ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TOWARDS EMPLOYEE RETENTION VIA MEDIATION OF EMPLOYEE LOYALTY: A COMPANY GOVERNANCE STUDY

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on employee retention, with a specific focus on the mediating role of employee loyalty. AI contributes to employee retention by personalizing engagement strategies, improving workplace efficiency, and reducing stress (Chowdhury et al., 2023; Adigwe et al., 2024). Utilizing a cross-sectional design, data was collected from 324 managerial-level employees within the manufacturing sector in Saudi Arabia through a convenience sampling technique. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was conducted using SmartPLS v. 4 software to analyze the relationships among variables. The findings indicate that AI significantly enhances employee loyalty, which in turn plays a crucial mediating role in improving employee retention. These results suggest that while AI directly influences retention, its most significant effect is mediated through increased employee loyalty. The study provides valuable insights for organizations seeking to leverage AI to foster a loyal workforce and enhance retention strategies. By highlighting the importance of integrating AI with practices that build employee loyalty, the study offers practical recommendations for organizations aiming to optimize their human resource management (HRM) and improve overall employee engagement and retention.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Retention, Loyalty, Manufacturing

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) has significantly transformed various facets of organizational management, reshaping how businesses operate and compete in a globalized economy (Adigwe et al., 2024). AI technologies, with their ability to analyze vast amounts of data, automate routine tasks, and provide insights for strategic decision-making, have become integral tools for enhancing efficiency, productivity, and overall organizational performance (Eziefule et al., 2022). From predictive analytics to automated customer service and personalized marketing, AI's influence extends across all functions of a business. In the realm of human resource management (HRM), AI is increasingly being utilized to improve recruitment processes, employee training, performance management, and talent retention strategies (Bhardwaj et al., 2020; Marvin et al., 2021). This technological evolution presents organizations with unprecedented opportunities to optimize their workforce and maintain a competitive advantage in the market.

In today's highly competitive business environment, talent retention has emerged as a critical concern for organizations seeking to maintain stability and drive long-term success (Horton, 2020). Employee retention goes beyond simply reducing turnover rates. It encompasses the broader objective of fostering a motivated, engaged, and loyal workforce (Seixas et al., 2024). High retention rates are often associated with increased employee satisfaction, better team cohesion, and stronger organizational performance (Chowdhury et al., 2023). However, retaining top talent has become increasingly challenging due to a variety of factors, including the shifting expectations of a new generation of workers, the increasing mobility of the global workforce, and the intensified competition for skilled professionals. Employees today seek more than just a stable job — they desire meaningful work, growth opportunities, and a supportive work environment. In this context, AI presents both opportunities and challenges. While AI technologies can significantly enhance job satisfaction by offering personalized experiences, streamlined processes, and data-driven insights, their impact on employee loyalty, an essential component of retention, requires careful consideration. The implementation of AI must be strategically managed to ensure that it contributes positively to the organizational culture and employee experience, rather than alienating or disengaging the workforce (Seixas et al., 2023). AI's impact on employee retention is multifaceted (Horton, 2020). On one hand, AI can enhance the employee experience by personalizing work processes, providing career development insights, and facilitating more efficient communication (Mer, 2023). AI-driven tools can analyze an employee's skills and career aspirations to suggest personalized learning and development opportunities, thereby increasing job satisfaction and loyalty (Rath et al., 2023). AI can also improve workplace efficiency by automating routine tasks, allowing employees to focus on more meaningful and engaging work. Moreover, AI can provide managers with real-time data and predictive analytics to identify potential retention risks, such as signs of disengagement or dissatisfaction, enabling timely interventions. However, while AI offers significant opportunities for improving employee retention, its implementation must be carefully managed to avoid potential drawbacks. There is a risk that AI, if not used thoughtfully, could lead to feelings of surveillance or depersonalization among employees, potentially undermining their sense of autonomy and belonging. Additionally, the effectiveness of AI in enhancing retention depends largely on how well it is integrated with other HRM practices, particularly those that foster employee loyalty (Basnet, 2024).

This study seeks to explore the role of AI in enhancing employee retention, with a particular focus on the mediating effect of employee loyalty. Previous research has highlighted various factors influencing retention, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and workplace culture (Anitha & Begum, 2016; Iqbal et al., 2017). However, the specific mechanisms through which AI influences these factors, particularly loyalty, remain underexplored. By investigating the relationship between AI, employee loyalty, and retention, this study aims to fill this gap and provide actionable insights for organizations looking to leverage AI effectively.

The structure of this paper is as follows. Section 1 discusses AI's role in employee retention and loyalty. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature, providing a foundation for the study. Section 3 details the methodology, including the study's design and data analysis approach. Sections 4 and 5 interpret the findings, offering insights into the relationships among the variables. Finally, Section 6 concludes by summarizing key insights, presenting implications for organizations on leveraging AI for retention, and suggesting directions for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Employee retention

Employee retention is a key component of effective HRM, reflecting an organization's ability to maintain its workforce and minimize turnover (Alshamrani et al., 2023). High retention rates are vital for organizational stability and success, as they help preserve institutional knowledge, reduce recruitment and training costs, and sustain productivity levels (Lee et al., 2023). Retaining experienced and skilled employees is essential for maintaining a competitive edge in today's dynamic business environment (Arora & Arora, 2024). Effective employee retention strategies involve creating a supportive and engaging work environment where employees feel valued and motivated (Fazal-e-Hasan et al., 2023). When employees perceive that their work is meaningful, their contributions are recognized, and there are clear paths for growth, they are more likely to remain with the organization long-term (Ekhsan et al., 2023). This, in turn, enhances overall job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

In addition to traditional retention strategies, the integration of technology, particularly AI, has introduced new opportunities for enhancing retention (Seixas et al., 2024). AI tools can analyze employee data to identify trends and predict potential turnover risks, allowing organizations to intervene proactively (Horton, 2020). AI-driven analytics can provide insights into employee engagement levels, job satisfaction, and other factors that may influence retention (Seixas et al., 2023). By leveraging these insights, organizations can tailor their retention strategies to address the specific needs and concerns of their employees (Das & Baruah, 2013). AI can also improve the employee experience by automating routine tasks, thus allowing employees to focus on more meaningful and fulfilling work (Alias et al., 2017; Singh, 2019). Additionally, AI can facilitate personalized career development plans and performance feedback, which can further increase job satisfaction and loyalty.

2.2. Artificial intelligence

AI refers to the simulation of human intelligence in machines designed to perform tasks that typically require human cognitive functions, such as learning, problem-solving, and decision-making (Loureiro et al., 2021). AI encompasses a variety of technologies, including machine learning, natural language processing, computer vision, and robotics (Brown et al., 2024). These technologies have

significantly impacted numerous fields, including business and management, where AI's integration has revolutionized operations, customer interactions, and HRM (Sestino & de Mauro, 2022).

In business management, AI has become increasingly relevant, particularly in the context of employee management (Nawaz et al., 2024). AI technologies are used to enhance operational efficiency, automate routine tasks, and provide personalized experiences for employees (Basnet, 2024). In HRM, AI aids in recruitment by identifying suitable candidates, supports employee performance management, and enhances career development through personalized recommendations (Halid et al., 2024). AI can influence loyalty by improving job satisfaction and career development opportunities (Singh & Khatun, 2024). Personalized AI tools analyze employee data to tailor work experiences and offer career growth suggestions, thereby enhancing job satisfaction. Moreover, AI automates routine tasks, allowing employees to engage in more meaningful work, which can foster a greater sense of loyalty to the organization (Chowdhury et al., 2023). AI contributes to retention by addressing common turnover factors such as job dissatisfaction and lack of advancement opportunities (Vrontis et al., 2023). Predictive analytics enables AI to identify early signs of potential turnover, allowing organizations to intervene proactively. Additionally, AI improves the work environment and provides personalized support, which can enhance overall retention rates. AI represents a significant technological advancement with the potential to drive improvements in various business aspects, including employee management (Sabil et al., 2023). By positively influencing employee loyalty and retention, AI helps create a more engaged and stable workforce (Bujold et al., 2023). As AI technology continues to evolve, its role in shaping employee experiences and organizational success is expected to expand, offering new opportunities for enhancing job satisfaction and retention strategies. Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H1: Artificial intelligence influence on employee loyalty.

H2: Artificial intelligence influence on employee retention.

2.3. Employee loyalty

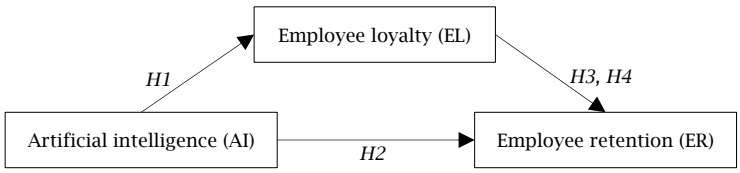
Employee loyalty is a critical factor influencing organizational success, as it reflects employees' commitment and dedication to their employer (Guillon & Cezanne, 2014). High levels of employee loyalty can significantly enhance an organization's stability and performance by reducing turnover rates and boosting productivity (Mehta et al., 2010). Loyal employees are more inclined to stay with the organization, contribute positively to the workplace culture, and invest greater effort in their roles (Tomic et al., 2018). Several factors contribute to fostering employee loyalty, including job satisfaction, recognition, and career development opportunities. When employees feel valued and appreciated, their commitment to the organization increases (Darmawan et al., 2020; Dhir et al., 2020; Hartika et al., 2023). Organizations that implement effective management practices, such as providing timely recognition, offering competitive compensation, and creating a supportive work environment, are more likely to cultivate strong employee loyalty. Employee loyalty plays a pivotal role in influencing employee retention (Lee & Liu, 2021). When employees are loyal to their organization, they are more likely to stay long-term, reducing turnover rates and the associated costs of recruitment and training (Mampuru et al., 2024). Loyal employees are generally more satisfied with their roles and are less likely to seek employment elsewhere, leading to greater organizational stability. The impact of AI on employee retention is partially mediated by employee loyalty. AI can enhance job satisfaction and career development opportunities, thereby increasing employee loyalty. In turn, higher levels of employee loyalty contribute to improved retention rates. By improving work conditions and providing personalized experiences, AI indirectly strengthens employee loyalty, which in turn helps retain employees within the organization. Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H3: Employee loyalty influence on employee retention.

H4: Employee loyalty mediates the relation between artificial intelligence and employee retention.

Figure 1 depicts the research model.

Figure 1. Research model



3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study utilized a cross-sectional design to investigate the impact of AI on ER, with a particular focus on the mediating role of EL. Data was collected from 324 managerial-level employees working in manufacturing sector organizations in Saudi Arabia. Participants were selected through convenience sampling, which facilitated the efficient gathering of data from readily accessible individuals.

A five-point Likert scale was employed for measuring responses, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", allowing participants to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with various statements related to the study's constructs. To measure the key variables, specific instruments were used: AI was assessed using seven items adapted from Paschen et al. (2019) and Wijayati et al. (2022), focusing on different facets of AI implementation. Employee loyalty was measured with five items adapted from Al-Refaie (2015), capturing the degree of employees' commitment to

their organization. Employee retention was evaluated using four items adapted from Elsafty and Oraby (2022), addressing factors that influence employees' decisions to stay with their organization.

Data analysis was performed using structural equation modeling (SEM) with SmartPLS. v. 4 software. This analytical approach enabled the exploration of complex relationships between AI, EL, and ER, including the direct effects of AI on ER and the mediating role of EL in this relationship. Additionally, a longitudinal study could be supportive in seeing the impact on the temporal scale.

4. RESULTS

The study's participants, totaling 324, predominantly consist of males (56%), with females making up 44% of the sample (Table 1). Most participants are within the age range of 25–44 years old, with 42% aged 25–34 years old and 39% aged 35–44 years old. Education-wise, a significant majority hold a bachelor's degree (62%), followed by those with a master's degree (28%), and a smaller group with a high school education (10%). In terms of experience, over half of the participants have 1–5 years of work experience (52%), while 27% have 6–10 years, 15% have 11–15 years, and a minor 6% have less than 1 year of experience.

Table 1. Participants characteristics (n = 324)

Category	*Characteristics*	*Frequency*	*Percent (%)*
Gender	Male	181	56
	Female	143	44
	Total	**324**	**100,00**
Age	25–34 years old	136	42
	35–44 years old	125	39
	45–54 years old	56	17
	55–64 years old	7	2
	Total	**324**	**100,00**
Education	High school or equivalent	31	10
	Bachelor's degree	201	62
	Master's degree	92	28
	Total	**324**	**100,00**
Experience	Less than 1 year	21	6
	1–5 years	167	52
	6–10 years	86	27
	11–15 years	50	15
	Total	**324**	**100,00**

Table 2 summarizes the measurement model results for the constructs of *AI*, *EL*, and *ER*. Item loadings for each construct above 0.7 met the threshold. The reliability and validity of these constructs are supported by the values of Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). *AI* shows good internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.843, a strong CR of 0.881, and an AVE of 0.515, indicating adequate variance capture. *EL* also demonstrates acceptable internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.73, a CR of 0.822, and a solid AVE of 0.581. Similarly, *ER* exhibits good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.773, CR of 0.804, and an AVE of 0.507, just above the acceptable threshold. These results indicate that the constructs are reliable and valid measures within the study.

Table 2. Measurement model

Items with constructs	*Loadings*	*Cronbach's alpha*	*CR*	*AVE*
Artificial intelligence (AI)		0.843	0.881	0.515
AI1: AI can help me find lost data.	0.734			
AI2: AI provides accurate data and information.	0.701			
AI3: AI can help me in making important decisions in the company.	0.751			
AI4: AI can help display hard-to-measure data.	0.77			
AI5: AI can protect the privacy of you and others.	0.772			
AI6: AI can help me get the job done.	0.78			
AI7: The authorities can easily audit AI.	0.704			
Employee loyalty (EL)		0.73	0.822	0.581
EL1: I believe nowadays employees move regularly from one company to another.	0.712			
EL2: I consider it ethical to leave this company if I receive a better offer from elsewhere.	0.753			
EL3: Commitment to the company is an important value.	0.756			
EL4: This company deserves my loyalty.	0.748			
EL5: I would recommend others to work in this company.	0.715			
Employee retention (ER)		0.773	0.804	0.507
ER1: I want to stay with the company for a long time.	0.737			
ER2: I feel really satisfied doing this job.	0.711			
ER3: I feel that I am developing my full potential at work.	0.757			
ER4: I feel that the training and development of the company enhance skills and expertise.	0.736			

Table 3 presents the discriminant validity of the constructs — *AI*, *EL*, and *ER* — using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. The square root of the AVE for each construct is compared with the correlations between that construct and others. These results confirm that each construct is distinct and well-differentiated from the others in the measurement model.

Table 3. Discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion)

	AI	*EL*	*ER*
AI	0.778		
EL	0.729	0.713	
ER	0.615	0.678	0.712

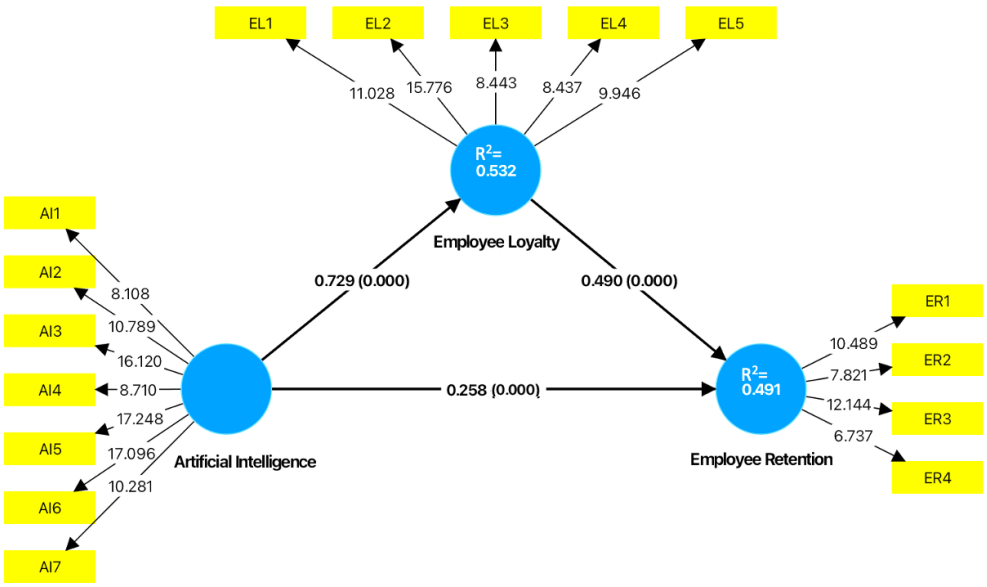
Table 4 presents the path coefficients for the hypothesized relationships in the model revealed significant findings across all paths. The relationship between *AI* and *EL* is strong, with a β value of 0.729, a high t-statistic of 12.41, and a p-value of 0.000, confirming the support for *H1*. The path from *AI* to *ER* also shows significance, with a β value of 0.258, a t-statistic of 3.839, and a p-value of 0.000, supporting *H2*. Additionally, the link between *EL* and *ER* is supported by a β value of 0.49, a t-statistic of 3.529, and a p-value of 0.000, validating *H3*. Lastly, the mediating effect of *EL* in the relationship between AI and *ER* is significant, with a β value of 0.357, a t-statistic of 3.383, and a p-value of 0.001, providing support for *H4*. These results demonstrate that all proposed relationships in the model are statistically significant and well-supported by the data.

Table 4. Path coefficients

Paths	β	*Std. dev.*	*t-statistics*	*p-values*	*Results*
AI → EL	0.729	0.059	12.41	0.000	*H1* supported
AI → ER	0.258	0.14	3.839	0.000	*H2* supported
EL → ER	0.49	0.139	3.529	0.000	*H3* supported
AI → EL → ER	0.357	0.106	3.383	0.001	*H4* supported

The R-squared values in Figure 2 indicate the proportion of variance explained by the predictors for each dependent variable. For *EL*, the R-squared value is 0.532, meaning that 53.2% of the variance in *EL* is explained by the model. This suggests a substantial amount of variability in *EL* can be attributed to the factors included in the model. For *ER*, the R-squared value is 0.491, indicating that 49.1% of the variance in ER is explained by the model. This reflects that a significant portion of the variability in *ER* is accounted for by the predictors.

Figure 2. Structural model



5. DISCUSSION

The results of this study underscore the pivotal role that *AI* plays in enhancing *ER*, with *EL* acting as a significant mediator in this relationship. The analysis reveals a robust positive path coefficient between *AI* and *EL* ($\beta = 0.729$), which supports *H1* and demonstrates that *AI* has a substantial impact on enhancing *EL*. AI technologies, when strategically implemented, can significantly increase employee satisfaction and commitment. This effect might be attributed to AI's ability to provide personalized feedback, streamline processes, and enhance overall employee experience (Marvin et al., 2021). Such improvements in *EL* are critical because they directly contribute to higher retention rates, as evidenced by the significant path from *AI* to *ER* ($\beta = 0.258$). This result supports *H2*, indicating that while the impact of AI on retention is somewhat smaller compared to its effect on loyalty, it still plays a crucial role in improving retention outcomes. The relationship between *EL* and *ER* ($\beta = 0.49$) is also significant, supporting *H3*. This finding underscores the importance of building a loyal workforce as a strategy for improving retention. Higher EL is associated with better retention rates, suggesting that fostering a sense of commitment and engagement among employees can effectively reduce turnover. The R-squared values, which are 53.2% for *EL* and 49.1% for *ER*, reveal that

the model effectively captures a considerable portion of the variance in both outcomes. This indicates that the predictors included in the model are substantial in explaining the variations observed in *EL* and retention. Additionally, the mediation analysis highlights that *EL* significantly mediates the relationship between *AI* and *ER*, with a β value of 0.357. This supports *H4* and emphasizes that the impact of *AI* on retention is, in part, channeled through its effect on *EL*. This significant mediation effect suggests that while *AI* directly influences retention, its most profound impact occurs through enhancing *EL*.

Organizations should strategically implement AI technologies to enhance employee experiences and satisfaction (Chowdhury et al., 2023). AI tools such as personalized learning platforms, advanced analytics for performance management, and automated feedback systems can play a crucial role (Alateeg et al., 2024; Alsaif, 2024). For instance, AI-driven career development platforms can tailor growth opportunities to individual performance and career goals, increasing engagement. Additionally, AI-powered analytics can identify areas where employees need support, fostering a more supportive environment (Bhardwaj et al., 2020). By aligning AI solutions with employees' needs and preferences, organizations can improve job satisfaction and boost loyalty, leading to higher retention rates (Horton, 2020).

Given that EL mediates the relationship between AI and retention, it is essential for organizations to focus on building and maintaining this loyalty. Creating a supportive and appreciative work culture where employees feel valued is crucial (Alateeg & Alhammadi, 2024a). Implementing recognition programs that leverage AI to track and reward achievements, along with regular feedback mechanisms, can enhance loyalty. Programs aimed at improving work-life balance, offering professional development, and fostering a positive workplace culture are also vital for cultivating long-term loyalty.

Retention strategies should integrate AI technologies with practices that build strong employee relationships (Seixas et al., 2023). While AI can improve job satisfaction and support, its most significant impact on retention is through enhancing EL. Therefore, organizations should combine AI tools with mentorship programs, team-building activities, and other practices that strengthen interpersonal relationships (Alateeg & Alhammadi, 2024b). This combined approach ensures that AI tools improve the work environment while organizational practices support engagement and loyalty.

To maximize AI benefits, organizations should tailor AI applications to meet the specific needs of their workforce (Seixas et al., 2024). Customizing AI tools to address the unique challenges and requirements of different employee groups can enhance their effectiveness. For instance, AI systems can be adjusted to provide targeted support for diverse demographics, ensuring that the tools are relevant and impactful. Tailoring AI applications helps in meeting varied workforce needs, thus improving both loyalty and retention.

Future research should explore the most effective AI tools and practices for enhancing EL and retention. Investigating specific features of AI technologies that significantly contribute to satisfaction and optimizing these features could be beneficial. Additionally, examining other potential mediators or moderators, such as organizational culture or leadership styles, might provide deeper insights into the AI-retention relationship. Longitudinal studies could also assess how the impact of AI on loyalty and retention evolves over time and across different contexts. By focusing on these areas, organizations can better leverage AI to improve ER, integrating technological advancements with practices that foster a loyal and engaged workforce.

6. CONCLUSION

This study underscores the significant role of AI in enhancing ER, with EL serving as a critical mediator in this process. The results reveal that AI has a strong positive impact on EL, which in turn significantly influences ER. The substantial R-squared values indicate that the model effectively explains a significant portion of the variance in both EL and retention, validating the proposed relationships. The findings highlight that while AI directly impacts retention by improving job satisfaction and efficiency, its most profound effect is mediated through its ability to enhance EL. This mediation effect emphasizes the importance of fostering a loyal workforce to maximize the benefits of AI in retaining employees. As organizations continue to integrate AI into their operations, it is crucial to focus not only on technological advancements but also on building a supportive and engaging work environment. Future research should explore specific AI tools and features that enhance EL and retention, as well as mediators like organizational culture and leadership styles. Longitudinal studies could provide insights into how AI's impact evolves over time and across contexts. This study's limitations, including its cross-sectional design and sector-specific focus, should be addressed to improve generalizability. The implications of this study suggest that organizations should strategically implement AI technologies that align with employee needs, foster a culture of appreciation and recognition, and integrate AI tools with practices that build strong interpersonal relationships. Tailoring AI applications to the specific needs of different employee groups and exploring further research on effective AI tools and practices will provide deeper insights and enhance the overall impact of AI on ER.

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