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## **Assessment of the Relationship between HRM Practices and Turnover Intension in Ethiopia: the Case of Academic Staff Members in Public Universities**

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### **Abstract**

*Good management of employee recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, supervisory support, training and development, compensation and employment relationships are interpreted positively by employees and this in turn reduces turnover rate and lowers the turnover intension. Accordingly, the main purpose of this study was to investigate the correlation between HRM practices and turnover intension of academic staff in public universities. The study employed a cross-sectional survey research method to collect and analyze the data from the study participants. A multistage sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study. Data was collected from instructors, head of department, deans, HR practitioners, and university top management. Besides, HR policies, HE proclamations and reforms as well as education sector development programs were used as a secondary source of data. The study result showed that collectively, the HR practices significantly predicted the turnover intension of employees at universities. A stepwise regression analysis result showed that of the six HR practices treated in this study, compensation and supervisory support were significantly predicted the turnover intension and the remaining four failed to influence the turnover intension. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that there is a variation among the HR practices in predicting the withdrawal intension of academic staff members from public universities. That is, all the HR practices are not equally important in impacting the turnover intension. From this, it is possible to suggest that although good HR practices are necessary to retain employees, it is critical to identify which one works best and which do not.*

**Key Words:** Higher Education, Employees, HRM practices, Turnover Intension

## **1. Introduction**

As to World Bank (2007), tertiary education is central to the economic and political development of any nation which is in turn vital to competitiveness in an increasingly globalizing knowledge society. However, this could be true if there is sufficient number of skilled manpower in the higher education institutions. Regarding this, the study made by World Bank (2007) confirmed that the major challenges higher education institutions in Africa facing today are: insufficient numbers of qualified academic staff in higher education institutions as the result of brain drain, retirements and HIV/AIDS; low internal and external efficiency; and poor human resource management practices. These are the entire involuntary turnover that made public universities loss their staff which is also true for Ethiopian Universities. Besides, there are also voluntary turnover and turnover intentions through which universities were losing their talented academic staff members.

According to Hailemariam and Rao (2003) although there is no clear conception among researchers on the term human resource practices, it is one of the major variables that influences employee intension to leave. HR practices that are well managed and implemented are able to decrease the intension of resigning among employees, because individuals tend to respond positively to top management commitment (Eisenberger, Fasalo and Davis-Lamastro, 1990).

Studies made by Darougheha et al (2013) shown that universities are one of the areas where knowledge is created, shared and used but challenged due to loss or turnover of these knowledgeable personnel. Scholars like Arnet and Obert (1995), Pfeffer and Vegia (1999), and Desseiler (1999) for an organization to reduce turnover intension of employees and remain effective, it must have applied proper human resource management practices.

According to Accenture (2001), Jardin and Amig (2001) cited on Bhat (2014) the employees perception to poor leadership of supervisors, unchallenging position, limited opportunity for growth, absence of recognition for better performance, limited control over the work and customer, salary benefit are not commensurate with the work requirement and the opportunity for better salary packed elsewhere are some of the most common reasons why employees intend to quit. Daroughaha (2013) on his part found out that to ameliorate the loss of experts, organizations need to have a proper human resource practices. Bhat (2008) investigated human resource practices as antecedents having impact on behavioral consequences such as person-organization fit and organizational commitment, which ultimately leads to employee turnover intensions. Human resource practice is clearly linked to employee turnover intension and it is a determining factor of turnover intension.

Further, researches have shown that human resource practices that are well managed and properly implemented are able to increase organizational commitment and decrease intension of resigning among employees because individuals tend to respond positively to the commitment and support of top management (Eisenberger, 2004). There are major human resources factors which make employees to quit from organizations and these are poor hiring practices, managerial style, lack of recognition, lack of competitive compensation system, and toxic work place environment (Abassie et al., 2000; Jones et al., 2002).

Different scholars have stipulated a variety of factors that have the potential to determine the employee's intent to leave. Liu (2004) conducted a study and disclosed that employees perception of

human resource practices including pay level, career development opportunities, work family support, and relationship with a leader resulted in lower employees' turnover intention as a reciprocate to an organization. Employees' sense of obligation to reciprocate the organization with better job performance and an increased and stronger organizational commitment will reduce the turnover intentions.

Although there were many studies conducted on the relationship between turnover intention and HR practices, none of them put a standard reason why employees leave. Particularly the study was limited in the higher education institutions in general and in Ethiopia in particular.

Second, there were inconsistencies in the findings of the studies made to identify factors for turnover intention and on the actual turnover. Third, most of the studies made on HR practices and intention to leave have emphasized on industries and other non-education institutions. Therefore, this study was aimed at investigating the correlation between HR practices and turnover intention among the academic staff in public universities of Ethiopia.

## **2. Objectives of the Study**

- To explore the outstanding issues in HRM in public universities of Ethiopia
- To identify the state of the relationship between aspects of HR practices and intention to leave
- To investigate the association between demographic factors and turnover intention.

## **3. Basic Research Questions**

In order to attain the aforementioned objectives of the study it is good to raise and find answer for the following questions.

- Are there any issues and concerns in the HR practices at universities?
- Is there any significant relationship between HR practices and turnover intention?
- Do personal factors contributed to the variation in turnover intention?

## **4. Research Methodology**

**4.1. Method:** A cross-sectional survey research method with a descriptive nature was adopted for the study to determine whether HR practices significantly associated to and predicted the academic staff member turnover intention.

**4.2. Sources of Data:** Primary data was collected from academic staff and office holders of the respective universities. Moreover, documents of various types were consulted as secondary source of data to supplement the information obtained from the primary data.

**4.3. Sample and Sampling Technique:** Multistage sampling technique was used to obtain respondents from teachers and office bearers. In Ethiopian universities are grouped in to three based on their year of establishment. Accordingly, there were 3 generations of universities as first, second and third generations. Hence, one university from each generation was taken using simple random sampling technique. Then stratified sampling technique was used to select college and departments from each university. After that simple random sampling technique was used to select instructors from each department of the respective universities. Office bearers such as head of departments, deans, directors and top management of the universities were included purposely because of the key role in the management of human resources.

**4.4. Data Collection Tools:** To collect relevant data from respondents questionnaire, interview and document analysis were used. The questionnaire was a five point likert scale employed to obtain data from teachers, head of department, and deans. Interview was used to get detail information from human resource director and university top management.

**4.5. Data Analysis Technique:** In order to analyze the quantitative data received from teachers, SPSS version 20 was used. To see the relationship between HR practices and turnover intension correlation analysis was performed. To identify the out standing issues in HR practices spearman rank order correlation was used. To the influence of facets of HR practices on turnover intension linear regression analysis was performed. To see the independent contribution of each of the HR practices on turnover intension stepwise regression analysis was performed.

## 2. Results and Discussion

Table 1 presented the demographic information of respondents in Ethiopian public universities.

### 2.1. Sex, Age and Qualification of respondents

**Table 1: Sex, Age and Qualification of respondents**

Demographics	Responses (358)		
		Number (No)	Percent (%)
Sex of Respondents	Male	323	90.2
	Female	35	9.8
Age of Respondents	<20	-	-
	20-30	187	52.2
	31-40	130	36.4
	41-50	32	8.9
	>50	9	2.5
Qualification of Respondents	Bachelor Degree	72	20.1
	Masters' Degree	256	71.5
	Doctor of Philosophy	30	8.4

Source: **Field Survey**

As can be seen from Table 1, the demographic data collected from respondents revealed that majority 323 (90.2%) of the study participants were male and the remaining 35 (9.8 %) were female showing less number of female teachers in the academic staff mix which is controversial with what was planned to be achieved by the government. From this, it can be inferred that apart from the government's effort to raise the number female in public universities, still the participation was not promising as the ratio is far below the target set by Ministry of Education.

The data in Table 1 also revealed that the larger majorities (52.2 %) of the respondents were in between the ages of 20 to 30 years, 36.6% were in between 31-40 years, 8.9% were in between 41-50, and 2.5 % of the respondents

were above 50 years old. It is widely accepted that good teaching demands an academic staff with appropriate qualification, professional competence, experience and motivation that is relevant to the level of the programs they are appointed to (Mulu, 2010).

Concerning the qualification of the academic staffs, Table 1 showed that 256 (71.5 %) of the respondents were Masters' degree holders while only 30 (8.4%) of the respondents were PhD holders. However, about 20.1% were with a qualification of bachelor degree. Therefore, despite the extensive training programs to meet the target set, there was still a lack of match between target set by government and the actual academic staff qualification mix in Ethiopian public Universities.

**2.2. State of Employees Intension to Leave Public Universities**

On Table 2, item 1 respondents were asked whether they look for a job outside this university. Accordingly, 38.8% of the respondents agreed that they are looking for a job outside their present university. But a greater number of respondents (44.2 %) disagreed and 17.0 % of respondents were indifferent toward the plan to jump from the current employing organization to another one.

Regarding the time when to leave their current organization in Table 2, majority (46.1 %) of the respondents agreed that they will leave as soon as they get better opportunity. The higher mean value of 3.15 also indicates majority of the respondents agree that they will immediately leave their organization if they get a better chance.

**Table 2: Employees Intention to Leave**

Intention to Leave	strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	mean	SD
	I am actively looking for a job outside this university	59 16.5%	99 27.7%	61 17.0%	81 22.6%		
As soon as I can find a better job, I will leave this University.	55 15.4%	73 20.4%	65 18.2%	95 26.5%	70 19.6%	3.15	1.36
I am seriously thinking about quitting my job.	82 22.9%	90 25.1%	65 18.2%	79 22.1%	42 11.7%	2.75	1.34
I often think about quitting my job in this University.	74 20.7%	92 25.7%	74 20.7%	82 22.9%	36 10.1%	2.76	1.29
I think I will be working in this university for five years from now.	68 19.0%	79 22.1%	98 27.4%	72 20.1%	41 11.5%	2.83	1.27
In the last few months I have thought seriously about looking for a job in another University.	77 21.5%	96 26.8%	64 17.9%	69 19.3%	52 14.5%	2.78	1.36
Taking everything into consideration, there is likelihood	41	70	73	112	62	3.23	1.27

that I will make a serious effort to find a new job within the next year.	11.5%	19.6%	20.4%	31.3%	17.3%		
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Source: **Field Survey**

On the other hand 35.8 % replied that they have no plan to leave even when they got better opportunity while 18.2 % were indifferent. Among the total respondents, 48.0 % of them disagreed that they are seriously looking about quitting their job. But 33.8 % of the employees agreed that they were looking to quit their job and about 18.2% of the respondents neither look to leave nor to stay on their job.

Of the total respondents 34.0% of them agreed that they often think to quit their job while the majority (46.4 %) of the respondents disagreed and 20.7 % of the respondents were in different. On the duration of their stay in the current organization, 41.1% of the respondents replied they have no plan to leave within the coming five years and 31.6 % of the respondents were planning to leave in the coming five months.

Of the total respondents 55.0 % of them were disagreed towards seriously looking for another job in same organization while 31.3 % were agreed. Still, 13.7 % were neither agreed nor disagreed to look for other options.

With regard to the need to look employment in another university and attempts made so far in Table 2, 33.8 % of them agreed that they wish to join another university while the majority (48.5 %) disagreed and about 17.9 % were indifferent. About 48.6 % the participants replied that there is a likelihood for them to leave this university and hence make a serious effort to find a new job within the next year while 31.1 % of the respondents disagreed on the likelihood for them to look for an employment in the next year and about 20.4 % of the respondents were neither agreed nor disagreed that they will make a serious effort to find a new job within the next year.

In Table 3, the most influencing factor with highest mean value and ranked number 1 is the irrelevance of performance evaluation parameter which indicates variety of problems related to the evaluation criteria.

**Table 3: Ranked Response on Variables Turnover Intension of Employees**

Factors	Mean Rank	Std. Deviation	
The irrelevance of performance evaluation practices	5.18	2.01	1
Lack of training and development program	4.93	2.14	2
Poor industrial relation existing in Universities	4.83	2.31	3
Absence of employee union to protect the right of workers	4.81	2.13	4
Unfair recruitment and selection practices existing in universities	4.80	2.50	5
Absence of proper support from top management	4.24	2.05	6

Source: Field Survey

The factor ranked second in affecting the turnover intension in public universities according to the views of the respondent was the inadequacy of training and development opportunities. The poor industrial relation existing in universities was stood third followed by the absence of employee union to protect the right and interest of workers by maintaining a positive relationship in the organization. Unfair recruitment and selection practices existing in universities ranked fifth as shown in Table 3.

**Table 4: Pearson Correlation of Personal Variables and Turnover Intension**

		Name of University	Name of the College	Sex of respondent	Age of respondent	Work experience	Qualification	Academic Rank
Intension to Leave	Pearson Correlation	.069	.004	.046	.018	.018	-.025	.063
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.195	.940	.390	.735	.738	.636	.238
	N	358	358	358	358	358	358	358

Regarding the relationship between personal factors and turnover intension, Table 4 shown that none of the HR practices were, significantly correlated to the withdrawal intension of employees in public Universities.

### 2.3. The Relationship between HR Practices and Turnover Intension

Pearson product moment correlation analysis was carried out to investigate the relationship between facets of HR practices and their turnover intension. Table 5 depicted that as expected all the HR practices except compensation were negatively related to the turnover intension of employees.

**Table 5: The Relationship between HR Practices and Turnover Intension**

		Recruitment	Appraisal	supervision	Training	Compensation	Relation
Turnover intent	Pearson	-.051	-.057	-.127*	-.108*	.040	-.021
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.335	.285	.016	.041	.455	.698
	N	358	358	358	358	358	358

**Source: Field Survey**

According to the data in Table 5 supervisor support and training and development opportunities were significantly and negatively related to employees turnover intension ( $r = -0.27, P < 0.05$ ;  $r = -0.108, P < 0.05$ ) respectively. Similarly Bhat (2014) conducted a correlation analysis study to investigate the relationship between HR practices and employee turnover intentions. The result revealed that training and development opportunities were found to be significantly related to employee turnover intension.

Extensive recruitment and careful selection ( $r = -0.051, P = 0.335$ ), compensation and benefits ( $r = 0.040, P = 0.455$ ) and labour relation ( $r = -0.021, P = 0.698$ ) were not significantly related to turnover intension, although the relationship is positive for compensation as seen from Table 5. But the relationship is negative for recruitment and selection and labour relation.

Table 5 also depicted that there is statistically significant and positive relationship among the HR practices themselves. This indicates if there is one HR practice that is well managed and implemented this has an implication on the remaining HR practices.

**2.4. The Effect of HR Practices on Employee Turnover Intension**

With regard to HR facets predicting the intension to leave multiple linear regression analysis was carried out. According to the data presented in Table 5, there is a statistically significant relationship between the facets of HR practices and employees turnover intension ( $P\text{-value} < 0.05$ ).

Table 6: Regression Analysis of HR Practices on Turnover Intension

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.221a	.049	.033	.76459	.049	2.999	6	351	.007

a. Predictors: (Constant), Relationship, Recruitment, Compensation, Training, Appraisal, Support

**Source: Field Survey**

According to the data in Table 6, HR practices were found to have a significant impact on turnover intension of employees. All the variables of HR practices explained 4.9 % of the variance in withdrawal intension. Thus, when HR practices are improved and well implemented, turnover intension tends to down with it. Previous studies done on the impacts of HR practices on lecturer turnover intension have also showed that by applying appropriate HR practices universities may increase organizational commitment and there by the turnover intension (Darougheha et al. 2013).

**Table 7: Hierarchical Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Turnover Intension on Predictor Variables**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.472	.185		18.798	.000
	Recruitment	-.005	.076	-.005	-.061	.952
	Appraisal	.006	.064	.007	.093	.926
	Support	-.148	.069	-.175	-2.149	.032
	Training	-.110	.071	-.122	-1.548	.123
	Compensation	.195	.081	.175	2.399	.017
	Relationship	-.018	.078	-.017	-.230	.818

a. Dependent Variable: Intension to leave

Source: **Field Survey**

From Table 7, it is shown that compensation and supervisory support were the most powerful predictor of employee turnover intension in public universities (B= 0.175, P=0.017; B= 0.175, P= 0.032) respectively. A study made by Hong et al. (2012) found out similar association that there is a significant relationship between employee turnover intension and supervisor support. Moreover, Allen et al. (2003) also found out that supervisor support was significantly and negatively related to the actual turnover and turnover intension.

However as shown in Table 7, recruitment and selection is negatively related to employee turnover intension although it was not significant (B= -0.005, P= 0.952), performance appraisal practices was insignificantly but negatively related to employee turnover intension (B= -0.007, P= 0.926), and training and development program was also failed to predict turnover intension of employees (B= -0.122, P= 0.123). However, labour relation is the least powerful predictor of employee turnover intension (B= -0.017, P= 0.818).

### 3. Conclusion

The ultimate goal of this study was to examine the effects of HR practices on employee’s turnover intension. Of all the HR practices considered in this study the impact of supervisor support and compensation was significant. Therefore, it is support and benefit arrangement in place that are powerful in determining the turnover intention at universities.

Similar to previous researches, the result showed that collectively the HR practices significantly predicted the staff turnover intension at universities. What was not consistent with the previous findings is that not all HR practices significantly contributed to the prediction.

Therefore, though all the HR practices are necessary to retain employees, there is a variation among the aspects in terms of their prediction power of withdrawal intension. This suggests that a positive relationship exists between the extents to which organizations implement HR practices to reduce the intension to quite.

#### **4. Recommendation**

The study result revealed that there is a variation among the HR practices in their prediction of academic staff commitment and their turnover intension. Accordingly, the influence of supervisor support and compensation was so significant compared to the other human resource practices and this demand due attention of the HR practitioners at universities.

But collectively all the HR practices significantly predicted the turnover intension of employees. Therefore, the HR practices should be well managed both individually and as a bundle so that employees would reciprocate this in the form of higher intension to remain with the organization.

Surprisingly, compensation as an aspect of HR practices was found to be positively and significantly influenced the turnover intension. Therefore, universities are better to consider and indentify really whether academicians tend to leave their job more when they are compensated.

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