

Malaysian Private Security Firms: Linking HRM Practices to Turnover Intention

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Abstract

Turnover intention remains a persistent challenge within labour-intensive occupational sectors, with existing literature highlighting the influence of human resource management (HRM) practices as key determinants of employee retention. However, research focusing on the private security industry remains notably limited, despite its chronic turnover and high operational volatility. Addressing this empirical gap, the present study investigated whether four HRM practices Compensation and Benefits, Employee Relations, Performance Management, and Training and Development negatively relate to turnover intentions among private security personnel. Grounded in Social Exchange Theory, it was hypothesised that higher perceptions of HRM support would significantly reduce turnover intentions. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was administered using non-probability convenience sampling. The study targeted security guards and operations personnel across eight zones in a district within Malaysia, yielding a final sample of $n=123$ respondents, selected via Krejcie and Morgan's sample determination table. Due to the non-normality of data, Spearman's Rho was employed to test the hypothesised relationships. Results revealed that Compensation and Benefits exhibited the strongest and most significant negative association with turnover intentions, followed by Employee Relations and Performance Management. Training and Development was not statistically significant. These findings underscore the critical role of reward-based and relational HRM practices in reducing turnover intentions, offering practical insights for organisations and HR practitioners seeking to stabilise their workforce. The study contributes to theory by validating Social Exchange mechanisms in a sector-specific context and highlights the need for strategic compensation, communication, and HR support to strengthen employee retention.

Keywords: Turnover Intention, HRM Practices, Compensation, Private Security, Social Exchange Theory

Introduction*Study Background*

The private security industry has emerged as a fundamental component of contemporary society, serving not only to safeguard assets and business establishments but also to maintain public safety in diverse environments. Security guards are now widely deployed across industrial facilities, residential areas, government offices, construction sites, public spaces, and large-scale outdoor events. In the public domain, their presence is particularly critical in areas such as transportation terminals, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions. Recent evidence highlights that the number of private security guards has surpassed that of law enforcement officers, underscoring the growing reliance on this industry. For instance, Grunwald, Rappaport, and Berg (2024) noted that in the United States, private security officers significantly outnumber the police, with the disparity continuing to expand.

Private security guards now outnumber public police by almost 2 to 1 in the United States; more than 1.2 million people are employed as private security guards, while there are fewer than 700,000 police officers. A 2022 survey of law enforcement executives unanimously reported a considerable expansion of private security services in their communities over the previous five years, particularly in neighbourhood security (83.7%), shopping centres (82.6%), and school security (80.9%). Local data reveals that this phenomenon is equally prevalent within the Malaysian context, where the private security sector has expanded steadily, experiencing significant growth within the residential and public sectors, including new schools, hospitals, and government offices.

Despite its vital function and rapid expansion, the industry struggles with an enduring challenge of high turnover rates. Reports reveal that annual turnover among security guards in the U.S. may reach levels between 100% and 400%, creating constant workforce instability. (Belfry Software, 2025)

Thus, this study is interested in identifying the relationship between four core Human Resource Management (HRM) practices such as Training and Development, Compensation and Benefits, Performance Management, and Employee Relations and turnover intentions among security guards employed in registered private security firms operating in a rural district within Malaysia. The scope is confined to full-time personnel with at least six months of service, focusing on how these organizational investments foster a sense of reciprocity as defined by Social Exchange Theory (SET), thereby reducing the likelihood of voluntary exit in a high-attrition, rural service environment.

In their study, Tett and Meyer (1993) defined turnover intention as the extent to which employees purposefully contemplate exiting their present employer. For private security firms, managing these intentions is not simply a human resource issue but a prerequisite that influences organisational continuity and service quality. Personnel frequently contend with repetitive tasks, irregular and extended working hours, exposure to stressful or hazardous situations, and low occupational prestige. Historically, poor employment conditions, including inadequate pay, limited career development opportunities, and insufficient training, have further aggravated the problem. (Button et al., 2011).

This is where Human Resource Management (HRM) becomes critical. HRM encompasses structured policies and practices designed to recruit, retain, motivate, and develop employees (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). Moreover, effective HRM practices serves as “a key factor that has been linked in previous studies to positive workplace outcomes and achieving corporate and organizational goals” (Basher, 2025)

Moreover, in Malaysia, studies on HRM and turnover focus predominantly on sectors such as manufacturing, hospitality, healthcare, public service, and oil and gas, while the vital private security industry remains insufficiently examined. For example, Rahman, Malarvizhi, and Khan (2025) examine how human resource management practices relate to turnover intentions among employees in the Malaysian ICT industry, highlighting the continued academic focus on high-growth corporate sectors over more regulated service industries.

A review of existing research reveals that significant gaps remain within the current literature. Therefore, this inquiry will extend its examination to include published works that are accessible, and existing studies will be focused specifically on the topic to be investigated in the unique context of local private security firms.

Problem Statement

This study addresses the persistent issue of high employee turnover within the private security sector connecting directly to current academic debates. Specifically, this study aligns its significance with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth. (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA], n.d.)

In Malaysia, private security firms face persistent challenges in retaining employees, yet there is limited research examining the extent to which HRM strategies and practices shape employees’ intentions to leave. Most previous studies in this niche sector were conducted in different industries, such as hospitality, telecommunications, or the ICT sector. The unique dynamics of the security sector, including irregular working hours, occupational risks, and relatively low compensation, warrant a specific investigation into their HR strategies.

Most of the previous studies in this niche sector were conducted in different industries. We delve into existing studies that have explored HRM practices and turnover intentions in various industries, such as the hospitality industry (Peng, Sarip, Mohd Arif, & Khair, 2021), telecommunications and internet providers (Krishnan, Liew, & Koon, 2017), ICT sector (Rahman, Malarvizhi, & Khan, 2025) and secondary schools (Marcel, Yole, Abdullahi, Usman, & Abubakar, 2023)

Besides this, the study also seeks to explore the connection between specific HRM practices such as “training and development, remuneration systems, and appraisal mechanisms”, to determine which aspects of HRM practices have the strongest influence on turnover intentions in their present organization

Furthermore, a qualitative inquiry conducted by Jore, Størkersen, Haavik, and Almklov (2025) into the professional realities of Norwegian security personnel suggests that prioritizing this

overlooked sector significantly offers a more comprehensive focus on the empirical field of safety and security research.

Corroborating previous research, most of the papers on security studies are found from abroad (international), Jore et al. (2025) and their findings might not be relevant to the local Malaysian context. For example, Aduda, Omondi, and K'Obonyo (2022) examined how HRM practices influence turnover in Kenya's private security sector.

While the evidence suggests that factors like recruitment, training, compensation, and employee relations play an important role in retention, cultural factors may significantly impact research findings, and policies, legal frameworks, and regulations may also influence the outcome of the study. Our analysis revealed that the existing literature on private security firms/security guards is primarily comprised of international journals with relatively few local studies. The study reveals a lack of local data in these areas.

We synthesize existing studies that address the topic under investigation and show exactly why currently available studies are insufficient and how the current knowledge is critically lacking. For instance, Ghazali and Turiman (1994) investigated levels of job satisfaction among security guards at Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (currently Universiti Putra Malaysia). Similarly, Thian (2003) explored the attitudes and training requirements of security personnel at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), focusing primarily on skill development and training needs. More recently, Rustam and Habidin (2021) examined the challenges encountered by security guards serving in state government hospitals in Selangor, providing insights into sector-specific issues within the healthcare context.

Beyond institutional case studies, other scholars have considered broader organizational and regulatory perspectives. Ismail, Abidin, Rasdi, and Cheah (2023) "emphasized the significant contribution of the auxiliary police in enhancing security, safety, and occupational health functions." Rasahugan (2023) examined the governance of Malaysia's public sector security services, highlighting how regulatory structures, institutional monitoring, and organizational practices contribute to accountability and effective service delivery.

This research addresses a gap in the literature by providing localized data from Malaysia, exploring whether standard HRM interventions function effectively for security guards in rural, contract-based employment. The focus is warranted as empirical studies have largely overlooked guards in rural and semi-rural districts, where labour market conditions, enforcement of standards, and access to institutional support differ markedly from urban centres. In these settings, a lack of grievance mechanisms and social safety nets, combined with fewer employment alternatives, likely intensifies vulnerabilities and exacerbates turnover intentions, a pattern consistent with findings from other developing nations in the Global South.

In rural settings, security personnel frequently operate in isolated posts such as plantations, educational institutions, and industrial peripheries where managerial monitoring is episodic and HR interventions such as training, feedback systems, and performance appraisals are inconsistently implemented. Previous studies conducted by Meng'anyi, Bor, and Auya (2025) claimed that examining differences in working conditions in urban areas as compared

to those in rural security contexts enables the creation of specific strategies to improve local working conditions.

Addressing this gap is critical not only for advancing sector-specific HRM theory but also for informing policy interventions aligned with Malaysia's commitment to SDG 8 and inclusive economic growth. Building on the common-good HRM framework articulated by Katarzyna Piwowar-Sulej (2025), employee and organizational outcomes are achieved by aligning workforce practices and strategies with sustainable development priorities.

Evidently, focusing on rural security guards as an under-researched and potentially vulnerable workforce segment enables this study to extend the current conceptual framework by incorporating spatial inequality, enforcement discrepancies, and labour precarity into the analytical framework, thereby contributing both theoretical and policy relevance to current debates in social sciences disciplines.

Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between Human Resource Management (HRM) practices and turnover intentions among employees in registered private security firms in Sarawak.

Specific objectives include:

- To identify the relationship between training and development and turnover intentions.
- To identify the relationship between compensation and benefits and turnover intentions.
- To identify the relationship between performance management and turnover intention.
- To identify the relationship between employee relations and turnover intentions

Research Hypotheses

Based on the objectives, the following hypotheses are proposed:

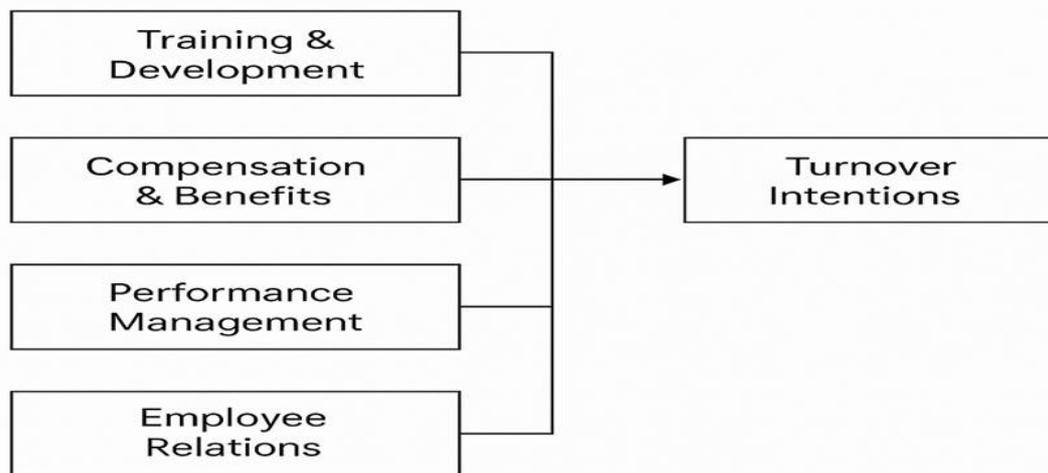
- **H1:** There is a significant negative relationship between training and development and turnover intentions.
- **H2:** There is a significant negative relationship between compensation and benefits and turnover intentions.
- **H3:** There is a significant negative relationship between performance management and turnover intentions.
- **H4:** There is a significant negative relationship between employee relations and turnover intentions

Conceptual Framework

This research explores the relationship between the Independent Variables (IV) of Training and Development, Compensation and Benefits, Performance Management, and Employee Relations and the Dependent Variable (DV), Turnover Intentions.

Conceptual Framework

Relationship between HRM Practices and Turnover Intentions in Registered Private Security Firms in Sarawak



HRM Practices

Human Resource Management (HRM) encompasses structured policies and practices designed to recruit, retain, motivate, and develop employees. Effective HRM practices serve as a key factor linked to positive workplace outcomes and achieving corporate goals. Core practices include total compensation packages, performance evaluation, employee training, upskilling programs, and prospects for growth. Previous research highlights that well-implemented HR practices are linked to lower turnover intentions; conversely, when pay structures do not meet expectations or performance assessments are perceived as unfair, employees tend to show a stronger intention to resign.

As noted by Sonar and Pandey (2023), “HRM extends beyond administrative functions and serves as a strategic tool for engaging, motivating, and retaining employees. Through the effective implementation of these measures, organizations can cultivate a positive and engaged work environment, enhance employee involvement culture, and boost overall organizational performance.

Previous studies suggest that human resource development (HRD) initiatives such as structured and comprehensive compensation packages, incentive and reward programs, and systematic performance evaluations can enhance employees’ competencies and attitudes in an organization.

Memon, Salleh, Mirza, Cheah, Ting, Ahmad, et al. (2021) reported that “employees who perceive HRM practices such as training programs and ongoing feedback demonstrate higher work engagement, ultimately leading to a reduction in turnover intentions within Malaysia’s oil and gas industry.”

Employees are valuable assets in the organization. Elements in human resource management (HRM) that heighten employee performance should be addressed. Organizational outcomes are strongly shaped by the quality of employee performance. High-

performing employees make greater contributions, ensure operational efficiency, and better achieve organizational goals. Thus, competent HRM practices are very important.” (Paeno, P., et al., 2023)

Arokiasamy, Fujikawa, Piaralal, & Arumugam (2024) stated that HRM practices are instrumental in influencing employee attitudes, the extent of satisfaction employees derive from their jobs significantly impacting employee retention in the organization. Given the consistently high attrition in the private security sector, well-designed HRM approaches are vital for reducing employees’ intentions to leave.

More recent studies have built upon these theoretical foundations by exploring how organizational practices can reduce turnover intentions. Rahman et al. (2024), for instance, showed that “well-structured recruitment procedures, transparent and competitive remuneration practices supported by programs for employee learning and career advancement, performance appraisal mechanisms, and supportive work–life balance initiatives all strengthen employee commitment, which in turn helps lower the likelihood of turnover.” These findings highlight not only the relevance of HRM practices but also their practical value for managers aiming to retain staff. Therefore, a review of earlier studies suggests that HRM practices consistently show a relationship with lower turnover intentions in organizations throughout the world

The Malaysian Private Security Industry (PIKM)

The Persatuan Industri Keselamatan Malaysia (PIKM) serves as the primary Industry Lead Body for Malaysia’s private security sector. Malaysia PIKM sets professional benchmarks and manages training to ensure high standards of licensing and competency. All operational activities of agencies fall under the Private Agencies Act 1971 (Act 27), requiring them to complement the Royal Malaysia Police. Common challenges in the sector include financial constraints, weak managerial capacity, and integrity-related concerns. Training is central to professionalising the industry; security officers must complete the Certified Security Guard (CSG) programme. As of late 2024, PIKM membership included over 1,126 agencies, as detailed in Table 1.1

Table 1.1
 Latest statistical data showing PIKM membership (until 12th December 2024)

Year	Existing Members	Cancellation of License	<u>Additional Membership</u>	Total
2018	785	5	12	792
2019	792	2	2	792
2020	792	3	109	898
2021	898	0	1	899
2022	899	2	58	899
2023	956	0	112	899
2024	1068	59	1	1126

(Source : PIKM Annual Report 2024)

Theoretical Framework: Social Exchange Theory (SET)

This study is grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET), pioneered by Blau (1964). SET posits a principle of reciprocity in workplace interactions, proposing that when employers demonstrate fairness and support, employees tend to demonstrate stronger commitment and positive work behaviours. HRM practices are viewed as investments by the organisation that signal value and respect toward employees. When workers feel that their company invests in competitive compensation and links rewards to performance, they usually return the favour with deeper organisational loyalty, making them far less likely to hunt for a new job. Conversely, a sense of being mistreated or undervalued acts as a primary catalyst for staff resignation.

Figure 1.1 A Conceptual Model of Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964)

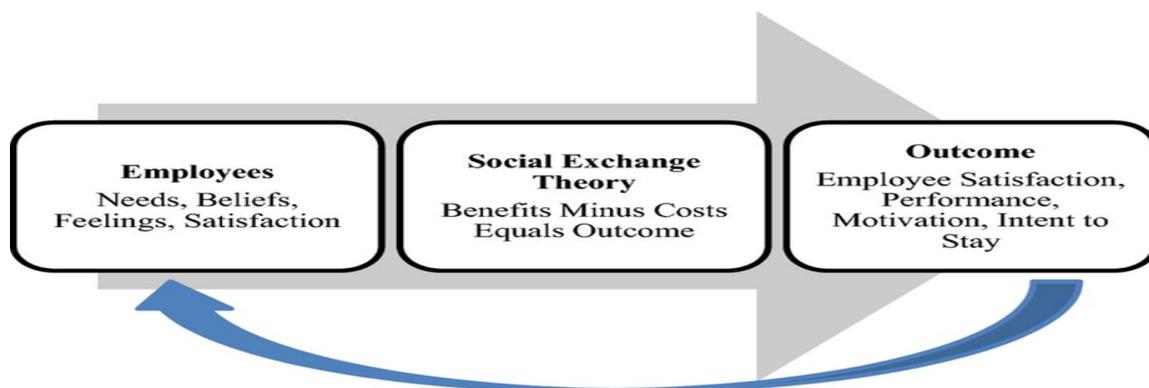


Figure 1.1 A Conceptual Model of Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964)

Adapted from Blau (1964)

Method

Overview

The study adopted a quantitative, correlational research design using structured questionnaires to facilitate data collection. This approach enables the description of patterns and the explanation of observed behaviours corresponding to the research objectives. The research followed a deductive, non-experimental correlational approach to investigate naturally occurring relationships between HRM practices (independent variables) and turnover intentions (dependent variable). Gamage (2025) “highlights the importance of selecting a research design that is well-suited to the aims of the study, corresponds with the research questions, and remains consistent with the theoretical framework underpinning the investigation.”

Population and Sampling

The target population identified for this study comprises of security guards employed in several licensed private security companies for the provision of security services for government schools operating in a district within Malaysia. The total population was 180 individuals (n=180). Using Krejcie and Morgan’s (1970) sample determination table, the minimum sample size required for a 95% confidence level was 123. A non-probability convenience sampling technique was used to ensure participants were reachable within time and resource constraints. Respondents were required to have been employed for at least six months to ensure informed responses.

The survey questionnaires were distributed to Security Firm A (25), Security Firm B (25), Security Firm C (25), Security Firm D (20), Security Firm E (22), Security Firm F (20), Security Firm G (18) and Security Firm H (19). An additional 6 questionnaire forms were given to security operations officer operating in the district area. Moreover, these security guards from this particular district were chosen because of their tacit knowledge of on-the-ground HR practices that will provide the necessary depth to justify this localized inquiry for this study.

In addition to this, the selection of respondents from this district was predicated on the assumption that their domain expertise in region-specific operational practices would facilitate more accurate and contextually relevant responses compared to those of security guards from other geographical areas.

Instrumentation and Translation

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire divided into three sections: demographics, HRM practices, and turnover intentions. Measurement items were adapted from established studies and assessed using a five-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree"). To ensure comprehension among security guards, the instrument was translated into Bahasa Malaysia. Validity was ensured through expert review by academicians and a senior industry practitioner, who examined items for readability and contextual relevance.

Reliability Analysis

Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha for a sample of n=123. All scales demonstrated good to excellent reliability, well above the recommended 0.70 threshold:

Table 2.1

Internal Consistency Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) for Study Variables (n = 123)

	HRM Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's α	95% CI
1	Training and Development	7	.94	[.92, .96]
2	Performance Management	5	.89	[.85, .92]
3	Employee Relations	7	.94	[.92, .96]
4	Compensation and Benefits	5	.86	[.81, .90]
5	Turnover Intentions	8	.90	[.87, .93]

Note. CI = confidence interval.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS (v. 26.0). Initial procedures involved descriptive metrics (means, standard deviations, and frequencies) to summarise demographics. Normality tests (Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilks) were conducted to determine the distribution of the data. Due to significant deviations from normality ($p < .05$), the non-parametric Spearman's Rho correlation was utilised to evaluate the relationships between variables

Results*Demographic Analysis*

The final sample of n=123 respondents was predominantly male (n=109, 88.6%) and married (n=106, 86.2%). The average age was 40 years, with the largest age group being 31 to 40 (n=43, 35%). In terms of education, 52% had attained SPM (GCE Ordinary Level). The majority (n=122, 99.2%) were frontline security guards, with (n=64, 52%) having served between 1 and 3 years. All respondents were contract-based, and (n=92, 74.8%) worked the day shift (7:00 am to 7:00 pm)

The workforce was multi-ethnic, with the Malays (n=60, 48.8%) and Ibans (n=60, 48.8%) being the largest group in the study sample (n=123) followed by the Chinese (n=2, 16%) and Bidayuh (n=1, 0.8%). In this aspect, scheduling and other policies should accommodate religious practices to reduce dissatisfaction.

In addition to this, the education levels were moderate, with the highest frequency at the SPM (GCE Ordinary Level), indicating that most respondents had completed upper secondary education. Notably, we've also observed a marked increase in the percentage of respondents who have completed upper secondary education when comparing the current data to that of 20 years ago. In other words, our current respondents are more highly educated than those from 20 years ago.

Specifically, the average participant is in their early 40s, with a noticeable younger mode at 28, suggesting some younger representation. A mid-career workforce consists of experienced workers, typically aged in their 30s to 50s (or even 40s to 50s plus), who have significant industry knowledge, strong skills, and are often seeking growth, new challenges, reskilling, or greater work-life balance in the middle phase of their long careers. Therefore, since the workforce is mid-career, it is often associated with higher job embeddedness but also greater susceptibility to burnout if HRM practices are poor.

Similarly, the findings indicate that employees in the 1 to 5-year range are often at risk of leaving if career progression stalls. Thus, HRM must address job insecurity, lack of benefits, and contract renewal transparency.

Tests for Normality

As shown in Table 3.2, all five study variables of training and development, performance management, employee relations, compensation and benefits, and turnover intentions demonstrated statistical significance across both tests ($p < .05$).

Thus, since every $*p^*$ -value is less than .05, the evidence strongly suggests that none of the variables are normally distributed in this sample. This pattern of results is consistent across both tests, lending greater confidence to the conclusion that the data significantly deviate from a normal distribution. We therefore utilized the Spearman correlation, a nonparametric test, for further analysis.

Table 3.2
Results of Normality Tests for Key Study Variables (n = 123)

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		Shapiro-Wilks	
	Statistic	*p*	Statistic	*p*
Training & Development	.114	< .001	.945	< .001
Performance Management	.230	< .001	.907	< .001
Employee Relations	.284	< .001	.887	< .001
Compensation & Benefits	.121	< .001	.965	.003
Turnover Intentions	.156	< .001	.931	< .001

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Note. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test used a Lilliefors significance correction. All $*p^*$ -values are two-tailed. A significant result ($*p^* < .05$) indicates a deviation from normality. (non-normal) If the **Sig.** value is **less than 0.05**, the data significantly deviate from a normal distribution (i.e., **non-normal**)

Descriptive Statistics of Variables (Correlation Analysis)

Next, we examine the relationships between the studied variables, as detailed in the correlation table shown. Table 3.3 presents descriptive statistics (means and standard

deviations) and intercorrelations using Spearman's rank-order coefficient for five study variables ($n = 123$). Spearman's rho was appropriately selected given the earlier finding of non-normal data distribution. The strength and direction of relationships are interpreted alongside the average levels of each variable as reported by the respondents.

Table 3.3
Summary for Spearman Rho Correlation, Means and Standard Deviation ($n=123$)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Training & Development (TD)	3.45	0.64	—				
2. Performance Management (PM)	3.71	0.59	.233**	—			
3. Employee Relations (ER)	3.79	0.62	.270**	.594**	—		
4. Compensation & Benefits (COM)	3.44	0.73	.491**	.407**	.464**	—	
5. Turnover Intentions (TI)	2.93	1.05	-.053	-.211*	-.216*	-.302**	—

Note.

M = mean; SD = standard deviation. Spearman's rho coefficients are reported.

- $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Results

The primary objective of this study was to evaluate the perceptions of human resource management (HRM) practices and turnover intentions among employees. This section presents the descriptive findings for each variable, followed by the results of the hypothesis tests.

In our analysis, on average, respondents rated the human resource practices positively, with means above the midpoint of the scale. Employee Relations (ER) received the highest average rating ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 0.62$), followed closely by Performance Management (PM; $M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.59$). Training & Development (TD) and Compensation & Benefits (COM) had similar, moderately positive means (3.45 and 3.44, respectively), though COM showed greater variability in responses ($SD = 0.73$). Turnover Intentions (TI) had the lowest mean ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 1.05$), indicating a moderate tendency toward leaving, with substantial dispersion among participants.

In line with our research objectives to explore the link between HRM practices and employee exit trends, we examined the relationship and strength of the studied variable to draw conclusions.

The correlations with turnover intentions were negative, as theoretically expected. However, their strength and significance varied. Compensation & Benefits had the strongest negative relationship with TI ($r_s = -.302$, $p < .01$), indicating that higher satisfaction with pay and benefits is associated with a notably lower desire to leave. Employee Relations and Performance Management also had significant, though weaker, negative correlations with TI ($r_s = -.216$ and $-.211$, respectively, $p < .05$). Interestingly, the correlation between Training & Development and Turnover Intentions was negative but very weak and non-significant ($r_s = -.053$, ns), suggesting that, in this sample, perceptions of training opportunities have little direct association with thoughts of quitting.

Correlation and Hypothesis Testing

A Spearman's rho correlation was run to determine the relationship between HRM variables and Turnover Intentions to test the hypotheses as summarized in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4

Summary of the Strength and Direction of the HRM variable

	HRM Variable	r-value (r_s)	p-value	Direction	Strength
1	Compensation and Benefits	-0.302	0.001	Negative	Moderate
2	Employee Relations	-0.216	0.016	Negative	Weak to moderate
3	Performance Management	-0.211	0.019	Negative	Weak to moderate
4	Training and Development	-0.053	0.560	Negative	Very weak (not significant)

The analysis yielded the following results:

- **H2:** Compensation and Benefits vs. Turnover Intentions: Revealed the strongest significant negative relationship ($r_s = -.302$, $p < .01$). Supported.
- **H4:** Employee Relations vs. Turnover Intentions: Demonstrated a significant negative association ($r_s = -.216$, $p < .05$). Supported.
- **H3:** Performance Management vs. Turnover Intentions: Showed a significant negative relationship ($r_s = -.211$, $p < .05$). Supported.
- **H1:** Training and Development vs. Turnover Intentions: Indicated a negative but very weak and non-significant relationship ($r_s = -.053$, $p > .05$). Not Supported.

Among the significant predictors, Compensation and Benefits exhibited the strongest negative correlation with turnover intentions ($r_s = -.302$, $p = .001$). Although the strength of association is moderate, the statistical significance supports the argument that dissatisfaction with pay, allowances, bonuses, and benefits is linked to higher turnover intentions. Compensation functions not only as a monetary incentive but also as a symbolic indicator of organisational value and recognition. The present finding corroborates earlier studies which have shown that inadequate compensation packages are among the most salient predictors

of turnover intentions, particularly in service-based and contract-dependent industries where wage structures are less competitive. Improved rewards, benefits, and allowances therefore reinforce the social exchange contract, enhancing perceptions of fairness and reducing employees' likelihood of seeking alternative employment.

Similarly, for Employee Relations ($r_s = -.216$, $p = .016$) and Performance Management ($r_s = -.211$, $p = .019$) both demonstrated statistically significant but weaker negative relationships with turnover intentions. These variables capture relational and procedural dimensions of the employment relationship, both of which are central to SET's emphasis on reciprocity and social obligations. Fair performance appraisal systems, constructive feedback, information transparency, and respectful treatment contribute to a more positive relational climate. When these elements are present, employees are more likely to reciprocate through sustained organisational membership. This aligns with the notion that employees are more likely to remain with an organisation when they perceive interpersonal respect, trust, and fairness in managerial practices.

In contrast, Training and Development was found to have a very weak and statistically non-significant negative correlation with turnover intentions ($r_s = -.053$, $p = .560$). This suggests that training initiatives alone may be insufficient to influence retention in this context. For contract-based and lower-tier occupational groups, training may lack clear links to promotion, wage increments, or job security are key factors that typically render training valuable in the social exchange process. Without such mechanisms, training may be viewed as a functional requirement rather than an investment in employee growth, thus limiting its capacity to shape turnover-related decisions. This finding diverges from studies conducted in professional and high-skilled settings where training-related opportunities are strongly tied to career advancement and organisational commitment.

Collectively, these results underscore the importance of strategic HRM practices in managing turnover intentions. For this sampled population, tangible rewards (i.e., compensation) appear to exert the greatest influence, while relational dimensions (employee relations and performance management) contribute additional but weaker protective effects against turnover. Developmental initiatives, however, may require reconfiguration or clearer value pathways to serve as effective retention mechanisms.

From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964), this pattern reflects the logic of reciprocal exchange, whereby employees are more likely to retain membership in an organisation when they believe that the organisation is honouring its side of the exchange through equitable treatment, competitive rewards, and procedural transparency. Conversely, when organisational practices are perceived as unfair, insufficient, or exploitative, the social exchange relationship weakens, increasing the likelihood of turnover intentions

Discussion

The present study primarily examined the extent to which selected Human Resource Management (HRM) practices influence employees' turnover intentions. Empirical results demonstrated that three HRM practices of compensation and benefits, performance management, and employee relations exhibited statistically significant negative associations with turnover intentions. These findings indicate that improvements in these HRM domains

are likely to reduce employees' intentions to leave the organization. Accordingly, the research hypotheses related to these variables (H2 to H4) were supported.

In contrast, the hypothesis concerning training and development (H1) was not supported, as this construct did not show a statistically significant relationship with turnover intentions. This suggests that, within the context of the sampled security workforce, training and development initiatives may be perceived as having limited relevance or immediate value in influencing decisions to remain with or exit the organization.

Conversely, a growing body of recent scholarship presents contradictory evidence, reporting weak, negligible, or non-significant relationships between developmental opportunities and turnover intentions. Yusuf, Abdulkareem, and Yusuf (2022) and Jiang, Yip, and Gong (2025) found that T&D had limited explanatory power in predicting turnover intention when compared to more salient HRM constructs such as compensation, job satisfaction, or supervisory support. These studies suggest that the retention value of T&D may be contingent on contextual moderators such as occupation type, perceived career mobility, labor market alternatives, generational values, or work design characteristics. In occupations with highly standardized tasks, limited career pathways, or constrained training access such as private security T&D may not be perceived as meaningful or strategically beneficial, thereby explaining the non-significant pattern observed in the present study.

The Dominance of Compensation and Benefits

The findings of the present study revealed that compensation and benefits constituted the most influential HRM dimension in mitigating turnover intentions. This aligns with Social Exchange Theory, as employees reciprocate organisational investment when their financial and non-financial needs are met. Compensation functions as both a transactional payment and a symbolic signal of organisational regard. These findings are consistent with recent studies across sectors, including SMEs and the construction industry, which highlight that pay and benefits are foundational levers for retention with recent Scopus- and WoS-indexed studies reporting comparable results across sectors and labor contexts (Bendera, Chong, & Ng, 2025; Conroy & Morton, 2024; Marane & Asaad, 2025; Sarmiento & Jose, 2025). Taken together, these studies reinforce the argument that compensation and benefits remain a foundational HRM lever in shaping employee retention behavior.

Further support for this interpretation is provided by Abdul Malik and Alhassan Musah (2024), who demonstrated that millennial employees' propensity to leave their jobs is strongly influenced by the degree to which pay and benefits are perceived as satisfactory, particularly within the construction industry. Their findings highlight generational expectations regarding economic security and underscore how compensation functions as both a transactional and symbolic element of the employment relationship.

The present analysis is also consistent with evidence from a 2025 Malaysian investigation of SMEs, which reported that competitive compensation packages significantly enhanced employee retention outcomes (Abugu & Othman, 2025). According to that study, compensation acts as a central mechanism for safeguarding human capital, especially in environments characterized by limited labor supply and substantial inter-firm competition. Collectively, these converging results emphasize the strategic necessity for organizations to

adopt comprehensive and competitive total compensation systems as a core component of their retention strategies.

Relational Practices: Employee Relations and Performance Management

Employee relations and performance management both demonstrated significant but weaker negative relationships with turnover intentions. These variables capture the relational and procedural dimensions of employment. Fair appraisals, constructive feedback, and respectful treatment contribute to a positive climate, which employees reciprocate through sustained membership. SET explains that when HR practices are perceived as supportive, employees feel obligated to react with behaviours that enhance performance and loyalty.

The Non-Significance of Training and Development

Surprisingly, Training and Development (T&D) did not exhibit a statistically significant association with turnover intentions. This suggests that T&D may not operate as a salient motivational lever in this specific context. Several factors explain this:

- **Adequacy of Initial Training:** For many guards, the initial CSG certification is the only required credential, and further training may be viewed as marginally beneficial. One plausible explanation relates to how security personnel interpret the adequacy of training for their roles. For many guards, the initial CSG certification represents the primary credential required for job performance. As a consequence, additional training is often perceived as unnecessary or only marginally beneficial. When employees believe they already possess sufficient competencies to meet task demands, the perceived value of further developmental opportunities diminishes, reducing the likelihood that such initiatives will influence long-term employment decisions.
- **Operational Constraints:** Guards work 12-hour shifts, and staffing shortages create a "replacement gap," making it difficult to vacate roles for learning activities. Operational constraints further attenuate the potential effect of T&D. The majority of guards work extended 12-hour shifts, which substantially limits the availability of time for structured learning or skill enhancement activities. This challenge is compounded by persistent staffing shortages and the so-called "replacement gap," in which continuous site coverage requirements impede the release of personnel for training. Empirical work has noted similar constraints in security and other shift-based occupations, wherein roles cannot be vacated without dedicated relief personnel (Sarmiento & Jose, 2025). Under these conditions, T&D becomes difficult to implement, and employees may not expect such opportunities to form part of the employment value proposition, thus weakening its relevance to turnover outcomes.

Although Training and Development (T&D) are widely recognized as mechanisms for enhancing employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities, the empirical literature examining its relationship with turnover intentions remains mixed and highly context dependent (Jun & Eckardt, 2025). In theory, T&D should strengthen perceived organizational support, equip employees with job-relevant competencies, and reinforce long-term employability each of which may influence retention decisions. However, empirical findings across industries and national settings indicate that the strength and direction of these effects are far from uniform.

- **Lack of Pathways:** In lower-tier occupational groups, training often lacks clear links to promotion or wage increments, limiting its capacity to influence turnover decisions. Supporting studies have reported that T&D can operate as a critical determinant of employee outcomes, including performance, commitment, and turnover intention. For example, Yek et al. (2024) demonstrated that developmental investments significantly reduced turnover intention among millennial employees, suggesting that learning-oriented work environments may appeal to younger cohorts who prioritize career growth and skill progression. Similarly, research in high-skill and knowledge-intensive sectors frequently identifies T&D as an instrument of retention, particularly when employees perceive developmental opportunities as equitable, transparent, and aligned with career trajectories.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings reinforce the utility of Social Exchange Theory (SET) in explaining retention dynamics in non-traditional sectors. Identifying compensation as the primary driver underscores that models understating economic reciprocity may be theoretically limited. Practically, organisations should view compensation as an investment in human capital rather than a mere expense. Strategies should move beyond market competitiveness to include performance-linked incentives and structured benefits to enhance psychological attachment. Recent empirical research demonstrates that compensation systems are negatively associated with turnover intentions, indicating that employees who perceive their rewards as equitable and competitive are less inclined to leave the organisation (Ohunakin & Olugbade, 2022).

Complementary evidence also highlights the importance of motivational HR practices in shaping employee attitudes. Suhail et al. (2025) demonstrate that HR practices, including compensation, are linked to positive employee outcomes such as job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviours, which in turn contribute to lower turnover intentions. The empirical findings of this study, which identify Compensation and Benefits as the HRM practice most strongly associated with lower turnover intentions, provide important insights for both organisational stakeholders and sector regulators. For organisations in the private security industry, strategically designed compensation structures should be understood as investments in human capital retention rather than operational expenses. Competitive and fair reward systems have been shown to enhance employee behaviour and reduce the likelihood of voluntary attrition (Chusniah & Wahyuningtyas, 2025)

Well-structured reward strategies can positively influence work quality, operational efficiency, and overall productivity. By recognising and incentivising high-performing employees through financial bonuses, promotions, or other tangible rewards, organisations can stimulate motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment, thereby reducing turnover and fostering retention. Evidence from recent systematic reviews indicates that well-designed reward systems contribute to organisational commitment and employee stability (Figueiredo et al., 2025).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed to examine the influence of four HRM practices on turnover intentions among private security guards in Sarawak. Results confirmed that higher satisfaction with Compensation and Benefits, Employee Relations, and Performance Management leads to

lower turnover intentions. Compensation was the strongest predictor. Conversely, Training and Development was not significantly associated with retention, possibly due to a lack of clear career pathways or the functional nature of mandatory training in this critical sector. Private security firms have an important role to play in ensuring their own hiring and employment practices are beyond reproach and able to achieve the highest standards of operations within the industry.

Recommendations for the Private Security Industry

- **Strategic Reward Frameworks:** Firms should adopt comprehensive total compensation frameworks that reflect the specific demands and risks of security work. Establishing salary structures informed by market benchmarking can enhance attraction and retention.
- **Enhancing Non-Wage Benefits:** Remuneration should be expanded to include meaningful benefits like comprehensive health insurance and retirement provisions to alleviate financial uncertainty.
- **Relational Support:** Organisations must foster constructive communication and transparent policies, as relational fairness significantly reduces turnover.
- **Performance-Linked Incentives:** Implementing structured bonuses and recognition programmes aligns individual efforts with organisational goals, stimulating motivation.

Future Research

Future studies should consider probability-based sampling to strengthen representativeness. Additionally, a mixed-methods design incorporating qualitative interviews could capture nuanced perspectives and unobserved mechanisms that surveys might overlook. Comparing these results across different regions or regulatory environments would further advance the understanding of retention in the global security industry

Taken together, future research should examine potential mediators such as perceived organizational support, employability, job satisfaction and moderators such as occupational structure, generational cohorts, job demands, and market competition to better understand how and when T&D influences turnover intentions. Such research would contribute to clarifying the inconsistent empirical landscape and advance theory-building in HRM literature, particularly for industries where human development practices do not inherently translate into retention-driven outcomes.

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