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Reward Practices and Employee Commitment in India's Hospitality Industry: Exploring the Mediating Role of Work-Life Balance and Emotional Intelligence

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ABSTRACT

The hospitality sector is one of the most resource-intensive, and employee dedication has emerged as a crucial factor in the sustainability and provision of hospitality services. This research aims to explore the relationship between hospitality employee commitment and reward management practices in the hospitality industry of Jharkhand(India) and the mediating variables of work-life balance and EI. A structured questionnaire, descriptive& causal research approach were used to gather data from hospitality professionals working in different hotels and service establishments.

Gender disparities in emotional intelligence and employee commitment are negligible, according to the research's findings. On the other hand, work-life balance and emotional intelligence are directly impacted by reward practices. Employee commitment is significantly positively correlated with work-life balance and emotional intelligence. They serve as variables that mediate. Because work-life balance, emotional intelligence, and employee commitment have high R2 values, the model has a high explanatory power.

Overall, the study supports the idea that good reward systems increase commitment not only by directly motivating workers but also by strengthening their emotional competencies and enhancing their capacity to balance the demands of their professional and personal lives. These findings have some very helpful theoretical ramifications and offer Jharkhand's hospitality managers useful insights into how integrated reward schemes can promote long-term organisational commitment and employee well-being..

Keywords: Reward practices, Work-life balance, Emotional Intelligence(EI), Employee commitment

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry stands as a cornerstone of India's economic growth, contributing substantially to employment generation, revenue enhancement, and international engagement. Within this dynamic landscape, the state of Jharkhand has emerged as a promising hub, driven by its cultural richness, natural beauty, and increasing urban development. As the hospitality sector in Jharkhand continues to expand, it faces pressing challenges related to human resource management—particularly in fostering and retaining a committed workforce. Among the critical factors influencing employee commitment are reward practices, work-life balance, and emotional intelligence. Reward practices, both intrinsic and extrinsic, serve as powerful tools to recognize performance, motivate employees, and align individual contributions with organizational goals. A study of customer-contact employees in upscale hotels found low levels of organizational commitment and empowerment. However, a strong correlation suggests that improving conditions that foster empowerment could lead to higher levels of organizational commitment, particularly affective commitment. (Kazlauskaite et al., 2006).This suggests that improving organizational conditions could decrease employee turnover and increase employee empowerment. Simultaneously, promoting a healthy work-life balance is essential for maintaining employee well-being, reducing stress, and improving retention. By improving teamwork, leadership effectiveness, and interpersonal interactions in the workplace, emotional intelligence further supports these initiatives. This study explores the interplay of these elements within the hospitality sector of Jharkhand, aiming to understand their collective impact on employee commitment and overall organizational success.

1.2 Theoretical Concepts and Framework

The hospitality sector in Jharkhand is experiencing growth due to tourism, industrial development, and urban infrastructure investment. However, issues such as job satisfaction, workplace stress, and employee retention persist. This study examines the ways in which work-life balance, reward systems, and emotional intelligence affect employee commitment within this particular socioeconomic and cultural setting. Salary, bonuses, promotions, recognition, and non-monetary benefits are

examples of both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Reward programs that work increase employee motivation and satisfaction, which lowers attrition and promotes loyalty. Particularly in service-intensive industries like hospitality, work-life balance—the capacity of employees to balance work obligations with personal and family needs—reduces stress and burnout. Employees with high emotional intelligence manage stress at work better, have stronger interpersonal bonds, and are more interested and dedicated to their work.

Employee commitment is directly impacted by their psychological attachment to and loyalty to their employer. Emotional intelligence, supportive work-life policies, and efficient reward systems all enhance employee retention, productivity, and organisational success.

Emotional Intelligence (EI):

A type of social intelligence known as emotional intelligence (EI) focuses on tracking emotions, differentiating between them, and applying this knowledge to shape decisions and behavior. It involves perception, access, generation, comprehension, and reflective management of emotions for both intellectual and emotional growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1993).In Iranian businesses, especially public ones, the study looks into how emotional intelligence affects occupational stress, organizational commitment, and job happiness. It investigates whether performance, effectiveness, and productivity may be enhanced by emotional intelligence and whether its impacts can be mitigated by other elements, such as organizational commitment. Despite problems with management, hierarchy, and the economy, emotional intelligence is seen as a tremendous advantage in enterprises.(Aghdasi et al., 2011)

Work Life Balance:

Work-life balance is crucial in today's diverse workforce, with dual-career families and long working hours becoming the norm. Demographic changes, including increased women and dual career families, emphasize the need for a symmetry between work and home lives. (Lakshmi & Prasanth, 2018)The study investigates the connection between organizational commitment and public employees' satisfaction with work-life balance policies (WLBPs) in the Philippines. The findings indicate that commitment is significantly impacted by overall satisfaction with WLBPs, with health and wellness programs being the most advantageous(Kim & Ryu, 2017).

Reward System :

The theoretical foundation for understanding the relationship between reward systems, work-life balance, emotional intelligence, and employee commitment draws primarily from Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Equity Theory. According to Blau (1964), SET asserts that relationships at work are built on reciprocal exchanges, with employees responding with greater commitment and engagement when they perceive fair and meaningful rewards. Accordingly, employees assess the fairness of reward distribution in relation to their own and their peers' efforts; perceived unfairness can result in discontent and a decline in commitment, according to Adams' (1965) Equity Theory. In addition to promoting employee satisfaction and work-life balance, reward systems that incorporate both intrinsic and extrinsic incentives also improve emotional stability and loyalty (Kumar & Arora, 2021). According to Khalid and Nawaz (2018), employees with higher emotional intelligence also tend to view rewards as recognition of their emotional investment and effort, which improves their affective and continuance commitment. Research further suggests that flexible reward practices—such as recognition, flexible scheduling, and wellness benefits—positively influence employees' work-life balance and, consequently, their organizational commitment (Mwangi & Nzulwa, 2020).

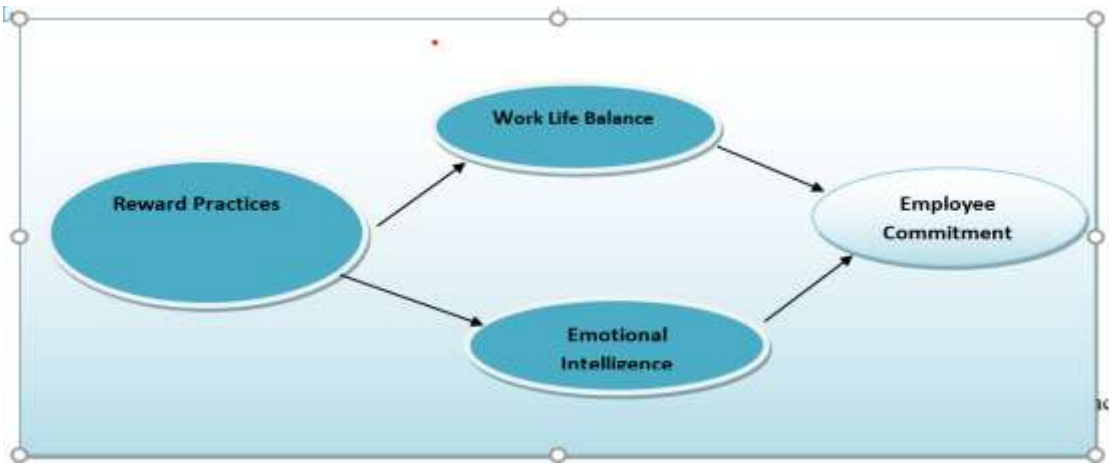

Figure 1 : Conceptual Framework

1.3 Review of Literature

Several studies have examined the interrelationship between emotional intelligence (EI), work-life balance (WLB), and employee performance, particularly within the IT and service sectors. Early research in Bangalore's IT sector by Rangreji (2010) revealed that, according to qualitative surveys and interviews, the main factors influencing WLB were frequent disruptions of personal

obligations owing to work constraints and unhappiness with time for non-work activities. Expanding on this, Joyce and Latif (2021) put out a conceptual framework that ties EI to WLB and individual performance, highlighting the critical role that EI plays in employee effectiveness and leadership. Similarly, Fernandes (2022) showed that EI moderates the association between WLB and work satisfaction, indicating a close interaction between these variables. In exploring the broader impact of WLB, Abdirahman (2018) found that WLB, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment jointly influence employee performance, a conclusion echoed by Liang and Tseng (2023), who showed that balancing effort and reward enhances quality of work life among nurses.

Research on the public and academic sectors has confirmed similar trends. Additionally, Seitwan, Herlamburg, and Sansora (2024) highlighted the importance of competency development, including emotional intelligence, in fostering work-life balance (WLB) and long-term organizational success, while Ming and Han (2023) found a positively correlate between EI and work engagement among Malaysian university staff. Additionally, Waruntu, Kainde, and Mandagi (2022) discovered that WLB and job satisfaction had a meaningful impact on millennial and Gen Z employees' performance, corroborating Jaharuddin and Zainal's (2019) results that WLB has a impact on job engagement and turnover intentions. A positive linear association between WLB and job satisfaction among millennial employees in the education industry was validated by Latha and Swathi (2022) in the Indian setting.

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Collectively, the reviewed studies underscore that emotional intelligence and work-life balance are interlinked with job satisfaction, performance, and employee retention, particularly in the evolving context of Gen Z in IT and academic sectors. The literature converges on the idea that emotional intelligence, flexible HR practices, and supportive organizational cultures are critical for sustaining productivity and well-being in the modern workforce.

1.4 Problem Statement

The hospitality sector in Jharkhand is growing steadily but still faces challenges in improving employee commitment, which is crucial for organizational success. Existing studies highlight that hotels largely focus on compensation and performance appraisal, with limited structured development of HR practices. Research shows that effective reward systems, work–life balance, and emotional intelligence positively influence employee commitment(Oya, 2021). In particular, monetary and non-monetary rewards, supportive work–life balance policies, and aspects of emotional intelligence such as self-management and relationship management strengthen employees' attachment to their organizations(Aamir, 2023). Few empirical studies, nevertheless, have looked at how these elements interact in the hospitality industry in Jharkhand. This study examines how reward systems, work-life balance, and emotional intelligence combined impact organisational commitment in an effort to bridge this gap.

1.5 Significance of Study

The study focuses on the impact of reward practices on work-life balance, EI and employee commitment in the Jharkhand hospitality sector. It aims to enhance employee retention, improve organisational productivity, promote work-life balance, and develop emotional intelligence. The results can help HR professionals create reward system that encourage employee dedication, enhance work-life balance, and promote both personal and professional well-being. The study can help guide state-level efforts to enhance working conditions in service industries and is pertinent to regional stakeholders.

1.6 Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant difference in emotional intelligence, work-life balance and employee commitment based on gender and qualification.

H2: EI and work-life balance have a significant influence on Employee Commitment

H3: There is a significant relationship among the reward system, emotional intelligence, and work-life balance.

1.7 Objectives of the Study

The study objectives that resulted from the stated hypothesis are as follows:

To examine the relationship between reward practices and work-life balance in the hospitality sector.

To find out the effect of reward practices and emotional intelligence in the hospitality sector of Jharkhand.

To evaluate the predictive validity of the proposed conceptual model.

2. Research Methodology

This chapter discusses a research methodology for investigating how reward systems impact emotional intelligence and work-life balance in Jharkhand's hospitality sector. This study uses a quantitative research approach and structured questionnaires to collect data as part of its descriptive research design. People who are at least eighteen years old and have worked in the hospitality industry for at least a year are included in the sample size.

The study adopts a descriptive and causal approach, utilizing both secondary and primary data collection techniques. The structured questionnaires will be employed To collect primary data, while secondary data will be gathered through a comprehensive literature review. This combined approach aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing employee commitment in the hospitality industry.

Analysis of Data: Tools & Techniques

To examine and analyse the connection between employee commitment and reward practices, statistical methods such as regression analysis and correlation analysis will be applied to the survey data. Data analysis software like SPSS or excel will be used for coding and qualitative analysis. The collected data will be classified and analyzed using internal consistency reliability, correlation coefficient analysis, and regression analysis.

Limitations to the Study

Geographic Scope: The study only looks at the hospitality business in Jharkhand, it could not be an accurate representation of the sector nationally.

Time Limitation The scope of interviews and surveys may be restricted by the time frame for data gathering.

Financial Restrictions: Financial constraints may make it more difficult to obtain some resources, including more sophisticated analytical software or bigger sample sizes.

3.Results

Frequency tables are used in this chapter to display survey data. The data shows a gender distribution of 77.4% males and 48 females, age range of 18-25 years, high school qualified employees is 39.5%, job positions of entry level of employees is 23.9%, average years of experience of employees is between 1-6 years, and monthly income of 81.3% below ₹15,000, 25.9% between ₹15,001 - ₹30,000, 13.9% between ₹30,001 - ₹50,000, and 13.4% above ₹75,000.

Cronbach's Alpha is a statistical tool used to analyse the internal consistency and reliability of the data collected.

SCALE NUMBER	ITEMS	CRONBACH'S ALPHA
RP	7	0.893
WLB	5	0.862
EI	5	0.841
EC	5	0.842

Table 1: Cronbach alpha of all the variable

The instrument was deemed reliable, as indicated by the Cronbach alpha values, which were higher than 0.7, as shown in Table 1 above.

3.1Testing the Hypothesis:

H1: There is a significant difference in emotional intelligence, work-life balance and employee commitment based on gender and qualification.

Hϕ: There is no significant difference in emotional intelligence, work-life balance and employee commitment based on gender and qualification

T-Test

Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
AV_EMOTIONALINTELLIGENCE	MALE	165	4.0715	.63628	.04953
	FEMALE	47	4.0681	.51630	.07531
AV_EMPLOYEECOMMITMENT	MALE	165	4.0824	.65406	.05092
	FEMALE	47	3.8894	.67348	.09824

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper
AV_EMOTIONALINTELLIGENCE	Equal variances assumed	1.245	.266	.034	210	.973	.00343	.10119	-.19625	.20291
	Equal variances not assumed			.038	89.701	.970	.00343	.09014	-.17566	.18252
AV_EMPLOYEECOMMITMENT	Equal variances assumed	.099	.754	1.774	210	.078	.19306	.10885	-.02152	.40765
	Equal variances not assumed			1.745	72.568	.085	.19306	.11065	-.02748	.41361

Table 2 - Group Statistics and Table 3 – Independent Samples Test.

The above table shows The analysis indicates that there is a slight statistically significant difference in EI (Emotional Intelligence) between male and female employees. Males have higher EI (4.0715) and employee commitment (4.0824) than females.

3.2 PLS Algorithm for Measurement Model & Path Coefficient

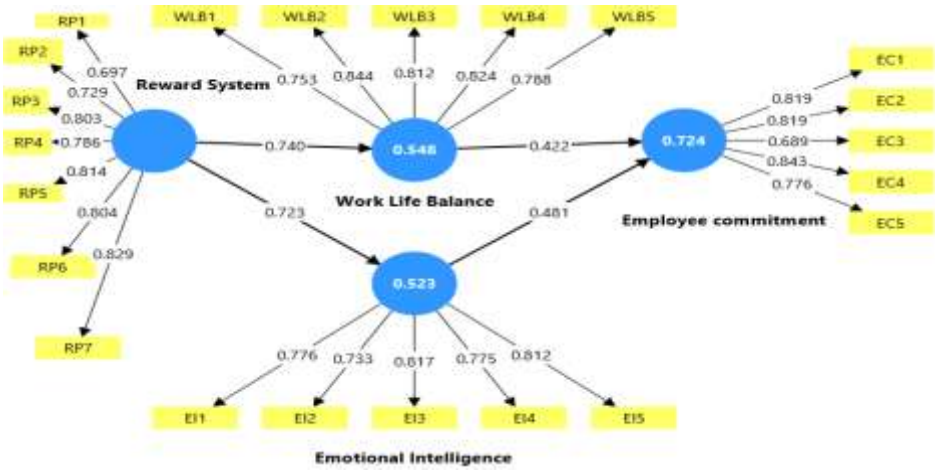

Figure 2: PLS algorithm

The structural model presented in Figure 2 illustrates the interrelationships among Reward System, Work-Life Balance, Emotional Intelligence, and Employee Commitment. The model demonstrates that the Reward System has a strong direct influence on Work-Life Balance (path coefficient = 0.740) and Emotional Intelligence (0.723), indicating that effective reward practices contribute positively to employees' ability to balance professional and personal roles while enhancing their emotional competencies. Furthermore, Work-Life Balance shows a positive relations with Employee Commitment (0.422). Similarly, Emotional Intelligence also positively influences Employee Commitment (0.481), implying that emotionally intelligent employees are more likely to exhibit higher levels of affective and normative commitment. The R^2 values of 0.548 for Work-Life Balance, 0.523 for Emotional Intelligence, and 0.724 for Employee Commitment indicate a substantial level of explanatory power within the model. Overall, the findings highlight that reward systems enhance employee commitment through their positive effects on both work-life balance and emotional intelligence.

H2: Emotional Intelligence and work-life balance have a significant influence on Employee Commitment

H0: Emotional Intelligence and work-life balance do not have a significant influence on Employee Commitment

3.3 Indicator loading Assessment Using on the Measurement Model

Construct	Outer loadings	Construct	Outer loadings
EC1 <- Employee commitment	0.819	RP1 <- Reward System	0.697
EC2 <- Employee commitment	0.819	RP2 <- Reward System	0.729
EC3 <- Employee commitment	0.689	RP3 <- Reward System	0.803
EC4 <- Employee commitment	0.843	RP4 <- Reward System	0.786
EC5 <- Employee commitment	0.776	RP5 <- Reward System	0.814
EI1 <- Emotional Intelligence	0.776	RP6 <- Reward System	0.804
EI2 <- Emotional Intelligence	0.733	RP7 <- Reward System	0.829
EI3 <- Emotional Intelligence	0.817	WLB1 <- Work Life Balance	0.753
EI4 <- Emotional Intelligence	0.775	WLB2 <- Work Life Balance	0.844
EI5 <- Emotional Intelligence	0.812	WLB3 <- Work Life Balance	0.812
WLB4 <- Work Life Balance	0.824	WLB5 <- Work Life Balance	0.788

Table 4: Outer Loading of the Construct

The majority of the indicator loadings were found to be greater than the predicted threshold of 0.690, as Table 4 illustrates. High loadings imply that the construct is well represented by the indicator.

Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) - List	
Construct	Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)
Employee commitment <-> Emotional Intelligence	0.948
Reward System <-> Emotional Intelligence	0.831
Reward System <-> Employee commitment	0.812
Work Life Balance <-> Emotional Intelligence	0.903
Work Life Balance <-> Employee commitment	0.927
Work Life Balance <-> Reward System	0.840

Table 5: HTMT

Table 5 shows that all the construct values are below the threshold values. HTMT measures construct distinctiveness using a threshold (≤ 0.85 or ≤ 0.90 for less strict validation). Higher values indicate possible discriminant validity issues.

3.4 Assessment of Collinearity

Collinearity statistics (VIF)

Construct	VIF	Construct	VIF
EC1	1.939	RP2	1.775
EC2	2.077	RP3	2.248
EC3	1.464	RP4	2.011
EC4	2.213	RP5	2.193
EC5	1.766	RP6	2.179
EI1	1.696	RP7	2.468
EI2	1.516	WLB1	1.729
EI3	2.039	WLB2	2.224
EI4	1.668	WLB3	2.012
EI5	1.978	WLB4	2.156
RP1	1.551	WLB5	1.822

Table 6: VIF

The table's Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values evaluate the multicollinearity of each construct's indicators. VIF values below 3.3 represent an optimal degree of predictor independence, whereas values below 5.0 show the absence of multicollinearity problems (Hair et al., 2021). All constructs in the current investigation, including Reward System (RP1–RP7), Work-Life Balance (WLB1–WLB5), Emotional Intelligence (EI1–EI5), and Employee Commitment (EC1–EC5), had VIF values between 1.464 and 2.468, which are well within the acceptable range. This suggests that there is no issue with multicollinearity across the indicators and that every construct adds something distinct and redundant to the model. As a result, the measurement model exhibits strong indicator reliability and discriminant validity.

3.5 Evaluation of the Coefficient of Determination (R2 Value)

Construct	R-square	R-square adjusted
Emotional Intelligence	0.523	0.520
Employee commitment	0.724	0.721
Work Life Balance	0.548	0.546

Table 6: R- Square and Adjusted R Square

The R2 and R-squared adjusted values in Table 6 are both higher than 0.50, suggesting that our model's endogenous constructs account for over 50% of the variance.. Adjusted R^2 of employee commitment (0.721) again shows strong reliability of the model. Employee Commitment should be the primary focus because it has the highest predictive power.Work-Life Balance and Emotional Intelligence are also critical, offering more than 50% explanatory impact.

H3: There is a significant relationship among the reward system, emotional intelligence, and work-life balance.

H0 : There is no significant relationship among the reward system, emotional intelligence, and work-life balance.

3.6 Assessment of Path Coefficients

Mean, STDEV, T values, p values					
	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Emotional Intelligence -> Employee commitment	0.481	0.488	0.087	5.554	0.000
Reward System -> Emotional Intelligence	0.723	0.726	0.066	10.899	0.000
Reward System -> Employee commitment	0.660	0.663	0.059	11.262	0.000
Reward System -> Work Life Balance	0.740	0.741	0.051	14.387	0.000
Work Life Balance -> Employee commitment	0.422	0.415	0.091	4.633	0.000

Table 7: Assessment of Path Coefficients

Table 7 describes both t-values and p-values. All the indicator loadings were determined to be significant. The t-values of indicator loading are higher than 1.96 (95% confidence interval), and the p-values are below 0.05 for the indicator.

3.7 Model Fit

Model fit		
Fit summary		
	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.067	0.085
d_ULS	1.121	1.830
d_G	0.540	0.619
Chi-square	622.715	655.979
NFI	0.800	0.790

Table 8: Model Fit

Table 8 shows: SRMR-Saturated = 0.067 , Estimated = 0.085 . A value below 0.08 indicates a good model fit.

D_ULS and d_G (Discrepancy Measures)-Higher values indicate greater discrepancies between the model and data. Saturated model shows lower discrepancies (better fit). Normed Fit Index (NFI)-Saturated model = 0.800, Estimated model = 0.790. Values ≥ 0.80 indicate acceptable fit. This estimated model is very close to this threshold, indicating moderate model fit.

CONCLUSIONS

The statistical analysis of the presented hypotheses provides critical insight into the relationship between gender, emotional Intelligence (EI), and employee commitment (EC) within the studied population. The findings reinforce the understanding that demographic variables such as gender that can influence workplace attitudes and behaviours, though the effects vary depending on the factor being measured.

Starting with H1, the t-test results indicate that there is a marginally statistically significant difference between male and female employees' emotional intelligence (EI). The EI of men is higher (4.0715) than that of women (4.0682). This suggests that in this sample, gender has no discernible effect on an individual's emotional intelligence. Gender-based employee commitment showed that men are more committed than women, with a mean value of 4.0824.

Similarly, H2 examined the substantial impact that work-life balance and emotional intelligence have on employee commitment. It was concluded that every indicator loading was significant. Indicator loading t-values are greater than 1.96 (95% CI) according to H3, and the indicator's p-values are less than 0.05. Additional hypothesis testing demonstrates that work-life balance and emotional intelligence both significantly and favourably impact employee commitment, emphasising their importance in forming workers' views and attachment to the organisation.

The findings also reveal that reward practices have a strong and direct effect on emotional intelligence and work–life balance, which in turn enhance employee commitment. Effective reward systems not only motivate employees but also improve their emotional regulation and ability to balance work and personal life. The structural model demonstrates high explanatory power, indicating that reward practices, along with EI and work–life balance, jointly explain a significant portion of employee commitment. Overall, the study underscores the pivotal role of reward practices in strengthening employee commitment through psychological and behavioral mechanisms, offering valuable implications for hospitality managers in Jharkhand.

5. Suggestions & Directions for Future Research

Although there are still many unexplored areas for future research, the study adds to the body of literature. First, for improved generalizability and comparative analysis, the scope might be extended beyond Jharkhand to other parts of the nation and other nations. To better establish the causal relationships between employee commitment, work-life balance, emotional intelligence, and reward methods, future research may use longitudinal designs. Better understanding of these correlations would result from the inclusion of other mediator/moderator variables, such as employee participation in 2020, job satisfaction, organizational culture, and leadership style.

Qualitative/mixed-method approaches may capture lived experiences of employees for better understanding. Finally, examining non-monetary and innovative reward practices, particularly for post-pandemic hospitality settings, may enable organizations to devise more holistic and sustainable strategies to enhance long-term employee commitment.

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