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Assessing retention strategies and employee retention intention in Private Higher Education Institutions of Ilocos Sur: A Study on effectiveness, relationship, and generational differences

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effectiveness of retention strategies and their influence on employees' intention to remain in private higher education institutions in the First District of Ilocos Sur. Specifically, it sought to determine: the level of effectiveness of institutional retention strategies in terms of working environment, leadership management, and employee development; the level of employee retention intention among faculty and staff; the significant relationship between retention strategies and employee retention intention; and whether there is a significant difference in employees' perceptions of retention strategies across generational cohorts. The study was anchored on Retention Theory and Retention Intention Theory, which emphasize that organizational practices and support systems significantly shape employees' commitment to remain in an institution. A descriptive-comparative correlational research design was utilized. Respondents consisted of forty-seven (47) faculty and staff from selected private higher education institutions, chosen through stratified random sampling. Data were gathered using a researcher-made questionnaire that underwent validity and reliability testing. Statistical tools employed included the mean to determine levels of effectiveness and retention intention, Pearson's *r* to examine relationships between variables, and ANOVA to test differences across generational groups. Findings revealed that retention strategies were generally perceived as effective, particularly in the areas of the work environment, leadership, and employee development. Employee retention intention was very high. Correlation analysis indicated a significant positive relationship between retention strategies and employee retention intention, suggesting that more effective organizational practices are associated with stronger employee commitment to remain in the institution. However, ANOVA results showed no significant differences in perceptions of retention strategies among generational cohorts. The study concludes that well-implemented retention strategies play a vital role in strengthening employees' intention to remain in private higher education institutions. The findings highlight the importance of supportive work environments, responsive leadership, and structured professional development programs in promoting institutional stability and sustainability.

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Introduction

Employee retention has become a critical concern for private higher education institutions, particularly

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in provincial areas where competition for qualified faculty and staff continues to intensify. Studies have shown that higher education institutions face ongoing challenges in maintaining a stable workforce due to rising turnover intentions and competition among institutions for skilled employees (Nguyen, 2022). Regional reports also highlight that academic mobility and integration across Southeast Asia intensify competition for competent faculty and staff, placing additional pressure on institutions to strengthen retention strategies (ASEAN Secretariat, 2024). As an educator and administrator within the higher education sector, the researcher has observed that frequent employee turnover disrupts academic continuity, weakens institutional productivity, and affects the overall quality of educational services. This observation is supported by findings that turnover negatively affects organizational performance and institutional stability (Dwesini, 2019a; Dwesini, 2019) and that work environment and organizational culture significantly influence faculty retention in higher education institutions (Abun et al., 2021; Columna & Garcia, 2024). Retaining competent and committed employees is therefore essential to sustaining institutional stability and achieving long-term organizational goals, as studies indicate that leadership, workplace conditions, recognition, and professional development opportunities contribute positively to retention intention among employees in higher education (Kim & Kao, 2020; Memon et al., 2020; Verma, 2024). These professional observations and experiences sparked a strong interest in examining how private higher education institutions address the challenge of retaining their workforce, an issue increasingly recognized in Philippine and international studies on faculty retention and institutional sustainability (Malinao, 2023; Lazona & Salabao, 2025; Datu-Ramos & Bautista, 2025). Despite implementing various human resource programs, many institutions still struggle to maintain high levels of employee commitment and loyalty. The researcher recognized that factors such as the work environment, leadership, and employee development opportunities may play a significant role in influencing employees' decisions to remain with their organizations. However, little empirical evidence exists on the effectiveness of these retention strategies in the specific context of private higher education institutions in the First District of Ilocos Sur. This gap in local research provided further motivation to conduct a systematic investigation on the topic.

The primary purpose of this study is to assess the effectiveness of retention strategies employed by private higher education institutions and to determine how these strategies influence employee retention intention among faculty and staff. Specifically, the study aims to examine whether the work environment, leadership, and employee development contribute to employees' willingness to remain at their institutions. In addition, the research seeks to explore whether generational differences affect perceptions of retention strategies. Through this investigation, the study aims to provide evidence-based insights to help institutional leaders design more responsive and sustainable human resource practices.

This study is organized in several sections: introduction, literature review, research methodology, data presentation and analysis, results and discussion, and conclusion.

Literature review

This literature review examines existing concepts and empirical studies on retention strategies and employee retention intention, particularly in the context of private higher education institutions (HEIs). The review focuses on the study's major variables—work environment, leadership

management, employee development, retention intention, and generational differences—and provides a theoretical and empirical basis for the current investigation.

Work environment and retention intention

A positive work environment is widely recognized as a critical driver of employee retention in higher education institutions. The quality of the institutional climate—reflected in collegial relationships, workload balance, job security, and psychological safety—significantly shapes employees' willingness to remain with their organizations. Columna and Garcia (2024) revealed that work environment and organizational culture were among the strongest predictors of faculty retention in Philippine private educational institutions, alongside compensation and leadership quality. Similarly, Motlokoe, Mokoena, and Isabirye (2024) found that supportive work environments and developmental opportunities enhance job satisfaction and loyalty among academic employees.

International research further confirms these findings. A study conducted in China identified job stress, burnout, and job insecurity as key determinants of higher turnover intention among faculty in private HEIs (Multidisciplinary Science Journal, 2023). These studies collectively suggest that the work environment functions not merely as a physical setting but as a social and psychological space that influences employees' emotional attachment and intention to remain. Despite this strong evidence, limited studies have examined how specific aspects of the work environment affect retention intention in smaller provincial HEIs in the Philippines. This gap underscores the need for localized investigation.

Leadership, management, and retention intention

Leadership management has been consistently linked to employees' commitment and retention in educational institutions. Effective leadership styles—particularly transformational, participative, and ethical—foster trust, recognition, and engagement, which enhance retention outcomes. In the Philippine context, leadership and management have emerged as crucial dimensions influencing employee retention in private HEIs (Columna & Garcia, 2024). Esoy et al. (2024) further demonstrated that leadership style significantly influences teachers' commitment, emphasizing that participative and transformational leadership practices increase faculty dedication and job satisfaction.

A Cameroonian study reported a strong positive correlation between transformational leadership and employee productivity and stability in higher education institutions (Higher Education, 2024). Conversely, leadership neglect, poor communication, and lack of recognition have been associated with employee dissatisfaction and higher turnover intention (Dwesini, 2019). These insights affirm that leadership management—through emotional intelligence, transparency, and inclusion—shapes employees' perceptions of their institutional experience, thereby influencing their intention to stay.

However, while leadership has been widely studied, limited research has examined its direct impact on retention intention within provincial private HEIs in the Philippines. The present study addresses this gap by analyzing leadership management as a key retention strategy in the local context.

Employee development and retention intention

Employee development—encompassing professional training, mentoring, research opportunities, and

career progression—is another cornerstone of effective retention strategy in higher education. Motlokoe, Mokoena, and Isabirye (2024) confirmed that training and development programs significantly predict job satisfaction, organizational loyalty, and employee retention among academic staff. In the Philippine setting, Esoy et al. (2024) found that career development initiatives positively influence both job satisfaction and retention among university employees.

Recent studies also emphasize the importance of development opportunities for younger generations. Research on Generation Z employees revealed that growth opportunities, supervisor support, and shared organizational values are vital factors influencing retention intention, underscoring the need for generationally responsive development programs (Bautista & Cahigas, 2024). When employees perceive that their institution invests in their professional growth, they are more likely to reciprocate with loyalty and long-term commitment. These findings underscore the role of employee development not only as a retention tool but also as a strategy for institutional sustainability and competitiveness.

Despite its importance, access to development opportunities remains uneven across institutions, particularly in resource-constrained provincial HEIs. Few studies have examined how employee development initiatives are perceived and implemented in smaller Philippine institutions, creating a research gap that the present study seeks to fill.

Retention intention in higher education institutions

Retention intention is defined as the employee's conscious and psychological desire to remain in an organization. It is shaped by multiple interrelated factors, including the work environment, leadership practices, and development opportunities. Datu-Ramos and Bautista (2025) found that faculty retention intention in Philippine medical schools was significantly associated with job engagement, satisfaction, and career growth. Similarly, Columna and Garcia (2024) reported that retention challenges in private HEIs were largely driven by institutional culture and leadership rather than compensation alone.

A study conducted in China likewise emphasized that job stress and insecurity reduce retention intention, while supportive leadership strengthens employees' resolve to stay (Multidisciplinary Science Journal, 2023). Collectively, these studies highlight that retention intention is a multidimensional construct in which emotional satisfaction, perceived fairness, and growth opportunities serve as stronger predictors of continued employment than monetary rewards.

While substantial research has explored retention intention, few studies have investigated it in relation to combined retention strategies within provincial private HEIs. This study contributes to the literature by examining these relationships in the specific context of Ilocos Sur.

Generational differences and retention strategies

Modern higher education institutions employ workers from different generational cohorts, including Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. Each generation possesses distinct values, work expectations, and career priorities. Francis and Hoefel (2018) and Chawla et al. (2020) explained that younger generations tend to prioritize flexibility, career growth, and meaningful work, while older generations often value stability and organizational loyalty.

These generational differences suggest that retention strategies may not be equally effective for all employees. Saura et al. (2021) and Verma (2024) argued that institutions need to adopt adaptive and generation-sensitive approaches to maintain a diverse workforce. However, some studies also indicate that well-implemented institutional policies can transcend generational distinctions and create uniform perceptions among employees.

In the Philippine setting, limited research has examined whether generational cohorts perceive retention strategies differently in private HEIs. The current study addresses this gap by analyzing whether perceptions of retention strategies vary across age groups within private higher education institutions in the First District of Ilocos Sur.

The numerous dimensions of retention strategies and retention intention consistently demonstrate that the work environment, leadership, management, and employee development are essential factors influencing employees' retention intention. Most studies conclude that supportive organizational practices strengthen job satisfaction, commitment, and loyalty. However, several research gaps remain. First, much of the existing research has been conducted in international or urban university settings, leaving provincial private HEIs underexplored. Second, few studies have examined the combined influence of the three retention strategy dimensions on retention intention within a single local context. Third, limited empirical work has investigated whether generational cohorts differ in their perceptions of retention strategies in Philippine higher education.

Statement of the problems

This study assessed the relationship between the effectiveness of retention strategies and their influence on employees' intention to remain in private higher education institutions in the First District of Ilocos Sur. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of effectiveness of retention strategies employed by private higher education institutions in the First District of Ilocos Sur in terms of:
 - 1.1. working environment;
 - 1.2. leadership management, and
 - 1.3. employee development?
2. What is the level of employee retention intention among faculty and staff in private higher education institutions in the First District of Ilocos Sur?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the effectiveness of retention strategies and employee retention intention in private higher education institutions in the First District of Ilocos Sur?
4. Is there a significant difference in the perceptions of employees regarding the level of effectiveness of retention strategies when grouped according to generational cohorts?

Hypothesis

H1: There is no significant relationship between retention strategies and employee retention intention in the private higher education institutions.

H2: There is no significant difference in the perception of employees in the level of effectiveness of retention strategies as to their generation.

Scope and delimitation of the study

This study focuses on examining the retention strategies of private higher education institutions (HEIs) in the First District of Ilocos Sur and their influence on employee retention intention, specifically in relation to the working environment, leadership management, and employee development, while also considering generational differences among Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. The study is limited to faculty and staff of private HEIs within the district.

Research methodology

This chapter presents the methods and procedures used in conducting the study. It includes the research design, the study locale, the population and sampling, and the data-gathering instrument. It also describes how the data were collected and analyzed to assess the effectiveness of retention strategies and employees' intention to remain in private higher education institutions.

Research design

The study utilized a descriptive-comparative correlational research design. The descriptive approach was employed to determine the level of effectiveness of retention strategies and the level of employee retention intention in private higher education institutions. Furthermore, the comparative and correlational aspects were used to examine differences and relationships among the variables.

Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Specifically, the weighted mean was used to determine variable levels, Pearson's r was used to identify relationships, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was applied to determine significant differences among groups.

Locale of the study

The study was conducted in selected private higher education institutions.

Population and sampling

The study's respondents were employees of these institutions.

Data gathering procedure

To facilitate data collection, the researcher formally sought permission from the Presidents of the respective institutions through a written request letter. Upon approval, questionnaires were distributed by designated employee representatives. The sampling technique ensured that participants were appropriate representatives of the employee population within the institutions.

Ethical procedures

The study ensured compliance with ethical standards in its conduct. Proper approval was granted by the

Data gathering instrument

The primary data-gathering instrument used in the study was a structured questionnaire comprising 31 items. The questionnaire utilized a **four-point Likert scale** to measure respondents’ perceptions, with the following response options:

- 4 – Strongly Agree
- 3 – Agree
- 2 – Disagree
- 1 – Strongly Disagree

The instrument underwent **content validation** by three experts in the field. Their recommendations were incorporated to improve the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the items. The validation process resulted in an overall mean rating of **4.73**, indicating that the instrument was highly valid.

To ensure reliability, the questionnaire was subjected to **Cronbach’s Alpha testing**, yielding a coefficient of 0.94, indicating excellent internal consistency.

For the interpretation of the level of retention strategies, the following was used:

<i>Norms</i>	<i>Statistical Range</i>	<i>Descriptive Rating</i>
4	3.26 – 4.00	Effective
3	2.51 – 3.25	Moderately Effective
2	1.76 – 2.50	Less Effective
1	1.00 – 1.75	Ineffective

To interpret the level of employee retention intention, the following scale was used:

<i>Statistical Range</i>	<i>Norms</i>	<i>Descriptive Rating</i>	<i>Overall Descriptive Rating</i>
3.26 – 4.00	4	Strongly Agree	Very High
2.51 – 3.25	3	Agree	High
1.76 – 2.50	2	Disagree	Low

Data presentation and analysis

Problem 1. What is the level of effectiveness of retention strategies of the private higher education institutions in the 1st District of Ilocos Sur?

Table 1. Working environment

a. Working environment	X	Descriptive rating
The physical facilities are conducive and productive for work.	3.66	Effective
The workplace provides a safe and comfortable environment.	3.79	Effective

The institution provides adequate resources and materials to perform work efficiently.	3.57	Effective
The workload is reasonable and allows for work-life balance.	3.40	Effective
Colleagues maintain cooperative and respectful relationships.	3.66	Effective
The institution promotes a culture of inclusivity and teamwork.	3.72	Effective
Communication within departments is open and transparent,	3.53	Effective
Overall	3.62	Effective

Source: Frio (2025-2026)

Legend:

<i>Norms</i>	<i>Statistical Range</i>	<i>Descriptive Rating</i>
4	3.26 – 4.00	Effective
3	2.51 – 3.25	Moderately Effective
2	1.76 – 2.50	Less Effective
1	1.00 – 1.75	Ineffective

Based on the data presented in the table, the overall mean rating of **3.62**, interpreted as **Effective**, indicates that employees generally perceive the institution's work environment as supportive and conducive to productivity. The findings show that the institution maintains an effective working environment, particularly in terms of safety, teamwork, and interpersonal relations. However, the relatively lower rating on workload balance suggests a need for improvement in this area. Strengthening workload management and internal communication may further enhance employee satisfaction and overall organizational effectiveness. Columna and Garcia (2024) revealed that work environment and organizational culture were among the strongest predictors of faculty retention in Philippine private educational institutions, alongside compensation and leadership quality. Similarly, Motlokoe, Mokoena, and Isabirye (2024) found that supportive work environments and developmental opportunities enhance job satisfaction and loyalty among academic employees.

Table 2. Leadership management

b. Leadership management	X	Descriptive rating
Leaders demonstrate participatory and consultative leadership.	3.62	Effective
Leaders communicate institutional goals and expectations clearly.	3.64	Effective
Leaders show fairness and impartiality in their decision-making.	3.57	Effective
Leaders recognize and appreciate faculty and staff contributions.	3.64	Effective
Leaders provide timely feedback and constructive support.	3.64	Effective
Leaders model ethical and transparent behavior.	3.62	Effective
Leaders motivate employees to perform at their best.	3.51	Effective
Overall	3.60	Effective

Source: Frio (2025-2026)

As indicated by the data in the table, the level of leadership management effectiveness is 3.60, interpreted as Effective. This indicates that employees generally perceive the institution's leadership practices as

satisfactory and supportive. The findings show that leadership management in the institution is effective, particularly in communication and support, while further efforts to motivate employees could strengthen the leadership's impact. Esoy et al. (2024) further demonstrated that leadership style significantly influences teachers' commitment, emphasizing that participative and transformational leadership practices increase faculty dedication and job satisfaction.

Table 3. Employee development

c. Employee development	<i>X</i>	Descriptive rating
Employees are provided with equal opportunities for training and professional development.	3.49	Effective
Employees are mentored and coached.	3.40	Effective
Employees are supported with research and academic advancement.	3.55	Effective
Employees are encouraged to pursue higher education or further studies.	3.81	Effective
Employees are given clear career progression or promotion opportunities.	3.53	Effective
Employees are provided with performance appraisal systems that guide development.	3.62	Effective
Employee development programs are aligned with personal and institutional goals.	3.68	Effective
Overall	3.58	Effective

Source: Frio (2025-2026)

Based on the data in the table, the overall mean effectiveness of employee development is 3.58, which is interpreted as "Effective." This indicates that employees generally perceive the institution's development programs and opportunities as supportive and beneficial. The findings show that employee development initiatives are generally effective, particularly in supporting further studies and aligning programs with institutional goals, though mentoring and coaching programs could be strengthened further. Mokoena and Isabirye (2024) confirmed that training and development programs significantly predict job satisfaction, organizational loyalty, and employee retention among academic staff.

Table 4. Summary of the level of effectiveness of retention strategies

Retention strategies	<i>X</i>	Descriptive rating
Working environment	3.62	Effective
Leadership management	3.60	Effective
Employee development	3.58	Effective
Overall	3.60	Effective

The summary table indicates that the overall mean is 3.60, interpreted as Effective. Among the three dimensions, Working Environment obtained the highest mean (3.62), followed by Leadership Management (3.60) and Employee Development (3.58). The results indicate that all three dimensions are consistently implemented and contribute to the institution's retention efforts.

Problem 2. What is the level of employee retention in the private higher education institutions in the 1st District of Ilocos Sur?

Table 5. Level of employee retention intention

Employee retention intention	<i>X</i>	Descriptive rating
I intend to continue working in this institution in the near future.	3.49	Very High
I feel a strong sense of belonging to this institution.	3.66	Very High
I am satisfied with the support provided by my institution.	3.55	Very High
I feel committed to helping this institution achieve its goals.	3.79	Very High
I will recommend this institution as a good place to work.	3.62	Very High
I seldom think of leaving this institution.	3.32	Very High
I am willing to exert extra effort to contribute to institutional success.	3.77	Very High
I am likely to renew my contract or continue my service here.	3.51	Very High
I see myself building a long-term career in this institution.	3.36	Very High
I see no compelling reason to leave this institution at this time.	3.38	Very High
Overall	3.54	Very High

Source: Frio (2025-2026)

Legend:

<i>Statistical Range</i>	<i>Norms</i>	<i>Descriptive Rating</i>	<i>Overall Descriptive Rating</i>
3.26 – 4.00	4	Strongly Agree	Very High
2.51 – 3.25	3	Agree	High
1.76 – 2.50	2	Disagree	Low
1.00 – 1.75	1	Strongly Disagree	Very Low

Based on the data presented in the table, the findings indicate a very high level of employee retention intention, characterized by strong organizational commitment, loyalty, and willingness to contribute to institutional goals. While most employees express a clear desire to stay, the slightly lower rating on thoughts of leaving suggests that some may still consider alternative opportunities. Overall, the results reflect a stable and committed workforce with positive attitudes toward continued employment in the institution. Saura et al. (2021) and Verma (2024) argued that institutions need to adopt adaptive and generation-sensitive approaches to maintain a diverse workforce. However, some studies also indicate that well-implemented institutional policies can transcend generational distinctions and create uniform perceptions among employees.

Problem 3. Is there a significant relationship between retention strategies and employee retention intention in the private higher education institution in the 1st District of Ilocos Sur?

Table 6. Relationship between retention strategies and employee retention intention

	Working environment	Leadership management	Employee development	As a whole
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Employee retention	0.644	0.646	0.608	0.633
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These results indicate a moderate-to-strong positive relationship between retention strategies and employee retention intentions. This means that as the effectiveness of the work environment, leadership, and employee development increases, employees' intention to stay in the institution also increases. Thus, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between retention strategies and employee retention is rejected. This supports the findings of Pinca (2022), which revealed that effective retention practices, such as a positive work environment, supportive leadership, and employee development opportunities, significantly influence employees' intention to remain in their organization.

Problem 4. Is there a significant difference in employees' perceptions of the effectiveness of retention strategies across generational cohorts?

Table 6. ANOVA table

<i>Source of variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between groups	0.032	2.000	0.016	0.089	0.915	3.062
Within groups	24.584	138.000	0.178			
Total	24.616	140.000				

This indicates that there is no significant difference between the groups' assessments of the retention strategies. Therefore, the respondents have similar perceptions of the retention strategies regardless of grouping variables. Hence, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference among the groups is accepted. The findings of this study are consistent with the study of Costanza, Darrow, Yost, and Severt (2020), which concluded that although employees belong to different generational groups, their attitudes and perceptions toward workplace policies and retention strategies are often more similar than different.

Discussion

Findings related to private HEIs in the district, particularly on effective retention strategies such as a supportive working environment, ethical leadership, and development opportunities, play important roles in strengthening employees' intention to stay, as supported by Columna and Garcia (2024) and Motlokoe et al. (2024).

Although retention strategies were rated as effective, workload balance emerged as a potential area for improvement, consistent with the observations of Lazona and Salabao (2025). Strengthening mentoring programs and equitable access to development opportunities may further enhance employee satisfaction, as suggested by Bautista and Cahigas (2024). The findings indicate that the work environment, leadership and management, and employee development collectively contribute to the perceived effectiveness of retention strategies in private HEIs. The effective rating implies that institutions have established systems that foster supportive workplace relationships and institutional stability. Consistent with Abun et al. (2021), a positive work environment promotes trust, psychological safety, and engagement, which are essential in academic settings where collaboration and academic continuity are highly valued. The results suggest that maintaining a conducive physical and psychosocial environment

The implications of the working environment extend beyond physical facilities and include organizational culture, communication patterns, and workload expectations. While the overall environment was perceived positively, the identified concern about workload balance suggests that institutions need to revisit their staffing and task distribution mechanisms. Lazona and Salabao (2025) emphasized that excessive workload may gradually weaken employee motivation despite otherwise favorable institutional conditions. Thus, addressing workload concerns may prevent future turnover and sustain the positive perceptions already established among employees.

Regarding leadership, the findings highlight the significant role of ethical and supportive practices in promoting employee commitment. Effective leadership fosters transparency, recognition, and participative decision-making, which strengthens trust between administrators and employees. Motlokoe et al. (2024) noted that leadership behaviors significantly shape organizational climate and employee morale, while Verma (2024) emphasized that leaders who demonstrate fairness and support contribute to stronger retention outcomes. These implications suggest that leadership development programs and continuous managerial training remain crucial for sustaining institutional effectiveness.

Employee development also emerged as an important dimension influencing retention intention. Opportunities for professional growth, mentoring, and continuing education signal institutional investment in employees' long-term careers, which in turn strengthens organizational commitment. Memon et al. (2020) underscored that career development opportunities enhance engagement and reduce turnover intention. Similarly, Bautista and Cahigas (2026, 2024) highlighted that equitable access to development programs increases motivation across employee groups, suggesting that institutions should ensure consistent implementation of faculty development initiatives to maximize retention outcomes.

The very high level of retention intention demonstrates that employees are highly loyal and committed to institutional goals, supporting the conclusions of Datu-Ramos and Bautista (2025). However, occasional thoughts of leaving indicate the need for continuous organizational support to sustain this commitment. As emphasized by Memon et al. (2020), career development and work engagement strengthen employees' willingness to stay. However, occasional thoughts of leaving indicate a need for ongoing organizational support, particularly to address workload concerns and maintain positive workplace relationships, as noted by Lazona and Salabao (2025). Overall, a supportive organizational culture contributes to employee loyalty and institutional stability, highlighting the importance of continuing effective retention strategies to ensure long-term performance and academic continuity (Columna & Garcia, 2024; Motlokoe et al., 2024).

The significant relationship between retention strategies and employees' intention to remain in private HEIs indicates that employees' decisions to remain are strongly influenced by institutional practices related to the work environment, leadership, and development opportunities. This finding supports Memon et al. (2020), who emphasized that career development and engagement significantly strengthen retention intention, and aligns with Kim and Kao (2020), who found that positive work environments reduce turnover intention through increased employee engagement. Likewise, Abun et al. (2021) and

Columna and Garcia (2024) highlighted that supportive workplace conditions and organizational culture play crucial roles in sustaining faculty commitment. Leadership practices also reinforce retention, as ethical and supportive leadership enhances trust and organizational attachment (Sarwar et al., 2020; Verma, 2024). Overall, the strong relationship confirms that effective, holistic retention strategies are essential to promoting long-term employee commitment and institutional stability in higher education settings.

Lastly, the absence of significant differences across generational cohorts suggests that retention strategies in private HEIs are broadly inclusive and effective for employees regardless of age group. This finding supports Costanza et al. (2020), who argued that generational differences in workplace attitudes are often less significant than organizational context and leadership practices, and aligns with Chawla et al. (2020), who emphasized that shared institutional values can minimize generational gaps in work engagement and preferences. Similarly, Sithole and Pwaka (2019) noted that effective leadership and supportive organizational cultures reduce variations in employee expectations across age groups. The results further imply that institutions may prioritize strengthening universal strategies related to leadership, work environment, and employee development rather than designing separate approaches for each generation, consistent with the observations of Verma (2024) and Bautista & Cahigas (2024) on inclusive workplace practices. Overall, equitable and consistent organizational policies help foster cohesion and shared commitment among employees, regardless of generational affiliation.

Implementing retention strategies in higher institutions can be challenging, but this can be addressed by providing leadership training and development programs to equip leaders with effective management skills. Encourage regular feedback and coaching to help employees grow and develop. Foster open and transparent communication throughout the institution. Recognize and reward employees' contributions and achievements. In the work environment, the following are advanced: flexible schedules, remote work options, and compressed workweeks to promote work-life balance. Provide access to wellness programs, mental health resources, and employee assistance programs. Foster an inclusive culture that values diversity, equity, and respect. Create modern, comfortable, and collaborative workspaces that promote productivity and creativity. In the area of employee development, the following are also considered: offering training, workshops, and conferences to enhance employees' skills and knowledge. Establish mentorship programs to pair employees with experienced professionals. Create clear career advancement paths and opportunities for growth. Offer tuition reimbursement or education assistance programs to support employees' continuing education.

Conclusion

Private higher education institutions in the First District of Ilocos Sur generally implement effective retention strategies, particularly in the areas of the work environment, leadership and management, and employee development. A safe and comfortable workplace, along with strong leadership communication, recognition, and institutional support for further studies, serves as an important foundation for employee retention. Moreover, employee retention intention among faculty and staff was very high, reflecting strong commitment, loyalty, and willingness to remain at their respective institutions. The study also confirmed that retention strategies have a significant positive relationship

with employees' intention to remain, indicating that effective organizational practices contribute to employees' dedication to institutional goals. Lastly, perceptions of retention strategies were consistent across generational cohorts, suggesting that institutional policies and practices are implemented uniformly and effectively across all age groups.

The study's results should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size (47) and limited demographic diversity. The majority of the participants were from four (4) selected private higher education institutions, with limited sample sizes, which may not reflect the experiences of broader institutions. Future research could prioritize recruiting a larger, more diverse sample to increase the study's generalizability and applicability of the findings.

Some directions to consider for future research, as suggested by findings and gaps, are the following: conduct regular employee satisfaction surveys to identify areas for improvement; develop a diversity and inclusion strategy to promote a welcoming environment; create an employee recognition program to celebrate milestones and achievements; and offer competitive salaries and benefits to attract and retain top talent.

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Ethical review statement: The research is submitted to the ethical review board and approved for the conduct of the study. It does not involve human-sensitive issues.

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