

Employee Value Proposition: A Systematic Literature Review of Its Conceptualization, Dimensions, and Outcomes

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ABSTRACT

Employee value proposition (EVP) has become a central construct in human resource management as organizations compete to attract, engage, and retain talent within an increasingly tight and mobile labor market. Although the term is now widespread in practitioner discourse, the underlying construct remains conceptually fragmented, often used interchangeably with employer branding and lacking a unified dimensional framework. This study conducts a systematic literature review (SLR) of 28 peer-reviewed journal articles and conference papers, published between 2019 and 2026, to synthesize how EVP has been conceptualized, the dimensions that constitute it, its antecedents and behavioral outcomes, and the contexts in which it has been studied. The review shows that EVP is most frequently operationalized through a five-value framework covering economic, development, social, interest, and application value, that it is closely intertwined with employer branding and corporate brand strategy, and that it is consistently associated with retention-related outcomes such as intention to stay, affective commitment, employee engagement, and organizational citizenship behavior. The review further finds a persistent imbalance between employer-branding and EVP-specific research, a scarcity of longitudinal and cross-cultural studies, and growing calls for more individualized and digitally embedded EVP models. Theoretical and practical implications for human resource management are discussed.

Keywords: *Employee Value Proposition, Employer Branding, Talent Retention, Organizational Commitment, Systematic Literature Review*

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations across sectors are operating in an intensifying war for talent, in which the ability to attract, engage, and retain skilled employees has become a decisive source of competitive advantage (Manoharan et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2025). Employee turnover imposes substantial financial and operational costs through lost knowledge, recruitment expenses, and productivity disruption (Rounak & Misra, 2022; Swanepoel & Saurombe, 2022). In response, human resource (HR) practitioners have increasingly adopted the marketing concept of a “value proposition” and applied it to the employment relationship, giving rise to the notion of an employee value proposition (EVP): the bundle of financial, developmental, social, and psychological benefits an employee receives in exchange for the knowledge, skills, and effort contributed to an organization (Rounak & Misra, 2022).

The EVP construct has its roots in the employer branding literature, which conceptualizes organizations as brands that must be marketed to current and prospective employees in the same way products are marketed to consumers (Berber et al., 2026; Raj, 2021). Berthon et al.’s (2005, as cited in Raj, 2021) employer attractiveness scale, later adapted to measure EVP from the employee’s perspective, remains the most widely cited dimensional framework in the field. Despite this apparent consensus, however, EVP research remains fragmented: several studies note a persistent conceptual overlap between EVP, employer branding, and employer attractiveness (Raj, 2021), while others point to a scarcity of empirical studies that examine EVP as a construct in its own right rather than as a peripheral dimension of employer branding (Rounak & Misra, 2022; Theys & Barkhuizen, 2022). A bibliometric analysis of 25 years of employer and internal branding research further shows that the two research streams have evolved largely independently of one another, leaving the specific antecedents and consequences of EVP comparatively under-theorized (Saini et al., 2022).

Given this fragmentation, the present study conducts a systematic literature review (SLR) of the EVP literature with the aim of consolidating existing knowledge into a coherent thematic map. Specifically, the review addresses four research questions: (1) How has EVP been conceptualized and distinguished from related constructs such as employer branding? (2) What dimensions or components constitute EVP? (3) What antecedents and behavioral outcomes have been empirically associated with EVP? and (4) What contextual patterns and gaps characterize the existing body of research? By answering these questions, this review offers both a theoretical synthesis for future EVP scholarship and practical guidance for organizations seeking to design more effective, differentiated value propositions for their workforce.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a systematic literature review (SLR) approach, which allows for a transparent, replicable, and theory-building synthesis of a defined body of literature (Rounak & Misra, 2022). The review corpus was compiled from peer-reviewed journal articles and conference proceedings addressing employee value proposition and its closely related constructs, drawn from publishers and outlets including Emerald Insight, AOSIS, Business Perspectives, Frontiers, and other indexed journals, spanning publication years 2019 to 2026. Search terms combined “employee value proposition,” “EVP,” and closely associated concepts such as “employer branding,” “employer attractiveness,” “talent retention,” and “intention to stay.”

Inclusion criteria required that a document (a) be a peer-reviewed journal article or conference proceeding, (b) be available in English or provide a substantive English abstract, and (c) engage substantively, conceptually or empirically, with EVP or its immediate nomological network (e.g., employer branding, employer attractiveness, talent retention). Documents were excluded when EVP or a related construct was mentioned only in passing, without conceptual elaboration or empirical measurement. The initial corpus comprised 35 documents. After removing one duplicate record, 34 unique documents remained. Title and abstract screening against the inclusion criteria excluded six documents whose primary focus lay outside the EVP nomological network (e.g., general organizational agility, HR analytics, or instructional-design research in which EVP-related terms appeared only incidentally). This process yielded a final review sample of 28 documents, summarized and synthesized thematically in the following section.

Following recommended SLR procedures, the 28 included documents were read in full and coded thematically around three recurring themes: (1) the conceptualization and definition of EVP, (2) the dimensions or components of EVP, and (3) the antecedents and behavioral outcomes associated with EVP. A fourth theme captured contextual and methodological patterns across studies, which informed the identification of research gaps. Findings were synthesized narratively, consistent with common practice in HRM systematic reviews of a heterogeneous, largely quantitative and qualitative (rather than purely experimental) literature.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Conceptualization of Employee Value Proposition

Across the reviewed literature, EVP is consistently defined as the set of benefits, financial and non-financial, that an employee receives from an organization in exchange for the knowledge, skills, and effort they contribute (Rounak & Misra, 2022). This exchange-based definition draws on social exchange theory and positions EVP as the employer-side counterpart of the psychological contract between employee and organization (Raj, 2021; Rounak & Misra, 2022). Historically, the construct emerged from the employer branding literature: Ambler and Barrow’s (1996, as cited in Berber et al., 2026, and Raj, 2021) foundational concept of the “employer brand” as a bundle of functional, economic, and psychological benefits associated with employment is repeatedly cited as the conceptual ancestor of EVP.

While EVP, employer attractiveness, and employer branding are conceptually related, the reviewed studies distinguish employer branding as the strategic process of building and communicating an organization’s identity as an employer, whereas EVP denotes the substantive content of that identity, the actual value offered to employees (Raj, 2021). Several studies describe a trend toward greater individualization of EVP, in which organizations are encouraged to move from a uniform, one-size-fits-all offer toward a more segmented or even individualized “value exchange” that reflects the distinctive needs of specific employee groups (Rounak & Misra, 2022). Relatedly, Theys and Barkhuizen (2022) propose a framework in which an organization’s overall EVP, built on generic employment needs, gives rise to a more targeted talent value proposition (TVP) addressing the needs of specific scarce-skill employee segments, which in turn feeds into the organization’s employer brand communication.

3.2 Dimensions of Employee Value Proposition

The dominant dimensional framework in the reviewed literature is Berthon et al.'s (2005, as cited in Raj, 2021) five-value model, which conceptualizes EVP along interest value (stimulating and innovative work), social value (a positive and supportive work environment), economic value (competitive compensation and job security), development value (recognition, career advancement, and self-worth), and application value (the opportunity to apply and share knowledge). This framework, originally developed to measure employer attractiveness, has been adapted across the reviewed studies to assess EVP from the employee's own perspective. Empirical tests of the model, however, do not always confirm the equal importance of all five values: in an Indian IT-sector sample, economic, development, and social value were found to be stronger predictors of employees' intention to stay than interest and application value, suggesting that the relative salience of EVP dimensions may vary by industry and labor-market context (Raj, 2021).

Other reviewed studies extend the classical five-value model. Bronlet et al. (2024), in a Swiss financial-sector case study, propose a two-tier structure distinguishing extrinsic motivational factors (salary, benefits, and career opportunities) from intrinsic motivational factors (job latitude, support from colleagues and management, working environment, and organizational purpose), finding that intrinsic factors, particularly working environment and colleague support, contributed most strongly to employees' overall EVP experience. Similarly, Theys and Barkhuizen (2022) operationalize EVP for the South African water board sector around financial compensation, non-financial benefits, career development opportunities, work satisfaction, and corporate culture. Taken together, these studies suggest that while the five-value model remains the field's common reference point, contemporary EVP frameworks increasingly incorporate intrinsic, cultural, and purpose-related dimensions alongside the traditional economic and developmental ones.

3.3 Antecedents and Outcomes of Employee Value Proposition

The reviewed literature identifies several organizational antecedents of a strong EVP. Alignment between business strategy and HR/employer-branding strategy is one recurring antecedent: organizations pursuing a differentiation strategy tend to invest more heavily in employer branding and in developing an appealing EVP than those pursuing a cost-leadership strategy (Dixit, 2024). Organizational agility and internal communication also matter: in a study of Thai small and medium enterprises, network communication and employee dynamic capability were found to be catalysts for a stronger EVP, with hierarchical command structures identified as a barrier (Piriyakul et al., 2024). Digital transformation is an emerging antecedent, with employees' cognitive, emotional, and adaptive responses to new digital HR technologies shown to shape EVP-related job performance outcomes in a Chinese digital-platform context (Yang, 2026). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) also strengthens EVP indirectly, by enhancing organizational reputation through the mediating role of employer branding (Raj et al., 2022).

In terms of outcomes, the most consistently reported effect of EVP across the reviewed studies is on employees' intention to stay. In the Indian IT sector, EVP was found to increase intention to stay both directly and through the moderating roles of psychological contract fulfillment and organizational social identity (Raj, 2021). Comparable retention effects are reported for teachers in South African private schools, where a clear and well-communicated EVP was identified as a significant retention lever (Swanepoel & Saurombe, 2022), and for employees in Serbia, where perceived employer brand, closely related to EVP, was positively associated with intention to stay, most strongly through a healthy work environment, training and development, and work-life balance (Berber et al., 2026). Beyond retention intentions, EVP has been linked to affective commitment and intention-to-serve among South African traffic officers (Macpherson & Werner, 2024), to organizational citizenship behavior through the mediating role of organizational commitment (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019; Ziglar, 2020), and to employee voice behavior through psychological contract fulfillment, moderated by employees' promotion- or prevention-focused motivational orientation (Satpathy et al., 2024). Rounak and Misra (2022) further propose that the strength of these relationships is moderated by employees' individual exchange ideology: employees with a high exchange orientation place greater weight on compensation and career growth, which tends to lower their intention to stay, whereas those with a low exchange orientation are more responsive to training, work-life balance, and work environment, which tends to positively strengthen their intention to stay.

A closely related outcome concerns employer attractiveness to prospective employees. Several studies show that EVP-related attributes shape job-seeking intentions among specific talent segments, including Generation Z candidates, whose priorities center on a fun and supportive work environment more than on compensation or application value (Lassleben & Hofmann, 2023), early-career academics in South African higher education institutions (Lesenyehlo et al., 2018), and Indonesian millennials, whose job-application intentions are jointly shaped

by employer branding and e-recruitment practices (Wijaya et al., 2023). Internally, a process-based approach to internal employer branding, combining internal branding activities with intra-organizational research, has also been shown to improve employee engagement (Staniec & Kalińska-Kula, 2021), while industry-level “talent branding” has been proposed as a collaborative strategy for expanding the overall talent pool available to organizations within a sector, such as hospitality (Manoharan et al., 2023).

3.4 Contextual Variations and Research Gaps

The reviewed studies span a wide range of sectors and geographies, including public-sector water utilities and traffic law enforcement in South Africa (Theys & Barkhuizen, 2022; Macpherson & Werner, 2024), private education (Swanepoel & Saurombe, 2022) and higher education more broadly (León-Espinoza & Souto-Anido, 2026), financial services in Switzerland (Bronlet et al., 2024), small and medium enterprises in Thailand (Piriyakul et al., 2024), digital-platform work in China (Yang, 2026), the mining and coal industries in Sweden and Vietnam (Tretten et al., 2025; Nguyen et al., 2025), and knowledge-intensive institutions in Zimbabwe (Mazorodze & Mkhize, 2022) and Ukraine (Kudaktin & Nazarenko, 2023). Cross-country comparative evidence further suggests that even the language used to communicate EVP-related concepts, such as workplace “passion” in job advertisements, is interpreted differently by prospective candidates across national contexts, implying that a standardized EVP message should account for individual and cultural characteristics of the target audience, not only external labor-market factors (Jędrzejczyk, 2024). This diversity indicates that EVP is now studied as a near-universal HR concern rather than one confined to any single industry, though the corresponding methodological base remains uneven.

Three gaps stand out. First, consistent with the bibliometric evidence that employer branding and internal branding research streams have evolved largely independently (Saini et al., 2022), EVP-specific empirical research remains comparatively scarce relative to the broader employer branding literature, with several authors explicitly noting the paucity of EVP-focused studies (Rounak & Misra, 2022; Theys & Barkhuizen, 2022). Second, the reviewed empirical studies are overwhelmingly cross-sectional and confined to a single organization or country, limiting causal inference and generalizability; longitudinal and cross-cultural replications remain rare. Third, while several studies gesture toward individualized or segmented EVP models (Rounak & Misra, 2022) and digitally mediated employment experiences (Yang, 2026), few have empirically tested how EVP should be tailored across generational cohorts, occupational groups, or digital work arrangements. This gap is reinforced by evidence that employees differ systematically in organizational commitment, burnout, and intention to leave across hierarchical level, sector, generation, and income group, which has been used to argue for a more deliberately segmented organizational EVP (Țănculescu-Popa, 2020), an increasingly pressing question as hybrid and platform-based work arrangements expand alongside generational shifts in workforce expectations, such as those observed among Generation Z employees (Lassleben & Hofmann, 2023).

4. CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review synthesized 28 studies on employee value proposition published between 2019 and 2026 to clarify how the construct has been conceptualized, dimensionalized, and empirically linked to organizational antecedents and employee outcomes. The review confirms that EVP is best understood as a multidimensional, exchange-based construct rooted in the employer branding literature, most commonly operationalized through economic, development, social, interest, and application value, and consistently associated with retention-oriented outcomes such as intention to stay, affective commitment, engagement, and organizational citizenship behavior.

Theoretically, this review contributes a consolidated thematic map of a literature that has otherwise developed unevenly alongside the broader employer branding field, and it highlights the need for future studies to test more individualized, sector-specific, and digitally contextualized EVP models. Practically, the findings suggest that organizations seeking to strengthen talent attraction and retention should move beyond generic, compensation-centered offers and design differentiated EVPs that combine extrinsic rewards with intrinsic factors such as work environment, purpose, and developmental opportunity, tailored to the expectations of specific employee segments. As a corpus-based review, this study is limited by its reliance on a curated set of documents rather than an exhaustive multi-database search, and by its focus on predominantly English-language sources; future reviews may extend this synthesis through a fully systematic database search, meta-analytic techniques, and greater representation of non-Western and non-English literature.

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