

## EXPLORE THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF EMPLOYEE TURNOVER DRIVERS IN THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR

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**Abstract:** The hospitality industry relies heavily on employee satisfaction, which directly influences service quality, guest experience, and long-term business success, yet workers often face demanding conditions such as irregular schedules, stress, and limited career opportunities. Research shows that supportive leadership, fair working conditions, and development opportunities can significantly improve satisfaction, reduce turnover, and strengthen organisational performance, while customer incivility has been found to harm job satisfaction and increase emotional exhaustion. This study examines the key factors shaping employee satisfaction in the Hungarian hospitality sector, aiming to identify effective practices that can enhance workplace culture and overall employee well-being. This study aims to explore the indirect psychological factors that influence employees' length of stay in the hospitality sector, focusing on motivation, organizational culture, and professional development. A questionnaire-based dataset (N = 407) was analyzed using linear regression and K-means cluster analysis to examine how psychological variables predict workplace tenure and identify employee typologies based on turnover tendencies. Motivation and positive organizational culture were strong predictors of long-term employment, while perceived professional development surprisingly correlated with shorter tenure. Three distinct employee clusters were identified with varying retention profiles. The findings provide nuanced insights into the interplay between individual psychological profiles and organizational retention dynamics, highlighting distinct patterns that can inform targeted HR development strategies. Turnover tendencies can be predicted by psychological factors. Tailored retention strategies – based on motivation, development needs, and cultural fit – are recommended to reduce workforce turnover in hospitality settings. Such evidence underscores the importance of integrating psychological profiling into HR decision-making processes to proactively identify at-risk employees and strengthen long-term organizational stability.

**Keywords:** employee turnover, motivation, organizational culture, hospitality industry, cluster analysis

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### INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is one of the fastest-changing and most labor-intensive sectors, exerting a direct impact on people's everyday lives, whether in restaurants, cafés, hotels or other service establishments. One of the most important pillars of this sector's operation is human resources – the employees themselves. Their satisfaction is not only essential to their personal well-being but is also decisive for service quality, guest experience, and the competitiveness and long-term viability of the enterprise. Today's guests seek and expect experience during service encounters in hospitality venues.

Employees in hospitality frequently face physical and mental strain, irregular work schedules, weekend and holiday shifts, as well as direct and often stressful interactions with guests. Alongside these challenges, labour shortages, low pay, and limited opportunities for advancement are common, all of which can adversely affect employees' extrinsic and intrinsic motivation and satisfaction. Nevertheless, numerous factors can contribute to a positive employee experience and satisfaction, such as supportive and fair leadership, appropriate working conditions, ensuring work–life balance, and the provision of training, recognition, and development opportunities. Enhancing employee satisfaction is not only a moral obligation but can also serve as a strategic tool for reducing turnover, increasing loyalty and improving service quality.

Analyzing data from 452 employees using the hierarchical regression method and PROCESS Macro, it finds that customer incivility had a significant negative effect on employees' job satisfaction, and had a significant positive effect on

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emotional exhaustion and turnover intention (Pu et al., 2024). According to KSH data, in Hungary in 2020, 171000 people were employed in accommodation and food service activities, of whom 76000 were men and 94000 were women (Hungarian Statistic Office, 2020). In this study, employee satisfaction, organisational culture, motivation, and employees' tenure at a workplace are examined through the specific context of the hospitality sector. The primary objective of the study is to map the key factors that influence employee satisfaction and to highlight which measures and good practices may support the improvement of the work environment in this highly important yet often undervalued sector.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Average tenure – turnover

Turnover intention refers to an employee's internal inclination to leave their current workplace. In the hospitality industry this is particularly common, as the sector is often characterised by seasonal employment, high workloads and limited opportunities for advancement. Drivers of turnover intention may include dissatisfaction, low pay, weak managerial support or an inadequate organisational culture. Understanding and addressing these factors is crucial for reducing turnover, increasing employee commitment and maintaining service quality. This study examines turnover intention among hospitality workers, with particular attention to age- and family-related factors. According to Croes et al., 2024 individual conversion factors like age and marital status were the strongest predictors of turnover, with older and married employees less likely to leave their jobs. In contrast, traditional variables like income, education, and job type did not significantly influence turnover intentions. The relevant aspects of the literature are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Literature on workplace tenure (Source: Authors' elaboration 2025)

Author	Year	Title	Finding
Croes et al.	2024	A triadic model of job retention and turnover dynamics in the hospitality industry	Age and marital status influence workplace loyalty more strongly than pay.
Grotte et al.	2021	HR challenges during the pandemic in the Hungarian hotel and hospitality sector	The pandemic significantly affected workplace stability.
Dwesini	2019	Causes and prevention of high employee turnover within the hospitality industry	Preventing turnover is crucial for competitiveness.
Eventrend Global	2019	Research findings on the relationship between hospitality and employment	On average, employees stay at a workplace for four years. Among those under 30, the loyalty indicator is lower than among those over 30; among those over 40, it is significantly higher than in the 30-40 age group.

### 2. Motivation

Multiple studies confirm that the satisfaction of workers in hospitality is closely related to the work environment, leadership style, pay and the quality of relationships with colleagues (Kim et al., 2009; Chiang & Jang 2008). According to research by the Gallup Institute, employee engagement – which is closely linked to satisfaction – directly affects service quality, guest satisfaction and employee retention (Harter et al., 2002).

Zhu et al., 2025 showed in their research that reveal that incremental creativity reduces initial withdrawal intentions and slows their progression over time, while radical creativity initially decreases withdrawal intentions but lacks sustained impact. Table 2 below presents selected motivational models without claiming exhaustiveness.

Table 2. Literature review of motivation (Source: Authors' elaboration 2025)

Author	Year	Theory	Core Idea
Locke	1976	Job satisfaction can be conceptualized as a pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences, in which satisfaction arises when perceived job outcomes align with or exceed the individual's valued expectations	Its core idea is that satisfaction is determined by the discrepancy between what individuals expect from their job and what they actually receive, moderated by the importance of each job face.
Alderfer	1969	Condenses Maslow's five needs into three categories: Existence (basic material needs); Relatedness (interpersonal relationships); Growth (personal development)	Unlike Maslow, needs can be pursued simultaneously and frustration in one area can lead to regression to another.
Mc Clelland	1961	Focuses on three learned needs: Achievement; Affiliation; Power	People are motivated by different dominant needs depending on their personality and experiences.
Herzberg	1959	Job satisfaction and dissatisfaction arise from two different sets of factors: •Hygiene factors (e.g., salary, work conditions) prevent dissatisfaction •Motivators (e.g., achievement, recognition) promote satisfaction	Improving hygiene factors prevents dissatisfaction, but only motivators truly enhance motivation
Maslow	1943	Human needs are arranged in a hierarchy: 1. Physiological; 2. Safety; 3. Love/Belonging; 5. Self-actualization;	Lower-level needs must be satisfied before higher-level needs become motivational
Hull	1943	Motivation arises from biological needs that create internal drives, which organisms seek to reduce	Behavior is driven by the desire to reduce internal tension caused by unmet physiological needs.
James	1890	Behavior is driven by innate biological instincts	Human actions are influenced by inherited tendencies such as maternal care or food-seeking.

The Herzberg two-factor theory 1959 is also a frequently applied model in hospitality, whereby the absence of ‘hygiene factors’ – such as pay and working conditions – generates dissatisfaction, while ‘motivators’ – such as recognition and opportunities for development – increase satisfaction. The COVID-19 pandemic introduced new factors that amplified uncertainty and outmigration in the sector (Baum et al., 2020), hence in recent years, increasing emphasis has been placed on safeguarding employees’ mental health and sense of security as key determinants of satisfaction.

According to Park & Min, 2020 compared to findings from previous meta-analyses in other industry contexts, burnout, role stressors, and interrole conflicts show a stronger relationship with turnover intention among hospitality employees. Coworker support can help mitigate these effects, but the presence of such stressors remains a significant challenge. Moreover, national cultures and job levels may act as moderators in these relationships, highlighting the need for context-sensitive HR strategies. In light of these challenges, employee motivation becomes a key driver of performance in the conference tourism sector. Motivated staff, especially in hotels, event venues, and tourism services – are more likely to be enthusiastic, committed, and customer-focused. This not only helps reduce turnover intention but also leads to better service quality, which is essential for successful conferences and repeat business.

Therefore, fostering a supportive organisational culture that enhances motivation and addresses stressors is crucial for long-term success in this field. Based on Happ's research in 2015, it can be concluded that among the services, accommodation and meals are important for participants, and they are also willing to participate in optional programs, so organizers should take these factors into account when recruiting participants.

### 3. Organisational culture

Organisational culture is the sum of values, norms, behavioral patterns and managerial mindsets that determine a workplace’s atmosphere and functioning. In hospitality it is particularly important, as it directly affects employee motivation, collaboration and the quality of guest service. A supportive, open and value-based culture fosters employee commitment, reduces turnover, and contributes to raising service standards. Organisational culture is therefore not only an internal operational factor but can also represent a competitive advantage in the market. Table 3 below illustrates selected models of organizational structure.

Table 3. A review of the literature on organizational culture Source: Authors’ elaboration 2025

Author	Year	Theory	Core Idea
Hasanein & Metwally	2025	Hospitality Leading Green for a Sustainable Scene: The Mediating Role of Green Organizational Culture in the Relationship Between Green Servant Leadership and Environmental Performance	Their results highlight the interconnected role of leadership and organizational culture in shaping environmental performance in the Saudi Arabian hospitality industry.
Kachroo & Shadev	2025	Creating a High-Quality Organizational Culture in Hospitality Industry	A positive culture increases motivation and satisfaction.
Zheng et al.	2025	Enhancing tourism and hospitality organizations’ ESG via transformational leadership and employee pro-environmental behavior: The effect of organizational culture	Team leaders with TFL characteristics inspire more employee PEBs (pro-environmental behaviors),
Dawson et al.	2023	Hospitality Organizational Culture: Impact on Employee’s Job Satisfaction	Culture affects satisfaction and commitment.
Leyva-Duarte et al.	2020	Organizational culture in the hospitality industry: A bibliometric analysis	The research mainly focuses on hotels.
Balassa	2020	Organizational development studies in the Hungarian hotel sector	Human factors are key to success.
Chovanová Supeková et al.	2016	Marketing communications in the conditions of V4 countries	Organizational culture primarily helps members understand what the organization stands for, how it works and what it considers essential to its activities.

### 4. Professional Development

The hospitality industry is a dynamic and competitive environment in which professional development is not merely a matter of individual advancement but also a key factor in service quality and guest satisfaction. Lifelong continuous learning, training and skills development enable employees to adapt to industry changes, increase their efficiency and, in the long term, become more committed to their workplace. Supporting professional development therefore not only enhances employee motivation but also contributes to organisational success and sustainability, and the specific dimensions and manifestations of these developmental approaches are further illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4. Literature review of professional development (Source: Authors’ elaboration 2025)

Author	Year	Theory	Core Idea
Bannour & Varga	2025	Can Training acts as a mediator between employee CSR, organizational Support, and job satisfaction in Tourism? results of Research at a Hungarian Hotel Chain	The moderation effect of training on the relationship between organizational support and job satisfaction highlights the need for a balanced approach to employee development.
Nguyen et al.	2022	Dynamic capabilities in tourism businesses:	A positive learning culture within organizations will

		antecedents and outcomes	ensure that tourism companies have better quality human capital, thus supporting their sustained success.
Kalgi et al.	2022	A Study on the Significance of Training and Development in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry in India	Training increases productivity and motivations, and it is necessary to regularly evaluate the program to monitor its success.
Kleefstra et al.	2020	Workplace learning and organisational performance in the hospitality industry	Learning improves organizational performance.
Nieves et al.	2016	Human capital and performance in hospitality	Developing human capital is a competitive advantage.
Davidson et al.	2011	Hospitality HRM: past, present and the future	The prevalence of high staff turnover, poor training and theft suggests serious and persistent management inadequacies.

Based on the literature review, it can be said that employee satisfaction in the hospitality industry is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, influenced by personal, organizational, and industry factors, and these interrelated determinants are systematically presented in Table 5.

These will be examined in more detail in the following chapters.

Table 5. Examination of satisfaction in the hospitality industry (Source: Authors' elaboration 2025)

Author	Year	Theory	Core Idea
Pu et al.	2024	Hierarchical regression	Emotional exhaustion had a negative impact on job satisfaction and a positive impact on turnover intention. And job satisfaction had a negative effect on turnover intention.
Ye & Chen	2024	Confirmatory factor analysis	Indicating that strong work motivation generates positive work engagement.
Kómíves	2017	Cross-tabulation, correlation, discriminant analysis	There is a significant difference between the motivational tools used for different age groups.
Rudolfné	2015	Factor analysis, cluster analysis, cross-tabulation analysis	Measuring guest satisfaction based on demographic criteria.
Kómíves	2015	Cross-tabulation analysis, correlation	Employees are satisfied with their current jobs.

Bibi et al., 2021 therefore, believe that employees, the backbone of the hospitality industry, are vital to the effective functioning of business management. Managers can develop such CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) policies that foster an effective work environment and enhance employees' happiness.

## METHODOLOGY

The present study applies a quantitative, cross-sectional research design with the objective of identifying the indirect psychological determinants of employee retention in the hospitality sector. Instead of observing actual employee exits, the analysis operationalises turnover through **tenure at the current workplace**, which is widely recognised in organisational research as a valid and stable proxy for turnover intention and employee loyalty.

This approach allows for the examination of retention processes while avoiding the limitations associated with retrospective exit data and short-term fluctuation effects.

Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire among employees working in hospitality establishments. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and the confidential handling of their data. No personally identifiable information was collected. After data cleaning and the exclusion of incomplete cases, the final analytical sample consisted of **331 respondents**, for whom complete information was available on all variables included in the multivariate models. The sample comprised employees with heterogeneous career trajectories and tenure histories, enabling the investigation of both situational influences of the current organisational environment and more stable, dispositional dimensions of workplace attachment.

The dependent variable of the study was the number of years the respondent had spent at their current workplace. Three latent psychosocial constructs were specified as the principal independent variables: **motivation, organisational culture, and perceived professional development**. Motivation captured intrinsic commitment, work engagement and identification with the job. Organisational culture reflected perceived workplace climate, shared values, leadership practices and communication dynamics. Perceived professional development represented the employee's subjective assessment of learning, growth and advancement opportunities within the organisation.

Each construct was measured using multiple questionnaire items and subsequently transformed into **standardised factor scores** by means of factor analysis in order to reduce measurement error and enhance construct validity. In addition, respondents reported their **average tenure at previous workplaces**, which served as a descriptive indicator of longer-term career stability and individual retention propensity.

All continuous variables were standardised prior to analysis in order to ensure comparability of coefficients and to prevent scale-related distortions in the multivariate procedures. The analytical strategy combined several complementary statistical techniques. First, **Pearson correlation analysis** was employed to explore bivariate associations among tenure, the psychosocial factors and prior career stability. This step provided preliminary insight into the direction and strength of relationships and facilitated the detection of potential multicollinearity before the estimation of multivariate models.

Second, a **multiple linear regression model** was estimated with tenure at the current workplace as the dependent variable and the three psychosocial factor scores as predictors. The model evaluated the joint explanatory power of the psychological variables as well as the individual contribution of each predictor to employee retention. Model performance was assessed using the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), while the magnitude, direction and statistical significance of the effects were examined through standardised regression coefficients and associated p-values. Third, in order to identify distinct patterns of employee experience and retention, a **k-means cluster analysis** was conducted on the three standardised factor scores. The number of clusters was determined based on interpretability, within-cluster homogeneity and between-cluster separation, yielding a three-cluster solution.

The resulting clusters were subsequently visualised using a **principal component analysis (PCA) - based projection**, facilitating the interpretation of group differences in psychosocial profiles and tenure patterns.

Finally, a **mediation model** was tested to examine whether the effect of motivation on tenure operates indirectly through perceived professional development. Path coefficients were estimated using regression analysis, and the statistical significance of the indirect effect was evaluated by means of the **Sobel test**.

This procedure allowed for the decomposition of total, direct and indirect effects, thereby providing deeper insight into the underlying mechanisms shaping employee retention. Throughout the analysis, standard statistical assumptions were assessed and satisfied. The combined use of correlation analysis, regression modelling, cluster analysis and mediation testing ensured methodological triangulation and strengthened the internal validity of the findings.

## RESULTS

### 1. Correlation matrix

Turnover intention can be understood not only through the termination of employment, but also via employees' attitudes, motivations, and experiences of the organisational environment. As the available survey data did not contain direct information on exits, our aim was to uncover the interrelations of indirect turnover factors. The following variables were included in the analysis:

- **Current tenure:** the number of years the respondent has worked at their present restaurant.
- **Average tenure:** the average number of years spent at previous workplaces.
- **Motivation:** a psychological factor measuring the level of intrinsic commitment and identification with work.
- **Organisational culture:** the perceived workplace climate, values and communication dynamics.
- **Professional development:** the learning and development opportunities perceived by the individual.

To quantify relationships among these variables, we produced a Pearson correlation matrix. The data were cleaned and standardised beforehand. As shown below, in Figure 1, the correlation matrix maps the strength and direction of the relationships between variables (ranging from  $-1$  to  $+1$ ).

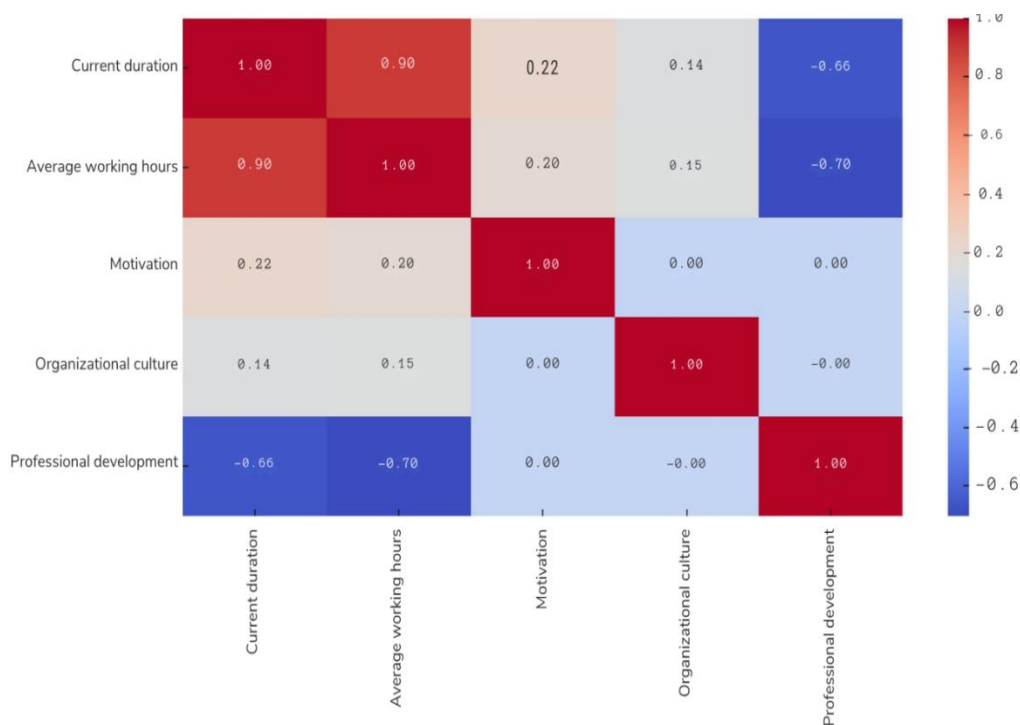


Figure 1. Correlation matrix of indirect turnover factors; output based on own analysis (Source: Authors' elaboration 2025)

One of the strongest associations was found between years spent at the current workplace and the average tenure characteristic of previous workplaces. The correlation coefficient of **0,90** indicates an extremely strong, significant positive relationship. This supports the theoretical assumption that tenure is not merely a function of current circumstances but

reflects a stable, intra-individual behavioural pattern. In other words, those who previously stayed longer in their jobs are highly likely to remain longer in their current position as well.

Between motivation and tenure, we observed a significant, positive but weak relationship. This suggests that high intrinsic motivation may contribute to longer-term commitment. Although the correlation of **0,22** is modest, it nevertheless draws attention to the potential of strengthening motivation through HR instruments to mitigate turnover – particularly when combined with other favourable psychosocial factors.

Perceptions of organisational culture also showed a positive yet weak association with tenure (**r = 0,14**). This implies that employees who evaluate the workplace climate more positively are slightly more inclined to remain longer at the organisation. It is important to note that the assessment of organisational culture did not show a substantive relationship with either motivation or perceived professional development; thus, these factors can be interpreted as independent psychological dimensions. Between the perception of professional development and tenure, there was a negative, strong correlation (**r = - 0,66**) which is surprising and invites theoretical interpretation.

The result indicates that those who perceive intensive opportunities for professional development typically have worked for a shorter period at their current workplace. Several interpretations are possible: it may be that the sense of development is more common among newcomers, who experience more intensive growth in the initial period. Alternatively, individuals striving for professional development may be more inclined to seek new challenges, leading to earlier departure.

A further hypothesis is that competent, development-oriented employees leave organisations more quickly once they no longer perceive new learning opportunities. No significant linear relationships emerged among motivation, organisational culture, and professional development, meaning that these dimensions operate independently in our sample.

This implies that an employee may be highly motivated while evaluating the culture negatively, or, conversely, may enjoy the team climate while missing opportunities for advancement. This separation reinforces the assumption that the employee experience is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon that cannot be described along a single factor.

## 2. Regression model

The second empirical pillar of our research is a linear regression model designed to examine the extent to which employees’ psychosocial characteristics – namely motivation, organisational culture, and perceived professional development – explain the number of years an employee has worked at their current workplace. Accordingly, the dependent variable in the model was tenure at the current workplace (years), while the independent variables were motivation (psychological factor score), organisational culture (factor score) and perceived professional development (factor score). The regression used 331 cases in which all of the above variables were complete.

The linear model’s performance was **R<sup>2</sup> = 0,538**, indicating that the three psychosocial variables jointly explain **53,8%** of the variance in the dependent variable - tenure at the current workplace. This is a high value, accompanied by the statistical significance of the predictors shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Significance levels of predictors, based on own analysis (Source: Authors’ elaboration 2025)

Factor	Regression coefficient (β)	p-value
Motivation	+2,0932	< 0,001
Organizational culture	+1,2828	< 0,001
Professional development	-6,3741	< 0,001

The results indicate that employees with higher intrinsic motivation are more inclined to commit and remain longer in a job. The coefficient of **+2,09** means that each one-unit increase in the motivation factor is associated, on average, with more than two additional years of tenure.

The coefficient of **+1,28** likewise reflects the effect of organisational culture: a positive cultural experience contributes significantly to longer retention. This finding highlights the importance of workplace climate and interpersonal dynamics. Employees decide to stay not only on material grounds but also on emotional and relational ones.

The negative and strong association for professional development (**β = -6,37**) is surprising, yet consistent with our correlation matrix: those who perceive high levels of professional development have typically worked for a shorter period at their current workplace. This apparent contradiction admits several interpretations:

- **Newcomer effect:** employees who have been in the organisation for a shorter time may experience intensive development during the initial period; thus “newness” can positively bias the sense of development.
- **Career-mobility dynamic:** those who perceive heightened development may already be in a career-building phase and change jobs deliberately; for them, development functions as a “springboard” to the next step.
- **Multidimensionality of the factor:** the construct measuring professional development may encompass multiple dimensions; alongside the experience of development, it may also contain, for example, a sense of urgency or dissatisfaction with prior experiences.

## 3. Cluster analysis

Based on the results of the regression model, it was assumed that employees exhibit different psychological patterns, which are also reflected in workplace attachment. To examine this hypothesis, we conducted a k-means cluster analysis with the aim of dividing employees into homogeneous groups along three psychosocial factors: motivation, evaluation of organisational culture, and perceived professional development.

The variables were standardised in advance, and clustering was performed into three clusters, as this proved to be the most interpretable and balanced solution based on within-cluster dispersions and visual separation. The clusters were visualised in a plane using PCA-based representation, as shown in Figure 2.

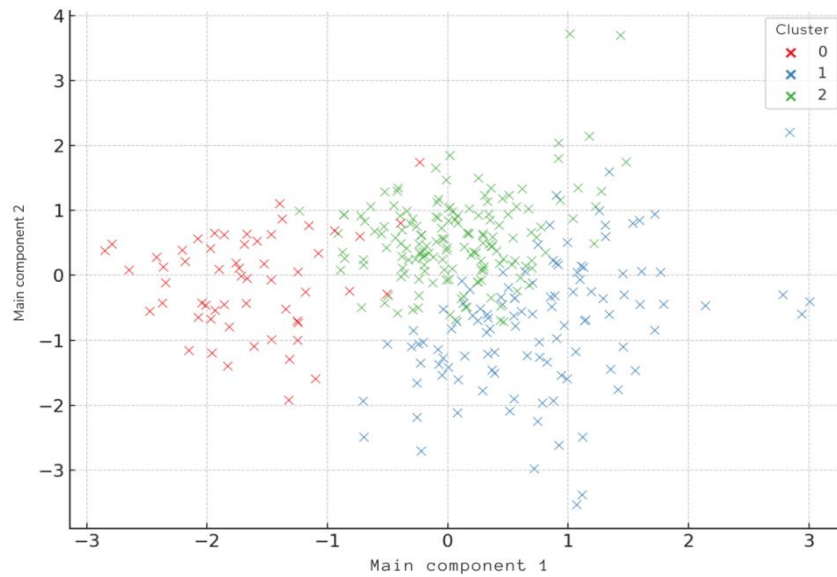


Figure 2. Clusters based on factor variables (PCA), output generated based on own analysis (Source: Authors' elaboration 2025)

Differences between the clusters in terms of the three psychosocial factors and tenure at the current workplace (years) are summarised in Table 7.

Table 7. Factors of clusters, based on own compilation (Source: Authors' elaboration 2025)

Cluster	Motivation	Organizational culture	Professional development	Length of employment (years)
0	+0,52	+0,35	-1,93	24,30
1	-0,31	-1,17	+0,06	4,55
2	+0,08	+0,63	+0,49	4,98

Cluster 0 comprises stable yet professionally stagnating employees. This group exhibits exceptionally high workplace loyalty (on average, they have worked at the company for more than 24 years), are motivated, and evaluate the organisational environment positively. However, their sense of professional development is distinctly low, suggesting that they perceive their position as stable but no longer developmental. Although they may seem ideal at first glance, they carry a hidden turnover risk: long-term stagnation and a lack of challenges may lead to 'passive burnout'.

Cluster 1 represents disengaged and frustrated employees, characterised by low motivation, negative evaluations of organisational culture, and a low sense of professional development. Their average tenure at the current workplace is only 4,5 years. They are the group most at risk of turnover. They have already worked for a shorter period, and neither intrinsic commitment nor the environment provides sufficient retention forces. In their case, swift HR intervention is particularly important, including re-energising motivation, managerial attention, and culture-change initiatives.

Cluster 2 consists of professionally active yet mobile employees. They show medium values in terms of motivation and culture, but the highest score on the professional development factor. However, their average tenure is likewise only ~5 years. These are the 'career builders' or 'career jumpers' who are active, open to learning and advancement, but less attached to their current position. Retaining them may be successful through personalised career planning, the provision of advancement opportunities, or internal mentoring programmes.

#### 4. Mediation model

When examining the causes of turnover, a common approach is to consider how workplace motivation, organisational culture and professional development influence employees' commitment. The aim of the present analysis was to determine whether the effect of motivation on tenure – that is, how long an individual has worked in their current workplace—operates indirectly through the perceived sense of professional development.

We investigated this using a classic mediation model that maps three principal pathways:

1. The effect of motivation on professional development (path a)
2. The effect of professional development on tenure (path b)
3. The direct effect of motivation on tenure (path c')
4. The total effect of motivation on tenure (path c)

The mediating role was tested statistically using the Sobel test.

The total effect is observed along path *c*. According to the model, there is a positive relationship between motivation and tenure: **B = + 2,07 years**. This means that each one-unit increase in employee motivation can extend the time spent at the current workplace by, on average, more than two years.

For questionnaire-based social science data, this is considered a strong effect, which we likewise accepted as such, reinforcing the assumption that motivated employees exhibit greater commitment.

Path *a* captures the mediator linkage from motivation to professional development. The analysis revealed that motivation influences the sense of professional development only minimally and in a negative direction: **B = - 0,02**, which is not significant. This contradicts the assumption that motivated employees automatically perceive greater opportunities for development. It is possible that other factors (e.g., development pathways offered by the employer, scarcity of positions) shape the experience of development more strongly.

The mediator effect was assessed along path *b* from professional development to tenure. The perceived sense of professional development has a negative effect on how long someone has worked at their workplace: **B = - 6,04**, which is significant. This surprising result suggests that employees who experience intensive professional development change jobs more frequently – consonant with our earlier findings. It may be that these individuals are developing for the purpose of building their careers – i.e., they are motivated by progression rather than long-term loyalty.

The direct effect is shown along path *c'*, between motivation and tenure while controlling for professional development. The model controlled for professional development and still found a strong positive effect: **B = +1,95 years**. This indicates that the effect of motivation operates directly rather than through professional development. In short: a motivated employee is a more loyal employee, regardless of how strongly they feel professionally supported. In the Sobel test—which serves as the statistical evaluation of the mediating effect – the significance of the mediating relationship was determined as follows:

- **z = 0,39**
- **p = 0,70**

The latter is not significant; thus, we cannot claim that professional development mediates the relationship between motivation and tenure. On the basis of these results, professional development does not mediate the effect of motivation on turnover propensity (i.e., on staying). This means that motivation directly influences loyalty – even if the employee does not perceive outstanding development opportunities. Professional development is rather an indicator in the opposite direction: those who experience progress in this domain change jobs more frequently. Conversely, professional development is not a ‘retention force’ in itself and may indeed be a precursor to potential outflow.

## DISCUSSION

The aim of our research was to identify which indirect psychological factors – primarily motivation, organisational culture and the perception of professional development – influence the length of time hospitality employees spend in their jobs, and thus indirectly shape turnover. The results clearly confirm that motivation is the strongest retention factor: the higher its level among employees, the longer they remain in their workplace. Organisational culture also exerts a significant and positive effect on loyalty, albeit to a lesser extent than motivation. By contrast, the perception of professional development did not prove to be a retention force; indeed, our findings suggest it is rather a precursor to outflow: those who perceived stronger development opportunities spent a shorter time in their current job. This indicates that development does not necessarily translate into internal loyalty, but in many cases is instead associated with career mobility.

It also became evident that motivation and culture have direct effects on employee loyalty, and that these relationships are not mediated by the perception of development. In other words, retention does not operate through employees seeing development opportunities ahead of them, but rather through their experiencing intrinsic motivation and evaluating the organisational culture favourably. In parallel, the results highlighted that tenure displays a degree of dispositional stability: those who spent longer periods at previous workplaces tended likewise to show longer tenure at their current employer, whereas the opposite pattern appeared among those with more mobile careers.

This suggests that a ‘propensity to stay’ can, to some extent, be interpreted as an individual personality trait that extends beyond the effects of the immediate organisational environment. A key finding of the study is that the employee population is not homogeneous, but can be arranged into three clearly distinguishable groups. One group comprises stable yet stagnating employees who are motivated and satisfied with the culture, but report a low sense of development, resulting in long tenure that may, however, potentially lead to burnout. Another group consists of disengaged and frustrated employees who spend shorter periods in their jobs and are characterised by low motivation and negative perceptions of culture. The third group encompasses professionally active yet mobile employees who perceive development opportunities, but this propels them outward rather than strengthening internal loyalty.

These results contribute to turnover research in several ways. First, they nuance the widely held assumption that professional development is invariably a retention factor: in the context examined, the opposite holds—development is more a precursor to job change. Second, they reinforce that motivation and organisational culture are fundamental drivers capable of directly leading to longer tenure. Third, they point to stable, individual patterns in employee behaviour that HR policies must take into account. In practical terms, organisations would be well advised to prioritise strengthening employee motivation and the positive elements of culture, as these constitute the principal engines of loyalty. Providing professional development remains important; however, the present findings show that, on its own, it does not guarantee retention and, in the absence of internal career paths and advancement opportunities, may readily channel employees

outward. Identifying heterogeneous employee groups enables organisations to devise differentiated retention strategies tailored to distinct motivational and development profiles.

Reducing turnover therefore requires a complex, multi-level approach that simultaneously considers motivation, culture, development opportunities and individual dispositions. The greatest challenge for organisations is to harness the mobility potential arising from development not as outward movement but as internal progression – thereby transforming development into one of the strongest instruments of loyalty.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of our study was to identify which indirect psychological factors – motivation, organisational culture and the perception of professional development – influence employee retention in the hospitality sector. Tenure at the current workplace served as the metric for loyalty, which can be regarded as a reliable indicator of turnover.

Our research was based on quantitative methodology, testing the relationships between the three main predictors and tenure using statistical models. The results showed that motivation is the strongest predictor of longer tenure, while organisational culture also exerts a positive – albeit smaller – effect. By contrast, the perception of professional development displayed a negative relationship with tenure, suggesting that development opportunities are markers of mobility rather than strengthening loyalty. Our findings also indicated that tenure exhibits a degree of dispositional stability: those who had spent longer periods at previous workplaces tended likewise to remain longer at their current employer. The cluster analysis identified three clearly distinguishable employee groups: stable yet stagnating workers; disengaged and frustrated employees; and professionally active yet mobile workers.

These groups highlight the heterogeneity of the workforce and the need for differentiated retention strategies.

The study offers both theoretical and practical contributions: it questions the widely held assumption that professional development on its own increases loyalty, and it underscores the central role of motivation and a supportive organisational culture in employee retention. The results provide a useful starting point for hospitality organisations seeking to reduce turnover and to develop targeted, evidence-based human resource strategies.

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