

BEYOND PAY: A PSYCHOSOCIAL SAFETY CLIMATE AND JOB RESOURCES FRAMEWORK FOR REDUCING TURNOVER INTENTION AMONG MALAYSIAN TRUCK DRIVERS

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Article history

Received date : 15-8-2026
Revised date : 16-8-2026
Accepted date : 15-10-2026
Published date : 20-10-2026

To cite this document:

Arifin, H. H., Karim, H. H., & Husain, N. A. (2026). Beyond pay: A psychosocial safety climate and job resources framework for reducing turnover intention among Malaysian truck drivers. *Journal of Islamic, Social, Economics and Development (JISED)*, 11 (87), 302 -314

Abstract: *Pay is frequently presented as the principal solution to truck-driver turnover, yet compensation alone cannot correct an employment environment in which workers perceive weak psychological-health protection, limited development, inconsistent decisions and insufficient organisational care. This conceptual paper develops an integrated psychosocial safety climate (PSC) and job resources framework for understanding turnover intention among Malaysian truck drivers. A structured conceptual review was undertaken using peer-reviewed studies and relevant policy literature published primarily between 2010 and August 2026. Evidence was synthesised through PSC theory and Job Demands-Resources theory, with attention to four resources: fair compensation, training and development, organisational justice and perceived organisational support. The analysis indicates that compensation is a necessary employment resource but becomes less credible when pay decisions are opaque, training does not create progression, rules are applied inconsistently, or management does not respond to driver concerns. PSC is therefore positioned as an upstream organisational climate that shapes whether these resources are designed, communicated and experienced as genuine commitments to worker well-being. Ten propositions are developed, including the expectation that a coherent job-resource bundle will have greater retention value than pay improvement alone. The framework contributes a context-sensitive basis for future empirical research and provides logistics companies with a practical sequence for strengthening driver retention through psychologically safe and resource-supportive employment systems.*

Keywords: *Psychosocial safety climate, job resources, turnover intention, fair compensation, truck drivers, Malaysia*

Introduction

Road freight is indispensable to Malaysia because it connects ports, manufacturers, distribution centres, retailers and final customers across the national supply chain. Truck operators occupy a particularly important position because they transport third-party goods for hire or reward within the regulated commercial transport system. The Ministry of Transport (2024) continues to report road-transport capacity as a central component of the country's transport infrastructure. This operational importance, however, does not remove the human-resource difficulty of attracting and retaining qualified drivers. Malaysian evidence has identified poor working conditions, occupational image, entry barriers, remuneration and other employment factors as contributors to driver shortage (Rahmat et al., 2021). Retention is thus not merely an employment concern; it affects service continuity, accumulated driving experience, safety and the reliability of logistics operations.

Turnover intention refers to an employee's conscious and deliberate tendency to leave the current employing organisation. It differs analytically from an industry-level driver shortage, an observed resignation, or successful retention, although it is an important closest indicator of subsequent withdrawal. International trucking research shows that driver turnover is costly and that reductions in resignation rates can generate meaningful economic benefits (Trick et al., 2021). Studies of commercial and public-transport drivers further show that workplace justice, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, rewards, support and safety climate are relevant to intentions to leave or stay (Cantor et al., 2011; Ha, 2025; Lannoo & Verhofstadt, 2016; Swartz et al., 2017). These findings make a purely wage-based explanation too narrow.

The phrase beyond pay does not imply that wages are insignificant. Fair and predictable compensation is a foundational exchange for demanding commercial driving work. The limitation arises when pay is treated as a stand-alone intervention while drivers continue to experience uncertain scheduling, limited skill development, unclear decisions, poor communication, or indifference to psychological health. Evidence on pay transparency indicates that the direct relationship between pay practices and turnover intention may be weaker than pathways involving organisational support and justice (Stofberg et al., 2022). Truck driver research likewise suggests that resources such as colleague support, flexibility and meaningful work conditions shape occupational experience alongside wages (Wijngaards et al., 2019). The central issue is therefore not pay versus non-pay resources, but whether compensation forms part of a credible and coherent employment system.

Psychosocial safety climate offers a useful organisational explanation for this coherence. PSC refers to shared perceptions of organisational policies, practices and procedures for protecting employees' psychological health (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). Its four domains concern management commitment, management priority, organisational communication and organisational participation. Unlike an isolated employee benefit, PSC signals the principles used by management when allocating attention and resources. A high-PSC logistics company is therefore expected to make pay decisions fairly, provide relevant trainings for development, apply procedures consistently and respond meaningfully to driver concerns. A low-PSC company may offer selected benefits while its underlying systems continue to prioritise delivery performance over psychological health.

Despite this theoretical relevance, research integrating PSC, job resources and turnover intention among Malaysian truck drivers remains limited. A study of logistics drivers in Selangor found no significant overall relationship between perceived organisational support

and turnover intention, but its single-company sample of 80 respondents constrains broader inference (Hanib & Wan Abdullah, 2020). Existing Malaysian driver-shortage studies identify multiple causes but do not explain how an upstream organisational climate may produce a system of retention resources (Rahmat et al., 2021). The present paper addresses this gap by asking: How can PSC and a coherent bundle of job resources explain and potentially reduce turnover intention among Malaysian truck drivers? Its objective is to develop a theoretically grounded framework and propositions suitable for subsequent empirical testing.

Literature Review

Turnover Intention in Commercial Driving

Commercial driving combines operational responsibility with substantial physical, cognitive, and social constraints. Drivers work away from conventional offices, operate under delivery deadlines, interact with distributors and customers, and depend on organisational systems for route planning, equipment, rest, training and problem resolution. Research with truck drivers has linked daily work pressures and situational constraints with exhaustion and intentions to leave, while also showing that work and community resources can influence these relationships (Schmidbauer et al., 2025). Studies of Dutch truck drivers similarly found concerns relating to work pressure, technology, and the design of support around the driving task (de Winter et al., 2024). These features make turnover intention a response to an employment system rather than a single dissatisfaction.

Sector evidence also illustrates why non-pay conditions matter. Safety climate has been associated with truck drivers' job attitudes and intentions to leave (Swartz et al., 2017), and safety-climate research in trucking has extended beyond accident outcomes to job satisfaction, engagement and actual turnover (Huang et al., 2016). A recent natural experiment found that improving overnight parking and restroom access substantially improved driver retention and recruitment, demonstrating the behavioural importance of seemingly basic quality-of-work-life resources (Hall et al., 2026). In developing-country public transport, rewards and organisational support have also emerged as practical retention considerations (Ha, 2025). Taken together, the evidence implies that drivers evaluate both the economic return from work and whether the organisation enables them to perform it with dignity, predictability and support.

Psychosocial Safety Climate as an Upstream Organisational Climate

PSC theory locates the origin of many psychosocial working conditions in management priorities and organisational systems. Management commitment reflects visible action to prevent psychological harm. Management priority concerns the relative importance given to psychological health when it competes with productivity goals. Organisational communication concerns whether psychosocial risks and solutions are discussed openly, while organisational participation captures employees' involvement in identifying and resolving these risks (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). This upstream position distinguishes PSC from resources located only at the task or supervisor level.

The integration of PSC into the Job Demands-Resources model has already been demonstrated among Malaysian workers (Idris et al., 2011). More recent synthesis supports PSC as a determinant of job design and shows positive associations with job control, supervisory and organisational support, rewards, organisational justice and development opportunities (Amoadu et al., 2023). Malaysian longitudinal evidence also links PSC with recovery processes that reduce emotional exhaustion (Yulita et al., 2022). These findings are consequential for truck

driving because drivers often depend on distant managerial decisions and may have limited opportunities to challenge unreasonable schedules or seek immediate assistance.

PSC also has a reasonable retention function. Research among construction workers found that PSC was associated with intent to stay through job satisfaction (Xie et al., 2024). Research in a developing-country manufacturing context similarly reported that PSC contributed to lower turnover intention and that organisational training shaped employee outcomes (ZamirKhan et al., 2024). These occupational contexts are not identical to Malaysian trucking, but they demonstrate that PSC can extend beyond health outcomes to employment continuity. The conceptual expectation is therefore that truck drivers who perceive management as genuinely protecting psychological health will be less inclined to leave from the organisation.

Job Resources for Driver Retention

Job Demands-Resources model defines job resources as physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of work that support goal completion, reduce the costs of job demands, or stimulate learning and development (Bakker et al., 2023). Resources can activate a motivational process that supports engagement and attachment, and they can also help workers manage difficult conditions. Contemporary JD-R theory emphasises interactions, resource accumulation and the need to understand resource configurations in changing environments (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). For truck drivers, four organisational resources are especially pertinent: fair compensation, training and development, perceived organisational justice and perceived organisational support.

Fair Compensation

Fair compensation concerns more than the nominal wage. It includes the perceived adequacy, predictability, transparency and equitable distribution of salary, trip payments, overtime, allowances, incentives and benefits. In commercial driving, earnings may vary with routes, distance, waiting time and operational decisions that drivers do not fully control. Compensation therefore becomes both an economic resource and a signal of how the organisation values difficult or inconvenient work. When payment calculations are unclear or waiting and compliance time are not recognised, a nominal pay increase may fail to create a durable sense of fairness.

The argument is supported by evidence that transparent pay practices relate to lower turnover intention partly through perceived support and organisational justice (Stofberg et al., 2022). Transport research also consistently treats remuneration as relevant to occupational attractiveness and driver retention (Lannoo & Verhofstadt, 2016; Rahmat et al., 2021). Yet fair compensation cannot resolve limited voice, arbitrary discipline or weak support. Its retention value depends partly on the process through which pay is determined and explained, making it a necessary but not self-sufficient resource.

Training and Development

Training and development provide competence, confidence and future orientation. For truck drivers, relevant development may include defensive driving, hazardous-goods competence, fatigue management, digital systems, customer interaction, incident response and progression towards trainer, dispatcher, fleet or safety roles. Training that only fulfils compliance requirements may not be experienced as development. Its motivational value increases when drivers understand how new skills improve safety, employability and internal progression.

Employee-development research shows an overall negative relationship between perceived organisational investment in development and turnover intention, with organisational commitment playing an important explanatory role (Martini et al., 2023). In PSC research, opportunities for development are more likely in climates that prioritise worker health and adequate resourcing (Amoadu et al., 2023). The organisational message matters: development signals long-term investment when it is accessible, relevant and linked to progression, but may be dismissed when it shifts compliance responsibility to drivers without improving their work.

Organisational Justice

Organisational justice encompasses the fairness of outcomes, procedures, interpersonal treatment and explanations. These dimensions are visible in route and workload allocation, disciplinary action, accident investigation, incentive decisions, leave approval, promotion and the opportunity to appeal. Commercial drivers may judge an organisation harshly when rules are applied inconsistently or when operational delays beyond their control produce penalties. Such experiences communicate whether the driver is treated as a responsible professional or merely as a replaceable operating input.

The relevance of justice is supported by trucking-specific evidence showing that workplace justice perceptions influence commercial driver turnover intentions (Cantor et al., 2011). A meta-analytic review also confirms a consistent relationship between organisational justice dimensions and turnover intention across occupations (Özkan, 2022). PSC should strengthen justice by requiring management to consult employees, communicate psychosocial consequences, and balance performance expectations with health protection. Justice is therefore both a resource and a test of whether stated PSC commitments are enacted.

Perceived Organisational Support

Perceived organisational support refers to employees' general belief that the organisation values their contribution and cares about their well-being. For drivers who work remotely, support is revealed through distributors and customers behaviour, access to timely help, maintenance response, recovery after difficult incidents, respect for rest, consultation and acknowledgement of frontline expertise. Support must be available when operational disruptions occur; generic messages of appreciation cannot substitute for responsive systems.

A systematic review and meta-analysis found a moderate negative association between organisational support and turnover intention, although the evidence was concentrated in nursing and should not be transferred uncritically to trucking (Galanis et al., 2024). Other frontline research similarly shows that perceived organisational support reduces burnout and turnover intention (Wang & Wang, 2020). The Malaysian logistics driver study by Hanib and Wan Abdullah (2020) did not reproduce the expected overall relationship, reinforcing the need for larger, multi-company and occupation-specific testing. Conceptually, PSC should make support more credible because concern for psychological health is embedded in management policy and practice rather than left to individual supervisors.

Conceptual Review Method

This study used a structured conceptual review to integrate theory and empirical evidence rather than to estimate a pooled effect. This approach was selected because the relevant knowledge is distributed across PSC, JD-R, employee turnover, and professional-driver research. Following the logic of integrative literature reviews, the process combined systematic searching with theory-led interpretation and framework development (Snyder, 2019). The review does not

claim exhaustive coverage equivalent to a registered systematic review; its purpose is transparent conceptual synthesis.

Identification

Searches were conducted through Google Scholar and publisher databases, supplemented by reference chaining from major reviews and recent truck-driver studies. Combinations of the following terms were used: psychosocial safety climate, PSC, job resources, fair compensation, pay fairness, training and development, organisational justice, perceived organisational support, turnover intention, intent to quit, intent to stay, truck driver, lorry driver, commercial driver, logistics driver and Malaysia. Peer-reviewed work published primarily from 2010 to August 2026 was prioritised, while seminal theory papers and relevant official Malaysian policy or statistical sources were retained.

Screening

Titles, abstracts and available full texts were screened for direct relevance to at least one link in the proposed framework. Studies were retained when they defined PSC or job resources, examined turnover or retention, addressed professional drivers, or provided Malaysian contextual evidence. Papers dealing exclusively with crash mechanics, vehicle engineering or general labour-market turnover without an organisational mechanism were excluded. Table 1 records the selection logic.

Table 1: Literature Selection Criteria

Criterion	Included	Excluded
Publication type	Peer-reviewed articles, reviews and relevant official sources	Editorials, promotional material and unverified commentary
Period	Primarily 2010-August 2026; seminal earlier theory where necessary	Older sources without continuing theoretical or contextual relevance
Construct relevance	PSC, job resources, compensation, development, justice, support, turnover	Studies without a clear organisational or retention mechanism
Occupational relevance	Truck, lorry, bus, logistics and comparable safety-critical workers	Transport studies concerned only with vehicle technology or crash engineering
Context	International evidence with explicit interpretation for Malaysian truck drivers	Direct transfer of foreign findings without contextual qualification

Eligibility and Conceptual Synthesis

Eligible sources were coded according to occupational context, focal construct, theoretical mechanism, outcome and implication for truck drivers. The synthesis proceeded in three stages. First, evidence was organised around the four job resources. Second, PSC was examined as an upstream condition affecting resource design and credibility. Third, relationships were translated into propositions and a parsimonious framework. Contradictory and context-specific findings, including the non-significant Malaysian logistics-driver result reported by Hanib and Wan Abdullah (2020), were retained rather than suppressed.

The final synthesis comprised 27 sources: 26 peer-reviewed journal articles and one official Malaysian transport-statistics publication. The corpus combined four evidence streams: PSC and JD-R theory, employee-turnover research, professional-driver studies and Malaysian contextual evidence. Because the objective was framework construction rather than effect estimation, the results are reported as convergent conceptual patterns and testable propositions.

Results of the Conceptual Analysis

Pay Is Foundational but Not Self-Sufficient

The first result is that pay should be conceptualised as one component of job quality rather than the entire retention strategy. Compensation supplies material security and recognises the difficulty and responsibility of commercial driving. Nevertheless, the psychological meaning of pay is shaped by transparency, consistency and the treatment surrounding its allocation. A driver may receive an incentive yet still perceive the organisation as unfair if routes are unequally assigned, waiting time is ignored or disciplinary decisions are unexplained. This explains why organisational support and justice can account for more of the relationship between pay practices and turnover intention than pay communication alone (Stofberg et al., 2022).

This conclusion is consistent with driver studies showing that safety climate, work conditions, support, job satisfaction and practical facilities contribute to attitudes and retention (Hall et al., 2026; Huang et al., 2016; Swartz et al., 2017; Wijngaards et al., 2019). The conceptual implication is not to reduce compensation expenditure, but to prevent pay initiatives from being undermined by weak organisational systems. Retention interventions should begin with fair and predictable earnings and then test whether the wider resource environment enables drivers to perform, recover, develop and be heard.

PSC Determines the Credibility of Job Resources

The second result is that identical human-resource practices may be interpreted differently depending on PSC. Training in a high-PSC organisation can signal investment and risk prevention; the same training in a low-PSC organisation can appear to transfer liability to drivers. A performance bonus in a high-PSC organisation can recognise demanding work; in a low-PSC organisation it may encourage unsafe pace. A grievance process may provide voice where participation is valued or merely exist on paper where productivity is always prioritised. PSC therefore supplies the interpretive and governance context within which job resources acquire credibility.

This argument follows the evidence that PSC precedes a wide set of work-design conditions and is positively associated with organisational rewards, support, justice and development opportunities (Amoadu et al., 2023). It also aligns with evidence connecting PSC to staying or quitting intentions in other demanding occupations (Xie et al., 2024; ZamirKhan et al., 2024). For geographically dispersed drivers, these signals are especially important because organisational policy is often encountered through schedules, dispatcher communications and automated systems rather than face-to-face management.

Job Resources Operate as a Complementary Bundle

The third result is resource complementarity. Each resource addresses a different retention problem. Fair compensation addresses economic adequacy and reward. Training addresses competence and prospects. Justice addresses consistency, voice and respect. Organisational

support addresses care and help when work becomes difficult. A weakness in one resource can reduce the value of the others. Attractive pay with arbitrary discipline may feel coercive; training without progression may create frustration; supportive supervisors cannot fully compensate for unfair company-wide pay procedures.

JD-R theory permits this bundle interpretation because resources can accumulate and jointly support motivation and coping (Bakker et al., 2023; Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). The framework therefore rejects both a pay-only model and a collection of unrelated practices. It proposes a resource architecture in which PSC aligns organisational intention, resource provision and driver experience. Table 2 summarises the conceptual roles of the four resources.

Table 2: Conceptual Roles of the Proposed Job Resources

Job Resource	Primary Retention Need	PSC-Consistent Practice	Risk When Isolated
Fair compensation	Economic adequacy, predictability and recognition	Transparent calculations, payment for all work time and equitable incentives	Pay increases may be undermined by opaque or inconsistent treatment
Training and development	Competence, safety and a credible future	Relevant paid training with recognised progression pathways	Compliance-only training may shift responsibility without creating opportunity
Organisational justice	Consistency, voice, respect and explanation	Fair route allocation, incident review, discipline and appeal procedures	Formal rules lose legitimacy when applied selectively
Organisational support	Care, assistance and acknowledgement	Responsive dispatch, maintenance, recovery and well-being support	Personal goodwill cannot correct unsupportive organisational systems

Proposed Conceptual Framework and Propositions

Figure 1 positions PSC as the upstream organisational climate, the four resources as an integrated resource bundle and turnover intention as the focal outcome. A direct PSC-turnover path is retained because climate can influence attachment through signals of managerial priority even beyond the four specified resources. The framework also proposes that the resource bundle has complementary value beyond the sum of isolated initiatives.

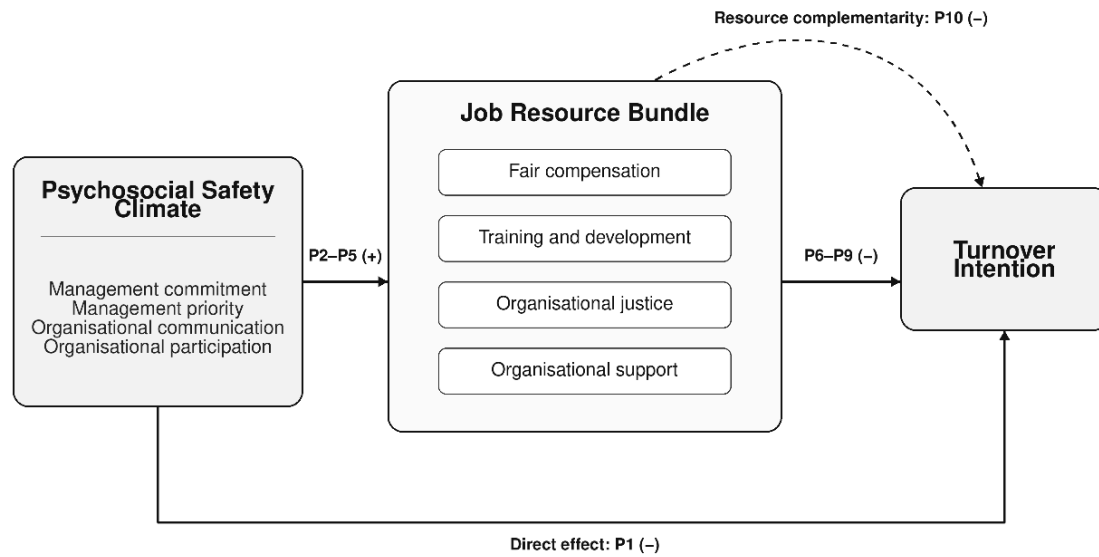


Figure 1: Proposed PSC and Job Resources Framework for Turnover Intention

Table 3: Conceptual Propositions

Proposition	Statement
P1	PSC is negatively related to turnover intention among Malaysian truck drivers.
P2	PSC is positively related to drivers' perceptions of fair compensation.
P3	PSC is positively related to drivers' access to relevant training and development.
P4	PSC is positively related to drivers' perceptions of organisational justice.
P5	PSC is positively related to drivers perceived organisational support.
P6	Fair compensation is negatively related to turnover intention.
P7	Training and development are negatively related to turnover intention.
P8	Organisational justice is negatively related to turnover intention.
P9	Perceived organisational support is negatively related to turnover intention.
P10	A coherent bundle of the four job resources is more strongly associated with lower turnover intention than fair compensation alone.

Discussion

The proposed framework advances a simple but consequential argument: retaining truck drivers requires both adequate rewards and an organisational climate that makes resources credible. Pay-centred responses are understandable because remuneration is visible, measurable and immediately relevant. They become strategically incomplete when they leave unchanged the procedures, communications and support systems through which drivers experience the organisation. The framework therefore reframes retention from a compensation problem to a resource-governance problem.

This reframing helps reconcile mixed evidence. The non-significant overall relationship between organisational support and turnover intention reported in a small Malaysian logistics-driver sample (Hanib & Wan Abdullah, 2020) does not necessarily mean that support is irrelevant. It may indicate restricted variation within one organisation, insufficient statistical power, measurement limitations, or the possibility that support becomes effective only when reinforced by fair procedures and other resources. Conversely, evidence from other occupations should not be assumed to apply automatically to drivers. The framework makes these contextual questions testable rather than resolving them by assertion.

Theoretical Contributions

The first theoretical contribution is the positioning of PSC as an upstream resource-governance climate rather than another resource in a flat list. This preserves the causal ordering proposed by PSC theory: management commitment, priority, communication and participation shape the work environment in which resources are allocated and interpreted. The second contribution is the separation of compensation adequacy from compensation credibility. A payment practice becomes a stronger retention resource when drivers also perceive justice and organisational support. The third contribution is the bundle proposition, which extends JD-R reasoning from individual resources to a coherent organisational configuration.

The framework is also occupationally specific. Truck drivers conduct commercial haulage for third parties and work across organisational boundaries, yet remain dependent on their employer for schedules, equipment, pay calculations, training, support and fair treatment. This combination of mobility and organisational dependence makes resource consistency especially important. It also suggests that PSC may be communicated through operational systems, such as dispatch rules and incident procedures, as much as through conventional well-being programmes.

Practical Implications for Malaysian Logistics Companies

The practical sequence begins with diagnosis. Companies should examine whether management commitment to psychological health is visible in delivery planning, overtime expectations, driver consultation and responses to fatigue or distress. A PSC statement is insufficient if dispatchers are rewarded only for delivery speed or if drivers believe that raising a concern will damage their income. Senior management should therefore assign accountability for psychosocial risks and review the alignment between safety, operations and human-resource metrics.

Compensation should then be audited for adequacy and procedural fairness. Companies should make salary, trip, overtime, allowance and incentive calculations understandable; recognise waiting and compliance time where appropriate; and establish a rapid correction process for disputed payments. The purpose is not simply transparency, but confidence that drivers will be treated consistently. Any incentive should be tested for unintended pressure that could conflict with rest, safety or legal compliance.

Training should be converted from a compliance event into a development pathway. Paid learning can be mapped to recognised competence levels and progression into senior-driver, trainer, fleet coordination or safety roles. Organisational justice requires consistent route allocation, evidence-based incident review, respectful discipline, clear explanations and a credible appeal channel. Organisational support requires responsive dispatch and maintenance systems, post-incident care, access to help during remote work and acknowledgement of driver

input. Together, these practices convert the idea of beyond pay into an operational retention system.

Limitations and Future Research

This paper is conceptual and does not establish causal effects. The evidence base spans different countries, occupations, and study designs, so contextual transfer to Malaysian truck drivers requires empirical verification. Turnover intention is also not identical to actual turnover, and resource perceptions may differ by route type, employer size, employment arrangement, region and driver tenure. The four-resource framework is intentionally focused and does not include every potentially relevant resource, such as schedule control, work-family support, vehicle quality or rest facilities.

Future research should test the framework with multi-company samples of active truck drivers and distinguish PSC from individual supervisor support. Structural models could assess the direct relationships, the contribution of each resource and the incremental value of the resource bundle. Longitudinal designs should examine whether changes in PSC and resources precede changes in turnover intention and actual exits. Qualitative interviews or focus groups could also establish how drivers interpret fair pay, development, justice and support in specific operational situations. Such work would determine whether the framework remains stable across regions and logistics subsectors.

Conclusion

This conceptual analysis concludes that fair compensation is indispensable but insufficient for reducing turnover intention among Malaysian truck drivers. Drivers assess not only what they are paid, but also whether the organisation protects psychological health, invests in their development, applies decisions fairly and provides meaningful support. PSC offers the upstream climate that can align these expectations with management practice.

The proposed framework integrates PSC with a job-resource bundle comprising fair compensation, training and development, organisational justice and perceived organisational support. Its main contribution is the proposition that these resources have greater retention value when they are mutually reinforcing and anchored in genuine management commitment to psychological health. Accordingly, logistics companies should move beyond isolated wage adjustments towards a transparent, developmental, just and supportive employment system. Empirical testing of the ten propositions can provide a stronger evidence base for driver-retention policy and organisational practice in Malaysia.

Acknowledgements

The authors acknowledge Open University Malaysia for its academic support. No external funding was received for this conceptual paper.

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