



## Research Article

Volume-03|Issue-05|2023

**A Descriptive Analysis of Strategies for Reducing Voluntary Employee Turnover in the Current Business Environment**Dr. Joel Chagadama<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. Desire Luamba<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Marvin L. J. Blye<sup>3</sup>, Dr. Kevin C. James<sup>4</sup>, Dr. Sada H. Jaman<sup>5</sup><sup>1</sup>DBA-Finance, President, Start Light Consulting LLC, Manassas, VA-USA<sup>2</sup>DBA-Finance, CEO, Star Light Consulting LLC, Manassas, VA-USA<sup>3</sup>DBA-Accounting, Department of Transportation Development, City of Baltimore, MD-USA<sup>4</sup>DBA-International Business Management, Sub-Contractors Manager L3Harris Technologies Inc., Palm Bay, FL USA<sup>5</sup>DBA-Information System, Instructor at LaGuardia Community College, Queens, NY-USA**Article History**

Received: 29.08.2023

Accepted: 07.09.2023

Published: 22.09.2023

**Citation**Chagadama, J. *et al.* (2023). A Descriptive Analysis of Strategies for Reducing Voluntary Employee Turnover in the Current Business Environment. *Indiana Journal of Economics and Business Management*, 3(5), 1-7.

**Abstract:** A skilled and experienced workforce gives an organization a competitive advantage. Organizations that can persuade their most valuable asset, the employee, to stay employed over a prolonged period drastically improve their chance of survival and enjoy continued success; however, convincing them to stay is one of the toughest challenges for managers. Furthermore, replacing key employees is very costly, and organizations must develop a fully consolidated policy that entices their employees to stay employed and committed to the organizational strategic plans. This study aims to critically analyze the various studies on reducing voluntary employee turnover, highlight factors responsible for employee departure, and the initiatives that can be applied to persuade them to stay. Recent devastating natural disasters, the raging effects of the covid 19 pandemic, technological enhancement, innovation, and globalization have brought stiff competition for a skilled and knowledgeable workforce. As the study is descriptive, several secondary articles are analyzed to summarize and synthesize fragmented knowledge and organize the literature review in a terse format. Therefore, the literature review will present traditional and contemporary strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover. Additionally, more emphasis is put on factors such as the leadership style of superiors, ability to exercise control concerning decision-making and problem-solving, desire for career advancement and skills development, conducive working environments, and ever-increasing aspiration for retention of key employees.

**Keywords:** Employees, Voluntary Employee Turnover, Literature Review, Recent Trends

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**INTRODUCTION**

Many companies struggle to preserve their workforce in this dynamic and complex business landscape. Many organizations are still trying to recover from the adverse effects of COVID-19, compounded by severe natural disasters that have significantly altered work patterns. Organizational success hinges on a competent, committed, and experienced workforce that can provide quality products and services. This is no hidden fact that employees play a crucial role in the sustainability and development of an organization. Businesses need comprehensive strategies to entice their most valuable assets, the employees, to buy in and be part of their long-term strategic plans. Losing a key, experienced, knowledgeable employee can adversely affect product quality, production, and efficiency, ultimately affecting the business's bottom line. The organizational competitive advantage and bottom line are determined and driven by a robust, committed workforce. When employees leave an organization, they go with knowledge, experience, culture, and value system, which the competition can capture and utilize to get ahead. A high voluntary turnover rate also harms the company's image as it might send wrong signals to prospective employees and customers.

**What is Reducing Voluntary Employee Turnover?**

Employee turnover is a human resource metric used to understand the employer-employee relationship. Voluntary turnover denotes employees' desire to terminate their employment solely on personal decision. Voluntary employee turnover can be instigated by several reasons, including relocation, accepting a job offer from another organization, retirement, or any other reasons the employee knows. Organizations need not only to attract talent but also strive to keep and mold them into the much-needed experience while helping them build a unique skill set that can enhance their organizational standing. As per (1), an experienced, dedicated, and knowledgeable workforce enables the organization to maintain its productivity, quality, profitability, and competitive advantage. Therefore, the primary reason for reducing voluntary employee turnover is to prevent the migration of talented employees to other organizations (2).

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study is a literature review of articles on reducing voluntary employee turnover and has the following objectives:

- Critically analyze various works done in analyzing causes of voluntary employee turnover.
- To highlight the reasons for voluntary employee turnover and the reduction strategies used.
- To highlight current business trends organizations use to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

## METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive and based mainly on secondary data. The secondary data comprises books, reports, newspaper articles, and research journals.

### Reasons for Voluntary Employee Turnover

Employee turnover is the rate at which a firm serves its employment relationship with its employees during a specific time frame and is typically grouped into voluntary and involuntary categories (3). Voluntary employee turnover is an employee-initiated termination, whereas involuntary employee turnover is solely based on the employer's prerogatives to eliminate an existing employment relationship. Examples of voluntary include numerous factors, such as poor working environment, job dissatisfaction, job insecurity, poor remuneration packages, poor working relationships, lack of job autonomy, and nonexistent career development opportunities (4). Similarly, the employer can let go of its employee(s) for reasons such as poor job performance or behavior, company restructuring effort resulting in downsizing, or loss of business due to market factors such as competition and change in customer taste (1). Therefore, understanding the type of turnover will help the organization identify its weaknesses and aid in addressing the deficiencies and recruiting efforts to improve employee experience and business planning.

### Challenges of Reducing Voluntary Employee Turnover

Voluntary employee turnover is a significant problem, especially in a highly competitive labor market, where organizations constantly seek innovative ways to reduce it and preserve their most valuable assets, "the employees." When an employee severs ties with the organization, the organization loses the skillset, experience, culture, and values that the employee embodies, which can then be captured and utilized by the competition. Furthermore, they are a sizable body of research that documents the adverse effects of turnover on performance, including substantial productivity losses, operational disruption, and organizational forgetting (3; 4). In addition, (5) deliberated on the exorbitant cost associated with replacing the departing experienced employees and how significantly it impacts the organizational bottom line and its sustainability. According to (6), the cost to replace resigned workers can be as high as 150 to 200% of the leaving employee's compensation. Therefore, if voluntary turnover is high, businesses experience high operational costs.

In addition to personnel replacement costs, other hidden costs include lost productivity, workplace safety issues, and decreased morale. According to (7), a high employee turnover rate negatively affects any business's ability to meet its total production capacity and adequately satisfy its customers. Voluntary employee turnover creates a vacuum that, if not filled adequately, can hamper production capabilities, efficiency, and product quality (3). Furthermore, leaving employees takes with them their specialized training, knowledge, and skills, usually not found in organizational manuals and often difficult to replace or replicate. A similar view is expressed in another work, where the authors discuss the challenges companies with high voluntary employee turnover rate faces in their operational process when employees leave with their knowledge, creating a vacuum (8). In addition, departing employees leave with their knowledge, expertise, and, in most cases, trade secrets that competitors can capture, giving them a competitive advantage. For example, Meta, a USA company, recently employed skilled disgruntled Twitter employees who helped it to develop and launch a social media platform, Threads, to be a direct competition.

### Reducing Voluntary Employee Turnover Strategies

Reducing voluntary employee turnover is also pertinent to organizational growth and stability. (1), in their studies, identified three critical strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover in the construction industry: improving human resource management, providing good working conditions, and employee engagement. Similarly, their study (5) surveyed 52 employees of a private higher education institute in the Philippines. They identified work environment, leadership, reward and recognition, wellness, training, and opportunities for advancement as pertinent to reducing voluntary turnover. A similar study (9) found recognition, rewards, training, career advancement opportunities, effective communication, pay, compensation, and benefits critical to turnover reductions. Also, (10) conducted an investigatory study surveying 140 academic and non-academic staff in Malaysia, concluding that better performance appraisal, working conditions, training and development opportunities, and a better reward system are critical to reducing voluntary employee turnover.

Furthermore, several researchers have opined that reducing voluntary employee turnover is less costly than hiring new employees (9; 3; 11). Some researchers suggested the role of organizational culture, flexible working arrangements, and leadership styles as instrumental in promoting conducive work environments critical to reducing voluntary turnover. For example, (12), in their studies on staff retention in the I.T. sector, emphasize the following strategies: career planning, flexible work time, performance appraisal, financial support, mentoring, and coaching sessions. On the other hand, (13) found that the attrition rate among young

professionals (20-25 years) is very high for the following reasons: slow career growth rate, poor relationship with colleagues and supervisors, and inadequate work-life imbalance. Below are some strategies we found that are universally utilized to help reduce voluntary employee turnover across industries.

#### **Employee Voice and Voluntary Employee Turnover**

Employee voice is an informal and discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns, problems, or opinions about work-related issues intending to bring about improvement or change (14). Several researchers using a range of theoretical frameworks have examined employee voice and concluded that organizations that allow employees to freely voice their concerns without risks of retaliation have healthy work environments critical to voluntary turnover reduction (1; 14; 15). In support, (15) conjectured that organizations that give their employees more opportunities to voice their dissatisfaction related to workplace conditions are more likely to retain them. For example, employees are more likely to remain with an organization they feel is more receptive to their demands and better equipped to address their grievances (3).

#### **Communication and Voluntary Employee Turnover**

Communication is critical to any organization's efforts to reduce voluntary turnover. (15) opined that communication improves employees' sense of identity and creates an environment of openness and trust. Several studies have denoted that organizations that do not have sound strategies to promote open communication are perceived to be procedurally unfair, and employees generally feel unhappy and look for opportunities elsewhere (3; 14; 15). Furthermore, as per (14), open communication is a precursor to a healthy working environment, and leadership should be at the forefront of operating in interpersonal, group, organizational, and intercultural communication. In support, (3), in his studies of the small construction industry, found that better communication from company executives boosts company efforts in reducing voluntary turnover and better employee engagement.

#### **Compensation and Voluntary Employee Turnover**

Compensation is a sensitive topic central to organizational efforts to reduce voluntary turnover. Compensation refers to employee rewards for work through money and benefits (16; 13). According to (17), compensation is the most excellent motivator affecting employee behavior. A review of 2022 scholarly articles identified and reviewed 22 publications on compensation and rewards from different industries and countries, and all confirmed that organizations that are perceived to have equitable, fair compensation packages have low voluntary turnover rates (18; 3; 13). In a study by (17), self-administrated questionnaires were distributed among 600 Parkistanian doctors to examine the effect of compensation on employee retention and turnover

intentions. A statistical analysis of the findings confirmed the intermediation effect of compensation on voluntary employee turnover. In addition, (8) investigated employee satisfaction and concluded that compensation, including basic pay, allowances, and work environment, significantly impacted job satisfaction among academic staff.

#### **Leadership and Voluntary Employee Turnover**

The leadership role is very crucial in reducing voluntary employee turnover. According to (19), responsible leadership has three components: (1) stakeholder culture where employee ethical and social behavior takes precedents, (2) fair and inclusive H.R. practices, and (3) organizational citizenship behavior toward the individuals. In support, nascent research revealed that leaders who constantly express humility positively influence their employees on the job, and as such, their employees exhibit high job satisfaction, performance, and engagement (20). It is, therefore, advisable that leaders exercise humility toward their employees to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Additionally, (1) talks about favorable working conditions, which improve when an employee has a good relationship with the boss. Leadership and management styles play a positive role in ensuring that employees stay longer in organizations and save them the challenges of staff attrition.

#### **Training, Development, and Voluntary Employee Turnover**

The importance of training and employee development can not be understated as the competitive labor market endures. Job-related training improves employees' problem-solving ability, making them confident, motivated, and committed to their jobs; thus, they are more likely to remain with the organization (2). (1) suggests that retaining a well-trained employee is better than wasting the training cost and starting the induction process once again. Training and career development opportunities play a positive role in employee performance and employee professional growth. According to (1), employee employees must continuously be groomed and developed to encourage their performance abilities.

Furthermore, training and career development bring clarity, and employees feel cared for by the organization, making them feel comfortable and unlikely to seek opportunities elsewhere. Their studies (4) show that training and development are motivational tools for reducing voluntary employee turnover while raising employees' commitment to the company. Organizations that invest in training and developing their most essential assets have a lower likelihood of staff turnover. Employees view their leadership more favorably, which helps enhance job satisfaction and reduces voluntary employee turnover.

### **Work Flexibility-Life Balance and Voluntary Employee Turnover**

(21) states that work-life balance is the ability of employees to create and maintain an equilibrium between work and family responsibilities. Work flexibility is an old concept that has recently been gaining momentum and accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic as companies seek comprehensive ways to appeal to employees in stiff labor markets (13). If employees are given the option of workplace flexibility, they will find options to balance their work and life. Especially in the current environment where more emphasis is placed on maintaining work-life equilibrium and employee-driven plasticity, finding a way to support stable schedules could have a sustainable impact on how employers attract and retain workers. An empirical study by (22) performed on a sample of 514 highly educated employees from the Republic of Serbia examined the relationship between turnover intentions and flexible work arrangements. The researchers found that flexible work arrangements and employee engagement positively affect turnover intentions. Flexible working arrangements result in less absenteeism and reduced voluntary employee turnover. Additionally, the availability of flexible work arrangements helps improve employee's work experience as they tackle complex work assignments in a relaxed work environment, which, in turn, leads to higher job satisfaction and reduced voluntary employee turnover.

### **Job Satisfaction and Voluntary Employee Turnover**

Job satisfaction is essential in ensuring an organization retains its employees to maintain its desired production levels by doing everything possible to bring job satisfaction to its employees. According to (2), job satisfaction is achieved when the expectation of employees when joining the organization matches reality. Low job satisfaction is one of the main factors that employees want to leave; conversely, high job satisfaction can retain employees (3). Several previous studies have described previous research on the correlation between job satisfaction and voluntary employee turnover. For example, (22) and (23) revealed that job satisfaction significantly affects voluntary employee turnover. In support, a survey study by (4) found that 51 percent of participants chose job satisfaction as the primary reason they stay employed with an organization. It stands to reason that higher job satisfaction levels reduce voluntary employee turnover rates, as employees' positive perception of their work makes them feel at home and encouraged to stay with their company.

### **HRM**

Human resources management (HRM) development in an industry and organization today proliferates. Human resources become essential to achieving an organization's vision, mission, and objectives. Amid intense industrial competition, companies not only recruit employees based on their

talents and abilities but also must be able to retain them for a prolonged time so they can apply their skills for organizational betterment (21; 23; 2). Using a sampling technique, (24) collected and analyzed data from Human resource professionals and examined the role of HRM in employee retention and organizational citizenship behavior. Their study results indicated that HRM's effectiveness positively impacts employee retention and organizational citizenship behavior. (22) agreed and opined that a high voluntary employee turnover percentage adversely affects the company's finances through increased human resource costs, including recruitment fees, selection and training for new employees, and other expenses such as advertising job advertisements (22). HRM is an important pillar that supports the company in achieving its goals. Reducing voluntary employee turnover requires promoting and creating a work environment that motivates employees to keep working by putting policies and practices that suit their needs. These policies and procedures help prevent employees from leaving while maximizing time spent working on projects and the organization.

### **Performance Appraisal and Voluntary Employee Turnover**

Performance appraisal is the assessment of individual performance to the overall contribution of the organization. It serves as an interface between management and employees. An effective performance appraisal will result in a satisfied, motivated, and committed employee (25). Employee performance appraisal has a significant positive effect on employee retention. Performance appraisals make employees feel valued, and the division of tasks and targets makes employees feel well-managed. Well-managed employee performance appraisals will reduce employees' willingness to resign as employees feel well-managed. A survey study by (26) investigates the effect of performance appraisal on employee turnover intention among employees in a company in Sibu, Sarawak. Study results showed that performance appraisal influenced by motivation motives, such as reward or other recognition, leads to subsided turnover intention and higher job satisfaction. In addition, according to (27), good performance appraisal will help companies keep track of their employees and also help employees improve their performance by identifying their weak areas—a good performance appraisal results in a better employee-supervisor relationship, resulting in a great workplace. Performance appraisal regarding career development significantly motivates employees to sustain themselves on the job and decreases the intention to leave the workplace (26).

### **Reducing Voluntary Employee Turnover: Recent Trends**

The demand for skilled employees continues to rise as companies battle for talent in tight labor markets. Employees have many choices, giving them the edge in compensation negotiations, benefits, and geography.

According to (25), the shortfall of skilled labor could go up to ten million by the end of this decade, and companies must invest much in protecting their current workforce to maintain a competitive edge. Organizations that understand the importance of reducing voluntary employee turnover will have an edge in the market. Several companies are paying attention to corporate social initiatives as a tool for reducing voluntary employee turnover. Recent studies have found that new generations are more attracted to organizations focusing on social initiatives, employee well-being, leveraging technology, and DEI initiatives (26; 3; 27). Therefore, the organization must understand generational preferences and use that as a tool to attract and reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Many companies experiment with their employees by treating them as customers to build solid relationships and motivate them to stay engaged. Some researchers also indicate that employees follow a life cycle, and their aspirations differ at different stages. Thus, understanding and fulfilling their expectations will make them retain their employees. Focusing on talent can transform work culture and business outcomes. Organizations that leverage a positive work culture that values diversity, equity, and inclusion position themselves as the "destination company" to attract top talent. Work culture happens organically. However, a positive, inclusive culture requires intentional effort. Proactively building community and encouraging employee engagement is essential to retaining skilled employees. Building trust through open communication and prioritizing workforce well-being can help improve engagement, reducing turnover and high costs.

### **Corporate Social Initiative and Voluntary Employee Turnover**

As human beings, we have different aspirations for the job. Traditionally, financial benefits tend to play a significant role in the retention of employees. However, times are changing, and so are employee preferences of an ideal company. According to (25), some employees prefer less payment over participating in corporate social initiatives. The corporate social initiatives of an organization are conducive to establishing a sound social image for the company, which in turn progresses the recognition of its employees. Studies have shown that employees' perceptions of corporate social initiatives can effectively influence employee attitudes and behaviors (28). In support, (25), in his study, found a positive relationship between employee participation in the corporate social initiative and their level of motivation. Corporate social participation helps companies with branding and employees' willingness to identify with the company, thereby helping in its effort to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

### **Branding**

It is becoming increasingly crucial for employers to prioritize employer branding to attract and

retain their skilled employees to stay viable and competitive. Employer branding is a relatively new strategy for recruiting and retaining the best talent within an increasingly competitive job market (29). Organizations to project a desirable image should devote significant resources to enhance their image through marketing and outreach initiatives. Businesses should develop a compelling social media presence to help build a strong employer brand that prospective and current employees want. Employer branding has become an increasingly valuable concept as employees elect to work for companies that align with their values and beliefs. As (30) pointed out, employers' brand power allows them to emotionally appeal to and engage their employees. Employer branding can also increase employee engagement and job satisfaction to help reduce voluntary employee turnover.

### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Culture**

A systematic review of scholarly literature identifies the DEI as a novice concept organizations use across the talent management life cycle (e.g., outreach and recruiting, training and development, and retention). Investing in and promoting DEI initiatives is critical to improving the employee experience and positively impacting employee retention (31). More organizations are now acknowledging the importance of diversity and are shifting focus on ensuring diverse demographic representation while promoting an equitable and inclusive work environment. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are intertwined concepts becoming a critical cornerstone of the culture employees want. A survey of U.S. employees and job seekers by (31) found that 76% of job searchers evaluate diversity when considering organizations and job offers. Today's top talent wants to work with organizations that value diversity and prioritize it in the workplace. DEI can cover many topics, including gender equity, pay equity, and pay transparency, and many countries are introducing legislation and laws to promote DEI in workplaces. Therefore, organizations must pay attention to DEI and implement strategies that enhance it or risk missing out on quality and diverse talent.

### **Leverage Technology.**

Automation can help deliver a robust experience not dependent on employee bandwidth. The brutality brought about by the pandemic has forced many employers to revisit how employees can perform their everyday functions efficiently while working remotely. According to a study by the (32), the number of American people working from home more than tripled from 5.7% in 2019 to 17.9% by 2021, a trend expected to continue as more employees with jobs that can be performed from home elect to stay out of the office. Many organizations have modified their work models to accommodate remote or hybrid work arrangements, and as a result, technology has become pivotal to maintaining productivity and performance. A more secure, reliable, and robust technological infrastructure enables

businesses to adapt quickly to new work dynamics while appealing to prospective employees and keeping current ones engaged. Staying abreast of new technological advancement and the ability to adapt is paramount to sustaining a healthy work environment and reducing voluntary employee turnover.

### Flexible work arrangements

The flexible working arrangement is a strategy that started well before the pandemic as many businesses searched for ways to attract and retain talent in a competitive labor market. Flexible working arrangements allow employees to balance their work and personal lives while allowing the business to meet the growing labor demands. Flexible work can add immeasurable value by working around employees' needs and helping reduce voluntary employee turnover. Furthermore, flexible work arrangements have the potential to expose the business to a pool of new, exceptionally talented professionals who could not fit into a role due to restrictive working terms and a lack of flexible working opportunities. Extending flexibility to employees will motivate teams and increase job satisfaction. Research has shown that a flexible working arrangement is one of the principal instruments for retaining employees in the workplace (13). (30) discovered that employees prefer to work in organizations that provide flexible schedules and support knowledge creation in the new typical business environment.

### Remote or hybrid work arrangements

The COVID-19 pandemic has enhanced the advancement of remote or hybrid work arrangements, and organizations unwilling to offer this work arrangement are losing out in the talent competition. The remote work revolution has been gathering pace, with an astonishing 94% of people working remotely during the pandemic electing to continue working remotely. Perceived benefits included flexible schedules, no time-consuming daily commutes, and a chance to spend this additional time on personal development or with family. The hybrid work schedule is making the traditional 9 to 5 work schedule obsolete as employees seek flexibility in their work schedule. Ultimately, as long as quality work is produced, it does not matter where or how it gets done – that is the new mindset for today's workforce.

## CONCLUSION

Employees are critical to the success of a business and, as such, are regarded as the most crucial asset for the organization. Their contribution is immense to the profitability and growth of any organization. Maintaining a highly productive, fully engaged, and experienced workforce brings innovation and paves the way for sustainable development within the organization. Employees will continue searching for greener pastures and openings at organizations they feel will appreciate, support, and share their values. Businesses that provide opportunities to their employees and genuinely attempt

to meet their expectations in addressing and promoting an equally welcoming culture will reap employee retention benefits. This study focused on the literature review of historical studies on reducing voluntary employee turnover in different sectors of the economy. However, the abundance of the material on turnover makes the task very tough to assimilate and synthesize concisely. Nevertheless, I have tried to cover the relevant strategies that expert researchers have found to aid in reducing voluntary employee turnover. Furthermore, attention is paid to the new trends that have started making their presence felt in the market.

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