



Faculty Retention among Higher Educational Institutions (HEI's) of Saudi Arabia: Role of Work Environment and Human Resource Management Practices

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ABSTRACT

Purpose Faculty retention is a growing concern for higher educational institutions (HEI's) since top management policy makers in HEIs have realized faculty retention as important for quality of education and institutional reputation. In this regard, limited study has been done to examine the human resource management practices and work environment on faculty retention. Therefore, purpose of this study was to examine the influence of human resource management practices (recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal and compensation and benefits) and work environment on faculty retention within the context of Saudi Arabia. **Methodology** Data was collected using convenience sampling method from 154 faculty working in Saudi Higher Educational Institutions. SPSS version 19 was used to analyze the data using regression analysis, correlation, and descriptive analysis.

Findings Results of this study indicated that training and development, compensation and benefits and work environment positively influence faculty retention whereas no significant relationship found between recruitment and selection and performance appraisal system on faculty retention. **Implications to Research and Practice** Findings of this study will be helpful for policy makers to design human resource policies with specific focus on training and development, compensation, and benefits. In addition, for higher faculty retention, work environment should be supportive, healthy, and safe. This is first study about faculty retention in the context of Saudi Arabia.

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Introduction

Employee retention is challenging task for human resource management because human resource professionals have realized that retaining talented employees' is vital for organizational performance. In addition, to measure the organizational performance, one of the key criteria is to evaluate the employees' performance and turnover which means that organizational performance is considered better if employees are committed with organization and turnover rate is low (higher retention). In this regard, Ulrich (1997) found positive relationship between employees' turnover and organizational performance which means that when employees' turnover is low, organizational performance improves. Therefore, if organizations plan to improve their performance, they should focus on employees' turnover rate and design policies in such a way that retain competent employees'.

Similarly, higher educational institutions (HEI's) have been adopting multiple strategies to minimize the employees' turn over because they have realized that employees' more specifically faculty members are key assets of the HEI's. In this regard, past studies have explored multiple factors which can influence faculty retention but limited research has been done on the role of human resource practices and work environment on faculty retention among HEI's. Al-Qarshoubi (2020) also highlighted that limited research has been done on faculty members retention at HEI's. In addition, M. Ng'ethe (2013) explained that faculty retention is growing concern among developed and developing countries and this area is under research among Middle East countries (Al-Qarshoubi, 2020). More specifically, no study has examined the effects of human resource management practices and work environment on faculty retention among HEI's within the context of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, purpose of this study is to examine the effects of human resource management practices and work environment on faculty retention among HEI's of Saudi Arabia.

Literature Review

Ever changing work environment forced HEI's to invest more and more in human resource management in order to improve employees' productivity and gain competitive advantage in the market. Kareem (2019) suggested that human resource management helps organizations to stay competitive in the market since main goal of the human resource management is to improve employees' performance through training and knowledge management practices (Dong et al., 2020; Nadler & Nadler, 2012; Sarandi, 2020). In addition, Potnuru and Sahoo (2016) suggest that organizations can improve their performance by developing their human resource and the key responsibility of human resource management is to provide training and career development opportunities for better employees' performance which ultimately turn to better organizational performance. Therefore, past research reported that competent and skilled employees' play a vital role in the process of gaining competitive advantage for organization. Furthermore, Asfaw et al. (2015) suggest that effective human resource management practices have several outcomes such as low turnover, better employees' performance and higher employees' commitment. The following sections will explain how human resource management practices and work environment may influence employee retention.

Human Resource Management practices and Faculty Retention

Employees' retention is important factor which helps organization to improve performance. T. W. Lee and Mitchell (1994) explain that employee retention is a process in which organization take all possible initiatives to keep the staff for longer period. However, employees' retention influenced by various factors and human resource management and work environment are prominent factors. Human resource management consist of several functions such as training and development, performance appraisal, recruitment and selection and safety and health etc. Past research has well documented the influence of human resource practices on organizational and employees' performance, but limited research has been done in the higher educational institution context and there is a need to examine the influence of human resource management practices on faculty retention. In this regard, Amin et al. (2014) suggested that if higher educational institutions want to improve their performance, they should effectively implement human resource development policies but unfortunately limited research has been done to understand the role of human resource management practices on employees' outcomes such as better performance (Kareem, 2019) and employees' retention.

Garavan et al. (2000) have highlighted that due to lack of human resource development model, researchers have been struggling to understand the role of training and development on employees' performance. In addition, M. A. BHATTI and ALDOSSARY (2021) found that training activities help faculty to improve performance. Point of consideration is that when faculty members receive training and development opportunities at their universities, they perceive that organization is concerned about their career growth and development which might enhance their commitment resulting in less turnover or higher retention. In this regard, Ford et al. (2018) suggested that training and development practices help employees to gain new knowledge, improve skills and abilities which improve their job performance and satisfaction. Therefore, satisfied employees are less inclined to leave the organization which results in higher employees' retention.

McEvoy and Cascio (1985) found that job enrichment and realistic job preview positively influence employees' turnover which means that when human resource management practices provide realistic job preview and find innovative methods to perform job, employees are more likely to stay with the organization or in other words turnover is low. Furthermore, Huselid (1995) found that high performance work system helps organizations to reduce the employees' turnover and increase employees' retention. In this regard, Bernard (2012) recommends that higher educational institutions should not focus on recruitment of skills faculty but also try to retain them by offering best human resource management practices including high quality work life and better work environment.

Selesho and Naile (2014) suggested that employees' rewards are important element to retain the employees' and same concept is applicable on faculty. Therefore, if HEI's want to retain faculty, intrinsic and extrinsic rewards play important role and human resource management practices should focus on effective reward system to maximize the faculty retention. In addition, Mustafa and Ali (2019) suggest that competencies development programs help employees to improve their performance and stay with the organization for longer period of time. These practices become more important in the context of HEI's, since

faculty are more involved in knowledge acquisition and knowledge sharing activities, they tend to continuously acquire new knowledge through skills development programs. Therefore, when HEI's offers skills development programs, faculty get motivated to participate in these programs which might result in higher retention.

Work Environment and Faculty Retention

Past studies have explained that work environment construct is based on multiple dimensions and organizations should develop each dimension to provide better work environment to their employees'. Work environment generally consist of six dimensions namely work load, personal growth, conflict, safety (Abraham & Foley, 1984; Metcalfe et al., 2020; Rygielska, 2020), rewards and organizational issues. Røssberg et al. (2004) have explained that work environment greatly influences employees' satisfaction, job burnout and performance which ultimately contribute to employees' decision-making wither to leave or stay in the organization. These findings suggest that work environment play important role in overall employees' productivity and satisfaction which encourage them to become committed with the organization and improve retention (reduce turnover).

Based on the above discussion, this study has formulated the following hypotheses:

- H1:** Recruitment and selection positively influence faculty retention among HEI's.
H2: Training and development positively influence faculty retention among HEI's.
H3: Performance appraisal system positively influence faculty retention among HEI's.
H4: Compensation and benefits positively influence faculty retention among HEI's.
H5: Work environment positively influence faculty retention among HEI's.

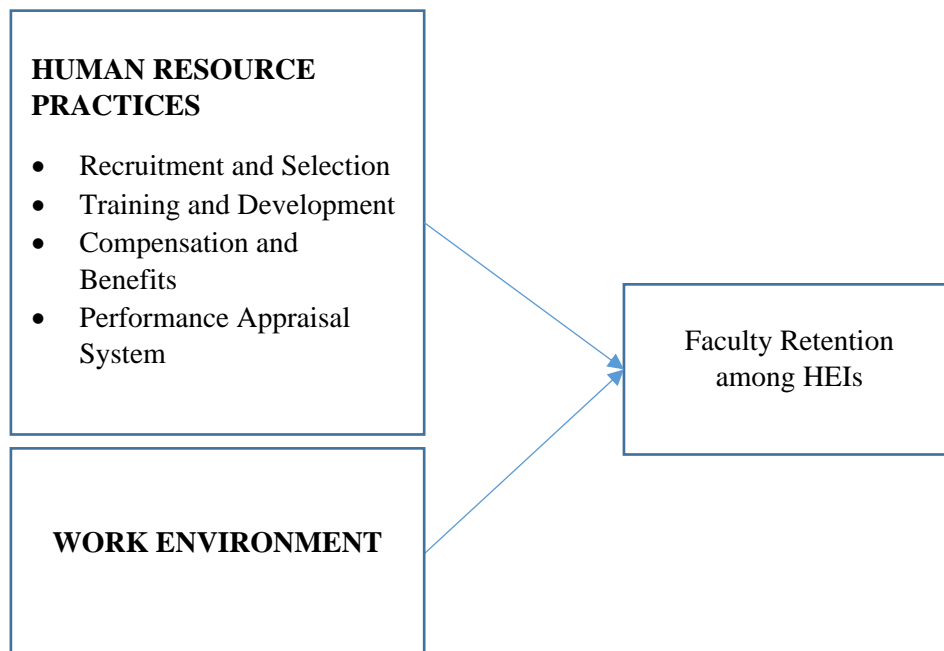


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Methodology

Research design

Baron and Kenny (1986) suggested that when purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between predictor and criterion variables, a quantitative research design is more useful since quantitative research method helps to investigate the nature and type of relationship among variables. Quantitative study is supported by deductive reasoning in which researchers try to empirically test the existing concept to further validate the results. Therefore, quantitative research approach was used in this study since purpose of this study was to examine the effects of human resource management practices (recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal and compensation and benefits) and work environment on faculty retention within the context of Saudi Arabia.

Sample and Research Instrument

M. Bhatti and Sundram (2015) suggested that probability sampling method is more appropriate when study is quantitative in nature. Therefore, since convenience sampling method is one of the types in probability sampling method and suitable in study setting when respondents are difficult to reach. Although past researchers have some concerns about convenience sampling method, but other researchers also support this method in a certain situation when simple or stratified random sampling is difficult to use.

All scales used in this study was adopted from past research and reliability of these scales were examined. Faculty retention was measured using 9 items based on 5 points Likert scale developed by J. M. Ng'ethe et al. (2012). Items of the scale are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Faculty retention items

No	Item
1.	I plan to work at my present job for as long as possible
2.	I am actively searching for an alternative to this institution
3.	I am actively searching for an alternative to this institution
4.	I would hate to quit this job
5.	As soon as possible, I will leave the institution
6.	I am in this institution for lack of an alternative employer
7.	If I wanted to do another job or function, I would look first at the possibilities available within this institution
8.	It does not matter if I am working for this institution or another, as long as I have work
9.	If I received an attractive job offer from another institution/organization, I would take the job

Source: J. M. Ng'ethe et al. (2012)

Likewise, work environment was measured using 13 items developed by Norfadzilah et al. (2016). Items of the scale are presented in Table 2

Table 2*Work environment items*

No	Item
1.	My place of work is safe and sanitary
2.	Everyone at work seems to talk about fitness, health and eating right
3.	I do not hear much griping from my fellow co-workers about their pay
4.	My organization cares for its employees' and their families
5.	My place of work is pleasant
6.	Almost everyone at my organization is rewarded based on performance
7.	Almost everyone at my organization is a recognized expert in his or her field
8.	My organization helps its employees realize their potential
9.	My organization tries hard to help its employees be the best they can professionally
10.	My organization helps its employees learn the need job skills
11.	My organization tries hard to educate its employees to become better professionals
12.	At my organization, everyone is encouraged to express his or her creativity
13.	The culture of my organization encourages employees to express creativity on the job and outside of their job

Source: Norfadzilah et al. (2016)

Human resource management practices were measured using 22 items developed by Gisela et al. (2012) are presented in Table 3

Table 3*Human resource management practices items*

No	Item
1.	The organization I work for widely disseminates information about both external and internal recruitment processes
2.	The organization I work for discloses information to applicants regarding the steps and criteria of the selection process
3.	The organization I work for communicates performance results to candidates at the end of the selection process
4.	Selection tests of the organization where I work are conducted by trained and impartial people
5.	The organization I work for has competitive selection processes that attract competent people
6.	The organization I work for uses various selection instruments (e.g. interviews, tests, etc.)
7.	I can use knowledge and behaviors learned in training at work
8.	The organization I work for helps me develop the skills I need for the successful accomplishment of my duties (e.g., training, conferences, etc.)"
9.	The organization I work for invests in my development and education promoting my personal and professional growth in a broad manner (e.g., full or partial sponsorship of undergraduate degrees, postgraduate programs, language courses, etc.)"
10.	In the organization where I work, training is evaluated by participants"
11.	The organization I work for stimulates learning and application of knowledge
12.	The organization I work for stimulates learning and application of knowledge

No	Item
13.	The organization I work for discusses competency-based performance appraisal criteria and results with its employees
14.	In the organization where I work, competency-based performance appraisal provides the basis for an employee development plan
15.	In the organization where I work, competency-based performance appraisal is the basis for decisions about promotions and salary increases
16.	The organization I work for disseminates competency-based performance appraisal criteria and results to its employees
17.	The organization I work for periodically conducts competency-based performance appraisals
18.	In the organization where I work, I get incentives such as promotions, commissioned functions, awards, bonuses, etc.
19.	In the organization where I work, my salary is influenced by my results
20.	The organization I work for offers me a salary that is compatible with my skills, training, and education
21.	The organization I work for remunerates me according to the remuneration offered at either the public or private marketplace levels
22.	The organization I work for considers the expectations and suggestions of its employees' when designing a system of employee rewards

Source: Gisela et al. (2012)

Research procedure

Data was collected using survey questionnaire and unit of analysis was individuals. Since data was collected from faculty working in higher educational institutions of Saudi Arabia. Initially, 300 questionnaires were distributed to faculty members based on convenience sampling approach. After distributing 300 questionnaires, one soft reminder was sent to the respondents, and they were requested to complete the questionnaire and submit. In this process, importance and objectives of the study were explained to the respondents to encourage them to complete the questionnaire which was helpful to improve the response rate. After 10 days, only 161 completed questionnaires were returned out of 7 questionnaires were discarded due to incomplete response. Remaining 154 completed questionnaires were used in the analysis. After coding and cleaning the data, descriptive statistics was used to check means, S.D and correlation among variables. In addition, normality of the data was examined. Skeweness and Kurtosis was within the acceptable limits.

Data Analysis

SPSS version 19 was used to analyze the data including descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. To test the study hypothesis, regression analysis was used.

Results

A reliability test was conducted with all variables of the study and each was found >0.6 as suggested by M. Bhatti and Sundram (2015) (Table 4).

Table 4*Reliability Test*

Variables	Reliability
Recruitment and selection	0.61
Training and development	0.71
Performance appraisal	0.66
Compensation and benefits)	0.76
Work environment	0.69
Faculty retention	0.74

Source: Research results

The demographic profile of the respondents of the study are presented in Table 5

Table 5*Demographic profile*

Demographics	No. of Students	Percentage
Gender		
Male	120	77.9
Female	34	22.1
Age		
18-28 years	19	12.3
29-39 years	31	20.1
40 and above	104	67.5
Discipline		
Business	70	45.4
Science	51	33.1
Engineering	24	15.5
Others	9	5.8
No. of years' using/working in digital banking		
1- 5 years	28	18.1
6-10 years	55	35.7
10 years and above	71	46.1

Source: Research results

The descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Table 6. The values are $p < 0.05$ as the desirable value (M. Bhatti & Sundram, 2015).

Table 6*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations*

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Recruitment and selection,	2.34	0.33					
Training and development,	3.10	0.29	0.27				
Performance appraisal	3.25	0.31	0.31	0.38			
Compensation and benefits)	3.64	0.48	0.29	0.21	0.32		
Work environment	3.10	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.40	0.31	
Faculty retention	3.14	0.30	0.27	0.45	0.39	0.29	0.31

Source: Research results

Table 7 presents regression results which explain that not all independent variables influence dependent variables. According to results, training and development, compensation and benefits, and work environment positively influence faculty retention whereas recruitment and selection and performance appraisal does not significantly influence faculty retention. The regression results showed that 65.0 percent variation (R square 0.65) in faculty retention can be explained by training and development, compensation and benefits, and work environment. In addition, a bell shape histogram and P-P plots fulfilled the normality requirement of the sample. The Durbin-Watson coefficient of 2.50 was between the acceptable limits of 1.5 to 2.5.

Table 7*Multiple Regressions*

Independent Variables	Beta	t-value
Recruitment and selection,	0.24	1.22
Training and development,	0.47	3.57
Performance appraisal	0.28	1.10
Compensation and benefits)	0.41	3.27
Work environment	0.39	3.49
Faculty retention	0.47	3.14
F-value	67.0	
Durbin Watson	1.98	
R Square	0.65***	
Adjusted R square	0.59***	

*** $p < 0.01$; t -values > 1.96 (M. Bhatti & Sundram, 2015)

Table 8*Hypothesis Testing*

Hypothesis	Beta	t-value	Accepted or rejected
H1: Recruitment and selection positively influence faculty retention among HEI's.	0.24	1.22	Rejected
H2: Training and development positively influence faculty retention among HEI's.	0.47	3.57	Accepted
H3: Performance appraisal system positively influence faculty retention among HEI's.	0.28	1.10	Rejected
H4: Compensation and benefits positively influence faculty retention among HEI's.	0.41	3.27	Accepted
H5: Work environment positively influence faculty retention among HEI's.	0.39	3.49	Accepted

Table 8 presents the hypotheses of the study with Beta and t-values with decision to accept or reject the hypothesis. Based on the regression results, no significant relationship was found between recruitment and selection and faculty retention ($t > 1.96$, $t = 1.22$, $P < 0.05$) (Hair et al., 2007). Whereas positive relationship was found between training and development and faculty retention ($t > 1.96$, $t = 3.57$, $P < 0.05$) (Hair et al., 2007). In addition, no significant relationship was found between performance appraisal and faculty retention ($t > 1.96$, $t = 1.10$, $P < 0.05$) (Hair et al., 2007). Whereas positive relationship was found

between compensation and benefits and faculty retention ($t > 1.96$, $t = 3.27$, $P < 0.05$) (Hair et al., 2007). Lastly, positive relationship was found between work environment and faculty retention ($t > 1.96$, $t = 3.49$, $P < 0.05$) (Hair et al., 2007).

Discussion

Faculty retention is serious concern because it can negatively impact the quality of education, consistency, and reputation of the educational institutions. In addition, when faculty leave the institution, it can adversely affect the peers. In this regard, Selesho and Naile (2014) pointed out that when faculty member leave the institution, it encourage others faculty members to leave as well which can negatively influence the students. In addition, Samuel and Chipunza (2009) explain that main goal of the employees' retention is to maintain the service quality and prevent losing skills employees' which helps organization to gain competitive advantage in the market. Therefore, HEI's management has been taking multiple initiatives in collaboration with human resource management to increase the level of faculty retention.

Like other developed and developing countries, Ministry of education in collaboration with HEI's has designed effective policies to maximize the faculty retention among HEI's of Saudi Arabia. In this regard, it's important to understand how different factors influence faculty retention because without clear understanding these strategies and policies will not be effective. Although past research has well documented factors which influence employee retention, but limited research has been done on faculty retention among HEI's. More specifically, none of the study has examined the factors which influence faculty retention among HEI's of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, purpose of this study is to examine the influence of human resource management practices and work environment on faculty retention among HEI's of Saudi Arabia.

Findings of this study suggested that among human resource management practices, training and development, compensation and benefits positively influence faculty retention whereas recruitment and selection and performance appraisal have no significant influence on faculty retention. Somewhat these findings are similar with past research findings which explains that better compensation and benefits helps organizations to retain the employees' and improve their performance. Although types of rewards are also important in retaining and motivating employees to perform better such as Kosfeld et al. (2017) have highlighted that intrinsic rewards are more beneficial in comparison with extrinsic rewards.

Similarly, M. A. BHATTI and ALDOSSARY (2021) also found that in comparison with extrinsic rewards, intrinsic rewards are more important for faculty performance. Furthermore, types of rewards may be different from one employee to another because young faculty are more inclined towards extrinsic rewards such as high salaries, bonus, and other financial rewards whereas senior faculty are more incline towards intrinsic rewards such as appreciation, encouragement recognition. These findings are applicable in current setting since faculty is considered knowledge workers who tend to work more towards intrinsic satisfaction in comparison with extrinsic. Similarly, faculty as knowledge workers strive to gain new knowledge and improve their ability and skills, training and development opportunities motivate them to get involve with their job and loyal toward institution. This is the reason, training and development positively influence faculty retention.

In contrast compensation and benefits and training and development, no significant relationship found between recruitment & selection and performance appraisal. These findings are contradictory to previous research findings in which studies found that employees' turnover linked with recruitment and selection process. In this regard, G. J. Lee (2006) and Raub and Streit (2006) found that recruitment and selection directly linked with employees' turnover. One possible reason behind these findings could be faculty perceive that recruitment and selection practices are almost similar in different countries and universities, therefore, if they leave the organization, new country or university may have similar recruitment and selection process which they consider acceptable. In addition, since faculty more likely to work for self-satisfaction to transfer the knowledge and work for the community, engage in research and development activities, external performance evaluation reports may not influence their decision to stay or leave the organization.

Conclusion, limitations, and Implications

The study concluded a few important findings. In comparison with human resource management practices, it was revealed that work environment also played an important role in employees' retention. The findings of this study indicated that work environment positively influenced faculty retention. One of the important considerations was that since personal growth was important component of work environment, faculty were more inclined towards personal growth and if work environment offered more opportunities for personal growth, faculty were more likely to stay with the organization. It was not only personal growth but other components of work environment such as safety, less conflict and organizational support that were important for attractive work environment.

There are few limitations of this study which invite future researchers to expand this research. Firstly, data collection of this study was based on few higher educational institution, future studies should expand the data collection and collect data from HEI's located in different part of Saudi Arabia. Secondly, response rate in this study was low which may hinder the generalizability of these findings. Future studies should replicate this model with high response rate to enhance the generalizability of these findings. Lastly, this research did not explore the role of gender, number of years with the organization and age factor in faculty retention. Future studies should explore the role of these demographic variables and evaluate the differences if any. As explained earlier, desire towards types of rewards might be different from one employee to another and young employees are more inclined towards extrinsic rewards and senior faculty may wish to get intrinsic rewards. Future research should explore how age factor influence preference of rewards among faculty which encourage them to stay with the organization for longer period.

Theoretical and practical implications are important component of any scientific study. Therefore, based on current study findings, this study also explains several theoretical and practical implications. From theory perspective, this research help researchers to understand the role of human resource management practices and work environment in faculty retention. In addition, current study findings strengthen the body of knowledge by explaining that human resource management practices and work environment not only play important role in general organizations but also important in academic setting like higher educational institutions. Although, past research found that recruitment & selection and performance appraisal linked with employees' retention, but current study findings are contradictory which will encourage researchers to re-consider conceptualization of these practices.

From practical perspective, this study has several practical implications. Firstly, this research suggests that HEI's should design and offer more training and development opportunities to faculty because as knowledge workers faculty tend to engage in more skills and knowledge gaining activities. Secondly, findings of this study suggest that work environment among HEI's should be supportive, healthy, and based on intellectual freedom. These practices will encourage faculty to stay with the organization. Lastly, human resource professional among HEI's should offer competitive compensation plan to the faculty because like other employees', faculty also get motivated with attractive compensation and benefits.

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