



The Influence of Employer Branding and Employee Value Proposition on Employee Engagement and Retention at Qara'a Technology Startup

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ABSTRACT: In a competitive business environment, the ability to attract and retain quality talent is critical to the success of startup companies. This study explores the role of employer branding and employee value proposition (EVP) on employee engagement and retention in startup companies in Pontianak City. This research uses a qualitative approach with data collection methods through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis to measure their perceptions of Employer branding and EVP practices and their impact on engagement and retention levels. The results of this study reveal that Qara'a's startup employer branding, based on the dimensions of interest value, social value, economic value, development value, and application value, can increase employee engagement and retention. Furthermore, the application of Qara'a's employee value proposition is packaged attractively and by employee expectations so that the EVP can increase the engagement and retention of Qara'a startup employees.

Keywords: Employer Branding, Employee Value Proposition, Employee Engagement, Employee Retention, Start-Up Company



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INTRODUCTION

Startup companies are one of the fastest-growing business phenomena in Indonesia. Startups are businesses designed to find a suitable business model to survive (Andriyati & Zulaikha, 2023). Indonesia became the number one startup in ASEAN in early 2024. According to the Katadata.co.id page, according to data from Startup Ranking, a Peruvian statistics company, on January 11, 2024, there were 2,562 startups in Indonesia (Annur, 2024). This figure shows that startup companies are proliferating today, along with increasing technological innovation; this growth also impacts the need for qualified human resources.

Tech startups have experienced significant growth in recent years. This thriving startup ecosystem offers a variety of new opportunities but also faces a substantial challenge in retaining employees. In a highly competitive industry, tech startups need to be able to attract, engage, and retain the best talent to stay relevant and innovative. One of the significant challenges faced by startup companies

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is in terms of human resource management. The research results Kofanov & Zozul'ov (2018) explain that the factors that influence the success of a startup are derived from external and internal factors, namely human resources or teams within the startup, organization, process, and environment. This is also supported by research from Rahmadiane et.al (2022), which revealed that factors affect startup growth, including human resources, infrastructure factors, and cybersecurity. In this case, human resources plays a significant role in startup development. Two concepts that can be key in achieving startup success goals are Employer branding and Employee Value Proposition. (Kinasih et al., 2019)

Rumangkit & Dwiyan (2019) stated that employer branding is a strategy for how an organization can communicate and interact with prospective employees, employees, and outsiders in the past, now, and in the future. In this sense, Employer branding includes all company efforts to build and demonstrate a positive reputation as an attractive workplace. The goal is to create a positive image so the company can attract and retain the best talent in the labor market (Sumartik et al., 2023). This concept is particularly relevant in technology startups with high competition to attract qualified employees.

In addition to Employer branding, companies need to implement a complementary strategy that highlights the values employees gain while working there, known as the Employee Value Proposition. Employee value Proposition refers to the value that an organization provides to employees in exchange for the skills, capabilities, and experience that employees bring to the success of the organization or company (Ariyanto & Kustini, 2021). This can include individuals' unique skills and experiences in the organization. Non-financial outcomes or values can significantly affect a person's job satisfaction and satisfaction with the company (Ochwo & Mwesigwa, 2021). An effective EVP includes financial compensation, career development opportunities, a supportive work environment, and a positive company culture.

Qara'a startup is a technology startup that focuses on learning the Quran using artificial intelligence since 2018. Along with the company's rapid development, the challenges in managing human resources and significantly improving employee engagement and retention are becoming increasingly important. Based on observations and brief interviews with the Founder and Operations Director of Qara'a, it was found that there is a need for labor in the startup industry, especially for employees who are considered potential and have superior skills. Other companies often offer jobs with more significant benefits to these potential employees, making them tempted to switch careers. In addition, the startup environment in Pontianak City generally still has limitations in providing competitive salaries, given its status as a startup company. This condition causes many professionals to choose to work outside Kalimantan to get rewards that are more in line with their expectations. This situation emphasizes the importance of the right strategy in employer branding and employee value proposition to create a work environment that can support company growth while retaining the best talent in the highly competitive technology startup industry.

In the tech startup space in Pontianak City, where employees often look for opportunities to grow and make significant contributions, a strong EVP can be a factor in an employee's decision to stay with the company. A clear and well-managed EVP can increase employee motivation and

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engagement (Fuadi & Anjayani, 2023). Employee engagement is a crucial factor that affects organizational productivity and performance. According to Gallup (2024), companies with engaged employees have higher productivity levels and lower turnover rates. Employee engagement makes employees contribute more than their abilities to their work and makes employees loyal to the company, thus reducing the desire to leave the company voluntarily. In the rapidly growing digital era, employee engagement is a challenge, especially for startups that often face uncertainty and rapid change (Chairunnisa et al, 2023).

One of the challenges in managing employees is retaining potential employees, known as employee retention (Srimulyani, 2020). Implementing employee retention strategies is essential for companies because high turnover rates can disrupt activities and productivity, creating instability and uncertainty in the workforce (Hamid & Fauzan, 2023). Employee retention is an effort to keep employees working for an organization/company. Winoto (2021) stated that keeping the best employees in the long term is a challenge faced by all companies or organizations.

Previous research has often focused on large, established companies with more resources to develop strong Employer branding and EVP programs. However, startup companies in early development may face different challenges in implementing these strategies. In-depth studies on how relatively new technology startups in Pontianak City implement and manage Employer branding and EVP to improve employee engagement and retention are limited.

Although much of the literature discusses employer branding and EVP separately, it is rare to find research that comprehensively examines the direct relationship between these concepts and employee engagement and retention. Previous research by Ariyanto & Kustini (2021) focused on measuring the success of employer branding and employee value proposition in explicitly attracting potential employees. Therefore, this research fills the void by exploring how the role of Employer branding and EVP together improve employee engagement and retention at technology startups in Pontianak City.

Most previous research used a quantitative approach to measure employee engagement and retention. Research with a qualitative approach that provides deeper insights into the employee experience in the context of technology startups needs to be improved. A qualitative approach can provide a richer understanding of internal company dynamics and employee perceptions of Employer branding and EVP.

This research provides significant benefits for both practitioners and academics. For practitioners, especially management and human resource managers in startup companies like Qara'a, the results of this study can serve as a strategic foundation for designing effective employer branding and employee value proposition (EVP) programs and understanding the role of these two aspects in improving employee engagement and retention guides companies to create a more engaging and supportive work environment, which can increase productivity and reduce costs due to employee turnover. This practice is especially important for startup companies that face huge challenges in retaining top talent amidst fierce industry competition.

This research significantly benefits practitioners, especially for startup companies' management and human resource teams. With a deeper understanding of the role of employer branding and

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Employee Value Proposition (EVP), practitioners can design more effective employer branding strategies to attract and retain top talent. Through these insights, companies can optimize EVPs to match employee expectations and needs, which in turn increases their satisfaction, engagement, and loyalty. Moreover, by recognizing the factors influencing retention, practitioners can develop more proactive policies for retaining employees and reducing turnover rates. This research also helps companies create a work environment that supports employee engagement to build a more productive, motivated, and committed team that will support the company's growth in the long run. Meanwhile, for academics, this research can enrich the literature on human resource management with a special focus on the context of startup companies. Employer branding and EVP about employee engagement and retention still require in-depth exploration, especially in Indonesia, where startups are growing rapidly. However, research on HR management in this industry could be more extensive. This research can also serve as a basis for further research to develop more comprehensive theories and models of HR management strategies in startups.

Based on the background explanation and problem identification described above, this research discusses the role of employer branding and employee value proposition in increasing the engagement and retention of Qara'a startup employees in Pontianak City.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of employer branding and employee value proposition (EVP) in increasing employee engagement and retention in the startup company Qara'a, which is operating in Pontianak City. Qualitative research methodology is used to deeply understand the phenomenon under study through descriptive, interpretative, and contextual data collection and analysis (Rifa'i, 2023).

In this study, inclusion criteria were set to ensure that the informants had relevant experience and understanding of the topic of employer branding and employee value proposition at Qara'a. The informants selected are active employees who have worked in the company for at least 6 months, as this duration allows them to understand the company's strategy and culture thoroughly. In addition, employees across different divisions and job levels will gain diverse perspectives, including those involved in decision-making or execution of HR strategies, particularly in terms of engagement and retention. Informants must also be willing to participate openly in the interview.

The sampling technique used in this research is purposive sampling. This technique ensures that the selected informants have characteristics and experiences relevant to the research objectives. With this approach, the researcher could select employees with specific knowledge about employer branding and EVP at Qara'a, such as HR members, managers, and employees from several levels of positions.

The main reason for using this qualitative method is to reveal phenomena in the real world through naturalistic data collection. Qualitative research is a naturalistic investigation because it uses interactive data collection strategies to find the natural flow of events and processes (Syaefullah, 2015).

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Several data collection techniques were used in this study to ensure the depth and accuracy of the information.

First, in-depth interviews using a semi-structured approach were conducted with the Founder and key employees of the Qara'a startup. These interviews aimed to gain insight into employee perceptions and experiences related to Employer branding, Employee Value Proposition, employee engagement, and retention (Rifa'i, 2023). Interviews are a data collection method that involves interaction between researchers and respondents to obtain relevant and in-depth information about the research topic. Interviews were conducted based on interview guidelines made by researchers with an interview duration of 40-60 minutes. The informants in this study consisted of 5 people: the Co-Founder, Director of Operations, Finance division employee, Marketing division employee, and IT division employee of Qara'a startup. In this study, five informants from various departments in the company can be considered sufficient to achieve data saturation, especially founders and employees with diverse and in-depth experiences related to employer branding and EVP in the Qara'a company.

Second, participatory observation was conducted by researchers who were actively involved in the company's daily activities, observing the work environment and interacting directly with employees at Qara'a startup company. Observation notes were taken in detail, along with field notes and documentation of the work environment at Qara'a. Fadli (2021) stated that participatory observation helps researchers understand the social and cultural context of the research subjects more deeply.

Finally, document analysis was conducted by reviewing internal company documents such as policies, branding strategies, and published EVPs. This analysis aims to understand how the company designs and communicates its identity, values, and offerings to employees. Document analysis provides a rich and reliable data source to complement the data obtained through interviews and observations. By using a combination of these techniques, this research aims to gain a comprehensive picture of the role of Employer branding and EVP in improving employee engagement and retention in startup companies in Pontianak City.

Data analysis in this study used the following method Miles & Huberman (1994). The data analysis component consists of

1. Interview data between the author and sources who know the information needed by the research focus and collect data through secondary data, such as company documents, required to obtain additional data.
2. Data reduction is done when the author collects data from observations, interviews, and documentation, summarizes, sorts, and focuses the data according to the research objectives, and makes abstractions from field notes and interview results.
3. Data presentation is carried out after the data is reduced from the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. It is then analyzed and presented in the form of interview notes, field notes, and documentation according to the focus of the research, to then conclude to obtain the right action.

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4. The final step in the interactive data analysis model is drawing conclusions based on verification. From the data that has been reduced and presented, the author concludes the results based on the evidence collected, answering the formulation of research problems.

To ensure the data in this study is valid, steps were taken, including triangulation, member check, audit trail, and peer debriefing. Triangulation is a data analysis approach that synthesizes data from multiple sources; member check is the process of verifying the accuracy of data by confirming findings with participants; audit trail is the process of recording the research process in detail for transparency; and peer debriefing involves discussions with experts for external validation (Susanto et al., 2023).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research examines the role of employer branding and employee value proposition in improving employee engagement and retention at Startup Qara'a. It utilizes a qualitative approach involving interviews with the Founder, Director of Operations, and employees.

Table 1. Data of Research Informants

No	Name	Title / Position	Duration Of Work
1	Hajon Mahdy Mahmudin	Co-Founder	10 Years
2	Ahmad Kamel	Operasional Director	7 Years
3	Fitriani	Finance Staff	6 Years
4	Siti Khairuzia Lazuardini	Marketing Staff	5 Years
5	Bima Anzalta	IT Staff	5 Years

After reducing the data, the author has some findings describing the employer branding strategy and employee value proposition in increasing employee engagement and retention at Qara'a Startup.

EMPLOYER BRANDING START-UP QARA'A

The interviews with the three informants show that Qara'a has been doing employer branding since the company was first established. Employer branding, carried out for the first time, involved the Founder promoting the company's brand on personal social media and at activities such as workshops and seminars. This is supported by the statement of informant 2, who has joined the company since 2017.

"I joined because Qara'a became one of the technology companies in Pontianak, and there I began to be interested in joining because I have basic knowledge in the field of technology and want to implement this knowledge by joining a technology-based company" (Interview informant 2, September 2024).

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The interview with informant 2 revealed that the interest in joining a technology startup company in Pontianak was influenced by the company's reputation as one of the leading technology companies in the region. Informant 2 explained that his educational background and basic knowledge of technology encouraged him to look for opportunities in companies that were in line with his interests and expertise. The company's strong employer branding was the main factor that motivated informant 2 to join, with the hope of implementing his knowledge and developing a career in an industry that is in line with his field of expertise.

Qara'a actively conducts various activities to support the success of their employer branding externally, including by using Instagram social media. The @Life.at.hotama account shares moments of Qara'a startup employees in their daily activities. In addition, Qara'a also conducts branding by visiting campuses and organizing various events. In addition, they utilize other social media such as Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn as a means of branding. Qara'a is also involved in social responsibility activities to help victims of natural disasters.

Internally, Qara'a conducts employer branding by communicating through its corporate culture to create a positive employee perception. The corporate culture is developed to shape the work ethic and is disseminated to each division. This culture is introduced to new employees through training programs.

EMPLOYER BRANDING STARTUP QARA'A DIMENSION

Based on the results of interviews and field observations conducted, the dimensions of Qara'a employer branding are known as follows:

1. Interest Value

The value of Qara'a's startup employer branding lies in its commitment to creating an innovative and opportunity-filled work environment. As a fast-growing company, Qara'a offers opportunities for employees to directly contribute to significant initiatives and influence the company's strategic direction. With a dynamic and collaborative atmosphere, Qara'a gives its employees room to grow in technical and leadership skills. Employees at Qara'a can hone their creativity and work alongside a passionate and diverse team, creating a work culture open to new ideas.

In addition, Qara'a stands out through its flexible approach to work-life balance. With support for career development through training, mentorship, and access to essential projects, Qara'a offers a constructive and motivating work experience. Qara'a is also active in social responsibility programs, such as Bakti Qara'a, allowing employees to impact the community positively. All this makes Qara'a an attractive place to work in a startup environment oriented towards growth and innovation.

2. Social Value

At Qara'a, the relationship between employees and supervisors is built on open communication, mutual respect, and ongoing support. Supervisors at Qara'a not only act as leaders but also as mentors who encourage employees' personal and professional development. By creating an

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inclusive and collaborative work environment, Qara'a ensures that each individual feels heard and valued, thereby strengthening loyalty and increasing overall team productivity.

At Qara'a, the main focus is a collaborative and open work culture, where every team member supports each other and works together to achieve common goals. The friendly and open environment allows for effective communication between coworkers, creating a harmonious and productive work atmosphere. Employees feel comfortable sharing ideas, solving problems together, and giving each other positive feedback, which not only improves the quality of work but also strengthens professional relationships within the team.

At Qara'a, the work environment is designed to spur creativity, productivity, and employee well-being through a relaxed and dynamic atmosphere. Each individual is encouraged to contribute actively without feeling burdened by rigid hierarchies, creating a strong sense of community and team support. In addition, Qara'a frequently organizes social and team-building activities that strengthen bonds between employees, making the workplace a place of fun and positive energy. This helps create a balance between seriousness at work and leisure, which increases overall job satisfaction.



Figure 1. The working environment at Qara'a startup (Source: researchers' documentation)

3. Economic Value

Qara'a understands the importance of family welfare for employees, thus providing special allowances to support their parents' needs. This policy reflects Qara'a's commitment to care for individual employees and ensure that their families, especially parents, are adequately protected and cared for. With this allowance, employees feel empowered and more motivated as they can work peacefully without worrying about their families' needs at home, creating a better work-life balance.

Qara'a provides excellent opportunities for employees to achieve promotions. According to one of Qara'a's employees, the company is open to career development opportunities for all employees, provided they have completed sufficient knowledge and skills to move to the next level. Qara'a is

very focused on employee development, with the aim that they do not just stay in one position but continue to grow through continuous and ongoing training.

4. Development Value

Qara'a is committed to facilitating the self-development of its employees by providing training opportunities, both internal and external. If employees wish to attend training outside the company that is relevant to their skill development, Qara'a offers full support in financial assistance and time permits. With this policy, Qara'a not only encourages the improvement of employees' competencies but also ensures they gain new experiences and knowledge that sustainably support their career advancement.

Qara'a has a scholarship program for employees who wish to continue their education or attend courses to improve their skills. In addition, Qara'a management also regularly recognizes outstanding and exemplary employees, both through formal awards and personal recognition. With this approach, Qara'a ensures that every employee feels valued for their contribution and is encouraged to continue developing, creating a work environment that motivates and supports professional growth.

5. Application Value

Qara'a is actively involved in humanitarian activities, including organizing aid for victims of natural disasters in Sintang Regency, West Kalimantan. By supporting the affected communities, Qara'a is committed to social responsibility and care for the surrounding environment. This activity benefits the victims directly and strengthens the sense of togetherness and team spirit among employees, creating a more positive and human values-oriented work atmosphere.

Qara'a Startup Employee Value Proposition Form

Based on the data collection results, the implementation of the role of employer branding and employee value proposition in increasing employee engagement and retention of Qara'a Startup is examined. The author can analyze the results of interviews with the director of operations that Qara'a implements strategies in the form of employee value proposition itself, which can be interpreted as follows:

1. Exiting work to feel passionate

The critical thing to know to build enthusiasm and carry out work according to passion is to see the vision and mission of the intended company. Based on Qara'a's website, it is found that Qara'a's vision and mission is to alleviate Qur'an illiteracy worldwide through technology. After the vision and mission are understood by Qara'a employees, the employees will associate it with the "personality" of Qara'a. Based on an interview with informant 2, the Director of Operations of Qara'a, it is stated that

"A common vision between employees and the company is critical to create harmony in thinking and acting in the work environment. When all elements of the company hold the same vision, goals, and strategies can be executed more effectively. In addition, this common vision contributes significantly

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to work comfort, as employees feel valued and aligned with the company's direction. This, in turn, makes employees feel more at home and loyal, and increases productivity and quality of work in the company." (Interview Informant 2, September 2024)

Based on research involving key informants, it was found that a shared vision became the main foundation in preparing various internal and external programs. The corporate image built through its vision, mission, programs, and values attracted the attention of informant 2, who was previously an intern at Qara'a. In addition, being part of Qara'a gives its employees a sense of pride.

2. Great company, great culture, great leader

Qara'a's open work culture is the basis of how Qara'a's organizational culture can be formed. The results of an interview with one of the informants concluded that corporate culture is one of the things that Qara'a has, making it attractive, especially in the eyes of employees.

From the various programs offered by Qara'a, both in the form of supporting facilities and additional benefits beyond salary, to communication patterns and work culture, informants stated that the corporate culture developed by Qara'a makes it a workplace with an excellent work-life balance. In addition, Qara'a has an open work culture, reflected in the ease of collaboration between employees, without restrictions on who, when, and where. This culture of openness creates effective and two-way communication. This is in line with the results of observations from social media, which are displayed through Instagram videos @lifeathotama. Researchers found that employees can easily discuss things with anyone, including those up to the Founder level.



Figure 2. Founder's Discussion with Employees in Person (Source: Instagram.com/life.at.hotama)

3. Wealth and reward

The results of the research on the form of Employee Value Proposition that employees want, especially in the aspect of welfare and rewards, show that income at Qara'a is considered quite competitive compared to other companies. Qara'a also offers a relatively faster appointment process for permanent employees than other companies. In addition to salary, Qara'a provides various employee benefits through programs outside working hours, such as Gathering, Outbound, Breaking the Fast Together, Independence Day events, etc. The rewards Qara'a gives its employees can be in various forms of appreciation, such as scholarships for employee self-development and special awards for exemplary employees who show the best performance. These awards increase motivation and provide employees with opportunities to continue developing professionally. From observations on social media, the author sees that Qara'a employees get awards from their leaders as a form of appreciation for their hard work for the company. In addition, Qara'a also has various programs to show care and loyalty to its employees, such as providing unlimited snacks, groceries, and other facilities. These activities help create a more intimate atmosphere among employees.



Figure 3. Qara'a Internal Rewards and Activities (Source: [instagram.com/life.at.hotama](https://www.instagram.com/life.at.hotama))

4. Growth and development

According to Citta et al. (2020), employees want self-development. The interview results revealed that Qara'a facilitates employees' self-development.

"So, we facilitate self-development for every employee at Qara. Employees are free to choose online and offline courses to update soft skills, for the registration fee the company will help facilitate" (Interview informant 1, July 2024).

Observations on Instagram social media reinforce the interview results. Qara'a actively supports and facilitates its employees' self-development. In addition to external training, Qara'a provides a discussion and sharing forum among employees called "Monthly Evaluation." This forum allows employees to express work-related opinions and share ideas and innovations they would like to propose.

Implementation of Qara'a Startup Employee Value Proposition

The implementation of the employee value proposition at Qara'a *startup* is designed to create a work environment that supports employee engagement and comfort. One of the essential elements is an open and collaborative organizational culture, where every employee is allowed to participate in decision-making and express ideas. This culture facilitates employee communication and makes them feel more comfortable working at Qara'a. In addition, the company's vision that aligns with employees' vision is an important factor that makes them feel emotionally connected to its goals. Qara'a also offers competitive compensation, including appropriate salaries and benefits, so employees feel financially rewarded. In addition, Qara'a provides self-development opportunities through various trainings facilitated by the company. This allows employees to continuously improve their skills, which benefits personal career development and supports the company's overall growth.

Based on the results of interviews and field observations by researchers, it was found that the role of employer branding and employee value proposition in increasing employee engagement of startup qara'a is as follows:

1. The role of employer branding in increasing employee engagement Qara'a

Employer branding is a corporate identity that attracts prospective employees and maintains employee loyalty (Kristianto & Handoyo, 2020). Good employer branding reflects a supportive, innovative work environment that aligns with employee values. Strong employer branding in a startup like Qara'a will attract employees with characteristics that match the dynamic and fast-growing culture, thus increasing their engagement. Based on the theory of Schaufeli et al., (2002) theory regarding the characteristics of employee engagement, the author found Employer branding's role in increasing Qara'a's employee engagement as follows:

- A) Vigour: Qara'a employer branding emphasizes the spirit of innovation, and new challenges will attract energetic and enthusiastic employees. Promoting a work environment that encourages vigor and creativity will likely encourage employees to engage in activities.

- B) Dedication: Qara'a employer branding reflects a vital mission and vision that will attract employees dedicated to the company's goals. Employees who feel connected to the company's vision will be more motivated to work hard and achieve shared targets.
- C) Absorption: Employer branding of Qara'a highlighting opportunities for growth and intellectual challenges will attract focused and immersed employees. A work environment that facilitates concentration and perseverance will increase employee engagement.

Employer branding plays an important role in Qara'a employee engagement. As expressed by informant 3.

"I think the employer branding at Qara'a has greatly impacted our employee engagement. The company's innovative and inclusive image makes us feel proud to be part of the team. We also feel more motivated and engaged because Qara'a is known not only as a fast-growing tech company but also as a workplace that pays attention to employee well-being and development. This makes us feel valued and encourages us to contribute more in achieving the company's vision." (Interview informant 3, October 2024)

Employer branding plays a vital role in increasing Qara'a's employee engagement. Strong and positive employer branding creates an attractive image, not only for potential employees but also for current employees. Employer branding that highlights the company's values, such as innovation, support for career development, and employee well-being, increases employee motivation and pride in the company.

Employees who feel proud and connected to the company's image are more engaged in their work. They become more motivated as they feel valued and recognized by the company. Good branding also strengthens employee engagement by increasing job satisfaction, as employees feel an alignment between their values and those of the company.

This relationship shows that strong employer branding not only impacts external perceptions but also plays a significant role in building internal employee engagement, which ultimately contributes to increased productivity, loyalty, and employee retention in the company. The results of this study are supported and in line with previous research, which explains that there is a positive and significant influence between employer branding and employee engagement (Ekhsan et al., 2021; Fuadi & Anjayani, 2023; Spoljari & Ver, 2022; Arinawati et al., 2021; Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019; Tumasjan et al., 2020)

2. The role of employee value proposition in increasing employee engagement Qara'a

An EVP is a company's promise to employees about what they will get in return for their contributions. In startups like Qara'a, a well-designed EVP can increase employee motivation and engagement by offering things that align with their values, such as development opportunities, flexibility, or innovation.

- A) EVP Qara'a offers personal development programs, training, and challenging projects to nurture employee energy and enthusiasm. By allowing room for creativity and initiative, employees will be more emotionally and intellectually engaged.

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- B) EVP Qara'a's rewarding commitment, whether in the form of non-financial rewards, recognition from leadership, or promotion opportunities, will strengthen employees' commitment to the company. The more their dedication is appreciated, the stronger the employee's involvement in achieving the company's goals.
- C) EVP Qara'a offers a flexible work environment in terms of time and place, which can increase absorption. Amenities such as spaces to focus or technology that supports productivity will allow employees to be immersed in their work without distractions.

Employee value Proposition plays an essential role in employee engagement, as expressed by informant 3.

"In my opinion, the employee value proposition offered by Qara'a is very influential on our employee engagement. Qara'a provides a supportive work environment, career development opportunities, and work-life balance. These values make us feel valued and motivated to give our best. This strong EVP attracts us to join and keeps us engaged and committed to the company's goals." (Interview informant 3, October 2024)

Employee value Proposition (EVP) is vital in building employee engagement. A strong EVP—a company's unique value offering to its employees—includes career development opportunities, a positive work environment, work-life balance, and recognition of employee contributions. Employees who perceive clear benefits from this EVP tend to be more engaged and motivated.

A well-designed EVP increases employee engagement by fostering a sense of value and belonging to the company. Employees who feel that their company provides support that matches their needs and expectations are more energized, productive, and loyal. This links EVP and employee engagement, strengthening loyalty and reducing turnover rates.

It can be concluded that Qara'a startup's employee value proposition effectively contributes significantly to building employee engagement, creating intrinsic motivation, and maintaining better employee retention, which is essential for the company's long-term success. This is in line with the results of previous research, which states that employee value proposition has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement in the company (Sumarni, 2024; Fuadi & Anjayani, 2023)

The Role of Employer Branding and Employee Value Proposition in Improving Employee Retention of Qara'a Start-Up

Based on the results of interviews and field observations by researchers, it was found that the role of employer branding and employee value proposition in improving the retention of Qara'a startup employees is as follows:

1. The role of employer branding in enhancing employee retention Qara'a

Employer branding is the public's perception of the startup Qara'a as a workplace, especially existing employees. By creating a positive image, Qara'a can attract and retain top talent. Based on the theory of Isfahani & Boustani (2014) in Ekhsan & Taopik (2020) regarding the indicators of

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employee retention, the author found the role of Employer branding in improving Qara'a employee retention as follows:

- A) Employer branding at Qara'a is vital to highlight that the company offers innovative, challenging, and creative work. By conveying that employees can get involved in unique projects and provide valuable work experience, employer branding helps create the perception that working at Qara'a offers opportunities for growth and continuous learning. This makes employees feel that their work is meaningful, which increases loyalty and reduces the desire to look for opportunities outside.
- B) Through employer branding, Qara'a built an image as a company with an inclusive, collaborative, and supportive work culture. This branding creates the perception that relationships between employees' Qara'a are based on cooperation and mutual respect. By highlighting these aspects, the company builds a comfortable and harmonious work environment, making employees feel more at home and more likely to stay with the company.
- C) Employer branding also includes transparent and fair compensation policies. By promoting Qara'a as having a competitive and transparent payroll system, the company emphasizes that employees are rewarded according to their contributions. This perception of fair compensation is essential in increasing employees' satisfaction with the company and retention.
- D) Through employer branding, Qara'a highlights management's commitment to employee development, such as training, mentoring, and attention to individual well-being. This message creates the perception that Qara'a cares about its employee's career growth and well-being, which is essential in building loyalty. This perceived support from management increases employee engagement, motivating them to stay and contribute long-term.

Employer branding plays a role in Qara'a employee retention. The statement of Informant 4 supports this.

"I think Qara'a's employer branding plays a huge role. When I joined, I saw Qara'a as a company with a good reputation for innovation and work culture. Their branding emphasizes that it is an ideal place to grow, and I have felt that while working here." (Interview Informant 3, October 2024)

Employer branding is vital in improving employee retention at Qara'a by building a positive image of the company as an exciting, innovative, and supportive workplace. Through employer branding, Qara'a can attract quality talent whose values and goals align with the company's, increasing employee engagement and loyalty. Strong employer branding also highlights that work at Qara'a is challenging and provides development opportunities, which makes employees feel constantly evolving and motivated. In addition, employer branding creates the perception that the work culture at Qara'a is open and collaborative, where relationships between employees are positive and personal development is supported by management. A company image that emphasizes fair and transparent compensation makes employees feel valued, while management's support for career development provides confidence that the company is invested in their growth. Combining these factors creates an engaging work environment where employees feel comfortable and encouraged to stay at Qara'a.

It can be concluded that the role of employer branding can increase employee retention at Qara'a startup by providing innovative work, building a collaborative work culture, providing competitive salaries, and supporting employee development. This is supported by previous research, which states that employer branding has a positive and significant effect on employee retention (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019; Dasan, 2022; Chopra et al., 2024; Tumasjan et al., 2020)

2. The role of employee value proposition in improving employee retention qara'a

EVP is the value or reward employees receive from the startup for their contribution. A clear and attractive EVP will encourage employees to stay loyal and motivated.

- A) An effective EVP includes challenges and opportunities for growth. By providing meaningful work and learning opportunities, Qara'a can ensure that employees feel that their work has a significant impact, thus increasing retention.
- B) A comfortable work climate is part of the EVP. If Qara'a provides an environment that facilitates positive collaboration and open communication between employees, this will increase employee satisfaction and desire to stay with the company.
- C) The EVP should reflect a fair and competitive compensation package. Qara'a can ensure employees feel valued and motivated to stay with the company by offering competitive salaries and relevant benefits such as health insurance.
- D) Support from management, whether mentoring or career development opportunities, is also part of a strong EVP. If employees feel they have managerial support in achieving their career goals, loyalty and retention will increase.

According to informant 2, Employee value Proposition plays a role in employee retention:

"At Qara'a, the EVP is obvious and strong. We are given opportunities to grow, get involved in innovative projects, and feel valued. The collaborative work culture and support from management make me feel that I have value here. This all contributed to my decision to stay and give my best to the company." (Interview informant 2, September 2024)

Overall, a strong Employee Value Proposition at Qara'a helps create an engaging, supportive, and fair work environment. By paying attention to these indicators, Qara'a can significantly increase employee retention, ensuring employees feel valued, engaged, and attached to the company. The employee value proposition plays a role in increasing employee retention. Previous research supports this, stating that the employee value proposition positively and significantly affects employee retention (Kumar et al., 2021; Anita et al., 2021)

CONCLUSION

Employer branding and employee value proposition play a role in increasing employee engagement and retention at Qara'a startup. Employer branding plays a significant role in creating a positive image of startup companies in Pontianak, especially Qara'a, as an innovative, exciting, and

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collaborative workplace. By building a reputation as a company that offers challenging work and a supportive work environment, Qara'a successfully attracts and retains quality talent. Employees feel more engaged in their jobs because of the alignment between their values and those of the company. This aligns with previous research, which shows that employer branding dramatically improves employee engagement. The employee value proposition at Qara'a has also proven to play an essential role in enhancing employee retention. Employees feel the company values and recognizes their contributions by offering fair compensation, a supportive work environment, and career development opportunities. A clear and relevant EVP not only helps attract new employees but also maintains the satisfaction and loyalty of existing employees, thereby lowering turnover rates. Overall, this research confirms that employer branding and EVP are two key strategies that complement each other in improving employee engagement and retention in startup companies in Pontianak, especially in the competitive technology industry. Startups like Qara'a that manage these two aspects well will have a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining quality talent. The results of this study provide input for startup founders to adopt the role of employer branding and employee value proposition to improve overall employee engagement and retention. In this case, it can also have significant implications for the performance of startup companies.

One of the main limitations of this study is the use of only one company Object as the focus of the study. This limitation may affect the generalizability of the research results, as the findings only partially reflect the conditions or characteristics of other companies in the same industry. Using a single company Object may result in bias in the analysis, especially if the company has significant uniqueness in structure, culture, or uncommon business strategies. Therefore, the results of this study should be viewed as an initial representation that requires further exploration. For future research, it is recommended that a study be conducted involving several companies from different sectors or sizes to obtain more holistic and comprehensive data. This can help validate the findings and provide greater insight into the phenomenon under study.

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