

## CAREER PLATEAU FORMS TURNOVER INTENTION: THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT AND CAREER SATISFACTION

Noerchoidah<sup>1\*</sup>, Dyah Widowati<sup>2</sup>, Siti Mahmudah<sup>3</sup>, Soffia Pudji Estiasih<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,4</sup> Universitas PGRI Adi Buana Surabaya, Indonesia

<sup>2,3</sup> Politeknik NSC Surabaya, Indonesia

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**ABSTRACT:** The pervasive high employee turnover intention, particularly prevalent in the hospitality sector, often disrupts company operations. This study investigates the influence of career plateau on turnover intention, mediated by affective commitment and career satisfaction. The research population comprises all hotel employees in East Java, with a sample size of 170 employees. The data analysis used the Partial-Least-Square Structural-Equation-Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. The hypothesis testing results substantiate that career plateau significantly and negatively impacts affective commitment and career satisfaction. Furthermore, both affective commitment and career satisfaction significantly and negatively influence turnover intention. The study also reveals that career plateau significantly and positively affects turnover intention when mediated by affective commitment. However, when judged by career satisfaction, the career plateau's effect on turnover intention was positive but insignificant.

**Keywords:** Affective Commitment; Career Plateau; Career Satisfaction; Turnover Intention

\*Corresponding Author: [noerchoidah@unipasby.ac.id](mailto:noerchoidah@unipasby.ac.id)

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## INTRODUCTION

In today's highly competitive business landscape, companies must excel in financial capabilities and effectively manage competent, high-quality human resources (Indriyani et al., 2022). Human Resources is a workforce that operates the management system at the hotel. In 2022, the Badan Pusat Statistik for East Java Province informed that human resources in East Java hotels reached 1,556,876 people. Forming a management system requires the talent, energy, and creativity needed to achieve hotel management goals. Managing and maintaining human resources is essential to stimulate employee work to maintain a competitive advantage for the company (Gim et al., 2015).

The phenomenon of turnover intention has garnered significant attention due to its persistent occurrence within the hospitality industry (Ryan et al., 2015; Noerchoidah, 2020). Turnover intention refers to a conscious and deliberate desire to leave an organization and poses a significant challenge for organizations (Huang & Su, 2016). One of the primary drivers of high turnover intention in the service sector is the strong demand for career advancement opportunities (Johns & McKechnie, 1995). Career development issues within the hospitality industry significantly impact employee job satisfaction, which, in turn, influences turnover intention. The negative consequences of high employee turnover intention include operational disruptions, moral dilemmas among remaining employees, increased recruitment and training costs, and a decline in service quality leading to customer dissatisfaction (Han et al., 2009; Noerchoidah et al., 2023).

Career satisfaction emerges as a critical determinant in an individual's decision to pursue turnover intention and seek opportunities elsewhere (Wickramasinghe & Jayaweera, 2010). Career satisfaction represents an individual's subjective evaluation of contentment or discontentment with their career (Lounsbury et al., 2008). Nauta et al. (2009) propose that career satisfaction reflects an individual's perception of their current and future career prospects. It substantially impacts employees' attitudes toward their jobs, with higher levels of career satisfaction supporting positive attitudes and lower ones indicating discontentment.

Commitment to the organization has been recognized as a significant determinant in turnover intent (Tremblay, 2021). Meyer et al. (1993) identified three types of organizational commitment: normative, continuity, and affective. This study focuses on affective commitment, characterized by an emotional bond and identification with the organization. Affective commitment is an essential predictor of turnover intention because it indicates an employee's sense of ownership, increased engagement in organizational activities, and desire to achieve organizational goals and remain with the organization (Ramalho Luz et al., 2018).

Career plateau has been identified as a significant factor influencing employee inclination to leave (Xie et al., 2016). Bardwick (1986) describes a professional plateau as a point where advancement ceases in a person's career. Before reaching the pinnacle of their professions, many people find themselves

stagnant, performing the same job activities for a lengthy period (Shon Miles et al., 2013; Lyons et al., 2015). According to research by Rilovick (2005), 80% of employees face a career plateau.

Previous research has explored turnover intent from several angles. Wickramasinghe and Jayaweera (2010) discovered a correlation between turnover intent and job satisfaction. Xie et al. (2016) and Obianuju et al. (2021) demonstrated a connection between intention to leave and career plateau. Mehmood et al. (2016) revealed that affective commitment influences turnover intent. The issue of professional plateau poses significant obstacles. In addition, an earlier study on career plateau and intention to leave has produced contradictory results. Several studies, including Xie et al. (2016), Wang et al. (2014), and Obianuju et al. (2021), have demonstrated a positive link between career plateau and intention to leave the organization. However, Lee (2003), Shahzad et al. (2011), and Hassan et al. (2020) showed no statistically significant relationship between career plateau and intention to leave. Similar to Harman et al. (2009) and Mensah & Kosi (2016), Shahid & Ahmad (2020) and Yang et al. (2019) discovered a strong negative influence of affective commitment on turnover intention. Mehmood et al. (2016) offered empirical evidence of an inverse relationship between affective commitment and turnover intention. These contradictory results demonstrate the need for additional research to establish a comprehensive research model. Therefore, this study aims to explore the critical factors related to turnover intention and contribute to the literature in a scholarly manner for submission to a reputable journal.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

The theory underlying the theoretical framework of this research is the social exchange theory (Blau, 2017). This theory explains the norm of reciprocity between employees and the resources they receive in return, such as monetary rewards, status, and benefits. The company's support, such as employee welfare, is expected to foster employee commitment and contribute to achieving organizational goals. However, when an imbalance occurs in the social exchange, affective commitment may be affected, subsequently influencing turnover intention. Additionally, understanding the mediating role of affective commitment and career satisfaction can provide valuable insights into addressing turnover intention.

### *Career Plateau and Affective Commitment*

Affective commitment is characterized by individuals' emotional attachment to their organization because of their experiences (Allen & Meyer, 1997). High levels of affective commitment indicate active engagement and a sense of fulfillment in being part of the organization. Moreover, individuals with affective solid commitment are willing to align their values with the organization's. Bardwick (1986) posits that a career plateau is linked to adverse outcomes associated with personal or professional setbacks. Career plateau causes dissatisfaction because employees' career expectations are not fulfilled,

which results in reduced employee affective commitment to the organization. Based on this explanation, the hypothesis:

*H1: Career plateau has a negative effect on affective commitment*

#### *Career Plateau and Career Satisfaction*

A career plateau is a stage where future advancement becomes uncertain due to an extended time spent in the current position (Shockley et al., 2016). Within organizations characterized by career plateaus, employees encounter limited opportunities for reaching the pinnacle of their careers. Yang et al. (2019) emphasize the significance of career plateau as a concept that shapes employees' perceptions of career progression within the organization. Employees actively seek to avoid career plateaus as they perceive such situations as monotonous and lacking opportunities for skill acquisition. Han (2010) asserts that career satisfaction represents an individual's enduring contentment with their career, derived from intrinsic and extrinsic factors such as salary, accomplishments, and prospects for personal growth. Career satisfaction is a metric for assessing an individual's confidence level in their career trajectory, aligning with their goals, values, and preferences. Therefore, the hypothesis is proposed:

*H2: Career plateau has a negative effect on career satisfaction*

#### *Affective Commitment and Turnover Intention*

Affective commitment appears as a reliable and influential predictor in the anticipation of turnover intention. The theoretical perspective on the relationship between affective commitment and intention to leave highlights employees' propensity to consider leaving the organization due to dissatisfaction and diminished commitment levels (Culpepper, 2011). Affective commitment, characterized by the emotional bond employees develop with their organization, plays a pivotal role in shaping turnover outcomes (Shafique et al., 2011). Employees involved in the local community and their work tend to have a higher level of social integration, which can create a more significant potential for emotional attachment (Mercurio, 2015).

*H3: Affective commitment has a negative effect on turnover intention*

#### *Career Satisfaction and Turnover Intention*

Career satisfaction has been identified as a significant and influential predictor of turnover intention (Wright & Bonett, 2007). This viewpoint is supported by Joo and Park (2010), who suggest that employees are more likely to experience turnover intention when they have low job satisfaction and limited opportunities for career advancement. Scholars such as Wright and Bonett (2007) and Nauta et al. (2009) emphasize the crucial role of career satisfaction in employee retention and organizational success.

*H4: Career satisfaction has a negative effect on turnover intention*

### *Career Plateau and Turnover Intention*

Promotion holds significant importance for employees, particularly those in the early stages of their careers (Xie et al., 2016). It serves as a measure of success and progression within the workplace. However, when companies fail to plan career management effectively, it can lead to career stagnation (Hassan et al., 2020). Every employee inevitably encounters periods of limited career advancement, known as career plateaus, within organizations (Conner, 2014). Previous studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between hierarchical plateau and turnover intention (Wang et al., 2014); (Xie et al., 2015). Drawing from the social exchange theory of Blau (2017), which emphasizes the exchange of contributions and stimuli between employees and the company, the Chinese context places significant emphasis on a hierarchical plateau and seniority as indicators of career success. Consequently, employees may perceive their contributions as undervalued by the company. Based on this description, the hypothesis is proposed:

*H5: Career plateau has a positive effect on turnover intention*

### *Career Plateau, Turnover Intention, and Affective Commitment*

Affective commitment refers to employees' emotional attachment, affiliation, and organizational engagement (Allen & Meyer, 1997). Previous research has indicated that career development significantly influences affective commitment Weng et al. (2010). On the other hand, a career plateau represents a stage in one's career where the prospects for further hierarchical advancement are minimal (Bardwick, 1986). During this career stagnation phase, affective commitment can be influenced by organizational factors (Bandura, 1997). This study's findings contribute to how career plateau affects employees' affective commitment to their current employer (Culpepper, 2011). Based on this reasoning, the proposed hypothesis is formulated:

*H6: Career plateau on turnover intention is mediated by affective commitment*

### *Career plateau, turnover intention, and career satisfaction*

Turnover intention refers to the propensity or intent of employees to leave their current position. Gamage Herath (2013) found a substantial correlation between career stagnation and intention to leave the organization, indicating a propensity for employees to consider turnover. Agolla and Ongori (2009) further established the association between career plateau and various adverse consequences, including turnover intention.

*H7: Career plateau on turnover intention is mediated by career satisfaction*

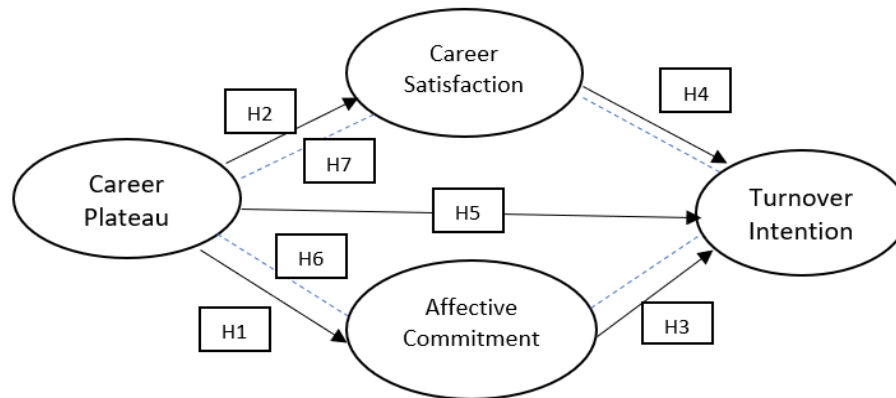


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research design, precisely a causal approach, to examine the impact of one variable on another. Data collection is conducted through the administration of online and paper-based questionnaires. The acquired data are then analyzed using the Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) method with a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 points.

### *Population and Sample*

The population of this study is 1.556.876 hotel employees located in East Java. This location in East Java was chosen because it has rapid hotel growth, as seen by the increasing number of hotel developments in the region. This study used a sampling technique: purposive sampling. Research with purposive sampling is used if the selected sample has the desired criteria or requirements per the research objectives. These employees have worked for more than one year, so the measure of career success is upward mobility or achieving a higher level. Determining the sample size follows the opinion of Hair et al. (2019), namely the number of indicators multiplied by the parameter (5 to 10). The minimum sample size is  $20 \times 5 = 100$  employees. However, this research used a sample of 170 employees to obtain more accurate information.

### *Measurement*

Career plateau measurement was adopted from Salami (2015) and consisted of six items. An example item used in this study was: "I couldn't possibly attain a higher position within the hospitality industry." Career satisfaction was measured using a scale developed by Spurk et al. (2011), which included four items. This study used a sample item: "I am content with the level of success I have achieved in my career." Affective commitment was assessed using a measurement developed by Allen and Meyer (1997), which comprised six items. An example item used in this study was: "The employee experiences a strong emotional attachment to the organization." The measurement of

turnover intention was adopted from Koslowsky et al. (2012) and consisted of four items. An example item used in this study was: "Employees are inclined to seek employment opportunities at other companies."

## RESULTS

### Outer Model Testing

The outer model must be validated before undertaking data analysis with route analysis. The outer model test determines the link between the latent variables and their corresponding indicators. The following results of the outer model are presented in Figure 2.

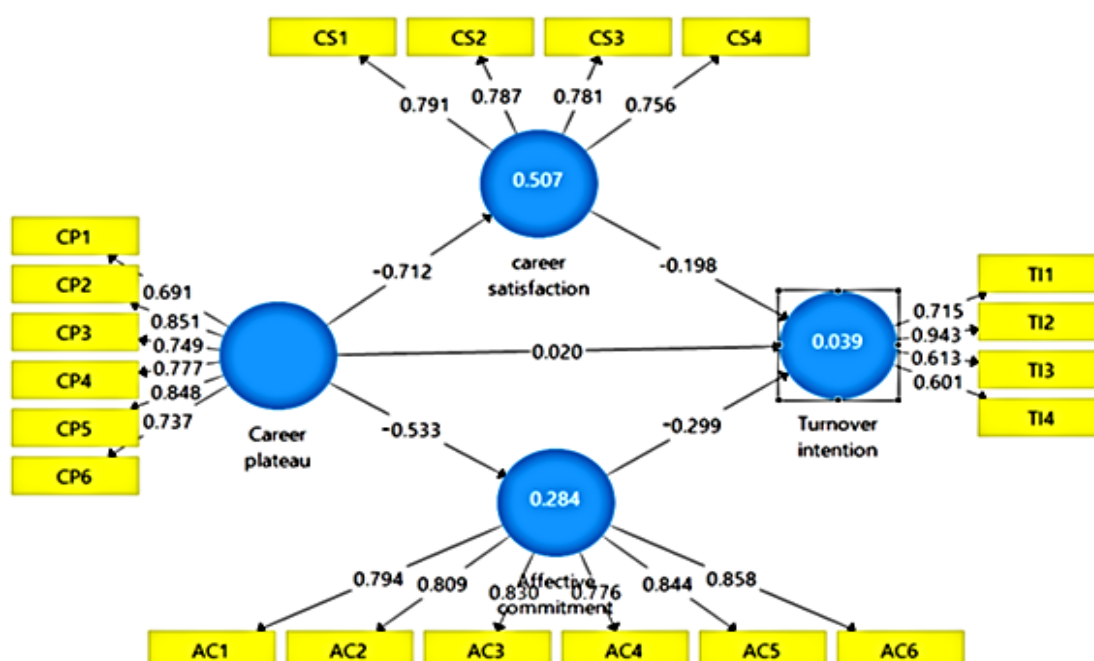


Figure 2. Outer Model Presentation  
 Source: Smartpls 3 output

### Validity test

The validity test measures how excellent or valid the relationship between indicators and their latent variables is. In the convergent validity test, the expected loading factor value is  $> 0.7$  and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value is more significant than 0.5. However, the loading factor  $> 0.7$  requirements are not satisfied, so a value of 0.6 is still considered sufficient to meet the criteria (Sholihin & Ratmono, 2013).

### Reliability Test

Reliability testing can be done by observing Cronbach alpha  $> 0.7$  and the Composite Reliability (CR) value  $> 0.7$  so that it can be declared reliable.

Table 1. Validity and Reliability Test Results

Variable	Items	Loading	AVE	Alpha	CR
Career Plateau	CP1	0.691	0.605	0.870	0.901
	CP2	0.851			
	CP3	0.749			
	CP4	0.777			
	CP5	0.848			
	CP6	0.737			
Affective Commitment	AC1	0.794	0.671	0.902	0.924
	AC2	0.809			
	AC3	0.830			
	AC4	0.776			
	AC5	0.844			
	AC6	0.858			
Career Satisfaction	CS1	0.791	0.607	0.789	0.861
	CS2	0.787			
	CS3	0.781			
	CS4	0.756			
Turnover Intention	TI1	0.715	0.534	0.756	0.816
	TI2	0.943			
	TI3	0.613			
	TI4	0.601			

Source: SmartPLS Outputs (2023)

Based on the SmartPLS output in Table 1, a validity test has been produced that all outer loadings for each variable are declared valid because they have a value of more than 0.6. The reliability test found for each variable is reliable because it has a Cronbach's Alpha value greater than 0.7 and a composite reliability (CR) value greater than 0.7.

*Inner Model Testing*

The inner model helps determine the appropriateness of the relationship between variables. The results of the internal model are presented in Table 2, namely R Square (R<sup>2</sup>).

Table 2. R Square (R<sup>2</sup>)

Variable	R Square (R <sup>2</sup> )
Affective Commitment	0.284
Career Satisfaction	0.507
Turnover Intention	0.039

Source: SmartPLS Outputs (2023)

Table 2 shows that the career plateau in affective commitment gives an R Square value of 0.284, meaning that the career plateau variable can explain the



affective commitment variable by 28.4%. As much as 71.6% is influenced by other factors. When an employee experiences a career plateau, such as feeling it is impossible to reach a higher position in the hospitality industry, promotional opportunities are limited, they have been at the current level for too long, the background does not match the needs of the hospitality industry, the nature of the work given is repetitive and routine, the hospitality industry does not encourage employees to learn tasks outside the division, which has a direct impact on employee affective commitment which is low (28.4%). As for other things, it was found that the career plateau model on career satisfaction gave an R Square value of 0.507, meaning that as much as 50.7% of the career plateau variable was able to explain career satisfaction and as much as 49.3% were other factors not examined in this study. Furthermore, career plateau on turnover intention has an R Square value of 0.039. This means that 3.9% of the career plateau variable can explain the turnover intention variable, while other factors outside the study influence 96.1%. After testing the outer and inner models, the hypothesis of the causal relationship of the research variables is then carried out, as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Results of Hypothesis Testing Direct and Indirect Effects

Hypothesis	Path	Effect	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	Decision
H1	Career plateau → affective commitment	-0.533	8.910	0.000	accepted
H2	Career plateau → career satisfaction	-0.712	15.060	0.000	accepted
H3	Affective commitment → turnover intention	-0.299	3.612	0.000	accepted
H4	Career satisfaction →turnover intention	-0.198	4.690	0.000	accepted
H5	Career plateau → turnover intention	0.020	2.201	0.000	accepted
H6	Career plateau → affective commitment →turnover intention	0.102	3.670	0.000	accepted
H7	Career plateau → career satisfaction →turnover intention	0.141	1.553	0.503	Rejected

Source: SmartPLS Outputs (2023)

The results of hypothesis testing in Table 3 show that the Career plateau variable negatively and significantly affects the affective commitment of hotel employees in East Java. The original sample results of -0.533, the t statistic value of 8.910 > t table 1.96, and the p-value of (0.000) < 0.05 all show this, so the hypothesis (H1) is accepted. The original sample is negative, meaning that the higher the career plateau in employees, the lower the affective commitment of hotel employees in East Java.

In addition, it was found that the career plateau had a negative and significant effect on the career satisfaction of hotel employees in East Java with the original sample result of -0.712, the t statistic value of 15.060 > t table 1.96, and the p-value (0.000) < 0.05 so that the hypothesis (H2) accepted. The original sample is negative, which means that the higher the career plateau in employees, the lower the career satisfaction of hotel employees in East Java.

Furthermore, the findings show that the affective commitment variable negatively and significantly affects turnover intention. This is evidenced by the original sample results of -0.299, the t statistic value of 3.612 > t table 1.96, and the p-value (0.000) < 0.05 so that the hypothesis (H3) is accepted. The original sample is negative, meaning that the higher the employee's affective commitment, the lower the turnover intention of hotel employees in East Java.

Table 3 shows that career satisfaction has a negative and significant effect on the turnover intention of hotel employees in East Java with an original sample value of -0.198, a statistical t value of 4.690 > t table 1.96, and a p-value (0.000) < 0.05 so that the hypothesis (H4) is accepted. The original sample is negative, which means that the higher the employee's career satisfaction, the lower the turnover intention of hotel employees in East Java.

Career plateau has a positive and significant effect on the turnover intention of hotel employees in East Java with an original sample value of 0.110, a statistical t value of 2.201 > t table 1.96, and a p-value (0.000) < 0.05 so that the hypothesis (H5) is accepted. The original sample has a positive sign, meaning that the higher the employee career plateau, the higher the turnover intention of hotel employees in East Java.

The findings of the indirect effect of career plateau on turnover intention mediated by the affective commitment of hotel employees in East Java with an original sample value of 0.102, a t-statistic value of 3.670 > t-table 1.96, and a p-value (0.000) < 0.05. This means there is a significant influence of affective commitment to mediate the effect between career plateau and turnover intention of hotel employees in East Java, so the hypothesis (H6) is accepted.

Furthermore, career plateau on turnover intention is mediated by career satisfaction of hotel employees in East Java with an original sample value of 0.141, a statistical t value of 1.553 < t table 1.96, and a p-value (0.503) > 0.05. This means there is a positive but insignificant effect from career satisfaction to mediate the influence between career plateau and turnover intention of hotel employees in East Java for the hypothesis (H7) rejection.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of the hypothesis testing indicate a significant negative relationship between the career plateau variable and affective commitment among hotel employees in East Java. Specifically, when employees perceive a high level of career plateau, their affective commitment tends to be low. Conversely, when employees perceive a low level of career plateau, their affective commitment is high.

In the context of hotel employees, career plateau refers to their perception of limited opportunities for future career advancement. This perception arises from a lack of promotional prospects, job challenges, and insufficient knowledge and skill development opportunities within the hospitality industry. Consequently, a high level of career plateau leads to a diminished sense of emotional attachment and identification with the organization. Employees who exhibit an affective commitment to the organization still value their careers and perceive career plateau as a negative factor that hinders their professional growth. The findings of this study align with previous research conducted by Godard et al. (2015) and Xie et al. (2015), which also reported a negative impact of career plateau on affective commitment.

The results of the hypothesis testing show that the career plateau variable has a negative and significant effect on the career satisfaction of hotel employees in East Java. This means that if hotel employees have a high career plateau, employee career satisfaction will be low. Based on the responses provided by the participants, it was evident that the lack of promotional opportunities, limited job challenges, and inadequate opportunities for knowledge and skill development significantly contributed to the low levels of career satisfaction among hotel employees in East Java. The experience of a career plateau resulting from limited prospects for career advancement has led to a sense of monotony and dissatisfaction with the work being performed. This study aligns with previous research conducted by Lee (1999) and Nachbagauer & Riedl (2002), which found a negative impact of career plateau on both career satisfaction and job satisfaction.

The findings of the hypothesis testing provide evidence of a significant and negative relationship between affective commitment and turnover intention among hotel employees in East Java. Specifically, a solid affective commitment among employees is associated with lower levels of turnover intention. The responses provided by the participants indicate that employees who perceive themselves as integral members of the hospitality industry, quickly assimilate into the hotel environment, and possess a high level of emotional attachment to the hospitality sector are less likely to actively seek alternative employment outside of the industry and leave their current positions. This finding is consistent with the views expressed by Culpepper (2011) and Kang et al. (2015), who suggest that employees with low organizational commitment are more prone to turnover. Additionally, Wong and Wong (2017) have posited that increased emotional attachment to the organization can contribute to employee retention. This study aligns with the research conducted by Shahid and Ahmad

(2020) and Yang et al. (2019), which also demonstrated a significant negative impact of affective commitment on turnover intention.

The statistical research demonstrates a substantial negative correlation between job satisfaction and intention to leave among East Java hotel employees. This suggests that higher levels of professional satisfaction are connected with a reduced intention to leave among hotel employees. Career discontent is frequently cited as a significant reason for employee turnover. The level of career satisfaction felt by hotel workers in East Java directly affects their decision to leave their existing positions. When employees are dissatisfied with their career growth, compensation, job attractiveness, and prospects for skill development at the hotel, they are more inclined to consider quitting. According to Judge et al. (1995), career satisfaction refers to employees' perceptions of their accomplishments and advancement opportunities. Employees dissatisfied with their careers seek professional improvement through the purpose of leaving. This result is similar to the research conducted by (Joo & Park, 2010), which indicates that employees who are content with their professions are more likely to remain with the business. Employees who are dissatisfied with their careers are more likely to opt to leave the firm.

It was evident from the statistical evidence that career plateau has a considerable and favorable effect on the intention to leave among East Java hotel employees. This suggests that a high level of career plateau in the hospitality business is connected with a greater propensity to leave the organization. In contrast, a low degree of career plateau is associated with a lesser intention to leave. The replies of the majority of participants show that personnel in the hotel business seek to advance their careers. This emphasizes their desire for better career possibilities and their capacity to complete their tasks, which can lessen their intention to leave the company. Employees' career needs directly affect their job happiness, which in turn influences the level of service they provide to hotel customers and their propensity to seek alternative employment.

The term "career plateau" refers to a circumstance in which an employee's professional growth reaches a specific point and then stagnates. This situation typically results in a greater predisposition to seek alternate job, especially among individuals who desire more significant professional challenges. This finding is similar to the research undertaken by Kanchana and Jayathilaka (2023), which reveals a substantial positive association between career advancement and intention to leave among Sri Lankan startup professionals. In addition, the study by Xie et al. (2016) also supports the association between career plateau and turnover intention.

The study found that affective commitment successfully mediated career plateau on turnover intention. This proves a significant favorable influence between career plateau and turnover intention through affective commitment as an intervening variable. This means that career plateau has a direct effect on turnover intention and can have an indirect impact on turnover intention through affective commitment; as well as evidenced by the original sample value, the direct result is greater than the indirect effect, that affective commitment has a mediating role.

The results of this study provide evidence that affective commitment plays an essential role in reducing employees' desire to move to another company. The test results prove that career satisfaction does not mediate the intermediate effect plateau on the turnover intention of hotel employees in East Java. This shows that career satisfaction does not play a role in the influence of career plateau on the turnover intention of hotel employees in East Java. Otherwise, high career satisfaction decreases turnover intention, which means that the more satisfied employees are with their careers, the more they will stay. They will not leave their jobs, so turnover intention is low. This means the increase or decrease in career plateau does not affect employee turnover intention through career satisfaction as a mediating variable.

## CONCLUSION

Several conclusions can be drawn based on the research findings and discussions presented. Firstly, career plateau in the hospitality industry significantly negatively impacts employees' affective commitment. Secondly, employees' perception of career plateau negatively affects their career satisfaction. Thirdly, affective commitment has a significant negative influence on employee turnover intention. Fourthly, career satisfaction has a significant negative effect on employee turnover intention. Fifthly, career plateau has a significant positive impact on employee turnover intention. Sixthly, affective commitment has a mediating effect on the relationship between career plateau and employee turnover intention. Lastly, career satisfaction does not mediate the relationship between career plateau and employee turnover intention.

These findings align with the social exchange theory proposed by Blau (2017), which emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between employees and hotel management. When employees perceive limited career opportunities, it leads to lower career satisfaction, resulting in reduced affective commitment and an increased likelihood of seeking alternative employment.

The practical implications of these findings for hotel management in reducing employee turnover intention include implementing strategies to address career plateaus, such as job rotation and cross-departmental transfers within different hotel categories. Future research could focus on differentiating hotel categories to obtain more specific insights. Additionally, further investigations can explore additional factors contributing to reducing turnover intention by incorporating other relevant variables.

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