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Employee Turnover and Retention Strategies: An Empirical Study of Public Sector Organizations of Pakistan.

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Abstract - It has been observed that employee turnover, especially amongst public sector organizations, is becoming a problem which costs a lot of money, efforts and energy. This problem might be a major obstacle for HR professionals in formulation of their HR policies. This study aims to identify the main turnover factors in some public sector regulatory authorities and to suggest some employee retention strategies within the Pakistani context. Data was collected by a questionnaire distributed amongst 568 employees, developed on the basis of extensive literature review. The importance of having a retention strategy, which is based on a well articulated human resources management system, was stressed.

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Employee Turnover and Retention Strategies: An Empirical Study of Public Sector Organizations of Pakistan

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Abstract - It has been observed that employee turnover, especially amongst public sector organizations, is becoming a problem which costs a lot of money, efforts and energy. This problem might be a major obstacle for HR professionals in formulation of their HR policies. This study aims to identify the main turnover factors in some public sector regulatory authorities and to suggest some employee retention strategies within the Pakistani context. Data was collected by a questionnaire distributed amongst 568 employees, developed on the basis of extensive literature review. The importance of having a retention strategy, which is based on a well articulated human resources management system, was stressed.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Beadles *et al.* (2000) found a positive and significant correlation between job retention and organizational performance. Campion (1991) found that inescapable turnover was characteristically viewed as critical to an organization. The notion that turnover decreases the organizational performance was supported by the most of researchers. Mobley (1982) suggested that turnover might interrupt job performance when an employee who intended to leave became less efficient and effective. Shaw, Gupta, & Delery, 2002 found empirically that voluntary turnover was associated with the inferior organizational performance. Other researchers suggested that turnover could improve performance. One probable advantage of turnover was the exclusion of poor performing employees (Price, 1989). Furthermore, Staw *et al.* (1986) proposed that turnover might enhance performance if most of the turnover was by employees with longer or very short tenure.

According to Reggio (2003), employee turnover “refers simply to the movement of employees out of an organization”. It is a negative aspect, which might lead to the failure of employee retention strategies in the organizations. “Leaving of job appears to reflect significant work place problems, rather than opportunities for advancement into better Jobs” (Holzer and Wissoker, 2001). Turnover of employees disrupts teams, raises costs, reduces productivity, and results in lost knowledge. So, it is essential for the management to realize the importance of employee job satisfaction. It was estimated in a study by Abbasi & Hollman in 2000

that American industries incurred \$11 billion annually as a result of voluntary and involuntary turnover. This cost was due to termination, advertising, recruitment, selection and hiring. Turnover also produced ethereal costs, such as declining morale, and the interruption of social and communication patterns as noticed by Mobley, in 1982. Beadles *et al.*, (2000) stressed the study of turnover as a well-researched area which was one of the major interest in organizational behaviour Shaw (1999) studied the association between employee turnover and organizational culture and Kaak, Feild, Giles, and Norris in 1997 explored the concept of turnover culture amongst lower staff. Some studies by Pizam & Ellis, (1999) recommended retention programs that could diminish turnover and its cause and effects. Realistic job previews, job enrichment, socialization practices were included. Boles *et al.* (1995) studied to make use of the pre-employment application demographics to reduce employee turnover. Hampton, 2000; Shanahan, 2000; Schreiber, 2000; Baumann, 2000 studied that the literature was also immersed with recommendations to undertake turnover and reduce retention.

In their study, Pinkovitz *et al.* (2004) attempted to know how much an organization is more likely to spend to ensure getting an adequate return on investment (ROI) in employees. Turnover direct costs enclose factors such as termination, vacancy, recruitment and selection, orientation and training. Other indirect costs can encompass such factors as lost of productivity of incumbent prior to departure, lost of productivity of co-worker, lost of productivity of the new hire during initial transition.

By calculating the real cost of employee voluntary resigning, it will be an indicator of what will worth to retain employees. Reggio (2003) pointed to the formula for computing turnover rates that the US department of Labor as follows:

Turnover Rate = (Number of separation during the month/Total number of employees at midmonth) X 100

Therefore in almost any organization, if the management utilizes the information compiled through the Exit interview system, positively it would result in a controlled turnover and develop an effective retention strategy (Gray, 2003). Gray (2003) reiterates that organizations need to assess their typical patterns of

turnover pertaining to their own circumstances. However, there are some general policies that should be considered so as to improve employee job satisfaction. Employees' job satisfaction is positively correlated with employees' retention. Reggio (2003) concluded from literature review that: "it is important that organizations strive to keep employees satisfied. Happy employees may be less likely to be absent from their job voluntarily or to look for work elsewhere" (P.38). To overcome the negative consequences of turnover, there is a need to understand the causes and the consequences of turnover in the Pakistani context. The study aims to define the main turnover factors in some public sector organizations and develop general guidelines for employees' retention strategy within the Pakistani context.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The reason of turnover vary from external environmental factors such as economy and its impact on turnover such as employment level, inflation (Pettman, 1975; Mobley, 1982) to the organizational variables such as type of industry, occupational category, organization size, payment, supervisory level, location, selection process, work environment, work assignments, benefits, promotions, and growth (Mobley, 1982; Arthur, 2001) The other turnover factors are related to the individual work variables such as demographic variables, integrative variables like job satisfaction, pay, promotion and working condition (Pettman 1975; Mobley, 1982; Arthur, 2001). The last perspective is the individual nonworking variables such as family variables (Pettman, 1975; Mobley, 1982).

The most important studied demographic variables are age, tenure and education. It was found, for example, that there is a consistent negative relationship between age and turnover. Younger employees have a higher probability of leaving (Porter and Steers, 1973; Price, 1977; Horner et al., 1979; Muchinsky and Tuttle, 1979). Younger employees have more chances, low family responsibility, and no lost chances in the existing organization. Similar to age, length of service is contributing to turnover decision. It was found that, the shorter the period of service, the higher is the turnover. Mangione (1973), in a multivariate study, found that length of service is one of the best predictors of turnover. However, there is no relationship between turnover and education as highlighted by Horner et al. (1979) and Price (1977)

The main concern of this study, however, is the individual level of turnover's factors. In this regards, Darwish (1999), for example, in a study in the UAE found that there is a positive correlation between intrinsic motivation, organizational commitment and job performance. He found also that organizational commitment is positively correlated with performance.

Lastly, he found that organizational commitment is positively correlated with age, job experience and duration of service in the actual institution. Cohen 1993; Hom & Griffeth 1995 and Allen, Shore & Griffeth 2003 explored that turnover intentions have represented a reliable indicator of actual turnover and were heavily influenced by job satisfaction. Hom and Griffeth (1995) maintained that employees decided to leave their organization when they become dissatisfied with their Jobs. Likewise, Meyer & Herschovitch argued in 2001 that when employees were dissatisfied with their jobs, their desire to remain in their organization started to erode. In fact, initial consequences of these negative affects, in the form of low job satisfaction were turnover cognitions.

Reggio (2003) had asserted that both low levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment are related to higher rates of turnover. Moreover, Muchinsky and Tuttle (1997) have summarized thirty nine studies related to the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover conducted in the past 50 years and found that all but four cases have shown a negative relationship. Research by Allen & Griffeth (2001), Allen et al. (2003), and Chiu & Francesco (2003) have shown that job satisfaction was a strong predictor of turnover intentions. In a study conducted in Pakistan by Rehman Safdar and Ajmal Wahed (2010) has shown a positive significant correlation between job retention and job satisfaction of $r=0.34$ which reflects that due to satisfaction with the current job is an indicators to predict employee turnover in the organizations may be low in finding another job due to a positive experience with their organization's policies. A large effect size correlations between job performance and job satisfaction ($r=0.52$) was found by Rehman Safdar and Ajmal Waheed in 2011 in the context of a non- Western country Pakistan.

III. CONSEQUENCES OF TURNOVER

Consequences of turnover may be at both either organizational or personal levels having both positive and negative consequences. Negative consequences to organizations includes, cost both tangible like recruitment and selection, training and development, low productivity and intangible cost like moral impact, stimulation of further turnover, impact of work load , disruption of team , and distraction of job performance. Some other negative consequences are strategic opportunity costs, disruption of social and communication patterns (Mobley, 1982; Roseman, 1981). Positive consequences include dislocation of poor performer, improvement, flexibility, adaptableness, conflicts resolutions, and a reduction in other withdrawal behaviors (Mobley, 1982). Negative consequences to individual include high expectation which might not materialized, losing seniority, and disruption of social life

(Mobley, 1982; Roseman, 1981). Positive consequences include higher income, job challenge, escape from stress environment. (Mobley, 1982). Generally, turnover is very costly especially at the executive levels. A study had estimated the cost of replacing an executive by 64,000 American Dollar and the cost of unscheduled absence averaging as high as 757 American Dollar per employees (Greenberg and Baron, 2003). Based on understanding the causes and the consequences of turnover, several researchers had suggested solutions and remedies to the problem of turnover through developing strategies for employees' retention.

IV. EMPLOYEE RETENTION

Retention could be improved by many factors like better recruitment effort, selecting right man for the right job, continuous review of job specifications and job descriptions, compensation practices, leadership and supervision, career planning and development, working condition, team building, centralization, organization communication and commitment, counseling leavers, flexible working hours, employee participation, turnover policies and appreciations (Mobley, 1982; Arthur, 2001). Although review of literature revealed a modest correlation between job satisfaction and performance, Greenberg and Baron (2003) concluded that "Naturally, as working people, we all want to be satisfied with our jobs. Not only does satisfaction keep us from withdrawing from our jobs, but it is also makes them more pleasant and enjoyable. And this, of course, is an important end in itself. McConnell defined job performance in 2003 as an accomplishment that can be observed and measured. Wright & Bonett in 2002 observed age as a variables influence job performance, Cronin & Becherer, 1999 and Fort & Voltero, 2004 found non-financial rewards like recognition of achievement and McConnell, 2003; Tzeng, 2004 found job satisfaction influenced job performance. All these variables should have a positiv influence on employee job performance. In a study conducted in Pakistan Rehman Safdar and Ajmal Waheed in 2011 found highly significant correlation of job performance with the job satisfaction ($r=0.52$) which supported the earlier wok of McConnell, 2003 and Tzeng, 2004.

V. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

This study is an empirical descriptive study based on a survey. After going through an extensive review of the literature, a questionnaire consisted of demographic and attitudinal variables and items was prepared and distributed. The sample for this study was drawn from the public sector authorities regulating telecommunication, power, oil & gas, media and corporate, capital and banking sectors of Pakistan and some of the organizations being controlled by these

regulators. Fifteen (15) organizations were selected for the research. The platform which helped to choose the sectors and the organizations was the data taken from Pakistan Public Administration Research Centre, Establishment Division, Annual Statistical Bulletin of Autonomous Bodies Employees and website of these organizations

Research participants included both officers and officials of these organizations. Fifty (50) questionnaires were distributed in each organization for minimizing the possibility of uncertainty and biasness. 750 questionnaire were distributed in 15 organizations out of which 568 questionnaire were received back response rate remained (76 %)

The items of questionnaire were grouped into five main factors as follows:

- a) My present job gives me internal satisfaction. (Item 37)
- b) I will continue in my present job even if I am paid less. (Item 38)
- c) I like my job because it is totally monotonous in nature. (Item 39)
- d) I can consider changing my job in the next 12 months. (Item 40)
- e) I would like to reach my superannuation in my present organization.(Item 41)

The reliability of the questionnaire's items was calculated by using Cronbach Alpha. Alpha= 0.76 was found significant.

Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Basic statistics, item mean scores, ANOVA and product moment correlations are among the statistical analyses which were conducted.

Results Demographics

The majority of the employees who filled the questionnaire are between the age of 25 and 35 and 74 % were men as it shown in Table 1.

Table 1 : Demographics % (N= 568)

Variables		Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	74.1
	Female	25.9
Age	Below 25 years	21.0
	25-35 years	47.0
	35-45 years	16.7
	45-55 years	12.7
	55-60	2.5
	Above 60	0.2
Educational Level	PhD	1.2
	Masters Degree	66.4
	B.Sc. Engineering	5.6
	Graduation	18.3
	Intermediate	6.9
	Matriculation	1.6
Job Status	Permanent	64.6
	Contractual	31.0
	Deputation	2.8
	Daily wagers	1.6
Job Category	Technical	28.7
	Managerial/Admin	47.5
	Any other	23.8
Job Level	Top	4.9
	Middle	44.9
	Supervisor	23.2
	Non-managerial	26.9
Mode of appointment	Direct	67.6
	Promotion	28.2
	Deputation	4.2
Number of years In present Organization	Less than 1	12.7
	1 – 2	26.1
	3 – 5	32.9
	6 – 10	10.2
	Over 10	18.1
Recruitment Matters dealt by	HR Department	77.5
	Any other	22.5

Their average tenure in present organization was 26.1% (1 to 2 years) and 32.9% (3 to 5 years). The education level of the respondents was 1.2 % (PhD), 66.4 % (Masters degree), 5.6% (Engineering), 18.3% (Graduations) and 6.9% (Intermediate). The job status of the respondents was 64.4 % (Permanent), 31 % (Contractual), 2.8% (Deputation), and 1.6 % (Daily wagers), job category of the respondents was 28.7 % (Technical), 47.5 % (managerial), 23.8% (others). The job level of the respondents was 4.9 % (Top management), 44.9 % (Middle management), 23.2% (Supervisors) and 26.9 were non-managerial. Mode of the appointment of respondents was 67.4 % (Direct recruitment), 28.2 % (promoted) and 4.2 % were on deputation.

VI. TURNOVER FREQUENCY:

Data analysis shows that 37% did not change their job/organization in their entire career. However,

about 58% had changed their job/organization at least once during their career. The percentage of the respondents who changed their organizations at least once represent 28% while the employees who changed their job/company more than once is illustrated in Table 2. Interestingly, some employees changed their jobs/organizations more than five times although they represent 5% of the sample only.

Table 2 : Respondents' turnover frequency

Turnover Frequency	N	%
None	209	37
1 time	158	28
2 times	82	14
3 times	61	11
5 times	29	5
More than 5 times	22	4
NA	7	1

The relationship between turnover and the above mentioned demographic variables will be reported in the following sections by using correlations and one-way ANOVA. The analysis was done on the basis of the above indicated factors.

1). Age and turnover:

The relationship between the age and the overall turnover rate was analyzed by using Pearson Chi-Square Test. The correlation is significant (DF=200, P=.01). ANOVA shows that there is a significant difference on the overall turnover rate on the basis of age (F=2.70, P=.05).

2). Education and turnover:

ANOVA shows that there significant differences on factor "a" and factor "c" on the basis of the educational levels. In factor a (F=4.32, P=0.01) and in factor c (F=2.27, P=.05). However, no significant difference on the overall turnover rate on the basis of educational levels.

3). Sectors of activity and turnover:

In the public sector, there was no significant difference on the attitudes towards the indicated factors on the basis of the public sectors' types sector (telecom, power, electronic media, banking and stock market) ANOVA shows no significant differences on the basis of the types of activities in various sectors and overall turnover. However, in the telecom sector ANOVA shows a significant difference on the basis of the types of activities and the overall turnover rate (F=4.90, P=.05).

4). Gender, attitudes and turnover:

ANOVA shows no significant difference on the overall turnover rate on the basis of gender. However, there are significant differences between male and female respondents in the following factors: Factor b (F=8.05, P=.01).

Factor d ($F=11.87$, $P=.001$).

Factor e ($F=7.83$, $P=.01$).

5) *Position, attitudes and turnover:*

No significant difference on the overall turnover on the basis of the position in the organization. In addition, no significant differences on the indicated factors on the basis of position, too.

6) *Length of service and turnover:*

ANOVA shows that there are significant differences on the basis of the periods that the employees spend in the organization and two of the indicated factors as follows:

Factor a ($F=3.35$, $P=.01$).

Factor e ($F=2.93$, $P=.01$).

VII. RETENTION STRATEGY

It was noticed that the majority of the respondents (60.2%) had mentioned that their organizations have not formulated any retention strategy. Interestingly, 21.4% of the respondents mentioned "do not know" while 18.4% said that their organizations have a retention strategy. In short, the majority of the public sector organizations do not make sufficient effort to retain their employees which shows that the human resources management role in the public sector organizations is still very weak.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Mobley (1982) suggested that turnover might interrupt job performance when an employee who planned to quit become inefficient. Shaw, Gupta, & Delery, 2002 discussed that experimental research has shown that voluntary turnover was linked with lower organizational performance. Other research suggested that turnover might improve performance. Price, 1989 studied that introverted potential advantage of turnover was the abolition of under performing employees. Additionally, Staw studied in 1986 that turnover can enhance the performance if most of the turnover was by employees with very long or very short tenure.

Regression results have shown that job retention correlates positively with Job performance. R-squared value was found 0.951 which explained 95.1 percent of the total variance for job performance relating to job retention, adjusted R-squared was 0.951 which is same as the value of R^2 . B value for job retention was 1.132 with standard error of 0.011. p-level of job retention was 0.000 and t value 104.46. All the values were positive t value with a 'b' value is significant hence predictor job retention is making a highly significant contribution. The smaller the value of significance 0.000 and the larger the value of $t=104.46$ is also showing the greater contribution of job retention. Beta value for job retention was 0.975 which provided a better insight into

the importance of job retention.

Cohen 1993; Hom & Griffeth 1995 and Allen, Shore & Griffeth 2003 explored that turnover intentions have represented a reliable indicator of actual turnover and were heavily influenced by job satisfaction. Hom and Griffeth (1995) maintained that employees decided to leave their organization when they become dissatisfied with their Jobs. Likewise, Meyer & Herschovitch argued in 2001 that when employees were dissatisfied with their jobs, their desire to remain in their organization started to erode. In fact, initial consequences of these negative affects, in the form of low job satisfaction were turnover cognitions. Research by Allen & Griffeth (2001), Allen *et al.* (2003), and Chiu & Francesco (2003) have shown that job satisfaction was a strong predictor of turnover intentions. Job satisfaction with the current job reflects an indicator to predict employee turnover in the organizations may be low in finding another job due to a positive experience with their organization's policies.

The results of this study confirmed the assumption that turnover rate in the public sector organizations is high especially in the regulatory authorities. Consequently, these organizations compete on a limited number of qualified employees in the market. The results of this study confirmed the accumulated evidence in the literature regarding the relationship between several demographic variables such as age, education and gender and turnover. Concerning employees' retention, the public sector organizations especially the regulatory authorities should play a more significant role in implementing human resources systems which should emphasize training and career development for the new employees. Thus, more effort is need in developing human resources management systems mainly in the public sector organizations.

Unfortunately, most of the public sector organizations do not have specialized professionals, managers, departments in human resources management. This argument was reflected in the fact that the majority of the respondents confirmed that their organizations do not make effort to retain their employees. Thus, strategies of retention, which are based on developing human resources management systems and organizational behavior aspects such as improving communication process and their HR policy and practicing, should be implemented in order to avoid high rate of turnover and its negative consequences. In short, more effort should be done to improve retention by taking in consideration the many factors like better recruitment effort, review job content, compensation practices, leadership and supervision, career planning and development, alternative work schedule, working conditions, non work factors, team building, centralization, organization communication and commitment, counseling leavers, flexible working hours,

compressed work week, employee involvement, policies for turnover, and recognitions. Needless to say that, these efforts should be conducted by HR professionals. This endeavor requires, however, more investment in this area by the public sector organizations.

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