

Group Factors of Voluntary Employee Turnover in Organizations from IT Sector

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Abstract: The research conducted so far on the phenomenon of voluntary employee turnover has still not achieved the desired method of keeping employees, especially in IT organizations. Therefore, it is important to expand the research by presenting new concepts that have not been developed so far, focusing on factors considered so far to be unclear in the context of voluntary employee turnover. This article aimed to present group factors relevant to mitigating voluntary employee turnover in IT organizations. In the context of factors related to the work on the team, identified the following factors: styles of leadership – inspiring and supporting leader like transformational or servant leadership, manager relationship, co-worker's relationship - emotional and instrumental support and internal communication, which cannot be ineffective and inefficient. A review of the literature considering group factors mitigating voluntary employee turnover shows that proper care for employees at the group level leads to measurable benefits for the whole organization.

Keywords: voluntary employee turnover; group factors; management

JEL Classification: D29; G30; M12

1. Introduction

The IT sector is one of the fastest-growing sectors due to growing technological needs (Henderson, 2012). The current crisis caused by the pandemic of COVID-19 shows that the technological need has become even higher every day, as almost all our lives have been moved online. During the previous crisis, wherein the IT industry, the decrease in turnover rate was not noticeable, although it is natural that during the crisis, the turnover rate is in recession (Lo, 2013). To meet the growing requirement for technology requirement, more and more IT companies are being established on the market, thus significantly increasing the demand for IT employees (Dohm & Shniper, 2007), whose deficit is constantly observed (Rong & Grover, 2009). The short-staffed causes that organizations have to compete strongly on the market for the interest of qualified and talented employees (McGee & Thyfault, 1998). Ensuring appropriate working conditions for employees will result in benefits for the organization because it is the employees who are key to maintaining the competitiveness of the organization (Bieńkowska & Ignacek - Kuźnicka, 2018). It can be concluded that the success of IT organizations can be determined by their strategy to manage voluntary employee turnover (VET) (Purohit, 2016; Lo, 2015). This strategy should primarily focus on finding the causes of employee dissatisfaction that may cause an intention to leave the organization. However, it is difficult to identify the causes of turnover and, because are strongly dependent on many conditions, so it seems reasonable to focus on the chosen sector

when studying rotation. In this article, the author identifies group factors influencing VET in the IT industry, which seem to be of significant importance in shaping it. The model of work in the IT industry is based primarily on working in teams, it is the team that directly affects the behavior and perception of the organization by the employees, and thus may contribute to their desire to leave the organization (Tarricone & Luca, 2002). Relationships with co-workers and relationships with supervisors, if based on conflict, are bound to result in intense dissatisfaction and negative feelings for the organization (Greene & Organ, 1973; Johnson & Graen, 1973; Johnson & Stinson, 1975). If a leader only requires an employee to be more efficient and effective, without supporting the employees in development and without giving them a sense of job security and trust, they may leave the organization (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Fairholm, 1994; Zand, 1997). Therefore, in interpersonal relations, communication is also important, because it is the weakness of its process that can lead to a lot of misunderstandings, which will lead to conflicts and dissatisfaction. Although these factors have so far been considered individually in the literature in the context of an employees' behavior, their job satisfaction, or decreasing the intention to leave, the researchers have not so far grouped them as group factors influencing VET. Given the identified research gap, the article aims to present a literature review on factors influencing VET and justify their importance in preventing intention to leave, and to inspire further consideration and research.

2. Voluntary Employee Turnover

The review of the literature confirms that the aspect of employee turnover has been analyzed for a long time (Hom et al., 2017) due to the fact, that employee turnover is an integral part of Human Resources Management (HRM) in an organization (Listwan, 2010). Personnel fluctuation is defined as a kind of variability, lack of constancy, or periodical fluctuation - thus, it defines a certain exchange of employees or loss of personnel (Cybulski, 2008). Nevertheless, the concept is very heterogeneous, as it includes any restrictions on the number of employees, suspension of recruitment, disciplinary layoffs, or outplacement – i.e., controlled layoffs, but also natural leaves of employees from the organization, such as retirement or VET (Bar, 1994). The current trend in HRM indicates that the loss of experienced employees and the loss of their tacit knowledge, the so-called "loss of human capital", can cause a risk to the organization because the recruitment of new employees consumes significant financial resources and it will take a long time to rebuild the knowledge of an experienced employee (Thatcher et al., 2002). Currently, research shows that it is highly skilled, highly efficient employees, due to their specialized knowledge, who most often decide to leave the organization because they are aware of their skills, looking for new opportunities and new challenges (Pocztowski, 2007). So far, many concepts related to VET have been developed. Purohit (2016) considers turnover as a rate of the number of employees, who leave the organization voluntarily and the organization must replace in a given period to the average number of employees employed in the organization. Moreover, the author considers the turnover rate in many ways but especially notes that the main risk for organizations is especially the VET of high-skilled employees (Purohit, 2016). Porter and

Steers (1973) in their turnover model focused on "turnover intention" and "intention to leave", defined as the next step in the process of leaving after experiencing dissatisfaction in the organization (Aburumman et al., 2010), a step that can lead to actually leaving the organization. Matz and colleagues (2013) define intention to leave as an intentional and aware decision to leave an organization. Intention to leave an organization is a much better indication of an employee's actual turnover than job satisfaction or affective commitment (Rubenstein et al., 2017; Schaap & Olckers, 2020). For an organization, information about the intention to leave seems to be very helpful as it forces the organization to take steps to influence the employee's decision. However, it is also important to identify those factors that cause such a high degree of dissatisfaction among employees that they are more likely to leave the organization. This is a big challenge for modern HR managers.

2.1. Factors Related to the Employee Turnover

For many years, researchers have been developing models to explain the turnover phenomenon, but the number of such models may indicate that they are not globally applicable. March and Simon (1958) presented VET is a phenomenon that depends mainly on the ease of changing jobs - that is, the possibility of employment on the job market and the goal that employees have when changing jobs (March and Simon, 1958). However, the advisability of changing jobs depends to a certain extent on the financial benefits and rewards currently offered by the organization (Steers & Mowday, 1981; Dreher, 1982; Gerhart & Milkovich, 1992;). According to the March and Simon model (1958), this influence of the factors determining the intention to leave is not direct, as it mediates through job satisfaction. Steers and Mowday (1981), in addition to the market and economic conditions, pointed to the indirect cause of VET, employee expectations for work, and the values that directly affected job satisfaction and work engagement, and organizational commitment. However, many of the factors included in the model were directly related to the individual characteristics of the employee. On the other hand, Price and Mueller (1981) focused on their model only on work-related factors. The causes of indirect turnover were primarily seen in autonomy, fairness, pay levels, promotion opportunities, work routines, social support, and training opportunities. The analysis presented by Price and Mueller (1981) seems to be in line with Porter and Steers (1973), who saw an intention to leave the organization as an organizational factor for dissatisfaction. Today, it is still believed that as long as an employee is satisfied with their job, the organization provides them with a sense of stability and the relationship with their manager is satisfactory, the employee will not feel the need to search for a new job. Unfortunately, it is more and more often observed that the level of turnover is increasing among employees whose profession is in high demand in the job market. This group includes knowledge workers (Trevor et al., 1997) so employees of the IT industry, which is considered to be one of the more attractive sectors on the job market, still facing a much more dynamic increase in demand for IT specialists than they are available. The specificity of this sector and the heterogeneity and multiplicity of models indicate that it is necessary to conduct a separate analysis of the reasons for VET in terms of its characteristics.

2.2. Voluntary Employee Turnover in IT Organizations

Purohit (2016) noted that the current actual turnover rate is close to 25% because more and more IT organizations are moving into the Indian market due to the low cost of retention (Purohit, 2016). Studies conducted by Lacity et al. (2008) show that the problem of VET in India is even stronger and the rate often exceeds 30%. Research conducted in Sri Lanka also confirms the growing problem of VET. The results of these studies show that only 50% of employees declare their intention to stay in the current organization while as many as 80% of employees expect certain job changes, i.e., career development through promotion (Jinadasa & Wickramasinghe, 2005). A study conducted in China shows that the turnover rate can reach up to 50%, which significantly increases the cost of recruiting employees and also limits the development of the organization (Listwan, 2010). In turn, a study conducted by the Malaysian Federation of Employees showed that in recent years, IT organizations have achieved the highest turnover rates – up to 75% (Hassan, 2014). Also, statistical studies conducted by the U.S. Department of Job Market confirm that the rate of VET from IT organization only in 2005-2006 increased by 7.2% and this trend is continuing (Von Hagel, 2009). As can be seen, the problem is real and these trends present a challenge for the management of IT organizations, taking into account the costs necessary to replace IT specialists (Korsakienė et al., 2015). Nevertheless, there is still too little research that concentrate on VET from IT organizations. Until now, researchers have focused more on research on VET in the banking, nursing, or accounting sectors (Von Hagel, 2009).

3. Group Factors of Voluntary Employee Turnover in IT Organization

There are many factors in the literature on VET that directly or indirectly affect intention to leave (March & Simon, 1958; Steers & Mowday, 1981; Price & Mueller, 1981). In Table 1, the author presented the concept of dividing the factors influencing VET the IT sector directly related to work group.

Table 1. Group factors of IT employee turnover

| Group factors of IT employee turnover | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Factor | Literature references |
| Leadership | Sun and Wang, 2017; Parris and Peachey, 2013; Jaramillo et al, 2009; Turgut et al., 2007 |
| Manager relationship | Cotton et al., 1986; Lee, 2004; Thwala et al., 2012; Foong, 2008; Longenecker and Scazzero, 2003; McKnight et al. 2009 |
| Co-workers relationship | Fisher, 1985; Uhl-Bien et al., 2000; Tews et al., 2013; Beehr et al., 2003; Viswesvaran et al., 1999 |
| Internal communication | Kotter, 1996; Ballard and Seibold, 2006, Kotter, 2012; Kim et al., 2010; Adebayo and Ogunsina, 2011; Abdien, 2019 |

Group factors, by the author, are defined as the factors related to the employees' position in the team. Scarnati (2001) defines teamwork as a cooperation process that allows employees to achieve additional results (Tarricone & Luca, 2002). Each team has common goals or tasks in which team members can develop effective, building up a good relationship and sharing knowledge and skills (Johnson & Johnson, 1995, 1999; Fisher et al., 1997). Any conflict can disrupt the harmony of work in a team, reduce the employees' job satisfaction and

productivity, and thus reduce the performance of the whole team and also increase the intention to leave the most talented employees (Greene & Organ, 1973; Lyons, 1971; Johnson & Graen 1973; Johnson & Stinson; 1975). Often, among the reasons for conflict, there are some misunderstandings or communication problems within the team, in consequence, effective communication also has a significant role in team management (Spaho, 2013). Therefore, a leader should inspire his co-workers to perform and effectively solve problems and conflicts, because it can strengthen the effective synergy of the team (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Fairholm, 1994; Zand, 1997). Teams are an integral part of the organization, the perception of the organization's employees is often based on the perception of work in a group (Tarricone & Luca, 2002). Based on the above considerations, the author has distinguished those factors, that will have a significant impact on VET as leadership style of team leader (Sun & Wang, 2017; Parris & Peachey, 2013), coworkers' relations (Fisher, 1985; Uhl-Bien et al., 2000; Tews et al., 2013), managers relationship (Cotton et al., 1986; Lee, 2004; Thwala et al., 2012), internal communication in the team (Kotter, 1996; Ballard & Seibold, 2006; Kotter, 2012).

3.1. Leadership

Leadership has a significant impact in the context of building relations between an employee and a leader. The leader behavior, i.e., the way decisions are made and implemented, their communication skills, as well as their approach to people, empathy, and understanding (Van Dierendonck et al., 2014; Kashyap & Rangnekar, 2016), influences an employees' behavior and attitudes - including their willingness to stay or leave the organization (Palanski et al., 2014, Wang et al., 2016; Turgut, 2017; Suifan et al., 2020). Mobley (1977) has long since recognized that employees will stay in their jobs if they receive adequate support from their manager. In the literature, one of the most effective styles of leadership indicated transformational leadership (Antonakis et al., 2003; Moynihan et al., 2012; Sun & Wang, 2017). Bass and AVALIO (1994) define this type of leadership as a four-dimensional model consisting of ideal influence, inspiration, individual consensus, and intellectual stimulation. Transformational leaders are models to follow who gain the respect and trust of their employees, communicate important and attractive organizational goals to their employees, and effectively motivate employees to work (Sun & Wang, 2017). Such leaders are focused on supporting employee development, building strong relationships with them, and unconventionally resolving problems and conflicts (Bass 1998; Bass & AVALIO, 1994). Studies conducted so far confirm the negative relationship between transformational leadership and VET (Wang & Sun, 2016; Khan, 2015; Lim et al., 2017). Another type of leadership that has been identified in the literature as supporting and positively influencing employee behavior is servant leadership (Dutta & Khatri, 2017). This leadership style has a positive impact on employee trust in the leader (Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010) and as a consequence increasing loyalty to the organization (Kool & Van Dierendonck, 2012). Therefore, many researchers suggest that improving organizational loyalty has a positive impact on organizational commitment and weakens VET (Dutta & Khatri, 2017). Therefore, the above considerations, show that a leader who tends to support their employees is

effective in reducing their turnover (Parris & Peachey, 2013; Jaramillo et al., 2009; Turgut et al., 2007).

3.2. Manager Relationship

The relationship between the employees and the manager seems to be an important HRM aspect, due to the growing significance of the employees in the organization and their growing rights (Lo, 2015). A supervisor's relationship with employees should focus on the proper communication process, correcting, shaping, and improving employees' knowledge, attitudes and behaviors to improve their job performance rather than punishing them for making mistakes (Megginson et al., 2001). Considering the much closer relationship between management and employee, positive treatment of employees by the supervisor may increase positive perceptions of organizational support (Rhoades et al., 2001; Joarder et al., 2011). As a result, research indicates that VET decreases and the employee's productivity, efficiency, and job satisfaction increase (Cotton et al., 1986; Lee, 2004; Thwala et al., 2012). Employees aspire to professional success through positive relationships with their supervisor, which can help to achieve organizational commitment and job satisfaction, and this indirectly reduces VET (Foong, 2008). Research conducted by Thatcher (2006) shows that satisfaction with the relationship with the superior has a positive, direct impact on motivation to work, while a negative perception of the superior has a direct impact on increasing the desire to leave the organization (Longenecker & Scazzero, 2003). Other research conducted on a group of employees, also from the IT industry, indicated that employees' trust in leaders increases job satisfaction and lowers VET (McKnight et al. 2009). Therefore, support from superiors is necessary because it will keep the employees in the organization and motivate them to work (Bigliardi et al., 2005; Zhao & Zhou, 2008).

3.3. Coworkers Relationship

Employees' relationships can be defined as the keeping of normal working relationships between employees, which can contribute to achieving satisfactory job performance, work motivation, morale, and, consequently, meeting organizational goals (Long et al., 2012). Fisher (1985) describes employee relationships as friendly and caring relationships that provide employees with emotional confidence and support in solving stressful situations. The truth is that the style of work, especially in the IT sector, is more and more challenging for employees because they often have to perform difficult tasks and work many hours in project teams (Lee, 2004). As a consequence, employees will have more social requirements and emotional needs to motivate them to work. There are arguments in the literature that high-quality interpersonal contacts cause a positive impact on employees' behavior (Uhl-Bien et al., 2000). Moreover, when it comes to employee support, it should be considered in two respects as instrumental support – focused on tasks and problem solving (Mossholder et al., 2005) – and emotional – focused on the person, the foundation of friendship and personal care (Beehr et al. 2000). According to Zohar (1994), the workload is one of the most stressful factors, while instrumental support can reduce the stress by reducing the workload of the co-worker (Beehr et al., 2003; Viswesvaran et al., 1999) and reduce VET (Tews et al., 2013).

Emotional support also seems to be effective in mitigating VET, especially among young employees for whom human relationships are more relevant (Tews et al., 2013). Building friendship in the workplace increases the worker's commitment because leaving would require building new relationships (Tews et al., 2013). Instrumental support, similar to emotional support, can mitigate some of the negative emotions associated with work exhaustion or burnout caused by growing requirements and responsibility at work (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Glomb & Tews, 2004). Therefore, it seems to be urgent for organizations to include employees' characteristics during formulating project teams.

3.4. Internal Communication

Communication is a crucial factor in HRM, above all, it is important in human relations management (Barrett, 2006). The role of internal communication in an organization is to analyze how is the process of people communication in the organization and to develop an effective communication system (Grunig & Dozier, 2002). It should also identify, create, and keep the connections that are beneficial for both the organization and its employees, on which the success of the organization will depend (Cutlip, 1985). Bevan and Bailey (1991) consider internal communication is the main factor in employee work motivation and job performance and has an important role in building an organization's competitive advantage (Tariszka-Semegine, 2012). Therefore, poor communication, can cause many risks in terms of HRM, such as lack of employee involvement, leadership problems, and even increased VET (Kotter, 1996; Ballard & Seibold, 2006; Kotter, 2012). Branham (2005) also suggests that poor communication between management and employees is one of the factors why employees decide to leave the organization. Effective managers listen to their employees, allow them to present their point of view, and involve them in the decision-making process - then the work proceeds smoothly and effectively (Mishra et al., 2014). Employees who describe communication as ineffective and inefficient show much more intention to leave the organization (Kim et al., 2010; Adebayo & Ogunsina, 2011; Abdien, 2019). Ballard and Seibold (2006) recognized the indirect impact of communication on VET. The organizations, which have a satisfactory communication process create a supportive work environment for the employees to successfully perform their tasks, increase job satisfaction, and consequently reduce education and job training (Naz & Gul, 2014).

4. Discussion

The considerations on VET in IT organizations, undertaken in the article, contributed to the identification of a specific group of factors that can significantly mitigate a VET of IT employees. The group factors included leadership, relationships with co-workers, relationships with managers, and internal communication. Transformational and servant leadership presented in the literature as the most effective in reducing VET was indicated as the most supportive style of leadership. Leaders who build trusting relationships and who inspire employees to develop their skills offer them a special learning environment, which results in increased employee loyalty to the organization, a higher sense of commitment to the organization, and consequently reduced VET (Wang & Sun, 2016; Khan, 2015; Lim et al.,

2017, Dutta & Khatri, 2017). The style of leadership thus influences the building of employee-manager relationships, as it is recognized that relationships do not necessarily have to be based on friendship, but trust and a sense of support are essential. Friendly relationships can be built with co-workers and it is precisely these relationships, largely among young employees, that have significantly reduced VET (Tews et al., 2013). Some employees expect emotional support from their co-workers, which will reduce the negative emotions caused by daily tasks, while others expect instrumental support, i.e., support in performing these daily tasks and reducing the employee's workload (Beehr et al., 2003). Internal communication seems to be complementary to teamwork relationships which, among the above factors, can support positive VET mitigation efforts (Iqbal, 2010). A literature review shows that it is possible to effectively mitigate VET already at the level of small groups in the organization. Therefore, managers should care for the best-qualified leaders who will inspire employees to develop and should select personnel to the team in that way to match not only the qualifications of other colleagues but also their character.

5. Conclusions

The article presents a literature review on a specific group of factors influencing employee turnover in IT organizations. This is an important phenomenon, given the ever-increasing demand for skilled IT employees and the continuing shortage of them. The concept of group factors that will reduce VET and prevent problems of organization with resources is presented. It is very important to conduct further considerations on VET and to develop a new concept of the turnover model because the models developed so far cannot be used universally. Of course, only a specific group of factors was taken into account in the considerations, which could be qualified as group factors - related to teamwork. Therefore, it seems necessary to repeat the review in the context of organizational factors and job-related factors. Besides, the considerations presented should also be verified in practice, and based on the research, a model for VET in an IT organization should be developed. Despite the limitations indicated, the presented considerations on VET in IT organizations may become an inspiration for further considerations on the significance of this phenomenon.

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