing on demographic details, job satisfaction, attrition intentions, and retention preferences. Secondary data were gathered from peer-reviewed journals, IHG publications, and relevant hospitality industry reports.

3.3 Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant relationship between employee retention initiative preferences and the perceived frequency of retention strategy review.

H11: There is a significant relationship between employee retention initiative preferences and the perceived frequency of retention strategy review.

H02: There is no significant positive relationship between the adequacy of training provided and employee work-life balance satisfaction.

H12: There is a significant positive relationship between the adequacy of training provided and employee work-life balance satisfaction.

3.4 Analytical Tools

Three analytical methods were employed: (i) Percentage Analysis for descriptive frequency distribution; (ii) Chi-Square Test of Independence to evaluate categorical associations; and (iii) Karl Pearson's Correlation Coefficient to quantify the linear relationship between training adequacy and work-life balance perceptions.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Demographic Profile

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 100)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 25	15	15%
	25 – 30	30	30%
	31 – 40	35	35%
	Above 40	20	20%
Gender	Male	60	60%
	Female	30	30%
	Prefer Not to Say	10	10%
Department	Housekeeping	40	40%
	Food & Beverage	30	30%
	Front Office	10	10%
Work Experience	HR / Admin	10	10%
	Others	10	10%
	Less than 1 Year	30	30%
	1 – 3 Years	40	40%
	3 – 5 Years	20	20%
	More than 5 Yrs	10	10%

The sample is predominantly male (60%), with the 31–40 age cohort representing the largest segment (35%). Housekeeping accounts for the highest departmental share (40%), consistent with the labour-intensive character of hotel operations. The majority of respondents (40%) have one to three years of tenure, indicating a relatively junior workforce with elevated susceptibility to early-career attrition.

4.2 Job Satisfaction and Work Environment

The following pie charts present the distribution of employee responses across key satisfaction dimensions. These visual representations enable immediate comprehension of the severity and distribution of workforce concerns.

Figure 1: Job Satisfaction Levels (n=100)

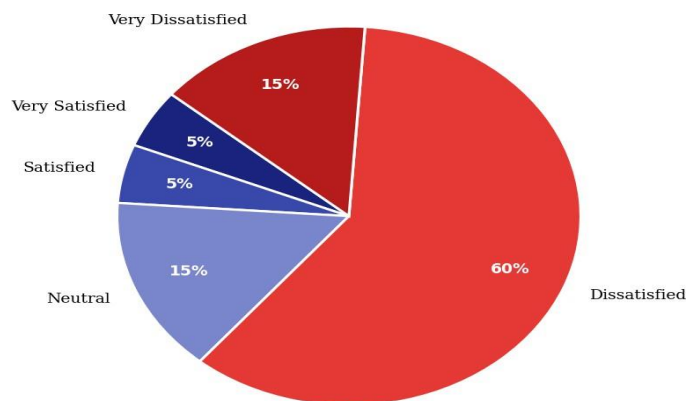


Figure 1: Job Satisfaction Levels (n = 100) | Source: Primary Data, 2026

Figure 1 reveals a deeply unfavourable job satisfaction landscape. A combined 75% of respondents express dissatisfaction with their current roles (Dissatisfied: 60%; Very Dissatisfied: 15%), while merely 10% report any degree of satisfaction. This acute engagement deficit constitutes the foundational driver of the property's attrition challenge and demands immediate, multi-pronged HR intervention.

Figure 6: Work-Life Balance Ratings (n=100)

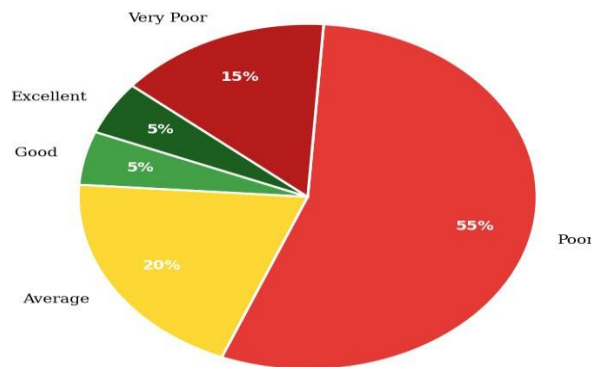


Figure 2: Work-Life Balance Ratings (n = 100) | Source: Primary Data, 2026

Figure 2 confirms that work-life balance is the most critical operational pain-point, with 55% rating it 'Poor' and 15% rating it 'Very Poor.' Only 10% consider their work-life balance satisfactory. This finding is consistent with the inherent demands of hotel work — irregular shift rotations, extended service hours, and limited rest provisions — and directly corroborates the exit intention data discussed in Section 4.3.

Figure 5: Work Recognition Frequency (n=100)

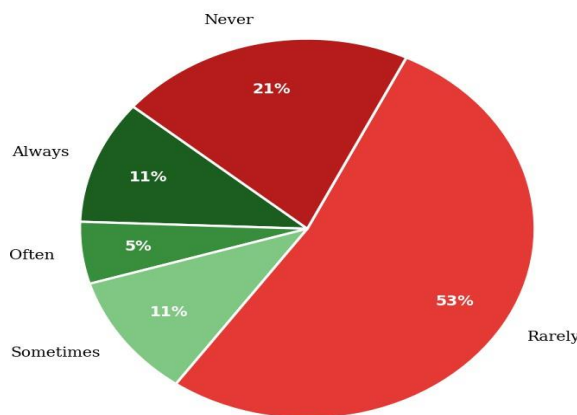


Figure 3: Work Recognition Frequency (n = 100) | Source: Primary Data, 2026

Recognition and appreciation are foundational motivational needs within any employment relationship. Figure 3 demonstrates that 70% of employees feel their contributions go largely unacknowledged — 50% reporting recognition as 'Rare' and 20% reporting that it never occurs. Conversely, only 15% experience consistent or frequent recognition. This represents one of the most readily addressable structural deficiencies in the hotel's current human resource practice.

4.3 Attrition Intentions and Primary Drivers

Table 2: Attrition Intention and Primary Reasons for Considering Exit

Category / Reason	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Considered Leaving – YES	70	70%
Considered Leaving – NO	30	30%
Primary Reason: Poor Work-Life Balance	50	50%
Primary Reason: Recognition & Rewards	15	15%
Primary Reason: Better Opportunities	15	15%
Primary Reason: Low Salary	10	10%
Primary Reason: Lack of Growth	5	5%
Primary Reason: Management Issues	5	5%

Figure 2: Primary Reasons for Considering Exit (n=70)

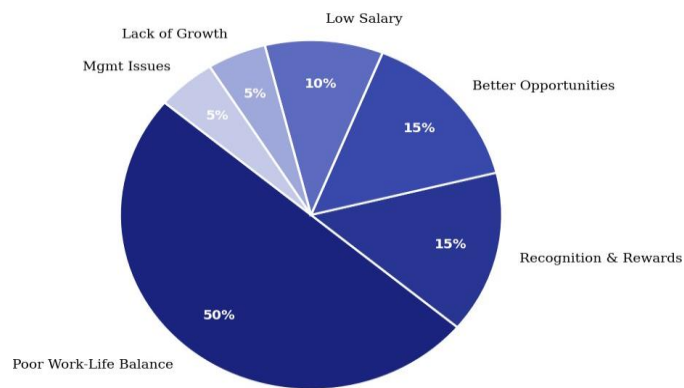


Figure 4: Primary Reasons for Considering Exit (n = 70) | Source: Primary Data, 2026

Table 2 and Figure 4 together confirm that 70% of surveyed employees have actively contemplated leaving — indicative of a systemic rather than incidental retention failure. Poor work-life balance is the single most cited reason (50%), followed by inadequate recognition and better external opportunities (15% each). The relatively modest salience of salary dissatisfaction (10%) as an isolated driver aligns with Herzberg's (1997) proposition that compensation improvements alone are insufficient to secure meaningful retention.

4.4 Retention Enablers and Preferred Initiatives

Figure 3: Factors to Encourage Longer Tenure (n=100)

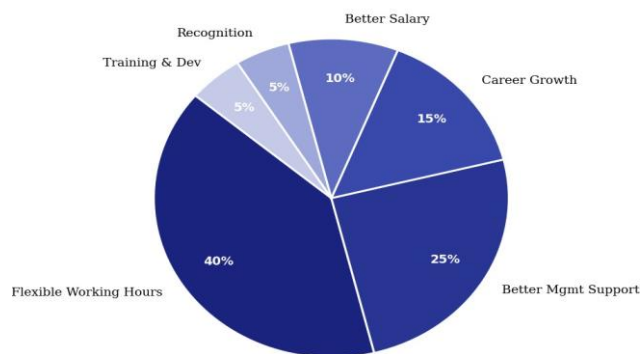


Figure 5: Factors that Would Encourage Longer Employee Tenure (n = 100) | Source: Primary Data, 2026

Figure 5 establishes that flexible working hours represent the single most impactful retention enabler (40%), followed by improved management support (25%) and career growth opportunities (15%). This hierarchy underscores the primacy of non-monetary, operational interventions over financial inducements alone, and points management toward scheduling and supervisory reforms as high-return investments.

Figure 4: Most Valued Retention Initiatives (n=100)

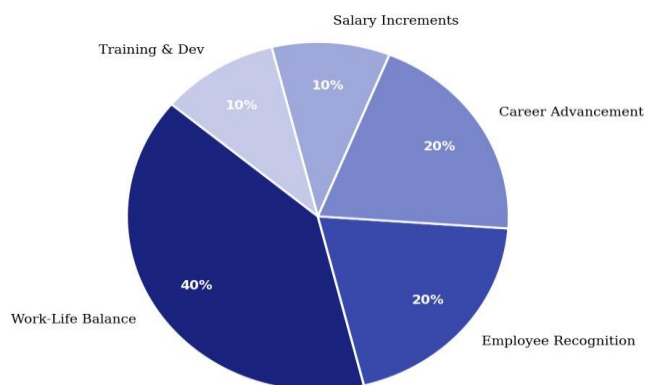


Figure 6: Most Valued Retention Initiatives in the Organisation (n = 100) | Source: Primary Data, 2026

Figure 6 reveals that work-life balance initiatives are the most highly prized retention mechanism (40%), followed by employee recognition programmes and career advancement opportunities (20% each). Salary increments and training and development are valued by 10% each. This distribution reinforces the conclusion that employees assign greatest weight to environmental and cultural factors over purely transactional benefits.

5. HYPOTHESIS TESTING

5.1 Chi-Square Test – Retention Preferences and Review Frequency

To determine whether a statistically significant association exists between the type of retention initiatives employees value most and their preferred frequency of strategy review, a Chi-Square Test of Independence was conducted.

Table 3: Chi-Square Test Results – Retention and Review Relationship (n = 100)

Test Statistic	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	73.63	16	0.010 *
Likelihood Ratio	14.39	16	0.020
Linear-by-Linear Association	58.86	1	0.030
N of Valid Cases	100	—	—

* Significant at the 0.05 level

The calculated Pearson Chi-Square value (73.63) substantially exceeds the critical value at $df = 16$ ($p = 0.010$, which is less than 0.05). Accordingly, the null hypothesis H_{01} is rejected and the alternate hypothesis H_{11} is accepted. There is a statistically significant relationship between the type of retention initiatives employees value most and the frequency with which they believe retention strategies should be reviewed. This result implies that employee retention preferences are heterogeneous and that HR policy review cycles must be attuned to the varied expectations of distinct workforce segments.

5.2 Karl Pearson's Correlation – Training Adequacy and Work-Life Balance

Table 4: Correlation Matrix – Training Adequacy and Work-Life Balance (n = 100)

Variable	Training Adequacy	Work-Life Balance
Training Adequacy – Pearson r	1.000	0.632 **
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	0.000
N	100	100
Work-Life Balance – Pearson r	0.632 **	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	—
N	100	100

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

A Pearson Correlation Coefficient of $r = 0.632$ ($p < 0.01$) indicates a moderate-to-strong, statistically significant positive relationship between training adequacy and employee work-life balance satisfaction. The null hypothesis H_{02} is therefore rejected in favour of H_{12} . This finding has meaningful practical implications: structured, role-relevant training not only builds occupational competence but also enhances employees' capacity to manage job demands more effectively, thereby positively mediating work-life balance perceptions. HR investment in training thus yields dual returns — skills development and improved wellbeing.

6. CONCLUSION

This empirical investigation provides both a diagnostic portrait of a workforce under significant attrition pressure and a structured blueprint for evidence-based managerial intervention. The findings document acute dissatisfaction across multiple dimensions — job satisfaction, work-life balance, and recognition — that collectively account for the 70% attrition intention rate observed among respondents. These conditions are not idiosyncratic to this property but reflect systemic vulnerabilities endemic to the broader hospitality labour market.

The study's hypothesis testing yields two particularly actionable insights. The significant positive correlation between training adequacy and work-life balance satisfaction ($r = 0.632$) illuminates an underutilised pathway through which HR investment simultaneously addresses competence development and employee wellbeing. The significant association between

retention preferences and review frequency advocates for treating retention strategy as a dynamic, continuously calibrated organisational commitment rather than a static policy document.

Ultimately, sustainable retention at Holiday Inn — and across the hospitality industry more broadly — requires an organisational philosophy that positions employees as valued human capital whose engagement, wellbeing, and professional development are strategic priorities. When this philosophy is translated into tangible operational changes — flexible scheduling, structured recognition, transparent career pathways, and responsive HR governance — it creates the conditions for a stable, motivated, and guest-responsive workforce. Such a workforce is not merely an operational resource; it is the cornerstone of long-term competitive advantage in the hospitality sector.

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