

Job Security and Employee Retention: Role of Job Embeddedness

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Abstract

The study attempts to understand the underlying mechanism for strengthening job security and employee retention of nurses working in private hospitals operating in India. The mediating role of job embeddedness in the relationship between job security and employee retention was also investigated in the study. Pre-existing questionnaire for data collection through convenience sampling was used in the study. Data were collected from a total of 388 employees. The study used structural equation modelling for analysis of the data. The result of the study shows a significant and positive relationship between job security and employee retention. The result also shows an essential role played by job embeddedness for strengthening the above relationship. The study attempts to understand the importance of job security as a vital factor for enhancing nurses' retention with the support of social exchange theory.

Keywords – Job security, job embeddedness, employee retention, social exchange theory

Introduction

Globally, there is currently a severe scarcity of medical personnel (Moses and Sharma, 2020). The majority of health-care metrics, including vaccination, maternal mortality, infant mortality, and human resource for health (HRH), are below the World Health Organization's health criteria (Javed and Ilyas, 2018). Large sums of money have been set aside by developed nations to recruit physicians from underdeveloped countries (Zhang et al., 2020). According to Mitani (2018), employee retention has been negatively impacted by inadequate pay, a lack of opportunity for professional growth, and a lack of career advancement. However, Dhanpat et al. (2019) looked into African organisations and discovered that a key factor in predicting employee retention is job security. Job security has also been identified by Staufenbiel and Konig (2010) as a source of satisfaction and motivation that propels workers to advance fearlessly and gradually.

Using job embeddedness as a mediator, the study investigated the connection between job security and employee retention. The brain receives a good signal from job security that reduces mental stress. In the literature on human resources management, job embeddedness is a relatively new topic (Rahimnia et al., 2019). Mitchell et al. (2001) claim that a wide range of factors affecting employee retention can be explained by job embeddedness. Both inside and outside of the office, job embeddedness is effective. It covers every action a person takes at work and aids in the explanation of behaviours related to the job (Karatepe, 2016). According to Murphy et al. (2013), job embeddedness is made up of a variety of factors that influence employee performance and retention. Furthermore, various job qualities, such job security, have a significant impact on employees' motivation, job embeddedness, and job satisfaction. These factors also influence how employees behave at work (Ghosh, 2017). According to Zeytinoglu et al. (2012), these traits are now a crucial component of organisational policies aimed at luring, inspiring, and keeping highly skilled workers. Additionally, job stability improves employee performance and retention in accordance with social exchange theory (SET) (Tian et al., 2016). According to Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), social exchange is the sharing of resources with the expectation of receiving something in return. Because employment is viewed as a resource and job stability as a reward for employees' contribution, workers in a particular job position are likely to assess their organisational connection from this angle (Piccoli & De Witte, 2015). When employees believe their interests are valued as much as the company's interests based on SET, their job embeddedness increases (Akgu'ndu'z and Sanli, 2017).

Additionally, the study differs from the body of previous literature in a number of areas. First off, the model used in this study—which includes job security, job embeddedness, and employee retention—is distinct from others because it

hasn't been looked at before. Second, when companies try to change the work design from a permanent to a contractual arrangement that provides them better control over their staff, job security is a prevalent problem in the health-care sector (Umrani et al., 2019). Employees, however, view a job contract as a threat to their career since it deprives them of control over their work and puts them at risk of losing their position. Employees become unsatisfied and alienated from the company as a result, and eventually they could feel pressured to quit (Umrani et al., 2019). Their performance may suffer even if they remain with the company since they are always afraid of losing their jobs. Thirdly, this research adds to the body of knowledge on job embeddedness theory.

Literature review

Social exchange theory

The relationship between an employer and employee, in which both parties assist one another for their own benefit, is examined in this study. Employer-employee relationships have been studied by numerous scholars using various ideas. The study is backed by SET, which analyses how a relationship promotes retention, balances the costs and benefits of a relationship, and operates on the exchange behaviour principle (Smyth and Zimba, 2019). The exchange conduct between two parties is represented by SET (Blau, 1964). According to De Sousa Sabbagha et al. (2018), job stability enhances employees' attitudes towards their work, which is in line with the exchange principle of SET. As a result, it can boost employee motivation, which could result in retention. Further, Huang et al. (2016) stated that employees' perception of security in their organisations influences the employee's on-job behaviours.

Employee retention

The practice of retaining staff members on board for the long haul is known as employee retention. Employees are drawn to or kept away from an organisation depending on how it handles their recruiting, motivation, and attractiveness (Umrani et al., 2019). The success of an organisation depends on its ability to retain its workforce. Employers are constantly looking for great achievers, and once they are identified, they will make every effort to keep them on board. Organisational sustainability is also a function of employee retention (Olckers and Du Plessis, 2012). Employee retention is a complicated issue that requires numerous approaches to address and cannot be resolved by a single and straightforward solution (Sinha & Sinha, 2012). Numerous academics have investigated employee retention in different methods and have come to the conclusion that it is a strategy for retaining talent within the company. Therefore, in order to retain their staff, businesses must create strategies that address economic, motivational, environmental, or health issues. Job security is the tactic examined in this study. Since providing services to the public is the primary purpose of the health care industry, staff retention is also essential. For health care companies, retaining personnel is the most significant and difficult challenge (Arnold, 2005).

Job security

"Job security is the assurance of job continuity and stabilisation provided by the organisation to the employees," said Davy et al. (1997). A formal employment contract between an employee and their employer about the guarantee of their employment continuity is known as "job security," according to Hur (2019). People's primary concern with job security is to increase their chances of retaining their existing position. Job security gives workers the expectation that they will have an equal opportunity to advance by applying their unique talents on the company's platform. According to Hur (2019), job security offers workers a number of advantages, including financial stability, the chance to make future plans, increased self-esteem, and a feeling of order.

Hypothesis development

Job security and employee retention Employee retention is significantly impacted by job security (Hussain and Rehman, 2013). It is an official contract that guarantees employment continuation. Employee confidence is increased by this guarantee, which results in longer stays. To promote job stability and boost productivity, organisations should include

job security in their policies (Browne, 2000). More dedicated workers will be advantageous to companies that offer a high level of job security. When job security is guaranteed, employees will work fearlessly and use their intelligence to increase organisational efficiency. One of the most effective and important methods for fostering employee retention is job security (Smith, 1999; Bibi et al., 2016; Sokro, 2012). On the basis of this discussion, this study argues that job security can increase employee retention. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H1. Job security has a significant positive relationship with employee retention.

Job security and job embeddedness

The idea of job stability has attracted a lot of attention from academics (Rahimnia et al., 2019). Job security is the guarantee that workers will have a job even if there are no external threats, such as a recession or the outside world. According to earlier research, job embeddedness and job security are significantly positively correlated (Coetzee, 2019; Singh et al., 2018). According to Karatepe and Vatankhah's (2014), job security is an organisational endeavour that conveys dedication and contentment, which may result in job embeddedness. Previous studies have also indicated that job security helps mitigate the fear of job loss; as a result, employees become more embedded with their organisations and perform better (Karatepe, 2016). Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H5. Job security has a significant positive relationship with job embeddedness.

Job embeddedness and employee retention

The concept of job embeddedness has since been extended to employee retention (Holtom and Darabi, 2018; Rubenstein et al., 2020). Employees are more embedded with their jobs in favourable circumstances and the opposite is true in unfavourable situations (Mitchell et al., 2001). The job embeddedness model proposes that employees will be happy when the organisation takes care of them, resulting in more embedded employees who prefer to stay with the organisation (Mitchell et al., 2001). Job embeddedness is a tool for employee retention (Holtom and Darabi, 2018; Ferreira et al., 2017). Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H6. Job embeddedness has a significant positive relationship with employee retention.

Job security, job embeddedness and employee retention

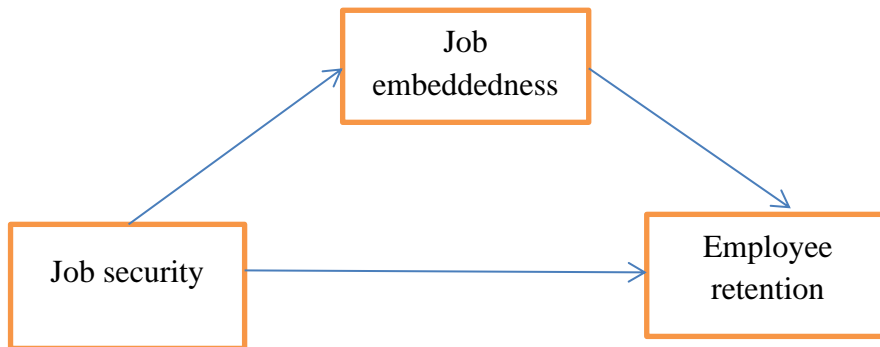
According to Saghih and Nosrati (2020), job embeddedness is "the scope and range of psychological, social, and financial factors affecting employee retention in the organisation," According to Ferreira et al. (2017) and Holtom and Darabi (2018), job embeddedness effectively reduces negative outcomes like turnover intentions and fosters positive outcomes like employee retention. Job embeddedness is a crucial retention tactic that can act as a mediator between employee attitudes and behaviours (Robinson et al., 2014). Job embeddedness as a mediator has, however, been the subject of very few studies (Thakur and Bhatnagar, 2017). Since every attitude requires some sort of stimulus to be triggered, job embeddedness does not emerge overnight. According to Murphy et al. (2013), job stability can be a significant precursor to job embeddedness. According to the study, workers who constantly worry about losing their jobs might put in less time and effort at work. Furthermore, their relationship with the company will suffer as a result of their on-going concern about their job security.

So, it is necessary to investigate the elements that affect job embeddedness. The connections between job security, job embeddedness, and employee retention, however, have not yet been the subject of any research. The majority of research on the idea of job embeddedness has been conducted in western nations (Karatepe, 2012). Because there is a lack of research in this area, it is necessary to investigate job embeddedness in the context of Asian countries (Thakur and Bhatnagar, 2017; Lee et al., 2014). Thus, it is anticipated that this study would close the gap in the Asian setting. Additionally, companies can use the results of this study to enhance workers' well-being at work by offering them the highest level of job security, which will boost their embeddedness and motivate them to stick with the company over the

long run. According to job embeddedness theory, job stability will foster a bond between workers and the company, which will lead to employee retention. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H7. Job embeddedness mediates the relationship between job security and employee retention

Figure 1. Conceptual Model



Methods

Sample and procedure

The study was conducted in private hospitals operating in India in order to examine the aforementioned theories. Data was gathered using a descriptive study design and an existing questionnaire. Using a convenience sampling technique, only 388 questions were found usable. To reduce bias, all participants were informed in advance of the study's goal and were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The information is shown in aggregate form, and neither the respondents' identities nor those of their organizations were revealed.

The demographic characteristics of the nurses participating in this study include women (55.9%) than men (44.1%). More young nurses participated in this study, with the 21–30 years old age group recording the highest number of respondents at 38.1%. Next, 26.2% of the respondents belonged to the 31–40 years old age group and 12.1% of the respondents were 51 years old or older. When asked about the number of years of service, 40.9% of the respondents informed that they had been working for 1–3 years, whilst 28.8% had been working for 4–6 years, 19.9% for 7–9 years and only 9.97% for 10 years or more. Regarding job security, the majority of participants were worried that they might lose their position at any time, which could impair their performance on the work and motivate them to quit the company.

Measures

Pre-existing questionnaires were adopted to measure JS, JE and ER. All the scales used for the survey were 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The details of all the measures used are mentioned below.

Job security- It was measured using a 4-item scale developed by De Witte (2005).

Job embeddedness- It was measured using a 12-item scale developed by Clinton et al. (2012).

Employee retention- A 3-item scale used by Kundu and Lata (2017) was used for measuring the variable.

Results

Evaluation of the measurement model was done using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), followed by hypotheses testing through structural equation modelling (SEM) using AMOS 24.0 version. Then the mediating effect was evaluated through direct and indirect effects of job satisfaction and job engagement was verified. Table 1 represents the mean, standard deviation, correlation matrix and square root value of average variance extracted (AVE) [for assessment of discriminant validity] for all the three constructs. The mean values were between 2.00 and 3.00 and values of standard deviation were about 1.00 for each of the variables. The positive relationship of between the variables is identified by the values of correlation coefficients.

Table 1. Mean, standard deviation and correlation matrix (along with square root of average variance explained-AVE)

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	JS	JE	ER
JS	388	3.234	0.627	0.750#		
JE	388	3.156	0.558		0.727#	
ER	388	2.995	0.688	0.424**	0.341*	0.786#

Notes: # Square root of AVE; *p-value <0.05; **p-value<0.01; JS= Job security; JE= Job embeddedness; ER= Employee retention

Measurement model assessment

The measurement model consists of three latent constructs, namely, JS, JE and ER, where the factor loadings of all the indicators are above 0.70 (Comrey and Lee, 1992). All of the indicators' factor loadings are more than 0.70. The model fit index values are within Hair et al. (2010)'s recommended acceptable ranges. [RMSEA = 0.042 (0.90), comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.925 (>0.90), goodness of fit index (GFI) = 0.912 (>0.90), normed fit index (NFI) = 0.911 (>0.90), and df = 1.719 (<3)]. To prove construct validity, convergent and discriminant validities were investigated. Cronbach's alpha and construct reliability (CR) were used to assess each construct's reliability. Convergent and discriminant validities were examined to establish construct validity. The reliability of all the constructs was examined using Cronbach's alpha and construct reliability (CR). The values of AVE, CR and Cronbach's alpha for all the variables along with factor loadings of the indicators are displayed in Table 2. The AVE values are greater than the acceptable value of 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), CR values greater than AVE, signifying convergent validity and Cronbach's alpha values are greater than 0.70 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Nunnally, 1978). Hence, the validity and reliability of all our constructs are assessed and the measurement model has been evaluated.

Table 2: Results for convergent validity and construct reliability (CR)

Factors and items	Standardized factor loadings	Cronbach's α	AVE	CR
Job security		0.844	0.564	0.837
JS 1: Chances are, I will soon lose my job	0.710			
JS 2: I am sure I can keep my job. (R)	0.794			

JS 3: I feel insecure about the future of my job.	0.726			
JS 4: I think I might lose my job in the near future.	0.772			
Job embeddedness		0.923	0.529	0.931
JE 1: The organization provides me with a way of life that suits me	0.712			
JE 2: Overall, I fit very well in [the organization	0.719			
JE 3: My closest friends are in the organization	0.744			
JE 4: Overall, I have strong ties with people throughout the organization	0.762			
JE 5: I would miss the excitement that this job brings if I left	0.712			
JE 6: There would be many things about organizational life that I would be sad to lose if I left	0.711			
JE 7: The area where I am based right now is suitable for my family and friends	0.728			
JE 8: There is plenty to keep me happy off duty around here	0.739			
JE 9: Even if I decide to leave the organization I would still live in the area where I am based at the moment	0.718			
JE 10: My family/partner has strong ties around the community where I am currently based	0.756			
JE 11: Leaving the area where I am currently based would mean many personal and/or family sacrifices	0.730			
JE 12: I would be very sad to leave the general community where I am based right now	0.701			

Employee retention		0.834	0.618	0.828
ER1: I am likely to stay in this organization for next five years.	0.825			
ER2: I will not change this organization easily.	0.813			
ER3: For me, this organization is the best of all possible organization to work for.	0.717			

Note: R= reverse coded

Testing of Hypotheses

Table 3 displays the results of the structural model's evaluation using SEM with 5,000 bootstrap replicates and a 95% confidence level. JS and ER were found to have substantial positive ($\beta = 0.373$; $p\text{-value} < 0.01$), supporting H1. Similarly, positive relationship between JS and JR ($\beta = 0.346$; $p\text{-value} < 0.01$) and JE and ER ($\beta = 0.318$; $p\text{-value} < 0.01$) were found thus supporting H2 and H3. The mediating impact of JE in the relationship between JS and ER has also been established in the study ($\beta = 0.110$; $p\text{-value} < 0.01$), supporting H4. All the hypotheses proposed in our study have been established and shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Path analysis

Path	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Remarks
JS->ER	0.373**		H1 Supported
JS->JE	0.346**		H2 Supported
JE->ER	0.318*		H3 Supported
JS->JE->ER		0.110*	

Notes: # Square root of AVE; * $p\text{-value} < 0.05$; ** $p\text{-value} < 0.01$; JS= Job security; JE= Job embeddedness; ER= Employee retention

Discussion

Through job security, this study aims to address the problem of low staff retention. Additionally, this study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding job security and staff retention in healthcare organisations. Furthermore, in order to improve the relationship between job security and employee retention, job embeddedness and job satisfaction are incorporated as mediators. SET, which explains human exchange or reciprocal behaviour, lends credence to this study (Huang et al., 2016). According to this hypothesis, job stability influences employee behaviour by fostering a positive relationship that benefits both parties. Furthermore, according to the reciprocity norm, nurses who are guaranteed job security will be happier in their positions because they won't be afraid of losing them. Additionally, they will become more integrated with the work, which will lead to employee retention.

Limitations and future research

The study has the following limitations that can serve as a guide for future research. First, the study is based on cross-sectional research. So, achieving more reliable information requires longitudinal study. Second, the respondents of the study belong to healthcare industry-private hospitals. So, other industry can be included in future studies for enhancing generalizability of the results. Third, the respondents of the study comprise only nurses and, therefore, it is suggested to carry further study on other types of employees working I healthcare industry. Fourth, some individual moderating variables and mediating variables along with organizational can be studied by future researchers.

Practical and theoretical implications

The study's findings can help human resource professionals and management staff better understand employee issues, especially those affecting workers in public hospitals. The model developed in this study on the links between job security, job embeddedness, and employee retention can help better understand the psychological attachment of employees to the organisation. The study's findings can also assist policymakers in achieving the employment-related SDGs. To guarantee job security, management must understand employees' wants and feelings before creating and implementing any strategy. Encouragement of emotional participation will make employees happier and more engrained in the organisation, which will result in longer tenures. As a result, healthcare facilities can benefit from this research.

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