



Original Article (Qualitative)

Identifying drivers affecting the retention of human resources in the government and non-government sectors

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to identify the drivers affecting the retention of human resources in the government and non-government sectors of Sirjan County. This study is applicable-developmental in terms of its purpose, and qualitative in terms of its research method. The data collection tool consisted of two parts: a review and exploration of research literature in the library section, and semi-structured interviews in the field section. The participants in this study in the field section were human resources managers in the government and private sectors of Sirjan. Individuals, selected by a sampling method. Semi-structured interviews with participants continued until theoretical saturation. The coding and text analysis process of the interviews was carried out in MAXQDA2020 software. The research findings showed that the drivers affecting the retention of human resources in the public and private sectors include: changes in the labor market (intense competition for talent, emergence of a new generation of workers, hybrid work), changes in technology (automation and artificial intelligence, need for new skills), changes in employee values (meaningfulness of work, personal development, meritocracy, work-life balance), changes in organizational structure (flat organizations, teamwork, flexibility in job roles), changes in employee expectations (development of soft skills, social responsibility, transparency and justice), psychological factors (mental health, motivation and job satisfaction, sense of belonging), economic factors (salaries and benefits, job security), organizational culture and work environment (effective and positive leadership, transparent and open communication, supportive and positive culture, diversity management, balance between organizational culture and individual culture, fairness and equality).

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Extended abstract

Introduction

Human resources are considered one of the most important and fundamental resources of organizations that need specialized and committed human resources to achieve their goals. Therefore, one of the most important tasks of human resource management in organizations is the task of preserving and retaining human resources (Bharath, 2023). Research shows that retaining human resources is influenced by many factors such as career development opportunities, work stress, financial and non-financial rewards, independence and autonomy, flexibility in work schedules, work-life balance, appropriateness of job roles and responsibilities, creating more responsible teams, ensuring a balance of human resource expectations with realistic job characteristics, social capital and support, human resource management practices and leadership (Jadon & Upadhyay, 2018; Matongolo et al., 2018). McKinsey's research indicates that 75% of large companies are concerned about the lack of talented and efficient people, and a Deloitte report shows that retaining these people is the top priority for 87% of human resource managers (Taghizadeh Masan et al., 2017). Today, retaining and maintaining human resources is the most difficult challenge for organizations in the public and private sectors. The movement of human resources in various fields is increasing rapidly, and the shortage of human resources in this sector in developing countries has been predicted by the World Health Organization to be 12.9 million people, which is a very high figure. Due to the shortage of skilled labor, employees expect more financial and non-financial benefits and are not willing to work under any conditions (Bharath, 2023). Despite the recognition of the importance of human resource retention in advancing the organization's goals more efficiently, very few studies have been conducted in this area, which indicates the existence of a theoretical and research gap in this subject area. Therefore, it is expected that this research, by providing a model, can pave a smooth path for the successful entry and movement of the government and non-government sectors of Sirjan and other organizations towards human resource retention. To achieve this goal, first, the theoretical foundations related to the field of human resource retention in human resource management in the government and non-government sectors were reviewed to determine what shortcomings and deficiencies there are in it. Then, considering these shortcomings and appropriate to the government and non-government sectors of Sirjan, in the research process using a qualitative method and also having the views of experts, an attempt is made to answer these questions: What are the drivers that affect the retention of human resources in the government and non-government sectors of Sirjan?

Theoretical Framework

Human Resources Retention

With increasing competition and the expansion of human resource development methods, organizations are trying to retain and empower their talented employees (Butson et al., 2023) so that they can perform at a high level. The issue of lost human capital is a frightening and costly issue for any organization, because every organization incurs a lot of costs to train, educate, and prepare its employees to the desired level of productivity and efficiency; and by losing its human resources, it incurs the loss of skills, experiences, and capital that the organization has gained over the years. As a result, for managers of organizations seeking to retain, improve, and increase the productivity of their workforce, the issue of retention is of particular concern (Worth et al., 2003). Employee retention measures the percentage of employees who remain employed for a specified period of time. Employee retention is the process that keeps your employees in your company. Companies go to great lengths to recruit



talent, and once these employees are hired, business owners must ensure that employees do not immediately leave (Phamet al., 2023).

Nahid et al. (2025) conducted a study aimed at identifying mechanisms for entrepreneurial retention of human resources, encouraging organizational entrepreneurial behavior. The findings of the study showed that the entrepreneurial retention component, including six subcomponents; employee satisfaction programs, design and implementation of the entrepreneurial talent acquisition system, design and implementation of the entrepreneurial motivation system, internal communication system, entrepreneurial compensation system, and employee personal development program, can be effective in the emergence of organizational entrepreneurial behaviors. Suryani & Syamsulbahri (2024) in a study examined the dynamics and complexity of employee retention and maintaining in a public company in Jakarta, Indonesia, focusing on the impact of human resource development programs (HRDP), transformational leadership (TL), and compensation policies (CP). The results emphasize the significant positive effect of HRDP (path coefficient = 0.626, $p < 0.001$), TL (path coefficient = 0.442, $p = 0.002$) and CP (path coefficient = 0.348, $p = 0.003$) on employee retention (ER). Validation of the measurement model ensures the reliability and validity of the constructs. The adjusted R-Square of 0.592 indicates a satisfactory fit of the model.

Research Methodology

The present study is classified as applicable-developmental in terms of its purpose, and a qualitative research of the content analysis type in terms of its research method. (Qualitative content analysis can be considered a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the processes of systematic classification, coding, and theme creation or design of known patterns). After taking interviews from the participants and writing the text related to the interviews line by line, the researcher analyzed the texts; in fact, codes, concepts, and categories were identified in this method through a systematic classification process, and then the drivers affecting the retention of human resources in the government and non-government sectors of Sirjan County were identified.

Research findings

In this section, interviews were conducted with 18 experts and human resource management specialists. The results of the interviews showed that the components of the drivers affecting the retention of human resources in the government and non-government sectors of Sirjan County include 8 organizing themes: changes in the labor market, changes in technology, changes in employee values, changes in organizational structure, changes in employee expectations, psychological factors, economic factors, organizational culture, and the work environment.

Discussion and conclusion

The aim of the present study was to identify the drivers affecting the retention of human resources in the government and non-government sectors of Sirjan County. The research findings showed that the drivers affecting human resource retention include: changes in the labor market (intense competition for talent, emergence of a new generation of labor, hybrid work), changes in technology (automation and artificial intelligence, need for new skills), changes in employee values (meaningfulness of work, personal development, meritocracy, work-life balance), changes in organizational structure (flat organizations, teamwork, flexibility in job roles), changes in employee expectations (soft skills development, social responsibility, transparency and fairness), psychological factors (mental health, motivation and job satisfaction, sense of belonging), economic factors (salaries and benefits, job



security), organizational culture and work environment (effective and positive leadership, transparent and open communication, supportive and positive culture, diversity management, balance between organizational culture and individual culture, fairness and equality). The results of this research are somewhat consistent with the findings of Butson et al. (2023) and Suryani & Syamsulbahri (2024), which confirms the results of this research.

Finally, based on the research findings, the following suggestions are made:

- Creating soft and technical skills development programs in line with technological developments (artificial intelligence, automation) and employee expectations
- Implementing agile training courses (microlearning) focusing on future-oriented skills
- Designing a dual career path (management/specialized) to meet the need for individual development and meritocracy
- Establishing a flexible rights and benefits system such as training vouchers, health care, or targeted paid leave
- Expanding the internal talent acquisition program with a focus on succession planning, and reducing dependence on the foreign market and creating a knowledge sharing platform between different generations of the workforce to transfer experiences