



EFFECT OF RELATIONAL COMPENSATION ON EMPLOYEE RETENTION: CASE OF HOTEL INDUSTRY OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract: This paper investigates the effect of relational compensation on employee retention in hospitality industry. For this purpose, a quantitative study was done, for which data was collected from five-star hotels of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan and a sample of 260 respondents was selected from a population of 800 employees through non-probability sampling technique. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analysis. The results showed that there is a strong relationship between relational compensation and employee retention. The regression results indicate that responsibility and autonomy are more influential in retention and recognition and respect were found to be insignificant. The results provide directions to management of hotels that they should focus on relational aspect in addition to providing monetary benefits. Future directions are also provided.

Keywords: Relational Compensation, Employee Retention, Pakistan

I. INTRODUCTION

Business landscape around the world has become extremely competitive and organizations operating in this environment are challenged to retain talented employees. It is important to develop an environment that not only motivate employees to stay in the organization but also minimizes the costs associated with high turnover. At the same time, the organization not only bear the cost in monetary terms due to employee turnover, but the burden of workload for some time will shift to the remaining employees as the overall workload will remain same. Consequently, the organization loses its long-term skilled employees and somehow the customers as well. On the other hand, the hiring of new employees will result in additional expenses (Haider, et al., 2015). Organizations formulate compensation strategies to retain employees. Sometimes, companies give unusual indirect benefits to their employees, which causes less cost to the company, but they are beneficial for their employees and plays a part in increasing performance of the employees as well. For example, on-site childcare, gym memberships, casual dress codes, flexible schedules and prizes, etc. (Webster, 2017). In recent years, organizations are focusing more and more on total compensation. It may have a variety of other purposes such as recruitment and retention of qualified employees, for the increase or maintenance of satisfaction of employees, for reward on peak performance and encouragement of employees, for achieving internal and external equity, for reducing turnover and company loyalty with the company, etc. (HR-Guide, LLC, 2015). Total compensation includes both direct and indirect benefits.

Direct compensation includes base salary and incentives directly paid to the employee, whereas indirect compensation is that which is in added to the basic salary and incentives and is not directly paid to the employee and may include retirement benefits, educational benefits, relocation expenses, medical benefits coverage, paid leaves, including vacation, holidays, disability insurance, life insurance, pension plans, etc. (SHRM, 2012).

According to Shadunsky (2017), there are two major differences in direct and indirect salaries. One is, the actual compensations paid to the employees for the services they render for the employer are the direct salaries while the other employment benefits are indirect salaries. The other is, the direct salaries have monetary value of the compensation given to the employee, but indirect salaries usually do not have their monetary value. According to Williams and Payne (2016), the rewards can be categorized as transactional rewards, relational rewards, individual rewards and communal rewards. Among these, transactional rewards and individual rewards can be considered as same while relational rewards and communal rewards are considered as the other category. Relational rewards are the intangible rewards and these

are meant to enhance the transactional rewards or financial rewards. It is a bit difficult for the competitors to imitate relational rewards.

Relational compensation is a return which is not seen like recognition, status, employment security, training and challenging work (Pitchai, 2002). Nonfinancial rewards are a major part of reward systems and they are called relational rewards. They are not included in the compensation package of the employees and relate to the situations. They are purposive and are meant for the well-being of the employee physically and psychologically. They satisfy the employees emotionally and fulfill their intellectual demands. Due to relational rewards people feel good about themselves, start making use of their talents and start interactions with others in a supportive manner (Joshi, 2016). Status, responsibility, feedback and more assertiveness are the examples of non-financial rewards. Subsidized membership, free teas, flexible working hours, cinema tickets, birthday and holiday presents are the intrinsic rewards included in non-financial rewards (Nzyoka & Orwa, 2016).

In a study done on employees' retention problem in Pakistani business environment (Ahsan, Burhan, Shahabuddin, & Javaid, 2014), it was concluded that more options and job opportunities for the employees are the key challenges for the organizations to retain their valuable employees in their organizations due to which employers need to develop and implement employee retention strategies in the organizations. For this purpose, employers need to focus on the strategies which can improve the condition of the employees through non-financial benefits which may include the career paths and opportunities for advancement of the employees, recognition of the achievements made by them and the factors that facilitate the completion of tasks such as organization culture, duration, paid leave, extended vacations, etc.

In Pakistan, there has been a tremendous revolution in the employment sector. Now the less employee turnover is considered as the mark of internal competency because there are a lot of career opportunities available for professionals and there are greater chances of their mobility between different organizations. So, the higher turnover negatively affects the growth of the firm. That is why the organizations must struggle hard these days to decrease the turnover rate of their organizations. For retaining employees for a longer period, organizations work hard to attract the best people, recruit them and then focus to retain the most talented people. For retaining the most valuable employees who can lead them towards high performance levels, employers need to use balanced practices which are beneficial to both employee and the employer (Nasir & Mahmood, 2016). The main objective of this paper is to investigate the role of relational compensation in retention of employees in hospitality industry.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Relational rewards result in binding the employees more strongly to the organization as they fulfill the specific individual needs of the employees. It delivers a positive psychological contract and is helpful for the organizations as it replicates the individual pay practices (Anku-Tsede & Kutin, 2013). Relational rewards are the intangible rewards which are meant to enhance the transactional rewards or intangible rewards are known as the relational rewards. These rewards empower the employees directly or indirectly and contribute in the success of the organization (Armstrong, 2007). Relational rewards are the intangible non-financial rewards which are concerned with the work environment of the organization (Armstrong, 2012). In the present study, four dimensions of the relational compensation: respect, recognition, responsibility and autonomy are focused.

Respect is the ability to see and celebrate the value in ourselves and others, is the sixth core strength. This is the most complex of the core strengths. It requires the emotional, social, and cognitive maturity that comes from developing the five previous strengths which are attachment, self-regulation, affiliation, awareness, and tolerance (Perry, 2017). The word respect is like empathy, love and compassion that everyone agrees connotes a positive attribute; however, there are innumerable ideas about what respect means (Spagnoletti & Arnold, 2007). Respect is a source of value for every human being despite of social, cultural and political differences. It is determined by positive gestures such as to pay attention to someone or taking another person seriously (Augsberger, Schudrich, McGowan, & Auerbach, 2012).

Recognition refers to the prestige an employee receives based on his efforts and achievements (Augsberger, et al., 2012). The work environment provides extrinsic rewards which are known as recognition. Recognition is a type of feedback to tell people that they have done well. People want to know that how well they have done their work, but they also want to get an appreciation for their achievements. Recognition can be provided by colleagues and managers through positive and immediate feedback to

acknowledge individual contributions. Praise is also a form of recognition which can be given in private or even in public (Armstrong, 2012).

Responsibility is the ability to respond to your environment. The author of “On Course: Strategies for Creating Success in College and in Life”, Skip Downing defines responsibility as “the ability to respond wisely at each fork in the road, your choices moving you ever closer to your desired outcomes and experiences. The opposite is waiting passively for your fate to be determined by luck or powerful others” (Villarreal, 2017). It is a process of delegating tasks to subordinates, giving them the right to take decisions and making decisions without the consent of the managers. It increases the level of entrepreneurial behavior of the subordinate and decreases the workload of the managers. It also increases employee empowerment (Nzyoka & Orwa, 2016).

Task autonomy is the degree at which an employee performs his tasks under his own directions without the order of any other person. When the employee carries out his tasks, task autonomy is determined by the procedures under which he carries out his working, scheduling his work with freedom and the level of his work independence (Abbas, Khan, & Hussain, 2017). Autonomy is the process of gaining control instead of being controlled by others and a good strategy to increase the loyalty of the employees with the organization (Nzyoka & Orwa, 2016). Autonomy relates to the empowerment which is given to someone to permit him to do some work for which he is qualified, and he is also officially responsible for doing that work (Augsberger, et al., 2012).

According to Perceived Organizational Support (POS) theory, employees believe that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). POS captures a relational aspect of the organizational life in contrast to structural characteristics of the job. If employees believe that the organization cares about them and recognize their efforts and achievements, they tend to think positively about their job and become more responsible towards achieving the objectives and goals of the organization. If employees think that their organization does not care about their well-being, in such cases employees tend to behave negatively. Literature shows that high levels of Perceived

Organizational Support show low levels of employee turnover intentions. Employees’ sense of well-being is improved by perceived organizational support by fulfilling relational and socio-emotional needs for self-enhancement and belonging. Therefore, low turnover intentions are reported by employees with high perceived organizational support because desired personal benefits are received by them. As a reaction, inspired by their organizational support, employees often feel obligated towards their organizations. For example, if employees are treated nicely they are more loyal to the organization and will not seek other employment opportunity but if they build a perception that they are not treated fairly they may leave the organization (Knapp, Smith, & Sprinkle, 2017). Also, POS increases socio-emotional needs and increase employee organizational membership which plays a vital role in establishing employee-employer relationship and reduces stress. Emotional needs are fulfilled due to POS, which reduces stress in employee life and enhances employees’ wellbeing (Justin Aselage, 2003).

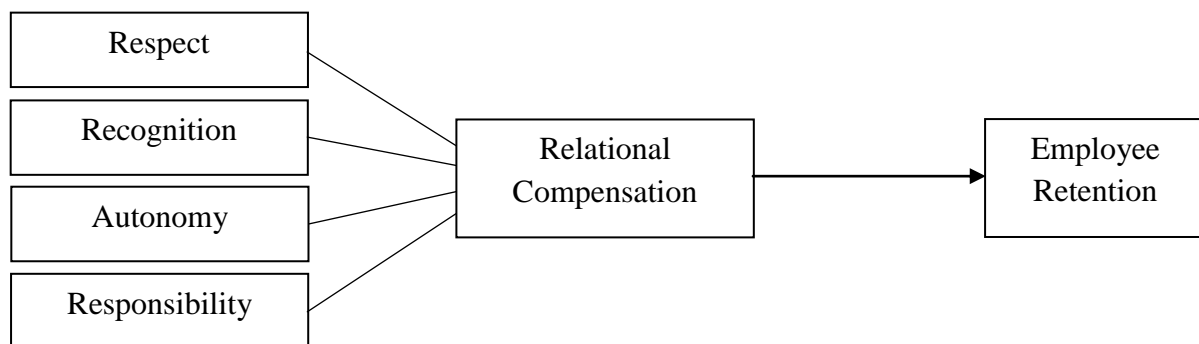


Figure 1: Model of the Study

III. METHODOLOGY

The population of the study consisted of 800 employees of 4 major hotels of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan. The target population included all levels of employees of these hotels. A sample of 260 was selected through Krejcie and Morgan(1970) formula. The sampling technique used was non-probability

sampling and the data were collected through convenience sampling method. Thus, 153 respondents from 470 employees of Hotel A, 49 respondents from 150 employees of Hotel B, 42 respondents from 130 employees of Hotel C and 16 respondents from 50 employees of Hotel D were selected on the basis of their willingness for collection of data. The overall response rate was 95%.

Following the studies of Mahmood et al. (2016), Hausknecht, Rodda, & Howard, (2009), Basheer et al., (2019), Hafeez et al. (2018), Hmaeed et al., (2018), Basheer et al., (2018), Muneer et al., (2019), Hameed et al., (2019), and Zahra et al. (2018) the study has used the quantitative methodology and data is collected using questionnaire. The instrument consisted of 28 items measured on 5-point Likert scale. Relational compensation had four dimensions of respect, recognition, responsibility and autonomy. The dimension of respect consisted of 6 items adapted from the study of Alnaqbi (2011) and Gurunathan and Vijayalakshmi (2012). The dimension of recognition was measured using 5 items adapted from the study of Alnaqbi (2011), Gurunathan and Vijayalakshmi (2012) and Yogesh (2016). The dimension of responsibility was measured using 5 items adapted from the study of Gurunathan and Vijayalakshmi (2012) and Yogesh (2016). The dimension of autonomy had 4 items adapted from the study of Alnaqbi (2011), Gurunathan and Vijayalakshmi (2012) and Yogesh (2016). The variable of employee retention had 8 items adapted from the study of Alnaqbi (2011).

The demographic section of the survey questionnaire consisted of items related to age, gender, education, organization, department, experience with current organization and total work experience. The demographics also included two items having a dichotomous scale. These items were related to provision of relational compensation in the organization and personal desire for relational compensation.

Respondents were assured of the anonymity of the survey and were recruited only those employees who willingly volunteered. Before the survey questionnaire was distributed, management of the hotels was approached and their consent was also taken. A pilot study was conducted to check the reliability of the instrument designed for data collection of the study. The value of Cronbach's Alpha was calculated using $N = 30$, to check the reliability of the research instrument used for the study. The calculated value of Cronbach's Alpha was 0.961 showing that the instrument was reliable for further data collection. The face and content validity of the instrument was also ascertained through factor analysis, and expert opinions. The results indicated that the instrument was valid.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic analysis revealed that majority of the employees was between the age of 26-30 years 32% with only 2% of the respondents above 41 years. Gender wise distribution indicated that majority were male (93%) and in response to marital status, 59% were married. 46% of the respondents had done bachelors degree. In response to working experience with current organization, 70.6% responded that they were with the organization for 5 years or less. Majority of the respondents (87.9%) shared that they were being compensated relationally as well.

The descriptive and correlation analysis is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Respect	4.5733	.40453	1					
2. Recognition	4.5169	.49878	.463**	1				
3. Responsibility	4.4806	.53896	.290**	.599**	1			
4. Autonomy	4.4688	.69939	.399**	.689**	.688**	1		
5. Relational Compensation	4.5151	.41850	.655**	.855**	.815**	.877**	1	
6. Employee Retention	4.3821	.69716	.322**	.549**	.600**	.660**	.671**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation results indicate that relational compensation has a strong positive relationship with employee retention but the dimensions of relational compensation individually have different levels of correlation with relational compensation. Respect has a weak positive correlation with employee retention, recognition has a moderate positive correlation with employee retention, responsibility has relatively strong positive correlation with employee retention and autonomy also has strong positive correlation with employee retention.

The regression results for each dimension of relational compensation are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis

	R	R²	Adj. R²	F	Beta	t	Sig.
Respect					.071	.784	.434
Recognition					.147	1.542	.124
Responsibility	.696 ^a	.485	.476	57.101	.324	3.834	.000
Autonomy					.397	5.471	.000

Dependent Variable: Employee retention

The regression results indicate that there is strong positive relationship between dimensions of relational compensation and employee retention and these dimensions explain 48.5% variance in retention. However, two of the dimensions respect and recognition have been found insignificant. The dimensions of responsibility and autonomy are significant contributors towards employee retention.

Employees working in the organization are sensitive towards the rewards which they receive from the organization and they may leave the organization when they get the opportunity to get greater rewards elsewhere (Hausknecht, Rodda, & Howard, 2009). Compensation can be used as a tool for enhancing the commitment of the employee towards the organization and retaining them in the organization (Nawab & Bhatti, 2011).

The analysis of the dimensions of relational compensation showed that respect and recognition have insignificant influence on employee retention. The results of this research are in contradiction to a survey conducted in South Africa, which showed that the workers who are treated with respect are more inclined to stay at their jobs (Thurman, et al., 2018). In fact, employee retention can be improved when the both monetary and non-monetary rewards are provided to employees. Research suggests that employee retention can be improved by providing work environment that provides recognition, autonomy, respect, opportunities and responsibility as it is difficult to find this kind of environment and difficult to leave also (Kashyap & Rangnekar, 2016).

The results are surprising as one could expect that respect and recognition would be influential in retaining employees. However, if Pakistani business environment and economic situation is considered than perhaps these results can be expected. For example, if demographically results are analyzed than it can be seen that majority of the employees fall within age bracket of 26-30 years (32%). This is the age group that is entering into job market after acquiring degrees. There are not many jobs in the market and the hotel industry is a closed industry with few groups having their monopoly. Therefore, once fresh graduates get jobs, they try their level best to stick to the jobs until they get experience and find job somewhere else. Similarly, this is also reflected from the experience with current organization that indicates 70.6% of respondents having 5 years or less with their current organization. In addition, there are not many job opportunities within hotel industry. Therefore, employees tend to remain with their employer even if relational compensation is not provided.

V. CONCLUSION

The present study focused on relational compensation and how its dimensions respect, recognition, responsibility and autonomy affects retention in the hotel industry. The results highlight the present job market and economic conditions of the country. The results are encouraging to some extent as well where organizations are giving more responsibility and autonomy to their employees to work. However, the insignificance of respect and recognition is worrisome. Employees require respect and recognition if they have to perform and increase their productivity and thus, in process contribute towards the success of an organization. Organizations need to focus on relational compensation along with financial incentives not only to motivate employees but also to have their loyalty and commitment that would eventually lead to success. The research is not without limitations. The foremost limitation is the sample size itself that is taken from only four hotels of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. This limits towards generalizability of the results. By incorporating more hotels from different regions of Pakistan would provide more useful insights into relational aspects of compensation. Relational compensation is affected by many factors such as how human resource policies are implemented, supervisor behavior and role is also important and most importantly the culture of an organization. Thus, these areas can be useful future prospects that could be studied in detail in relation to relational compensation and retention. Furthermore, to have more

in depth information and to have more meaningful results, mixed method approach could be used as well. This would generate more information that could be beneficial in understanding how relational compensation affects retention even if business and job environment is conducive.

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