

## A Review of Motivational Factors and Employee Retention: A Future Direction for Pakistan

Attia Aman-Ullah<sup>1\*</sup>, Azelin Aziz<sup>1</sup> and Hadziroh Ibrahim<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*School of Business Management, Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)*

### ABSTRACT

*This study intends to scrutinize the findings of existing studies on five motivational factors affecting employee retention in a developing country, Pakistan. The present study is exploratory in nature that employees content analysis of 18 published articles in Pakistan. While, 52 articles are from other countries, extracted through google scholar, Scopus database and web of science database. The present study revealed that work-life balance, job security, job autonomy and social supports indicates both positive and negative association with employee retention. While, it is concluded that job embeddedness is a relatively new and less explored concept as compared to other factors; thus, its relationship with employee retention needs further investigation in Pakistan. The present study only incorporated empirical work that is related to motivational factors i.e. work-life balance, job security, job embeddedness, job autonomy and social support. Other than that, various motivational factors can be added in the study to explain the ongoing issue of employee retention. This is a comprehensive review study that focused exclusively on employee's motivational factors affecting employee retention, by analyzing 72 articles from the period (1984-2019).*

**Keywords:** Employee Retention, Work-Life Balance, Job Security, Job Embeddedness, Job Autonomy, Social Support, Review.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Employee retention is the key component of organizational success in the long run (Aman-Ullah, *et al.* 2020; Azeez, 2017). Other means like outsourcing, continuous hiring and some monetary benefits could only ensure short term organizational success (Azeez, 2017). The process of employee retention depends on the willingness of both employees and employers in creating a bond with each other. If either party loses interest in doing so, it becomes difficult to maintain the relationship (Singh, 2006). Organizations face continuous struggles throughout employee recruitment to retention (Ibidunn, *et al.*, 2015). To fulfil their needs, some organizations use recruitment as a tool to maintain their day-to-day operations. However, incessant hiring is not a good solution for any organization as it involves a lot of time, money and unnecessary effort (Szabo, *et al.* 2018). Moreover, finding intellectuals of the same calibre is an almost impossible task. Therefore, employee retention is the best solution in the effort to save organizational resources (Walker, 2001).

Many researchers find that the implementation and adaptation of retention strategies help in increasing actual retention and achieving organizational goals (Gberevbie, 2010; James *et al.* 2012; Ramos, 2019). Organizations continuously struggling in creating attractive strategies that encourage employees to stay longer. According to Gberevbie (2008), retention strategy is a set of decision-making behaviours initiated by the organizations to retain their intellectual assets, maintain performance as well as balance competition in the market. Furthermore, Steel *et al.* (2002) stated that people do not always leave their organization for the same reason.

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\*Corresponding author: [attiaamanullah@yahoo.com](mailto:attiaamanullah@yahoo.com)

Pakistan is a least developed among Asian countries, dealing with several problems including severe employee shortage (Abbas and Guriro, 2018). For instance, it is reported in 2013 that 2.7 million Pakistanis left the country in the preceding five years to find better work opportunities. Ministry of Labour (Pakistan) reported a huge increase in employee migration towards developed nations at a 101% more than past figures during 2019 which is being expected to be followed in coming years (Aman-Ullah, *et al.* 2020). Over the last two to three decades, majority of qualified and skilled manpower from Pakistan moved to other countries, left Pakistan in a measurable condition which needs to be considered to save the economy and institutions of Pakistan. Our analysis seems to focus concisely on the push and pull factors that lead to such a huge pool of people leaving their home country like Pakistan.

Pakistan is managing its economy through injecting remittances but outweighing the loss in terms of skill shortage is not in favour of the country (Altaf *et al.*, 2015). Remittance is a temporary solution which depends upon policies of other countries, instead skilled employees can provide a permanent solution to the economy through maximizing the economy's potential and industrial development. Several other factors exist which instigate the emigration of qualified professionals towards developed economies (Richard, 2003). Among those factors, better living standards and access to quality education are the major pull factors affecting Pakistan. Whereas, political upheavals, disrupted national fundamentals and economic instability playing the major role of push factor in Pakistan (Sajjad, 2011).

Since the 1990s, many researchers suggested retention strategies to overcome this problem (Azeez, 2017). For example, Das and Baruah (2013) suggested compensation, reward and recognition, promotion and growth opportunities, employee participation, work-life balance, work environment, training and development, leadership and job security as important determinants of employee retention. Kossivi *et al.* (2016) indicated development opportunities, compensation, work-life balance, management, leadership, work environment, social support, autonomy as well as training and development as important predictors of employee retention. Jha (2019) stated that psychological safety and psychological empowerment as important determinants of employee retention. In short, there are many reasons that can encourage employees to stay based on their needs and circumstances. All those factors are mainly related to economic (Kim and Lee, 2007), psychological (Brown and Yoshioka, 2003) and social drivers (Bode *et al.*, 2015).

This study is an effort to enrich the existing body of knowledge by extending the works of several researchers. The determinants explored and reviewed under this study are work-life balance, job security, job autonomy, job embeddedness and social support. Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, all these factors create a sense of motivation among employees (Lindner, 1998). Numerous researchers like Rashid and Rashid (2012), Dysvik and Kuvaas (2011), Karatepe and Avci (2019) and Wentzel *et al.* (2010) also outlined these factors as significant motivational drivers for employee behaviour. To the best of the author's knowledge, study with similar context and variables is not yet conducted. Therefore, this is an effort to propose a research model on motivational factors affecting employee retention particularly in the context of Pakistan.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Work-Life Balance**

Work-life balance is becoming the centre of attention among employers due to its significant impact on employees' decision to stay in an organization. Ellenbecker (2004) added that flexible working hours allow employees to balance their personal and professional life. It is a key variable addressing issues related to employee engagement and retention through the creation of a link with employee attitudes like job satisfaction and commitment (Deery and Jago, 2015). Similarly,

Benito-Osorio *et al.* (2014) added that work-life balance practices help organizations in engaging and retaining talented employees which in turn helps in enhancing organizational productivity, cost-effectiveness and business expansions.

According to Gilley *et al.* (2015), although the work-life balance is important, there is yet any perfect solution towards achieving it because it involves several economic and social forces along with different role obligations. Hyman *et al.* (2003) added that high workloads and failure in maintaining a balance between family and work-life lead to intensified stress and emotional exhaustion among the employees thus affecting their overall well-being (Bell, *et al.* 2012). All the above ultimately leads to high employee turnover (Boamah and Laschinger, 2016). Kossek *et al.* (2014) suggested that positive work experience improves employee well-being and helps organizations in obtaining a sustainable workforce. Tham and Holland (2018) indicated working conditions, workplace climate, and well-being as useful factors that help organizations retain their employees. Russo *et al.* (2016) believed that work-life balance provides psychological relaxation and positive energy to the employees via the support they receive at work and home. A well-balanced life motivates employees to stay with their current organization longer.

When employees get emotional support through work-life balance, turnover intention rate can be reduced (Karatepe, 2013). Idris (2014) indicated that organizations that offer flexibility at the workplace have lower absenteeism rate and higher retention rate. Kumari (2012) added that work-life balance has a direct relationship with employee retention whereby an increase in one factor will also increase the other factor. Ogbuabor and Okoronkwo (2019) stated that the quality of work-life balance (work design, work-family balance and working conditions) helps in increasing motivation and retention of employees. Lazar *et al.* (2010) found that work-family conflict is the basic reason behind frequent employee absenteeism, poor engagement and high turnover rates which lead to loss of retention and creativity.

Besides studies from developed countries, Fazal *et al.* (2019) indicated that work-life balance is one of the biggest issues faced by organizations in developing countries like Pakistan and of which mainly affects female professionals. Due to heavy workloads and excessive office hours, employees find it difficult to manage family time. Alvi (2018) said employees who are able to have balanced work-life are more satisfied and prefer to stay with the same organization. Previously, Malik *et al.* (2016) in their study on pharmaceutical employees found that work-life balance has a strong role in the retention of their employees as it helps to avoid conflicts and encourage job satisfaction. Further, Nasir and Mahmood (2016) and Nasir and Mahmood (2018) in their review based study said work-life balance is an important retention strategy helps in employee retention. In a nutshell, in comparison to developed countries very limited studies found focusing work-life balance in relation to employee retention in the context of Pakistan. Inline, only five studies devoted to the literature of work-life balance and employee retention with respect to different sectors in Pakistan. Therefore, it is argued that work-life balance may have a potential avenue for future research.

## **2.2 Job Security**

Job security is a legal contract between the employee and the employer with regard to continuity assurance (Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt, 1984). Job security is equally important for both employees as well as employers by enabling them to keep their existing employees and reduce recruitment expenditure (Senol, 2011). It also strengthens the relationship between the employer and their employees which results in increased employee retention. According to Delery and Doty (1996), employees who perceive their job as secure become more productive leading to improved organizational development. Teimouri *et al.* (2016) added that employee engagement can be increased with the help of reward offerings, training, employee involvement, job security, and information sharing along with organizational justice which affects employee absorption and retention.

Job security can be further improved through training and development which ultimately helps in employee retention (Dhanpat *et al.*, 2019). According to Brockner *et al.* (1992), job security empowers people by providing them control over their work and assures continuity in the future. On the other hand, job insecurity creates the fear of loss among employees where they constantly feel threatened about losing their job to the point that they voluntarily quit as soon as they find a reasonable alternative (Cheng and Chan, 2008).

Besides studies from developed countries, Pakistan Hussain and Rehman (2013) studied job security in the textile sector of Pakistan and declared it as an important predictor of employee retention. Ahmad *et al.* (2012) stated that job security is an important component of employee motivation and retention. Further, Bibi *et al.* (2016) in their study on university teachers stated that job security coupled with compensation and favourable work environment, encourage employee retention. In conclusion, very limited literature found on job security while interpreting employee retention. Only three studies have devoted to understanding job security with respect to employee retention in Pakistan. Therefore, we would like to highlight that job security may have a potential avenue for future research with respect to employee retention in Pakistan.

### **2.3 Job Autonomy**

Autonomy is an individual's control over his/her work in terms of the type of work, the timing and the load (George, 2015). In the late '90s, many scholars agreed that work autonomy is an important organizational component that improves employees' intention to stay in their organization (Alexander *et al.*, 1998; Boyle *et al.*, 1999). However, when employees lose control over their work they become dissatisfied and thus producing a negative impact on employee retention (Ellenbecker, 2004; Laschinger *et al.*, 2009). Aruna and Anitha (2015) added that the younger generation can be satisfied through the provision of a good work environment and work autonomy leading them to stay longer. Similarly, Wilson (2015) stated that job autonomy is strongly correlated with employee retention and turnover. When employees have control over their schedules, their well-being and satisfaction are improved (Wheatley, 2017).

According to Halliday *et al.* (2018), job autonomy decreases work-related stressors and improves job attitudes like work engagement and work-life balance on top of decreasing turnover intentions. They also added that job autonomy poses more impact on females as compared to males. Similarly, Johari *et al.* (2018) also found autonomy to have a strong impact on employee behaviour and performance. Kannabiran *et al.* (2014) indicated job autonomy as a significant factor in encouraging employees to stay longer in their organizations. Job autonomy helps organizations maintain high employee morale and sufficient motivation (Pagdonsolan *et al.*, 2020). The more employees have control over their work, the more motivated they will be leading to enhanced performance and longer stays.

However, in context of Pakistan, Gul *et al.* (2012) added that if organizations need to maintain their position and want their employee to stay they must provide them power and autonomy which will help to achieve their dream. Further, Ahmed and Nawaz (2015) in their study on PIA employees say job autonomy has a strong role in employee commitment and retention which is equally good for organizational performance. In another study Tausif (2012) witnessed from education sector of Pakistan says that autonomy is one of the non-financial compensation that encourages satisfaction among employees which is beneficial for an organization to maintain their position. In the nutshell, very limited literature has been focused on job autonomy in relation to employee retention in the Pakistani market. Therefore, to explore the relationship of job autonomy with employee retention could be a potential avenue for future research in the context of Pakistan.

## **2.4 Job Embeddedness**

The concept of embeddedness is taken from sociology as a role of social relationships, economic actions and social moments (Granovetter, 1985). Mitchell *et al.* (2001) introduced the concept of job embeddedness for the first time as a “higher-order aggregate of forces for retention”. Job embeddedness works at both community and organizational levels and possesses three dimensions namely 1) links, 2) fit, and 3) sacrifice (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001). Link is the social relation of individuals with other factors on and off the job, while fit represents association or compatibility, and sacrifice refers to what an individual might gain or lose while taking the job (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001). All three dimensions are interlinked but have different theoretical phenomena as the link shows attachment to other factors like organization and family and shows influence on retention (Holtom *et al.*, 2012) along with social associations (Holtom *et al.*, 2006) and promoting retention by their power (Allen, 2006) with tempting normative pressures both on and off the job (Maertz *et al.*, 2003).

Ng and Feldman (2014) added that embeddedness has a strong influence on social networking behaviours, job motivation, and organizational identification both on and off the job. They also found that community embeddedness always remains under the influence of organizational embeddedness. Moreover, the fit dimension of job embeddedness shows the individual’s affinity towards the community through the culture or climate which in turn decreases turnover (Mitchell, *et al.* 2001). Schneider (1987) stated that the fit dimension is the best example of the attraction-selection-attraction paradigm. Further, person-organization fit increases the chances of employees to stay overtime (Holtom *et al.*, 2013). According to Mitchell *et al.* (2001), when employees enjoy their lives while working in an organization or living in a community, it will motivate them to stay further.

In Pakistan’s literature, according to Bibi and Jadoon (2018), job embeddedness has a strong influence on employee behaviour. As it improves employee well-being, encourage engagement and retention while discouraging turnover intentions and (Wu *et al.*, 2017). Further, Qazi *et al.* (2015) said that job embeddedness has a mediation relationship between perceived organizational politics, job insecurity and turnover intentions. Whereas, when it is coupled with job satisfaction it will lead to employee retention. Further, job embeddedness is not much explored in Pakistan as only a few studies have been found in the context of Pakistan. Therefore, it is yet to explore with respect to employee retention as a potential future avenue in Pakistan.

## **2.5 Social Support**

Social support entails the degree of satisfaction derived from the relationships built with colleagues, supervisors and subordinates (Schreurs *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, co-worker support is an important determinant of employee retention (Alexander *et al.*, 1998; Tai *et al.*, 1998). When employees receive the needed support, they become more committed to their work whilst their sense of belonging to the organization increases and ultimately improves employee retention (Miller *et al.*, 2001; Wells and Thelen, 2002). One of the most prominent reasons for employee turnover is the unstable employee-employer relationship (Fazio *et al.*, 2017; Jasper, 2007). It is a source of psychological contract breach which increases turnover intention (Chen and Wu, 2017). Employees with good co-worker relationships are found to be more satisfied at work and thus stay longer than those with bad relationships (Pitts *et al.*, 2011).

Furthermore, support from friends, family and supervisor helps in reducing emotional exhaustion, stress, burnout and absenteeism whilst increasing employee retention in the long run (Holahan *et al.*, 2005; Woodhead *et al.*, 2016). Karatepe (2013) added that social support encourages embeddedness among employees which in turn helps in reducing turnover intention. According to Courcy *et al.* (2019), social support helps organizations in relieving stress and improving employee commitment hence resulting in their longer stays with the organizations.

Foy *et al.* (2019) indicated that social support helps in removing workplace stress which in turn helps in improving employee performance and minimizing workplace conflicts.

However, in the context of Pakistan, Aslam *et al.* (2015) in their study on insurance employees in Pakistan mentioned that social support helps to reduce organizational cynicism, turnover intentions and having more committed employees. In another study, Saleem and Abbasi (2015) stated that Social Support is a critical factor affecting employees behaviour among textile employees as it helps them to manage their work more appropriately and feel safe. With this, it is argued that literature on social support with respect to employee retention is also limited in the context of Pakistan, which could be explored in future to make addition in the literature.

## 2.6 Conceptual Framework

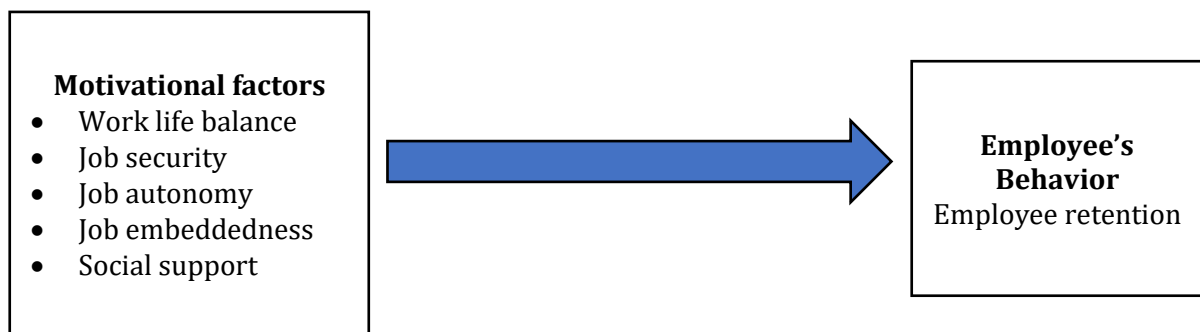


Figure 1. Conceptual model.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The present study tries to draw a conceptual model for employee's behaviour i.e. employee retention. Due to the limitations, it was not possible to summarize and report all the published material, however, the author tried to include all important studies required to cover needed aspects. To achieve the targeted purpose, the author used different sources like "Google scholars, Scopus and Web of Science database" to extract the peer-reviewed studies that already published. The keywords used for the study were employee motivation, employee behaviour and employee retention. The present study reviews the available literature of employee retention in order to highlight motivational factors on employee retention and to suggest the future avenue in Pakistan.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As such, employee retention is a constant necessity for any organization. This study is an attempt to investigate the motivational factors related to employee retention. After thoroughly reviewing the factors, it is found that except work-life balance, job embeddedness, job security, job autonomy and social support are relatively less explored in the previous literature as compared to other factors thus needs more exploration especially in the Pakistan, where employee retention is most at least (Aman-Ullah *et al.*, 2020; Mir *et al.*, 2015). Further, by classifying the literature into different sub-groups like upper management, lower management and employees; employees are seen less explored. Studies based on the specific industry are found missing in previous literature which could be encouraged in the future to solve the various industrial and organizational problems. This research model can be tested empirically on different organizations such as those in the education, healthcare, manufacturing and hospitality sectors for its authenticity and generalizability. In previous literature, a direct relationship was the main focus that suggests a future avenue for indirect relationships through moderation and mediation

studies to explain the reoccurring phenomena of employee retention. Further, majority of the previous studies were based on SPSS, three studies were based on AMOS; therefore, incorporating smart PLS will be a valuable addition in future to address the most prominent anomaly of employee retention.

Employees are important assets that no organizations dare to lose. Therefore, they keep struggling to facilitate them as much as possible. These facilities keep them motivated enough that they start owning the organization and stay intact (Gilmeanu, 2015). The present study focused on the motivational aspects of employees. As motivation has the ability to encourage people resulting in better performance, productivity and growth (Gilmeanu, 2015). Further, it will also influence their satisfaction level resulting in more committed employees, who always keep them engaged in organizational activities (Biswas and Bhatnagar, 2013). According to Maslow's motivation model, humans needs built employee attitude and control their behaviour (Jerome, 2013). Based upon Maslow's hierarchy of need organizations needs to facilitate their employees, so they contribute to their progress. This study proposed that when organization support their employees in term of "Work life balance, Job security, Job autonomy, Job embeddedness and social support" their social needs are being fulfilled as a result their chances to stay will increase respectively.

This study also had several limitations related to time and resource constraints which hindered this study form covering all the motivational factors affecting employee retention. However, the present study tried to identify the prospective avenues that left to be explored in order to cover up the possible causes and solutions for employee retention. Previous literature shows that most of the previous literature is written in the context of developed countries whereas, developing countries like Pakistan still have room to be explored. The present study only focused on the relationship portion while missed the theoretical and methodological portion which can be a valuable addition in the future studies. Furthermore, the present study only analysed those studies which are in open access and written in English while ignoring a sizable study. Therefore, future studies can find ways to overcome the aforesaid limitations to enable a more in-depth investigation of the subject. The present study tried to identify the agendas that left unexplored in past studies, to explore the factors in relation to employee retention.

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