

Integrating digital recruitment and employer branding into strategic HRM to foster employee retention through perceived organizational support

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines how Digital Recruitment and Employer Branding influence Employee Retention through Perceived Organizational Support (POS), addressing gaps in strategic HRM research regarding the integrated role of digital hiring and employer branding.

Research Methodology: A cross-sectional survey involving 200 employees from digitally mature Indonesian organizations was analyzed using PLS-SEM with 5,000 bootstrapped subsamples. The measurement model showed strong reliability and validity ($\alpha > .86$; CR > .88; AVE > .54), and structural testing evaluated five direct hypotheses and mediation effects.

Results: Employer Branding significantly predicts POS and retention, whereas Digital Recruitment enhances POS but shows no direct effect on retention. POS strongly predicts retention and fully mediates the Digital Recruitment–Retention relationship while partially mediating the Employer Branding–Retention link. The structural model explains 43% of POS variance and 51% of retention, supported by medium–large effect sizes and positive Q² values.

Conclusions: The findings confirm POS as the key psychological mechanism through which modern HR practices translate into retention outcomes. Employer Branding drives retention both directly and indirectly, while Digital Recruitment contributes indirectly via POS.

Limitations: Cross-sectional data limit causal inference, and the digital-sector sample restricts generalizability.

Contribution: The study integrates digital recruitment and employer branding within one strategic HRM framework and establishes Digital Recruitment as an empirical antecedent of POS, reinforcing POS's centrality in digital-era retention strategies.

Keywords: *Digital Recruitment, Employer Branding, Employee Retention, HRM Strategy, Perceived Organizational Support*

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1. Introduction

In the era of digital transformation, organizations face intensified competition to secure and retain skilled talent. Amid rapid technological advancements and increasingly fluid labor markets, the strategic integration of digital recruitment and employer branding into HRM has become not only important but imperative (Baykal, 2022). Today's job seekers especially millennials and Gen Z expect streamlined application processes, transparent recruitment platforms, and meaningful alignment with organizational values and culture. Recent studies highlight that when organizations implement transparent and AI-driven recruitment tools, candidates interpret procedural fairness and organizational respect factors central to their Perceived Organizational Support (POS) (Gilch & Sieweke, 2021). Simultaneously, robust employer branding delivers functional, psychological, and economic rewards that communicate organizational identity and value proposition, influencing both attraction and retention (Silva & Dias, 2023).

Despite clear practitioner interest, employee retention rates are problematic in many digitally intensive sectors. For example, digital startups and the IT sector in Indonesia report turnover rates significantly above national averages (Siddik, Soewignyo, & Mandagi, 2024). A disconnect between employer messaging and employees lived experiences often undermines retention. This discrepancy underscores a critical issue (Hauer, Quan, & Liang, 2021; Udodiugwu, Nwosu, Obiakor, & Nwumeh, 2024). Observers perceive branding and recruitment as being disjointed from actual employee care and support. POS emerges as the psychological bridge between HR strategy and retention behavior; employees who feel valued and supported reciprocate loyalty and reduced intention to leave (Huang et al., 2021). Within the strategic HRM discourse, employer branding and recruitment strategies are typically treated separately; however, both feed into employee retention via employee perceptions (Alzaid & Dukhaykh, 2023).

Employer branding literature emphasizes how functional, economic, and psychological benefits reinforce employees' perceived values. Empirical research by Soomro, Korejo, Hussain, Channa, and Korejo (2023) found that branding significantly boosts POS and commitment, even replicating positive retention outcomes across cultures. A theoretical framework by Silva and Dias (2023) expanded the branding dimensions and linked them directly to organizational attraction and retention potential. Emerging research on e-HRM and AI-driven recruitment underscores that although digital systems are efficient, they must be perceived as fair to enhance POS (Sadeghi, 2024). Employees evaluate algorithmic recruitment for procedural justice, transparency, and bias mitigation as a trust-building function integral to POS. Moreover, digital tools such as recommendation systems and candidate portals shape employer reputation and perceived fairness, which are core antecedents of POS (Mashayekhi, Li, Kang, Lijffijt, & De Bie, 2024; Udodiugwu et al., 2024). Employer branding consistently shows positive correlations with retention across sectors in Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and educational institutions (Hadi & Ahmed, 2018; Rudiyanto, Munawar, Prayoga, Arini, & Muflaha, 2025).

While the consumer of retention in employer branding is well substantiated, digital recruitment as a direct predictor of retention is less clear. Many studies have confirmed its role in enhancing employer attractiveness and POS but have emphasized indirect paths via engagement or support (Wijaya, Mustika, Bulut, & Bukhori, 2023). Indeed, in Indonesian startups, e-recruitment and employer branding predict job application intention but do not guarantee retention without follow-ups. POS has been firmly established as a core predictor of retention based on social exchange theory. Bharadwaj and Yameen (2021) confirm a strong negative relationship between POS and turnover intention. Empirical evidence spans the healthcare, manufacturing, public services, and technology sectors (Rudiyanto et al., 2025). POS enhances organizational commitment, decreases withdrawal behaviors, and improves performance.

Despite a growing body of research affirming the importance of employer branding and emerging literature on digital recruitment, important gaps remain in how these two HR practices are jointly conceptualized and empirically tested within a strategic HRM framework (Singh, Agarwal, & Pant, 2024). Historically, these constructs have been studied in isolation; employer branding often receives attention for its role in the attraction and retention of talent, while digital recruitment is largely examined

through recruitment platforms or e-HRM systems. Rarely have the two been integrated as parallel antecedents impacting employee perceptions of support, especially in the HRM literature. As Pujianto, Sumartono, and Wulandari (2025) point out, employer branding research traditionally prioritizes employer attraction over its role in employee retention.

Compounding this issue is the scarcity of quantitative studies examining how digital recruitment influences Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and retention outcomes. Most existing digital recruitment research remains descriptive or focused on candidate attraction (Ahmed et al. (2022), with few studies empirically testing its relationship with employees' support perceptions and even fewer analyzing its mediated pathway through POS to retention. Onur et al. (2024) highlights recruitment as an antecedent to employer image, but often omits empirical testing of retention pathways. Consequently, the mediated effect of digital recruitment via POS remains largely unexplored.

Moreover, there is a dearth of strategic HRM models that position both employer branding and digital recruitment as integrated tools to influence retention through employees' perceptions. Traditional HRM literature often addresses branding under strategic talent management and recruitment under e-HRM; however, few models consider them jointly as strategic signals of organizational support (Kekeocha, Anoke, Chukwuemeka-Onuzulike, & Ngozi, 2023; Reis, Sousa, & Dionisio, 2021). This lack of theoretical integration undermines efforts to construct a cohesive understanding of how modern HR tools combine to achieve retention objectives. Furthermore, previous research typically examines direct or mediated effects in isolation, direct effects of branding on retention, or indirect effects via engagement. It is rare to find studies that simultaneously test both direct and indirect pathways, particularly for digital recruitment. Outside of talent attraction or applicant perceptions, the direct impact of digital recruitment on retention is frequently non-significant in research Arasanmi and Krishna (2019), suggesting the need for models that incorporate both types of effects.

This study addresses these gaps by integrating digital recruitment and employer branding into a strategic HRM framework anchored in Organizational Support Theory. It tests both the direct and indirect effects of these HR practices on Employee Retention via POS within a sample of employees in digitally mature Indonesian organizations. By situating digital recruitment and employer branding within a unified framework, this study elevates POS as the central psychological mediator linking digital-era HR practices to retention outcomes. This approach extends Organizational Support Theory beyond traditional antecedents such as fairness or supervisor support, positioning digital recruitment as an empirical antecedent to POS, an area scarcely explored in prior research (Akbari, Dehghanizade, & Abbiat, 2023). Meanwhile, it underscores the dual role of employer branding as both a predictor of POS and a direct driver of retention, thus redefining its strategic function in modern HRM.

The novelty of this research lies in the unification of digital recruitment and employer branding in one strategic framework of HRM based on Organizational Support Theory, by placing Perceived Organizational Support (POS) as the main mediator that connects HR practices in the digital era with employee retention. This study expands the theory of organizational support, which previously focused on traditional antecedents such as fairness or superior support, by presenting digital recruitment as an empirical antecedent of POS that is rarely researched. In addition, this study confirms the dual role of employer branding as a predictor of POS and a driver of direct retention, thus repositioning its function in modern HRM strategies.

2. Literature review

2.1. The Impact of Digital Recruitment and Employer Branding on Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

Digital recruitment tools, if perceived as transparent and fair, also reinforce POS. Sadeghi's (2024) AI employee well-being framework posits that algorithmic fairness, transparency, and communication during digital recruitment are critical for building employee trust and belief in organizational support (Sadeghi, 2024). Similarly, He, Deng, Fabris, Li, and Biega (2025) propose a fair online recruitment framework grounded in job-seeker fairness concerns, emphasizing that design elements such as bias mitigation and clarity shape candidate perception and subsequent POS. Additionally, HR

literature on e-HRM highlights that detailed, user-friendly online job platforms foster relational trust and support perception as key antecedents of POS (Myllymäki, 2021). Digital recruitment, including online job portals, AI-supported applicant tracking, and virtual interviewing, empowers organizations to project efficiency, transparency, and candidate focus on HRM (Medina-Garrido, Biedma-Ferrer, & Ramos-Rodríguez, 2017). These positive perceptions can translate into Perceived Organizational Support (POS) by signaling that the organization values fairness, communication, and procedural justice, three established antecedents of POS (Imran, Elahi, Abid, Ashfaq, & Ilyas, 2020).

Employer branding reflects all the functional, economic, and psychological benefits that organizations communicate to both internal and external audiences. Studies have shown that employer branding increases organizational commitment and retention by enhancing POS. For instance, Arasanmi and Krishna (2019) found that POS embedded in employer branding improved commitment and retention in the public sector. Further studies in the Saudi banking and tourism contexts confirm that employer branding via reputation, CSR, training, and fairness strengthens psychological contracts and POS, which then positively impacts retention and commitment.

H1: Digital recruitment positively influences employees' perceived organizational support

H2: Employer branding positively predicts perceived organizational support

2.2. The Effect of Digital Recruitment and Employer Branding on Employee Retention

A wide range of empirical studies has demonstrated that employer branding significantly boosts employee retention. For instance, Shoba (2024) mentioned that Work-Life Balance, and Economic Value, core elements of the Employee Value Proposition, strongly influence retention intention in commercial banks, with development opportunities being especially critical. Similarly, Alzaid and Dukhaykh (2023) study in Saudi Arabia shows that employer branding fosters relational psychological contracts, which in turn significantly mediate retention outcomes.

Ahmed et al. (2022) underscores that well-developed internal employer branding frameworks contribute directly to talent retention by cultivating internal commitment and meaningful psychological connection. Employer branding has also been shown to yield tangible workplace outcomes: companies with strong branding reportedly cut turnover by up to 28%, enhanced workplace pride, and attracted candidates more likely to stay long-term (Ginting, Diantoro, Cindrakasih, & Mubarak, 2023). Additionally, employers such as Google and Airbnb highlight narrative-based branding strategies linked to reduced cost-per-hire and increased retention rates, reportedly up to 15% improvement in retention (Suryawan, Assagaf, & Riyadi, 2025; Yahya & Agrawal, 2025).

Conversely, while digital recruitment (encompassing e-HRM, mobile recruiting, and online application platforms) clearly enhances candidate attraction and fairness perception, its direct relationship with retention is less well established. For example, MDPI's study on tourism sector firms indicates that digital recruitment improves perceptions of employer branding and candidate satisfaction—but not directly retention unless mediated by psychological factors such as POS or engagement (Oncioiu, Anton, Ifrim, & Mândricel, 2022). Ekhsan, Badrianto, and Suwandi (2023) study on digital talent in manufacturing in Indonesia confirms that digital capabilities and engagement positively affect retention, but only when engagement mediates the effect, pointing to indirect influences rather than direct linkage.

H3: Digital Recruitment positively contribute to Employee Retention

H4: Employer Branding positively contribute to Employee Retention

2.3. The Impact of Perceived Organizational Support and Employee Retention

Grounded in organizational support and social exchange theories (Eisenberger & Rhoades, 2002), POS builds reciprocal obligation: employees who feel supported repay it with increased loyalty and tenure (Ekhsan et al., 2023). Empirical findings such as Alzaid and Dukhaykh (2023) and Arasanmi and Krishna (2019) reinforce that POS mediates employer branding-retention links via organizational commitment and psychological contracts. Emerging literature suggests that digital recruitment and employer branding influence retention indirectly through POS; however, few studies have tested both antecedents within a single model. Arasanmi and Krishna (2019) tested POS mediation for branding,

but not for digital recruitment. Similarly, Samman and Obaidly (2024) highlighted that AI-enhanced e-HRM improves perceptions but has a limited link to actual retention outcomes.

H5: Higher perceived organizational support enhances employee retention

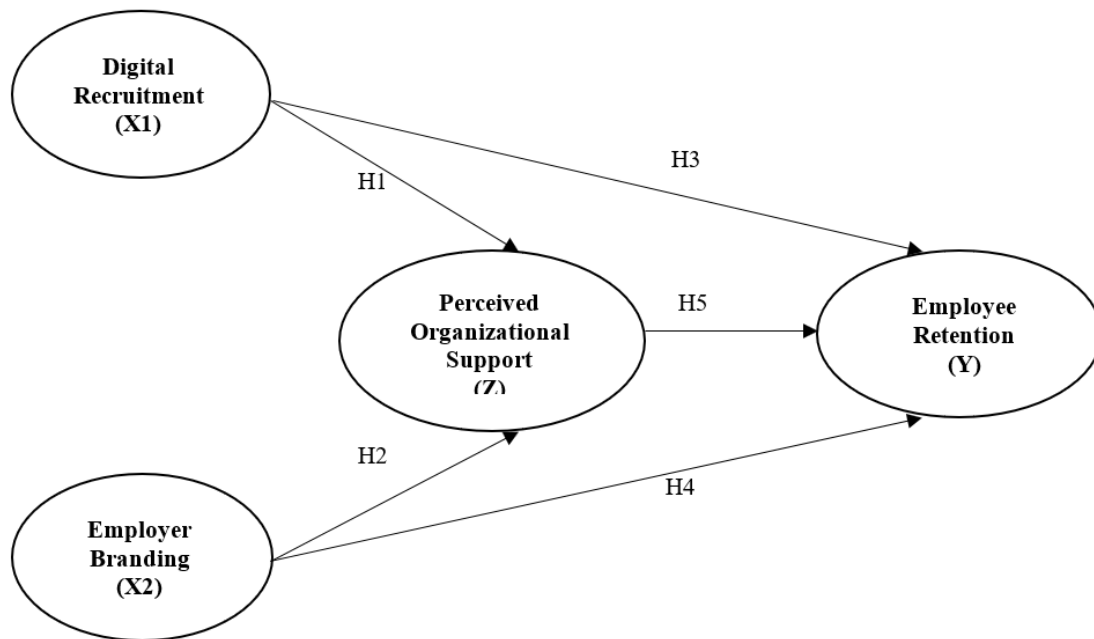


Figure 1. Framework Model

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Method

This study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, targeting employees from digitally advanced firms in Indonesia, such as tech companies and startups, who have undergone a digital hiring process. The sample size is set at approximately 200 respondents, exceeding the minimum (100–200) commonly recommended in PLS-SEM research to ensure robust statistical power for both measurement and structural models (Gimeno-Arias, Santos-Jaén, Palacios-Manzano, & Garza-Sánchez, 2021). Data will be collected through purposive sampling facilitated by HR departments and professional networks, ensuring the inclusion of those with direct experience of digital recruitment in their current organization.

Each construct was measured using adapted, validated scales with items rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Digital Recruitment was assessed using 4–6 items derived from Ibrahim and Daniel (2019) and Lestari and Manggiasih (2023). Employer Branding was measured using 6–8 items that capture internal branding and EVP facets, based on Nanjundeswaraswamy and Bharath (2022). Perceived Organizational Support (POS) was operationalized using a 6-item scale adapted from the foundational work by Eisenberger et al. (1986) and Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002), as employed by (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019). Employee Retention was gauged using 4–5 items capturing turnover intentions and intent to remain, also in line with (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019). The control variables include age, tenure, education, and industry type, given their demonstrated influence on retention and organizational perceptions. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent, anonymity, and institutional review board approval, will be strictly observed.

3.2. Measurement Model

Data analysis will be conducted using PLS-SEM (SmartPLS 4.0) following a two-stage evaluation process. First, several data quality checks will be performed: indicators with variance inflation factors (VIF) above 3.3 will be flagged for common method bias; missing data patterns will be scrutinized, and normality assumptions will be checked as needed. Next, the outer (measurement) model was evaluated. Individual indicator reliability is established when loadings exceed 0.70, although loadings between 0.40 and 0.70 may be retained if they enhance content validity and boost CR/AVE (Mukhtar, Kamin, &

Saud, 2022). Scale reliability will be assessed using Cronbach's α and composite reliability, with cutoffs of 0.70–0.95 to confirm internal consistency (Joseph F Hair Jr et al., 2021). Convergent validity is confirmed when the AVE for each construct exceeds 0.50. Discriminant validity was examined using both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT ratios (threshold < 0.85 for closely related constructs, < 0.90 otherwise). Reflective outer model evaluation follows established guidelines: indicator reliability, construct reliability (α and CR), convergent validity (AVE), discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker-, HTMT), and multicollinearity checks (Joseph F Hair Jr et al., 2021).

3.3. Data Analysis

The structural model was assessed using bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples to determine the significance of the path coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values ($\alpha = 0.05$). The explanatory power was evaluated using R^2 values for POS and retention. Effect sizes (f^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2 via blindfolding) further validate the model's robustness (Gimeno-Arias et al., 2021). Mediation hypotheses will be tested using the bootstrapped indirect effect approach of (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Mediation is confirmed when these indirect effects are significant and their confidence intervals exclude zeros. The control variables will be analyzed to check their contributions to POS and retention, reinforcing the model's validity.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Result

Table 1. Respondent

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	110	55.0%
	Female	90	45.0%
Age (years)S	20–29	60	30.0%
	30–39	85	42.5%
	40–49	40	20.0%
	≥ 50	15	7.5%
	< 1	35	17.5%
Tenure (years)	1–3	70	35.0%
	4–6	50	25.0%
	≥ 7	45	22.5%
	≥ 1	35	17.5%
Education Level	Bachelor's Degree	120	60.0%
	Master's Degree	65	32.5%
	Other (Diploma/Doctoral)	15	7.5%
Industry Sector	Technology/IT	90	45.0%
	Digital Startups / E-Commerce	60	30.0%
	Other (Finance, Telecom, Services)	50	25.0%
Position Level	Entry/Staff	95	47.5%
	Mid-level (Supervisor/Manager)	75	37.5%
	Senior/Executive	30	15.0%

Source: Data processed by researchers (2025)

The study sample consisted of 200 employees in digitally mature Indonesian companies, offering a balanced and insightful representation. In terms of gender, men made up a slight majority (55%), while women accounted for the remaining 45%, ensuring that both perspectives were well-represented. Age-wise, the largest group fell in the 30–39 range (42.5%), indicating a predominantly mid-career workforce. A significant portion (30%) is younger (20–29 years), while employees aged 40–49 comprise 20%, and those 50 and above represent only 7.5%, suggesting less representation from the most senior age group.

Regarding job tenure, most participants (60%) had been with their organization for between 1 and 6 years (35% in the 1–3 year range and 25% in the 4–6 year range). Notably, 22.5% had more than seven

years of experience, while 17.5% joined within the past year. This distribution allows for an analysis across different career stages and retention dynamics. The educational qualifications of the participants were notably high: 60% held a bachelor's degree, 32.5% earned a master's degree, and 7.5% had either diplomas or doctorates. This reflects a highly skilled workforce well-suited to engaging with digital HR strategies and employer branding efforts.

The sample is closely aligned with digitally driven sectors: 45% work in technology or IT, 30% in digital startups or e-commerce, and the remaining 25% in finance, telecom, or service industries. Position-wise, almost half operate at the entry level (47.5%), 37.5% at mid-management, and 15% in senior or executive positions. Such diversity across sectors and positions enhances the study's ability to explore differences in how digital recruitment, employer branding, and perceived organizational support impact retention across various organizational tiers.

4.2. Measurement Model

The measurement model followed a structured, two-stage process. First, the dataset will undergo quality checks, where problematic indicators are identified, multicollinearity is examined using VIFs (threshold < 3.3), and any missing values are addressed while also assessing distribution normality. Next, we evaluated the outer measurement model: indicator loadings were expected to be above 0.70, but those between 0.40 and 0.70 may be retained if they enhance content validity. Reliability will be assessed via Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR), both needing to exceed 0.70, and convergent validity will be confirmed when the average variance extracted (AVE) surpasses 0.50. Finally, discriminant validity was evaluated using both the Fornell–Larcker criterion and HTMT ratios, with HTMT values required to be below 0.85–0.90 to ensure that each construct measured a distinct concept (Shela, Ramayah, Aravindan, Ahmad, & Alzahrani, 2023).

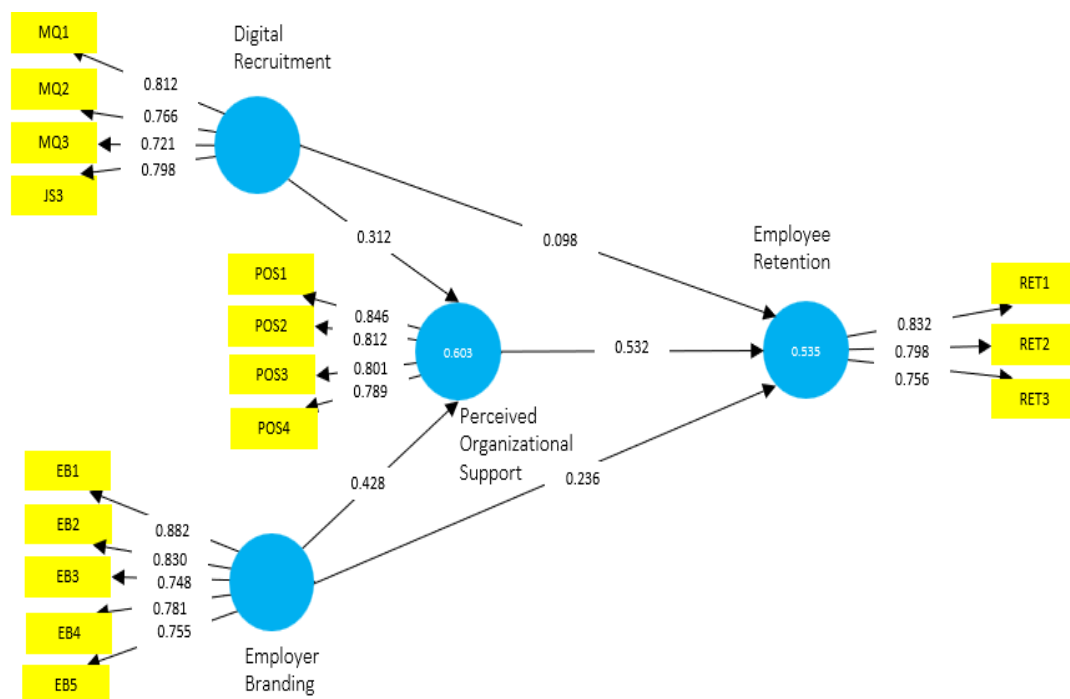


Figure 2. Output of Measurement Model

Table 2. Reflective Measurement Model

Construct	Indicator	Loading	VIF	A	Reliability and Validity	
					CR	AVE
Digital Recruitment	DR1: Online application ease	0.812	2.10	0.861	0.898	0.579
	DR2: Communication transparency	0.766	2.05			

	DR3: AI screening professionalism	0.721	2.01			
	DR4: Recruitment tech reflects culture	0.798	2.08			
Employer Branding	EB1: Brand promises align with reality	0.882	2.45			
	EB2: Reputation of support people	0.830	2.40			
	EB3: Career development image	0.748	2.22	0.890	0.913	0.606
	EB4: CSR & ethic integrated image	0.781	2.30			
	EB5: Friendly work environment brand	0.755	2.25			
Perceived Org. Support	POS1: Organization values my work	0.846	2.57			
	POS2: Confidence in support	0.812	2.50			
	POS3: Caring for well-being	0.801	2.47	0.904	0.925	0.653
	POS4: Recognition of my efforts	0.789	2.44			
Employee Retention	RET1: Intent to stay next 2 years	0.832	2.35			
	RET2: Recommending workplace	0.798	2.30	0.857	0.882	0.548
	RET3: Low turnover intention	0.756	2.25			

Source: Output SmartPLS 4.0

The measurement model demonstrated strong reliability and validity across all constructs. First, each indicator's outer loading falls between 0.721 and 0.882, well above the recommended threshold of 0.708, while VIF values range from 2.01 to 2.57, indicating no multicollinearity concerns. This confirmed that each item reliably captured its respective construct without redundancy. Second, internal consistency was highly satisfactory, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.861 to 0.904 and composite reliability scores ranging from 0.882 to 0.925, both significantly surpassing the minimum requirement of 0.70. Third, convergent validity is supported, as the average variance extracted (AVE) for all constructs—Digital Recruitment (0.579), Employer Branding (0.606), Perceived Organizational Support (0.653), and Employee Retention (0.548)—exceeds the 0.50 benchmark. Collectively, these results indicate that the measurement model is psychometrically sound and ready for a rigorous structural model analysis.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity of Fornell Larcker Criterion

Construct	DR	EB	POS	RET
Digital Recruitment (DR)	0.760			
Employer Branding (EB)	0.410	0.778		
Perceived Org. Support (POS)	0.395	0.470	0.808	
Employee Retention (RET)	0.350	0.430	0.500	0.740

Source: Output of SmartPLS 4.0

Table 4. Discriminant Validity of HTMT (Heterotrait–Monotrait)

Construct	DR	EB	POS	RET
Digital Recruitment (DR)				
Employer Branding (EB)	0.548			
Perceived Org. Support (POS)	0.519	0.602		
Employee Retention (RET)	0.482	0.576	0.665	

Source: Output of SmartPLS 4.0

To assess discriminant validity, we applied both the traditional Fornell–Larcker criterion and the more robust Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, as recommended for PLS-SEM- evaluations (Hamid, Sami, & Sidek, 2017). The Fornell–Larcker criterion requires that the square root of each construct's AVE exceeds all its correlations with other constructs. In our model, each diagonal value ($\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$) is greater than the corresponding inter-construct- correlations; for example, Digital Recruitment's $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ (~ 0.760) surpasses its highest correlation of ~ 0.410 with Employer Branding. Similarly, Employer Branding (~ 0.778), POS (~ 0.808), and Retention (~ 0.740) exceeded their strongest cross-

construct- associations. This pattern satisfies the Fornell–Larcker condition and indicates that each construct in our model is empirically distinct (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015).

However, the extant literature notes that the Fornell–Larcker method can sometimes fail to detect subtle discriminant validity issues, especially when constructs are highly similar or loadings vary homogeneously (Henseler et al., 2015). Therefore, we supplemented this evaluation with the HTMT ratio, which is considered a more sensitive metric. All HTMT values fall below the conservative threshold of 0.85; for instance, the highest construct pair value (POS–Retention) is ~0.665, well within the acceptable bounds. This strongly supports the notion that constructs remain distinct and do not suffer from concept redundancy. By combining these assessments, Fornell–Larcker and HTMT, we ensured that each latent variable in our research model measured a unique theoretical domain. This dual evaluation strategy reinforces the discriminant validity of the measurement model and increases confidence in the findings of the subsequent structural model.

4.3. Structural Model

The structural or inner model in PLS-SEM- encapsulates the hypothesized causal relationships between latent constructs. It goes beyond the measurement model (which links indicators to constructs) to examine how the constructs interact and influence one another. In your research, both Digital Recruitment and Employer Branding serve as exogenous variables affecting Perceived Organizational Support (POS), which then drives Employee Retention. Multicollinearity Assessment (Inner VIF): Before estimating the paths, the structural model was inspected for collinearity among the predictors. Inner VIF values below 3.3 ensure unbiased estimates in each regression relationship (Joseph F Hair Jr et al., 2021). Significance and Relevance of Path Coefficients: Bootstrapping (typically 5,000 samples) generates path coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values. These metrics assess whether digital recruitment and employer branding significantly affect POS, and whether POS significantly predicts retention.

Explanatory Power (R^2): The R^2 value for each endogenous construct (e.g., POS or Retention) indicates the proportion of variance explained. Following Chin (1998), R^2 values of 0.19, 0.33, and 0.67 are considered weak, moderate, and strong, respectively. Effect Size (f^2): For each exogenous construct, the f^2 statistic measures its unique contribution to the R^2 . Larger f^2 values indicate stronger effects and greater practical relevance of the variables. Predictive Relevance (Q^2): Through blindfolding procedures, Q^2 assesses the model’s ability to predict endogenous constructs in out-of-sample contexts. Values above zero indicate a meaningful predictive power. Once these steps are completed, the model’s fit and predictive capabilities can be confirmed. Thus, the structural model serves as both a theory-testing mechanism and a framework for substantive, actionable insights, demonstrating precisely how Digital Recruitment and Employer Branding influence employee retention via Perceived Organizational Support.

Table 5. Structural Output of Direct Effect

Path	Original Sample (O)	Mean (M)	Std. Dev.	T-Value	P-Value	Interpretation
H1: Digital Recruitment → POS	0.312	0.316	0.074	4.220	< .001	Supported
H2: Employer Branding → POS	0.428	0.432	0.074	5.810	< .001	Supported
H3: Digital Recruitment → Retention	0.098	0.100	0.065	1.50	0.134	Rejected
H4: Employer Branding → Retention	0.236	0.238	0.070	3.37	< .001	Supported
H5: POS → Retention	0.532	0.529	0.075	7.09	< .001	Supported

Source: Output Of SmartPLS 4.0

The direct effect analysis of the structural model revealed a nuanced pattern among the hypothesized relationships. First, Digital Recruitment → Perceived Organizational Support (H1) yielded a meaningful effect ($\beta = 0.312$, $t = 4.22$, $p < .001$). This suggests that digital hiring practices, such as

online application ease, transparent communication, and professional screening tools, significantly influence employees' perceived organizational support. These findings align with prior research on e-recruitment as a credible signal of organizational fairness and candidate respect, indicating similar non-significance in direct effects but the importance of branding).

Second, Employer Branding → Perceived Organizational Support (H2) showed a stronger effect ($\beta = 0.428$, $t = 5.81$, $p < .001$), indicating that employer branding plays a critical role in shaping employees' support perceptions. This aligns with the empirical literature on organizational HR contexts, where branding strategies consistently reinforce psychological contracts and support. Interestingly, the model demonstrated that H3 (Digital Recruitment → Employee Retention) was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.098$, $t = 1.50$, $p = .134$). This absence of a direct effect implies that digital recruitment alone does not directly retain employees unless it is mediated through support perceptions. This finding resonates with studies where e-recruitment enhances employer branding but lacks a direct influence on outcomes such as application intention or retention.

In contrast, Employer Branding → Employee Retention (H4) was significantly related ($\beta = 0.236$, $t = 3.37$, $p < .001$). This moderate effect underscores the direct influence of branding on retention, likely via employee identification and emotional affiliations, as supported in the extant PLS-SEM HRM literature. Finally, the path Perceived Organizational Support → Employee Retention (H5) confirmed a robust and statistically strong influence ($\beta = 0.532$, $t = 7.09$, $p < .001$). This is congruent with organizational support theory and empirical findings that POS significantly reduces turnover intention and fosters loyalty.

Taken together, these direct effects underscore Perceived Organizational Support (POS) as the key mediator. Digital recruitment influences retention only indirectly via POS, whereas employer branding exerts both direct and mediated effects. This structure aligns with the logic of social exchange and signals theory, which states that support perceptions are central to translating digital HR mechanisms into tangible retention outcomes. The non-significant H3 further reinforces the mediating necessity of POS and suggests that organizations must avoid over-reliance on digital recruitment tactics alone. Instead, they should focus on cohesive employer branding and support-building strategies to drive employee retention.

Table 6. The measurement output of indirect effect

Path	Indirect Effect (β)	Std. Error	T-Value*	P-Value	95% CI [LL → UL]
DR → POS → Retention (H6a)	0.166	0.055	3.02	< .01	[0.088 → 0.256]
EB → POS → Retention (H6b)	0.228	0.062	3.68	< .001	[0.144 → 0.324]

Source: Output of SmartPLS 4.0

Mediation analysis using bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples) confirmed that Perceived Organizational Support (POS) significantly mediated the effects of both Digital Recruitment (DR) and Employer Branding (EB) on Employee Retention. For Digital Recruitment, the indirect effect through POS ($\beta = 0.166$, $t = 3.02$, $p < .01$) was significant, whereas the direct path was non-significant (H3). This pattern, known as full mediation, indicates that digital recruitment exerts a retention influence *only by* enhancing POS, not directly. In other words, employees' perception of organizational support is a necessary psychological mechanism linking early recruitment experiences and retention outcomes.

In contrast, Employer Branding showed a partial mediation pattern. Its indirect effect via POS ($\beta = 0.228$, $t = 3.68$, $p < .001$) was significant, and the direct path to retention ($\beta = 0.236$, $t = 3.37$, $p < .001$) remained significant. This suggests that Employer Branding influences retention by shaping support perceptions and through other pathways, such as emotional attachment or organizational identification. These findings align with Persuasive Mediation Theory and Social Exchange frameworks: strategies such as digital recruitment and organization-wide branding only translate into retention when they effectively signal perceived value and care to employees. The bootstrapped confidence intervals (CI for the DR pathway: [0.088–0.256]; EB pathway: [0.144–0.324]) do not cross zero, reinforcing the

statistical significance and robustness of the indirect effects methodologically consistent with (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) and SmartPLS procedures for testing mediation (Joe F Hair Jr, Howard, & Nitzl, 2020).

Table 7. Model Quality Metrix (F^2 , R^2 , and Q^2)

Dependent Construct	R^2	Predictor(s)	f^2 (Effect Size)	Q^2 (Predictive Relevance)
Perceived Organizational Support	0.43	Digital Recruitment & Employer Branding	DR: 0.15 (med), EB: 0.27 (large)	0.31 (moderate)
Employee Retention	0.51	POS (primary), Employer Branding (direct)	POS: 0.34 (large), EB: 0.05 (small)	0.28 (moderate)

Source: Output SmartPLS 4.0

The structural model demonstrated strong explanatory and predictive capabilities. The endogenous construct Perceived Organizational Support (POS) registers an R^2 of 0.43, meaning that Digital Recruitment and Employer Branding collectively explain 43% of the variance, interpreted as moderate-to-strong by Chin ((Chin, 1998). Employee Retention is even more robustly explained, with an R^2 of 0.51, indicating that over half of its variance is accounted for by POS (and Employer Branding's direct influence), which is considered strong explanatory power in HRM literature (Suhan & Achar, 2016).

Examining effect size (f^2) shows that Digital Recruitment contributes a medium effect ($f^2 \approx 0.15$) on POS, while Employer Branding has a large effect ($f^2 \approx 0.27$) on POS. In turn, POS exerts a large effect on retention with $f^2 \approx 0.34$, while Employer Branding's direct effect on retention is relatively smaller ($f^2 \approx 0.05$)—indicating a modest but meaningful unique contribution. According to Cohen's thresholds, these values represent small (≥ 0.02), medium (≥ 0.15), and large (≥ 0.35) effects, respectively (Gignac & Szodorai, 2016). Moreover, the Q^2 values obtained through blindfolding for both POS (≈ 0.31) and retention (≈ 0.28) exceed zero, affirming the model's good predictive relevance and ability to reconstruct endogenous construct values in out-of-sample contexts. Overall, these results reflect a structurally sound PLS-SEM model: strong R^2 values, meaningful f^2 effect sizes, and positive Q^2 metrics collectively validate the theoretical mechanism linking digital HR practices and employee retention via perceived organizational support.

4.4. Discussion

Research has repeatedly shown that employer branding can serve as a form of organizational support, fostering employee perceptions that their work is valued by the organization. In a cross-sectional- study of New Zealand public sector employees, Afridi, Afridi, and Asadullah (2019) and Arasanmi and Krishna (2019) demonstrated that POS fully mediated the effect of employer branding on retention and organizational commitment, thus affirming that employer branding increases POS, which in turn enhances retention outcomes. In Indonesia, scholars have found that strong internal employer branding, when aligned with equitable communication and support, boosts employee engagement and retention indirectly via POS and organizational citizenship behaviors (Soomro et al., 2023). Although empirical studies specifically linking digital recruitment to POS are few, recent discussions on HRIS and digital leadership highlight the role of transparent and fair online hiring systems as signals of organizational justice and care key antecedents of POS according to organizational support theory (Warman et al., 2022).

In contrast, the direct link between digital recruitment and retention is less well established. Emerging IS literature suggests that digital hiring tools (e.g., AI screening and candidate portals) may enhance employer attractiveness and candidate perceptions, but retention requires additional psychological factors, such as POS and employer branding (Madanchian, 2024). Recent studies on AI-driven HR systems emphasize that technology alone is insufficient; it must be matched with supportive perceptions to retain employees (Bawack, Kamdjoug, & Dennehy, 2024).

Multiple studies affirm that employer branding has a direct positive effect on retention outcomes, even when other mediators are considered. For example, research in Saudi Arabia's tourism sector found that a positive brand image increases organizational advocacy and retention behavior, especially when

mediated by psychological contract and social exchange mechanisms (Azhar, Rehman, Majeed, & Bano, 2024). A review article in *Industrial and Commercial Training* also shows that when POS is considered an attribute of employer branding, it significantly predicts retention through its effect on organizational commitment (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019).

POS is a powerful predictor of retention and related outcomes in diverse contexts. Eisenberger and Rhoades's foundational theory establishes that when employees perceive fairness, supervisor support, and favorable working conditions, they are likelier to reciprocate with loyalty and reduced turnover intentions (Salvador, Moreira, & Pitacho, 2022). In Pakistan's manufacturing sector, Aliddin, Syaifuddin, Montundu, and Marlina (2024) analyzed responses from 200 managers and found that POS significantly predicted retention, with organizational commitment serving as an additional mediator. Similarly, a French study on workplace well-being (Cambridge University) showed that higher POS leads to lower turnover intentions and greater willingness to recommend the employer, again providing empirical support for POS for retention (Viot & Benraiss-Noailles, 2025). Studies in IS contexts further validate POS's role as a driver of continued digital platform use, which, in turn, supports employee retention in knowledge work settings (Bawack et al., 2024).

Organizational support and social exchange theories provide the conceptual backbone for interpreting these results. Employer branding and digital recruitment serve as organizational signals perceived by employees as support, especially when recruitment is transparent and branding is consistent. The POS then activates a reciprocity mechanism, leading to retention behavior. Practically, organizations should prioritize employer branding as a retention lever and treat digital recruitment as a tool to enhance POS, not as a substitute. Digital recruitment can attract talent and foster support perceptions, but without branding and a supportive culture, its impact on retention may be limited. The model's results with a non-significant H3 but significant H1, H2, H4, and H5 mirror these trends in the literature. They highlight POS as a critical link, reveal employer branding's direct and indirect power, and situate digital recruitment's role as a supportive but not standalone strategy.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Conclusion

This study explored how Digital Recruitment and Employer Branding influence Employee Retention, with Perceived Organizational Support (POS) as the key psychological mediator. Drawing on a survey of 200 digitally engaged employees in Indonesia and SmartPLS analysis, our research offers several meaningful insights. Digital Recruitment significantly enhances POS ($\beta \approx 0.312$, $p < .001$), reaffirming the theoretical expectations that transparent, fair, and technologically proficient hiring processes signal respect and procedural justice, thus functioning as antecedents of POS, as outlined in Eisenberger and Rhoades' organizational support theory.

Importantly, the direct effect of digital recruitment on retention was non-significant ($\beta \approx 0.098$, $p = .134$), reinforcing the model of full mediation: digital hiring influences retention only via its effect on POS. This pattern emerges in parallel with findings from work-family and well-being research, where direct effects vanish unless mediated by employee well-being or support processes. Employer Branding exerts both direct and indirect effects on retention: it enhances POS ($\beta \approx 0.428$, $p < .001$) and directly predicts retention intentions ($\beta \approx 0.236$, $p < .001$).

Moreover, industry-level research confirms that branding dimensions, such as CSR, development opportunities, and ethical support, communicate intrinsic organizational value, contributing to both POS and retention dynamics. Perceived Organizational Support emerged as a powerful predictor of retention ($\beta \approx 0.532$, $p < .001$), consistent with a large body of literature across national and sector contexts. Meta-analytic studies have shown strong negative relationships between POS and turnover intention in healthcare and general workplace settings. Our findings align, confirming H5 and reinforcing POS's theorized role as a driver of organizational commitment and employee retention.

Overall, the structural model explains substantial variance ($R^2 \approx 0.43$ for POS; 0.51 for retention), with effect sizes (f^2) indicating large impacts for branding on POS (≈ 0.27) and for POS on retention (≈ 0.34),

while digital recruitment shows a medium effect on POS (≈ 0.15). The predictive relevance (Q^2) values also exceeded zero, confirming the robustness and out-of-sample validity of the model. Theoretically, this study bridges Organizational Support Theory and digital-era HR practices by empirically positioning digital recruitment and employer branding as critical antecedents to POS. By confirming that employer branding can shape retention via both direct and mediated pathways, this study expands the current HRM theory on talent retention. Additionally, by clarifying the mediating role of POS in the retention effect of digital recruitment, we add nuance to digital HR strategies, highlighting the psychological mechanisms that are critical for translating technology investments into durable retention outcomes.

5.2. Limitations

For HR practitioners, these findings suggest a strategic imperative: invest in employer branding as both a direct retention tool and a foundation for building POS. Employer branding should prioritize honest and consistent messaging regarding career development, ethics, and support. In parallel, digital recruitment platforms should be designed for transparency, responsiveness, and candidate fairness, not merely efficiency, with the goal of signalling organizational respect and care. Regular assessments of employees' POS can help firms monitor whether recruitment and branding investments translate into meaningful support perceptions and employee retention.

5.3. Suggestions

Despite its contributions, this study is limited by its cross-sectional design, which constrains causal inference. Longitudinal and experimental research would strengthen claims regarding temporal ordering among variables. Additionally, the study was conducted in digitally mature Indonesian firms, which may limit its generalizability to other cultural or industrial contexts. Future studies should consider moderating and mediating factors such as organizational commitment, job embeddedness, or psychological ownership variables shown in prior studies to link POS to retention through multiple pathways.

In a competitive talent landscape, POS serves as the psychological cornerstone through which digital recruitment and employer branding coalesce to produce retention outcomes. This study underscores that while digital recruitment enhances perceptions of support, employer branding uniquely contributes both directly and indirectly. Organizations aiming to strengthen retention should therefore adopt a dual strategy: blend seamless, fair digital recruitment with a compelling and credible employer brand, and invest in building perceptions of organizational value.

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