THE IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE-ENABLED HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION OF OFFICE EMPLOYEES IN HO CHI MINH CITY: THE MODERATING ROLE OF LEADER EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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Abstract. This study analyzes the impact of AI-enabled Human Resource Management practices on the engagement and retention of office employees in Ho Chi Minh City, grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET). The proposed model examines the mediating role of engagement and the moderating role of leader emotional intelligence. Data from 326 valid responses were analyzed using PLS-SEM (SmartPLS 4.0). The results indicate that AI in recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation and benefits, and appropriate team has a positive impact on employee engagement and retention, whereas AI in performance appraisal is not statistically significant. Engagement serves as a crucial mediator, and leader emotional intelligence demonstrates a partial moderating effect. The findings provide practical implications for businesses to optimize AI-HRM applications to enhance employee engagement and retention within the context of digital transformation.

Keywords. artificial intelligence; human resource management; employee engagement; employee retention; leader emotional intelligence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Optimizing processes based on big data analytics helps AI reshape the HR activity chain from recruitment to performance appraisal (Garg et al., 2024). Similarly, technologies such as machine learning and predictive analytics are fundamentally changing organizational operations, supporting leaders in making more effective strategic decisions (Mer, 2023). Notably, AI helps reduce administrative pressure and personalizes interactions, thereby increasing employee engagement (Khan et al., 2025).

Engagement is considered a core factor in talent retention because a supportive environment helps employees clearly perceive their self-worth (Siswanto, 2024). Modern AI-HRM systems can forecast the risk of turnover and provide early warnings for businesses to proactively implement retention strategies (Chheda et al., 2025). Research by Vrontis et al, (2022) also emphasizes that AI improves the employee experience through personalized development paths. However, AI adoption may create psychological challenges, as extensive monitoring practices tend to increase stress diminish perceived autonomy and adversely influence job satisfaction, ultimately reducing employee engagement (Siegel et al., 2022). Therefore, the relationship between engagement and retention is extremely close, as engagement and satisfaction can explain up to 56.8% of the variation in organizational commitment (Harini et al., 2024).

To harmonize the technical aspects of AI with human values in management, Leader Emotional Intelligence becomes a decisive factor. Based on the model proposed by (Goleman, 1998), EI is a core competency directly influencing employee motivation and trust. Leader emotional intelligence is proportional to satisfaction and organizational commitment key prerequisites for staff retention (Wong & Law, 2002). Meta analyses reinforce the role of EI in driving performance and organizational citizenship behavior across various contexts (Miao et al., 2017).

Despite the rapid growth of AI-HRM, current research still has significant knowledge gaps. First, most academic focus is on operational efficiency (Vrontis et al., 2022) rather than the psychological behavioral consequences and actual perceptions of employees post implementation (Garg et al., 2024). Additionally, AI is often approached as a holistic concept, lacking separation into specific HRM practices to deeply assess aspects of welfare and emotional representation (Votto et al., 2021). Notably, the role of moderating factors to mitigate the negative impacts of algorithmic monitoring remains under explored (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016). In the context of the highly volatile office labor market in Ho Chi Minh City, researching the moderating role of Leader Emotional Intelligence is an urgent requirement. This study aims to fill these gaps and provide solutions to harmonize technology and human factors in the modern digital workspace.

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This study contributes to AI-HRM literature in three ways. First, it extends Social Exchange Theory by explaining how AI-enabled HRM practices influence employee engagement and retention while considering leader emotional intelligence as a moderator. Second, it develops a comprehensive model by examining five AI-enabled HRM practices together with the mediating role of employee engagement and the moderating role of leader emotional intelligence. Third, it provides empirical evidence from office employees in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, enriching AI-HRM research in an emerging economy.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

2.1 Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Social Exchange Theory (SET) is considered one of the important foundations for explaining social relationships in organizations. Social relationships are formed and maintained based on the principle of exchanging benefits, where individuals tend to participate in and maintain relationships when the rewards received are greater than or proportionate to the costs incurred (Homans, 1958; Peter Blau, 1964). Social exchange relationships are based on reciprocity, trust and long-term commitment with relationship quality depending on the level of fairness and value received by the parties (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

2.2 Employee Retention

Agarwal (2017) argues that improving employee retention means increasing the ability to maintain the workforce by building a favorable work environment and appropriate policies; thus, this concept is understood as an effort to minimize turnover rates and preserve a competent team. Retention is the result of organizational factors that increase an employee's intention to stay including job satisfaction, development opportunities, and organizational commitment (Kyndt et al., 2009).

2.3 AI Recruitment and Selection

The application of AI in recruitment helps optimize searching and selection processes through candidate data analysis, increasing accuracy and reducing bias in decision making (Rani et al., 2024). It promotes objectivity, transparency and fairness, thereby creating positive employee perceptions of the organization (Nguyen Tuan Anh, 2025; Nguyen Van Toai, 2024). Proper selection reduces job mismatch, enhances satisfaction, and improves experience, thus driving engagement (Azam Malik, 2024; Qawasmeh et al., 2024). AI enhances selection quality, creates positive experiences, and fosters perceptions of fairness, thereby increasing loyalty and reducing turnover intention (Sura, 2025). Specifically, engagement acts as a mediator when job fit and positive initial experiences contribute to a sense of belonging and long-term commitment (Tehseena, 2020). Based on these arguments, the study proposes:

H1: AI Recruitment and Selection positively affects employee engagement.

H2: AI Recruitment and Selection positively affects employee retention.

H3: AI Recruitment and Selection positively affects employee retention with the mediating role of employee engagement.

2.4 AI Training and Development

According to Gayathiri & Prabu (2024), AI-enabled HRM practices improve competency and job fit, thereby positively impacting engagement. Similarly, AI supports designing more effective training programs through data analysis and building adaptive learning environments (Uddin et al., 2025).

Furthermore, creating clear career paths using AI increases engagement; when employees feel the organization’s investment, they tend to stay and contribute more (Rožman et al., 2022). Consequently, these tools contribute to increased loyalty and retention rates (Sura, 2025). Quantitative research by Kambur & Akar (2022) confirms that integrating AI shortens time and significantly improves employee focus and learning experience. From these theoretical bases, the study proposes:

H5: AI Training and Development positively affects employee engagement.

H6: AI in Training and Development positively affects employee retention.

H7: AI in Training and Development positively affects employee retention with the mediating role of employee engagement.

2.5 AI Performance Appraisal

AI based performance appraisal systems are integrated structures of AI technologies aimed at collecting and analyzing big data to enhance accuracy, objectivity, and speed compared to traditional methods (Gupta & Tembhurnekar, 2024). The use of AI and machine learning in HR management has the potential to reduce bias and enhance consistency in evaluation, though the level of fairness depends on algorithm design and how employees perceive AI-driven decisions (Jabagi et al., 2025). However, excessive reliance on algorithms can make the process mechanical, lacking understanding of qualitative efforts, thereby diminishing trust and perceptions of organizational justice (Azam Malik, 2024; Tuan, 2025). Although AI helps minimize prejudice (Rožman et al., 2022) research by Gayathiri & Prabu (2024) indicates that this practice has not yet created a positive impact on engagement like other HR activities, and may even cause negative consequences without the combination of automation and human empathy (Novrianto et al., 2025). Based on these analyses, the study proposes:

H8: AI Performance Appraisal negatively affects employee engagement.

H9: AI Performance Appraisal negatively affects employee retention.

H10: AI Performance Appraisal negatively affects employee retention through the mediating role of employee engagement.

2.6 AI in Compensation and Benefits

AI based payroll systems can process repetitive tasks like salary calculation, tax deduction, and benefits management with minimal human intervention, while ensuring compliance and real time data processing (Korrapati, 2023). It also acts as a comprehensive support system for HRM functions, including compensation management (Mwita & Kitole, 2025). AI-enabled talent management systems personalize of benefit packages to meet the diverse needs of employees, increasing motivation and satisfaction (Azam Malik, 2024; Qawasmeh et al., 2024). Compensation and benefits are seen as core factors affecting retention; when the remuneration system fairly reflects employees' contributions, it enhances commitment and reduce turnover intention (Sorn et al., 2023). From these arguments, the study proposes:

H12: AI Compensation and Benefits positively affects employee engagement.

H13: AI Compensation and Benefits positively affects employee retention.

H14: AI Compensation and Benefits positively affects employee retention with the mediating role of employee engagement.

2.7 AI Appropriate Team

In the modern management context, AI-HRM serves as a strategic tool to automate processes and support leaders in making data driven objective decisions (Islam & Tamzid, 2023; Perello Marin & Tuffaha, 2021). At the team level, when humans and AI systems interact, this technology effectively assists in analyzing the compatibility of skills, personality, and work styles to form harmonious teams (Arslan et al., 2022). AI integration helps businesses accurately forecast HR trends and optimize team structures (Dopamu et al., 2025). According to Nawaz et al. (2024) argue that AI application helps minimize role conflict and facilitates the maximization of individual strengths within a collective. AI tools promote coordination, knowledge sharing, and increased interaction, especially in rapid response teams (Tuan, 2025). Based on these theoretical bases, the study proposes:

H15: AI Appropriate Team positively affects employee engagement.

H16: AI Appropriate Team positively affects employee retention.

H17: AI Appropriate Team positively affects employee retention with the mediating role of employee engagement.

2.8 Leader Emotional Intelligence

Theoretically, George (2008) defines leader emotional intelligence as the ability to consciously use emotions to direct behavior, create a positive atmosphere and build trust. Dahir (2025) expands this concept into the capacity to recognize, analyze and regulate individual and collective emotions to optimize organizational interaction. From a core competency perspective, (Goleman, 1998) identifies EI through five components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. Empathy and emotional regulation are key factors helping leaders inspire and drive employee motivation (Cavaletti & Bizarrias, 2023). According to Kour & Ansari (2024), EI helps increase understanding and psychological support, thereby strongly reinforcing engagement. High leader EI creates a positive environment, encouraging deep employee participation in work (John, 2022). Based on these analyses, the study proposes:

H4: AI Recruitment and Selection affects employee engagement with the moderating role of leader emotional intelligence.

H11: AI Performance Appraisal affects employee engagement with the moderating role of leader emotional intelligence.

2.9 Employee Engagement and Employee Retention

Engagement is an important predictor of retention because highly engaged employees have greater commitment, work more actively, and are less likely to leave the organization (Ekta & Arora, 2024). They create a sense of belonging, recognition, and trust, thereby forming loyalty and long-term stay intentions (Harini et al., 2024). The influence of HRM policies especially compensation management on retention is often transmitted through the level of employee engagement (Rahman et al., 2024). Strategies promoting engagement, such as recognition, empowerment and career development, positively impact retention, contributing to the stability of the organization's human resources (Arubayi, 2022). In a culture of empowerment and development support, high engagement directly reduces turnover intention (Siswanto, 2024). Based on these arguments, the study proposes:

H18: Employee engagement positively affects employee retention.

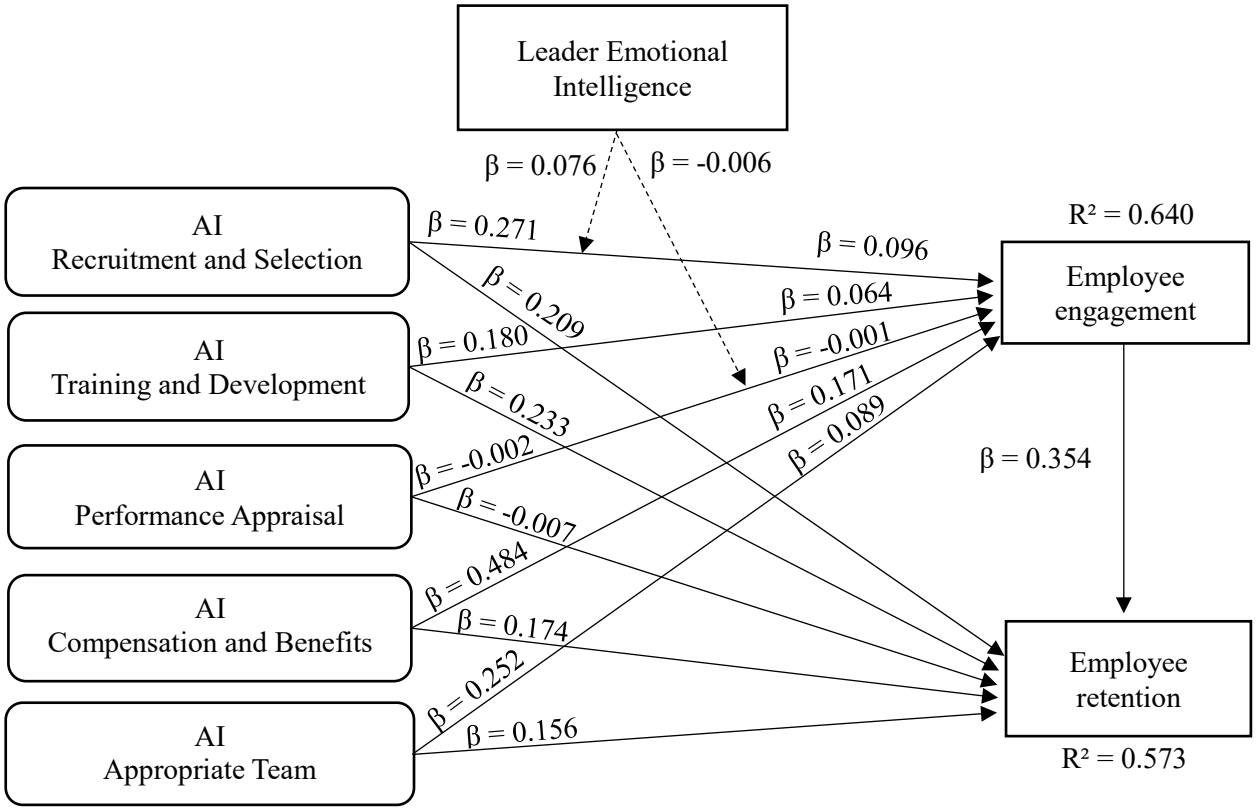


Figure 1. Research Model

3. RESEARCH METHODS

Step 1. Qualitative research was conducted through in-depth interviews with HR experts to adapt the measurement scales to the context of AI application in Vietnamese enterprises. The adjusted scales include: AI-enabled HRM practices (5 components: Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development, Performance Appraisal, Compensation and Benefits, Appropriate Team) inherited from Kambur & Akar (2022), Rožman et al. (2022); Employee engagement based on the scale by Rožman et al. (2022); Employee retention from Sura (2025) and Leader emotional intelligence measured by John (2022) scale.
Step 2: Quantitative data were collected through an online self-administered questionnaire targeting office employees in Ho Chi Minh City whose organizations had adopted AI in at least one HRM function. Convenience sampling was used, and the questionnaire was distributed via Facebook professional groups, Zalo, and personal networks. Respondents were required to be full-time office employees with experience using AI-supported HRM practices. The survey was conducted from February to March 2026, yielding 326 valid responses, which met the minimum sample size requirement for PLS-SEM. Data were analyzed in two stages: (1) SPSS for descriptive statistics and reliability assessment (Cronbach's Alpha and item-total correlation) and (2) SmartPLS 4.0 for evaluating the measurement and structural models with Bootstrapping used to test direct, indirect and moderating effects.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

After surveying 326 people, there were 167 males (51.2%) and 159 females (48.8%). The 25–34 age group was the majority (79.8%), followed by 18–24 (16%) with a small proportion of those aged 35 and above. The majority of participants had a university degree (82.5%). Regarding seniority, the 1–3 years of experience group was the highest (59.8%) followed by those with less than 1 year of experience (27%). The majority were employees (84.7%), with the remainder being managers and team leaders. In terms of income the most common range was 7–12 million VND (66%) followed by less than 7 million VND (25.5%), while higher incomes accounted for a low proportion.

4.2 Scale Reliability Testing

Table 1 shows that all constructs meet reliability and convergent validity requirements. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values exceed 0.7, indicating good internal consistency. All outer loadings are above 0.7 and AVE values are greater than 0.5, confirming convergent validity.

Table 1. Reliability and CFA Results

Factor	Variables	Outer Loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
AI Recruitment and Selection (AI_RS)	AI_RS1	0.835	0.889	0.918	0.692
	AI_RS2	0.848			
	AI_RS3	0.823			
	AI_RS4	0.839			
	AI_RS5	0.813			
AI Training and Development (AI_TD)	AI_TD1	0.846	0.869	0.910	0.718
	AI_TD2	0.866			
	AI_TD3	0.832			
	AI_TD4	0.844			
AI Performance Appraisal (AI_PA)	AI_PA1	0.735	0.838	0.874	0.636
	AI_PA2	0.887			
	AI_PA3	0.839			
	AI_PA4	0.716			
	AI_CB1	0.826			
	AI_CB2	0.810			

AI Compensation and Benefits (AI_CB)	AI_CB3	0.814	0.865	0.902	0.649
	AI_CB4	0.779			
	AI_CB5	0.797			
AI Appropriate Team (AI_AT)	AI_AT1	0.835	0.842	0.894	0.678
	AI_AT2	0.813			
	AI_AT3	0.823			
	AI_AT4	0.823			
Employee Engagement (EE)	EE1	0.884	0.918	0.938	0.752
	EE2	0.868			
	EE3	0.841			
	EE4	0.869			
	EE5	0.875			
Employee Retention (ER)	ER1	0.869	0.885	0.921	0.744
	ER2	0.862			
	ER3	0.870			
	ER4	0.848			
Leader Emotional Intelligence (LEI)	LEI1	0.803	0.878	0.910	0.671
	LEI2	0.807			
	LEI3	0.840			
	LEI4	0.781			
	LEI5	0.860			

Source: The Author'analysis results, 2026

4.3 Discriminant Validity Testing

The results in Table 2 demonstrate that discriminant validity between the constructs in the model is established. According to Henseler et al., (2015), the HTMT ratio between pairs of latent variables should be below the threshold of 0.85 to confirm discriminant validity. The analysis shows that the HTMT values range from 0.011 to 0.763 with no values exceeding the recommended threshold.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity Test Results

	AI_AT	**AI_CB**	**AI_PA**	**AI_RS**	**AI_TD**	**EE**	**ER**	**LEI**	**LEI x AI_RS**	**LEI x AI_PA**
AI_AT										
AI_CB	0.508									
AI_PA	0.195	0.147								
AI_RS	0.079	0.070	0.063							
AI_TD	0.168	0.211	0.054	0.033						
EE	0.600	0.755	0.124	0.345	0.335					
ER	0.535	0.609	0.100	0.380	0.451	0.763				
LEI	0.208	0.258	0.053	0.076	0.068	0.296	0.242			
LEI x AI_RS	0.042	0.068	0.027	0.011	0.060	0.112	0.055	0.029		

LEI x AI_PA	0.076	0.042	0.032	0.023	0.043	0.021	0.017	0.097	0.105	

Source: The Author'analysis results, 2026

4.4 Testing the Significance of Impact Relationships

Table 4 shows that all VIF values (1.048–2.640) are below 3.3 indicating no multicollinearity and that CMB is controlled. Most relationships are significant ($p < 0.05$) supporting H1, H2, H5, H6, H12, H13, H15, H16 and H18. In contrast, H8 and H9 are not supported showing that AI in performance appraisal has no significant effect. One possible reason is that AI in performance evaluation currently plays primarily a game-supporting role, lacking the impact to change employees' perceptions and behaviors.

Table 3. Significance Testing Results of Impact Relationships

Significance Testing Results of Direct Impact Relationships								
Hypothesis		**Coefficient**	**Sample Mean (M)**	**STDEV**	**T-value**	**P-value**	**VIF**	**Conclusion**
H1	AI_RS → EE	0.271	0.271	0.035	7.803	0.000	1.313	Supported
H2	AI_RS → ER	0.209	0.209	0.041	5.109	0.000	1.958	Supported
H5	AI_TD → EE	0.180	0.180	0.037	4.873	0.000	1.056	Supported
H6	AI_TD → ER	0.233	0.234	0.039	6.047	0.000	1.112	Supported
H8	AI_PA → EE	-0.002	0.004	0.037	0.042	0.966	1.050	Not supported
H9	AI_PA → ER	-0.007	-0.003	0.042	0.171	0.864	1.048	Not supported
H12	AI_CB → EE	0.484	0.483	0.043	11.218	0.000	1.313	Supported
H13	AI_CB → ER	0.174	0.175	0.051	3.393	0.001	1.958	Supported
H15	AI_AT → EE	0.252	0.250	0.041	6.082	0.000	1.300	Supported
H16	AI_AT → ER	0.156	0.155	0.046	3.382	0.001	1.463	Supported
H18	EE → ER	0.354	0.351	0.060	5.877	0.000	2.640	Supported

Significance Testing Results of Indirect Impact Relationships							
Hypothesis		**Coefficient**	**Sample Mean (M)**	**STDEV**	**T-value**	**P-value**	**Conclusion**
H3	AI_RS → EE → ER	0.096	0.095	0.022	4.400	0.000	Supported
H7	AI_TD → EE → ER	0.064	0.063	0.017	3.692	0.000	Supported
H10	AI_PA → EE → ER	-0.001	0.001	0.013	0.042	0.966	Not supported
H14	AI_CB → EE → ER	0.171	0.169	0.032	5.364	0.000	Supported
H17	AI_AT → EE → ER	0.089	0.088	0.022	4.127	0.000	Supported

Significance Testing Results of Moderating Impact Relationships							
Hypothesis		**Coefficient**	**Sample Mean (M)**	**STDEV**	**T-value**	**P-value**	**Conclusion**
H4	LEI x AI_RS → EE	0.076	0.074	0.037	2.053	0.040	Supported

H11	LEI x AI_PA → EE	-0.006	-0.007	0.034	0.184	0.854	Not supported

Source: The Author'analysis results, 2026

Regarding indirect relationships, the results show that H3, H7, H14, and H17 are significant ($p < 0.05$), demonstrating that AI-related factors have indirect effects on employee retention (ER) through employee engagement (EE). However, H10 is not supported ($p = 0.966$) indicating the absence of a mediating effect of AI in performance appraisal. This could be due to the fact that the implementation of AI_PA is still in a supportive phase and has not yet had a clear impact on employee experience and perception.
Regarding moderating relationships, H4 is supported ($p = 0.040$), confirming a significant moderating effect of leaders emotional intelligence (LEI) on the relationship between AI_RS and EE. Meanwhile, H11 is not significant ($p = 0.854$) indicating that LEI does not moderate the relationship between AI_PA and EE. A possible explanation is that the application of artificial intelligence in performance evaluation has not yet made a significant difference to employee experience, meaning that the moderating role of leadership has not been clearly demonstrated.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Management Implications

First, organizations should prioritize employee engagement as a core value to reduce turnover, as engagement is a key psychological factor influencing retention. AI-integrated survey tools can support real-time monitoring of satisfaction and enable timely interventions.
Second, organizations should personalize career development through AI-based training systems, which identify skill gaps and recommend suitable learning paths, thereby enhancing engagement and long-term commitment.
Third, trust should be established from the recruitment stage through AI-driven processes that ensure objectivity, transparency, and reduced bias, helping employees integrate more effectively.
Fourth, organizations should leverage AI to build fair and transparent compensation systems by analyzing market data and performance, strengthening employee engagement and retention
Finally, organizations should foster a collaborative work environment by leveraging AI to optimize team composition based on skills and working styles thereby improving satisfaction, performance and workforce stability.

5.2 Conclusion

This study assesses the impact of AI-enabled human resource management on the engagement and retention in Ho Chi Minh City offices amidst global digital transformation. The results show that four AI-HRM factors: (1) Recruitment and selection; (2) Training and development; (3) Compensation and benefits and (4) Appropriate Team have a positive impact on employee engagement and retention. Furthermore, engagement plays a crucial mediating role in this relationship and the emotional intelligence of leaders has a moderating effect.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

The current research scope focuses primarily on specific enterprise types and geographical areas. Consequently, extending these findings to other national or regional contexts should be considered with appropriate adjustments.
Future studies could consider expanding the sample size and survey scope to enhance representativeness. Incorporating the roles of additional AI factors and organizational contexts may further support the refinement of the research model.

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ẢNH HƯỞNG CỦA CÁC THỰC HÀNH QUẢN TRỊ NGUỒN NHÂN LỰC ỨNG DỤNG TRÍ TUỆ NHÂN TẠO ĐẾN SỰ GẮN KẾT VÀ GIỮ CHÂN NHÂN VIÊN VĂN PHÒNG TẠI TP. HỒ CHÍ MINH: VAI TRÒ ĐIỀU TIẾT CỦA TRÍ TUỆ CẢM XÚC NHÀ LÃNH ĐẠO

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Tóm tắt. Nghiên cứu này phân tích tác động của các thực hành quản trị nguồn nhân lực ứng dụng trí tuệ nhân tạo đến sự gắn kết và khả năng duy trì nhân viên văn phòng tại Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, dựa trên Lý thuyết Trao đổi Xã hội (SET). Mô hình nghiên cứu đề xuất xem xét vai trò trung gian của sự gắn kết nhân viên và vai trò điều tiết của trí tuệ cảm xúc nhà lãnh đạo. Dữ liệu từ 326 câu trả lời hợp lệ được phân tích bằng phương pháp PLS-SEM (SmartPLS 4.0). Kết quả cho thấy việc ứng dụng AI trong tuyển dụng và tuyển chọn, đào tạo và phát triển, lương thưởng và phúc lợi và phù hợp đội nhóm có tác động tích cực đến sự gắn kết và giữ chân nhân viên. Trong khi đó, việc ứng dụng AI trong đánh giá hiệu suất không có ý nghĩa thống kê. Sự gắn kết nhân viên đóng vai trò là biến trung gian quan trọng, trong khi trí tuệ cảm xúc của lãnh đạo thể hiện vai trò điều tiết một phần. Những phát hiện này đưa ra các hàm ý thực tiễn cho doanh nghiệp trong việc tối ưu hóa ứng dụng AI trong quản trị nguồn nhân lực nhằm nâng cao sự gắn kết và giữ chân nhân viên trong bối cảnh chuyển đổi số.

Từ khóa. trí tuệ nhân tạo; quản trị nguồn nhân lực; sự gắn kết nhân viên; giữ chân nhân viên; trí tuệ cảm xúc nhà lãnh đạo.

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