Staff Retention in the IT Pandemic Context

Brigitta Iulia Szabo, MSc
West University of Timișoara

Mariana Balaci, PhD
West University of Timișoara

Abstract

This study focuses on IT employee retention, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Retaining and employing young IT professionals today is a challenging task for human resources employees. We believe that this is a topical and very relevant topic for the HR field as most companies are facing staff turnover, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also known that the IT sector is very dynamic and constantly evolving, companies need manpower and competitiveness among employers is high. In addition, a poor retention strategy can have a negative effect on the productivity and work quality of the IT department. And these are some good reasons for a company to invest in a retention strategy.

Our research is qualitative in nature and we have sought to identify aspects of employee motivation and satisfaction with the benefits they receive from their employers. Understanding the real needs of IT employees was also one of the aims of this research.

The results of the investigation indicated a strong relevance of retention means such as the salary, the team and the good relationship with colleagues, the working environment and the development opportunities available to employees within the company.

Keywords: IT; retention; turnover; engagement; pandemic; pull-push factors

Introduction

Nowadays we are moving more and more towards the digitalization of everything around us; we need to implement software and programs in most production programs, as such the IT field is very dynamic, in demand and present in all professional activities. And for this reason, IT is a very dynamic and attractive field, with an increasing need for IT specialists in all sectors of activity. The fluctuation of personnel in this field has become inevitable in recent years, supported by the high demand for such specialists on the labour market, but also by the fact that they have the possibility of practicing this profession remotely and thus do not need to have the same location with the employing company. This high turnover in IT can have some of the most undesirable repercussions for organizations.

For decades leaders, managers and HR professionals have tried to understand the reasons why employees leave their jobs and realize that turnover is resource-intensive, so implementing retention strategies is crucial. Retention and turnover are two issues that companies face very often. Since companies invest a lot of money in recruiting top talent and developing them professionally, staff turnover is a big loss for employers. Therefore, HR managers are trying to implement retention strategies and prevent turnover.

To minimize the costs associated with staff turnover, companies are implementing staff retention strategies (Leena James, 2012, 80). Employees are capital for the organization. For retaining people who show commitment and talent, managers and HR specialists, need to put great emphasis on employee satisfaction. In most organizations a high level of employee retention is desired (Phillips, 1945, 2). Employee retention involves taking steps to encourage employees to stay with the organization for as long as possible.

Staff retention and turnover theories

Chaminade defines staff retention as a voluntary action by the company to design an environment that creates a strong employer-employee bond and retains them for the long term (Leena James, 2012, 80). Staff retention can be defined as either an organisation ability to retain employees or as a process, which provides motivation and encouragement for employees to stay in the organisation for a longer period, which benefits both parties (Gorde, 2019, 331).

Pull and push factors are an important part of retention management. Positive attraction to a new opportunity is a pull factor, whereby employees are looking for alternatives to their current job even if they are happy and satisfied. In these cases, it is essential for the employer or manager to understand the value, effectiveness, productivity of that employee and to identify the reasons why that employee is looking for alternatives and to understand the expectations from the current job. Providing these elements to the employee can lead to the development of organizational commitment on the part of the employee and long-term employee retention. (Taylor, 2010, 334-336). According to the literature these factors consist of the following: attractive salary, career advancement opportunities, challenge, security, a good company location, attractive organizational culture, work-life balance, more autonomy or freedom, reputation of the organization, social responsibility of the organization or benefits offered.

The other important factor is the push factor. At the root of a push factor is an unpleasant situation in the organization that causes the employee to go elsewhere to satisfy their professional needs (Taylor, 2010, 334-336). So, push factors are issues that push the employee towards the exit door. At the same time, they can be controlled because they occur in the company and can be avoided or ameliorated.

Managers have also observed that staff turnover or turnover affects productivity at the company level, as employees who intend to leave the company soon tend to neglect their duties, and new employees may be inefficient in the early stages of their

career. Turnover is the rotation of the workforce around the labour market, across companies, jobs or fields (Abassi, 2000, 333).

Employees usually leave organizations either because they have started to dislike the job or the organisation or have received other more attractive offers. This type of turnover does not include promotion, transfer or other internal job moves (Hom, 2020, 3-6). Reasons for voluntary turnover could include non-mandatory retirement, resignation due to spouse relocation, resignation for a better job. These reasons are based on the employee's personal choices (Maertz, 1998, 50-51). Abelson delineated two types of turnover: avoidable and unavoidable. We speak of turnover or unavoidable turnover when the employer cannot control the situation and the employee leaves the organisation for reasons such as family relocation, full-time care, medical disability or death. While avoidable turnover is caused by dissatisfaction with the job, and this can be resolved and even prevented early on (Abelson, 1987, 381-386). In the 21st century companies are resorting to numerous strategies in order to retain employees, among which the most common are family and lifestyle friendly programs, telecommuting, flexible hours. These strategies are particularly successful among female employees, Baby Boomers and Y (millennials) (Hom, 2020, 7). Krackhardt and Porter (1985) observed a snowball effect whereby employees in the same social network tend to resign in groups.

Finally, turnover has multiple consequences and effects on the company, especially in terms of costs. There are tangible and intangible costs. Tangible costs are easy to calculate and include HR staff time (salary, benefits, exit interview), manager time (salary, benefits, employee retention attempt, exit interview), unused vacation pay, recruitment campaign, training, other costs (e.g., staff leasing, employee overtime pay). The intangible costs are harder to calculate and can be much more damaging: loss of diversity of the workforce, poorer quality of work, loss of customers, competition - if the departing employee opens a new business, snowball effect - more employees decide to leave, damage to teamwork. Positive effects of staff turnover on the company include cost savings - if the tasks of the job are performed by the rest of the employees, cost savings - by hiring a less experienced person, increased productivity - by recruiting a more motivated and productive employee, increased diversity in the workplace or the possibility to reorganise jobs (Hom, 2020, 24-32).

Several theories emerge from the literature that identify and explain factors that influence turnover and retention strategies. The first formal turnover model was developed in 1958 by political scientist James March and economist Herbert Simon. According to this model, when an employee feels that the rewards and benefits offered by the employer do not match the effort put in, the relationship between employer and employee is out of balance. This imbalance makes the employee consider leaving the organisation and think about how easy it is to join another company. So this model is based on organisational balance. According to this model, the decision to leave the organisation is caused by two factors: the ease of career reorientation and the desire

to move, to change. The model did not take into account key factors that can influence retention, such as organisational stress or commitment (March, 1958, 517).

Mobley's model exposes the intermediate link between employee (dis)satisfaction and turnover. Thus, the model describes the procedure by which disappointed employees decide to leave the firm where they are employed.

Job embeddedness theory is a relatively new approach to staff retention, as embedded, integrated employees choose to stay despite the problems or dissatisfactions they encounter. Embeddedness in the workplace can be seen as a net or spider's web in which an individual can get stuck. When employees are entangled in this web the likelihood of remaining in their current position is high. Embedding theory offers a way to find out why people stay in a company. This theory is also known as retention theory. The theory is based on three dimensions: ties - the extent to which employees are connected to people or activities, fit - the extent to which the job fits with the community from which they come or aspects of the employee's life, and sacrifice - the ease with which ties are broken, what the employee would give up if they left the organisation. (Mitchell, 2001, 1104).

Herzberg's dual factor theory is one of the most popular theories of job satisfaction and is referenced in most retention literature. Job satisfaction can be associated with retention at some level because a fulfilled employee, whose needs are met by the employer, is hard to lose. Herzberg proposed the dual factor theory, according to which satisfaction and dissatisfaction are mutually exclusive dimensions. According to the theory the factors that relate to satisfaction are called 'motivational factors'. These factors are recognition, responsibility, achievement, promotion or career growth and opportunities for personal development. These factors are called motivational because their existence increases motivation. On the other hand, factors that are related to dissatisfaction are called 'hygiene factors' and they are meant to prevent dissatisfaction but do not provide satisfaction to employees. These are issues that are associated with pay, benefits, workplace conditions, interpersonal relations and company policies. In Maslow's pyramid, motivational factors are associated with higher order needs, while hygiene factors are lower order needs. Thus, when an employee is given job security they will not be satisfied, instead they will be less dissatisfied, because job satisfaction is a hygiene factor, according to Herzberg's theory. (Hur, 2018, 330-332).

Nazia and Begum (2013) conducted a study on the influence of the three Rs: respect, recognition, reward, on employee retention. To retain the best employees and maintain their job satisfaction employers need to implement the three R's: respect, recognition and reward. Respect is esteem, special attention given to people. Respect is the basis of employee retention, and recognition and reward will not work if employees are not respected. Recognition is defined as an act by which an employee's performance is clearly perceived and appropriately appreciated. Many problems arise because management does not pay attention to employee performance or employee needs. Rewards are the extra benefits that the company provides in addition to respect and

recognition, which makes employees motivated. According to research, of the three Rs, rewards have the greatest impact on employee retention.

The Zinger Model defines organizational engagement as the art and science of connecting employees to company strategies, roles, performance, growth, organization, community, customers, energy and happiness, with the goal of transforming everyday work into results and performance. This model provides a definition of engagement and an outline that includes the fourteen elements of the model (Zinger 2012).

Methodology

The topic of the present research is IT staff retention in the pandemic period. The IT field is a very dynamic, constantly changing and developing field and for this reason the IT workforce requires a different approach. Companies today are trying to offer more and more benefits to IT employees to attract and retain them. Moreover, most companies are investing a lot of resources and capital in their employees, training them internally, giving them the opportunity to obtain various certifications, and because of this they are trying very hard to retain them in the company. On the other hand, headhunting practices, which are becoming more and more popular among corporations, make the work of an HR specialist very difficult.

It is therefore very important for employers to know the needs and expectations of their employees, listening to them and offering them exactly what they need, creating a close link between employee and employer.

Research aims and objectives

The aim of the research is to find out what IT employees want from their employer. Through this study we want to find out as much as possible about employee needs, trends in retention practices, organisational commitment and the factors that trigger it. Essentially, the aim is to uncover those elements that attract and retain IT employees during this period.

Based on this well-defined goal, the following objectives have been developed:
- Checking the degree of organisational commitment of the interviewees - with this objective we want to find out whether there is a sense of organisational commitment in the subjects, how it has developed and how it manifests itself.
- To find out how familiar interviewees are with staff retention strategies.
- To identify the retention strategies used before and during the pandemic in the companies where the interviewees work.
- Identify and analyse the elements that increase the retention of the interviewees during the pandemic - setting this objective makes it possible to identify all the factors that are important for the employee and provides the possibility to define a top of these elements.

Data collection method and research instrument

For the present research we chose a qualitative method, the semi-structured individual interview. The interview was chosen because by choosing "a qualitative research method - we use a small number of cases but try to get the richest possible information from each subject. (...) we go in depth, trying to find out as much as possible from each subject, capturing both the specific elements of each case and the elements common to all." (Şandor, 2013, 137)

The semi-structured interview "addresses pre-determined themes and hypotheses - like structured interviews - but the questions and their sequence are not pre-determined - as in the case of unstructured interviews" (Chelcea, 2001, 129), thus giving us the possibility to intervene at any time with additional questions depending on curiosity or the level of development of the theme in question.

Furthermore, the interview has the following benefits: "flexibility - the possibility of obtaining specific answers to each question, observation and recording of nonverbal behaviour, studying issues in more depth (...), collecting spontaneous responses, etc." (Obrad, 2018, 69-70).

Interviews were conducted online using the Google Meet platform. Subjects were contacted using the social networks Facebook, WhatsApp and LinkedIn.

Study population and sampling method

Respondents were determined according to the research topic; thus, the mandatory criterion was that subjects were employed in the IT field, holding a job during the pandemic. Subjects were almost equally divided on gender, not equally divided by work experience.

As a sampling method, we chose a non-probability method: the snowball technique. This technique guides us to "identify new cases of interest based on information from the investigated cases" (Şandor, 2013, 136). Thus, the subjects already interviewed provided the contacts of other people employed in IT, whom we contacted, and they in turn suggested that we contacted other people of their acquaintance. Thus, like a snowball rolling, the sample became larger and larger until desired result was reached.

Limitations of the research

In the present research we encountered several limitations that made the researcher's work more difficult. Among these limitations are:
- Conducting exclusively qualitative research, which ensures narrower results compared to a research involving several research methods.
- The possibility of being subjective, both in the process of data collection and interpretation.

- Conducting interviews online, which excludes the observation of nonverbal behaviour (mimicry, gestures) and paraverbal language (voice volume, intonation, pauses in speech, emotions).
- The sample is not representative of the whole population studied and a biased sample may be generated.

Research results

Based on the interview guide, we discussed with people employed in the IT sector about the phenomenon of staff retention in their field, especially during the pandemic period. In the first phase each subject was introduced to the topic and purpose of the discussion and asked for consent to record and process the information.

So, to begin with, subjects were asked to describe the company they work for. 8 people stated that they work in consulting or IT service companies, in companies such as Memory, Atos, IBM, MHP - A Porche Company, and 3 people work in multinational automotive companies such as Continental or Hella, where they provide internal support. 2 out of 11 works in management positions, the rest of the respondents work in executive positions such as SAP Consultant, Application Developer, Application Support Specialist, System Administrator, SAP Authorisation Specialist and Programmer.

"*I was attracted by the opportunity to discover the area of management...., of course, and the difference in salary compared to other companies, i.e. to the company I left*"; (R. A.) "*I have the opportunity to develop and that I can learn a lot of new things. And that was the main reason why er... I chose to come here to this company.*" (P. A)... "*I can grow. And obviously learn a lot of new things.*" (M. A.). Another 3 put the collective first when they accepted the job offer. Still 3 other interviewees decided to get a job because they felt that the company offered them stability. Respondents expressed themselves as follows: "*First of all, being a big company, I think it gives you more stability. Yes. So, I've been working for eleven years in this company (laughing), so... I think you don't have this fear that you might lose your job, because there are a lot of vacancies. Even if one project ends there's the possibility to move on to another project.*" (S. E.); D. K. stated that she works at "*a big firm. And big companies are usually secure*", and M. A. said: "*it is a multinational company and with a reputation and a long experience in Romania, it seems to me a stable job that gives you the certainty that for the next 5 years (...) your job is secure*".

And 1 interviewee considers the peace of mind and the lack of pressure at work to be important: "*at Hella I am the System Administrator on the internal side. That is, if something went wrong inside the company. I don't provide services to other customers. It's more reassuring, it's safer and it's more in order. Why? Because it's not... there's not as much pressure compared to how you have a customer like Adidas.*"

In the question about organisational commitment, we explained to employees what commitment to the organisation actually means and tried to define their level of

commitment. This set of questions sounds like this: How strong is your connection to the company you work for? How does this connection manifest itself? Has it been influenced in any way by the pandemic? 5 respondents stated that there is a strong connection between the employee and the company, there is attachment to the company, to the collective.

We asked how this commitment manifests itself, what strengthens this commitment? Respondents said that the basis of people's engagement in the company is either the existence of development programmes, team building, charitable or sustainable programmes in which they participate together and represent the company, R. A. reported the following: "*activities like Reforestation Day, for example, where the company provides different materials, in this case some very small trees and colleagues from the company get together for a weekend and we go and do tree planting Workshops, team-buildings done, during the time of the pandemic unfortunately online but personally, you know except for the fact that we didn't see each other physically it was a very nice interaction online as well*.", be it the passion towards the job and implicitly towards the company,

2 interviewees stated that they do not feel a direct connection with the company, as an entity, that they work for, but are in a close bond with the collective, which is due to the company. D. K. told us "*With colleagues, for example, it is strong because we talk every day. So there's not a day when we're not going to talk. And with the company... as I don't go to the office, I can't say that I have a certain connection now*." and B. E.: "*At the moment I think it's very strong, but not necessarily with the company. More with the departments and the people I interact with... there is, I don't know, a very strong connection between me and the rest of the colleagues*." The rest of the respondents stated that there is no connection with the employer, either due to lack of interest from the company. Thus, the level of engagement is high for those who receive something in return from the company, such as experiences, intangibles that reinforce the sense of belonging to the community. Companies that don't give enough attention to employees are at high risk of losing them at any time, because they are not connected to the company, they don't identify with it, and they are not emotionally engaged. At the same time, it is clear from the employees' responses that the pandemic has not affected organisational commitment, if anything it has brought them closer and the company is the context for strengthening relationships.

To the next question, do you think the work you do on a daily basis is properly recognised, 8 out of 11 respondents say that their work is appreciated and recognised both financially and emotionally, through feedback or praise etc., while the rest of the respondents said that their work is not properly appreciated and recognised. Therefore, most of the employees get financial rewards and regular feedback, praise, which is a very important factor and which employees need. Therefore, it is often used in staff retention practices.

The fifth question in the interview guide sounds like this: Is there that sense of group or community belonging at work? Has it been affected by the pandemic? The employees

interviewed feel that the pandemic has brought benefits, with the IT area not being affected economically as much as other areas. Thus, they feel that the pandemic has brought them together, they have spent more time talking on daily calls, and links have been strengthened, even if they have not had physical contact. 7 interviewees said that there is a close-knit community and a sense of belonging to the group prevails. C. L.: "*I think there is. So here, the company being small, I say we get along, we are like a community, just like you say. We get along well. I mean, we also go out, so to speak*"; E. S.: "*Yes. We formed a group. Because of the pandemic we didn't meet much. (...) but I think we got attached to each other during the pandemic because we had daily meetings with colleagues on the project. (...) But we as a group on the project kept in touch daily. And I think that it formed, yes, a kind of group membership. So we became attached to each other*";

To get a clearer picture of the company's role in collective formation we asked interviewees how companies encourage these interpersonal relationships. Among the interviewees' responses were: extra work events (party, festival, charity, etc.), team building, delegations to other countries, informal outings, training courses or mentoring. So companies support the formation and development of workplace communities through various methods specific to company policy, but they have a common goal: the formation of close relationships, a network and a close-knit community so that it is difficult for employees to leave.

To the question Do you think you identify with the company's objectives and the results it wants to achieve? in the interview guide, 9 interviewees stated that they are informed about the company's objectives and identify with them at the level of the position they hold. All of them contribute a small part to the achievement of the big goal, and 2 respondents said that the company's goals are too far away from them, and they do not take an interest in them. The next question opens a new topic for discussion, staff retention: In your opinion, how important is a staff retention strategy and what benefits can it bring to the company, especially in these times? Why? The respondents are familiar with the phenomenon of staff retention and 10 out of 11 think that a staff retention strategy is very important, especially in the IT sector, where there is a great need for specialists. R. A.: "*Yes, it is very important and moreover, I can say that you hit the nail on the head, having real examples of times when the company had to intervene to retain staff so to speak. An example right from my own team, just last week I met. (...) So today... with the market that is developing in Romania in the IT area, every IT-st has a lot of opportunities, more and more, at least in big cities, like Timisoara, Cluj, Bucharest even Oradea, lately. There are more and more IT companies, which come with various benefit packages for employees and the competition is very high. In this sense, the strategy for staff retention must be brought to bear in every company on the employees. And I'll give you an example of staff retention that happened in our team*". Consequently, interviewees know the staff retention practices applied in the company, know their importance and the benefits it has on both the company and the individual.

To the question: do you think it can create an imbalance in your relationship with your employer when the benefits and rewards given do not cover the efforts made? Respondents' answers are almost identical, with 10 out of 11 saying that it can create an imbalance in the workplace when rewards do not cover the effort put in by the employee, arguing as follows: D. K.: "*Definitely. Yes, yes, definitely. Every employee at the moment when they are directly affected either by benefits, or salary, or the atmosphere in the team,... it can create a very big imbalance that leads to the loss of whole teams and I don't just mean isolated cases. There have been examples where entire teams have been destroyed because another employer, taking advantage of this imbalance, contacted an employee, took the first one and then they went after him... like a snowball, three, four, five more employees from the same team. And whole teams were destroyed.*" Thus, we can say that most employees consider that appropriate rewards and appreciation of efforts made are very important, are a basic need and can be classified in the group of "hygiene factors" according to Herzberg, because they prevent dissatisfaction but do not provide satisfaction to employees.

Further on, we moved on to concrete aspects that could increase staff retention. Based on the suggestions for managing retention made by Phillips et al. we generated a list of issues that could increase employee retention. 9 out of 11 interviewees stated that company image is important when choosing a job and that a tarnished organisational image could change their decision to accept a job offer. Employees feel that they are associated at some level with the company, which is why they do not want to work for companies with bad names, but are open to working with those companies that try to solve problems and appreciate trying to change. Therefore, organisational image is important and needs to be 'maintained' as most IT employees find it very easy to access details about the company and have a reluctance towards companies with a tarnished image. The main sources from which employees learn about a company are acquaintances, friends who work or have worked at the company, online reviews, sites such as: undelucram.ro, Glassdoor, LinkedIN, etc., company research, the company's official website and news.

Can asking questions about job compatibility and feeling fulfilled when working increase your retention in the company despite other dissatisfactions? All 11 interviewees consider that a sense of fulfilment, job compatibility and passion for what you do are particularly important and can increase retention.

For 10 of the 11 respondents, a pleasant, attractive and comfortable working environment can increase satisfaction and productivity.

Regarding work-life balance, if it could influence their decision to change jobs, all 11 respondents said that work-life balance was important. This is a need that any company should satisfy. Although some respondents said they had problems with organising their time during the home office period during the pandemic "*This was a bit difficult during the period when schools were closed and they were also making copies online*" (M. A.), but things have returned to normal. So this balance is desired by all employees interviewed. They want their personal time to be respected and this,

again, is seen as part of the 'hygiene factors', according to Herzberg, because they are meant to prevent dissatisfaction but do not give satisfaction to employees.

To sum up the discussions with the interviewees, we asked them:

"Based on your work experience so far, what were the top 3 factors by which a company was able to retain you for a longer period of time?"

Thus, we present the interviewees' choices ordered by their importance:

- Salary and benefits offered by the company (mentioned by 7 people)
- Staff, colleagues and relationship with them (5 people)
- Work environment (4 people)
- Opportunities for professional development and growth (4 people)
- Assigned projects (3 people)
- Home office and flexible working hours (3 people)
- Respect (2 people)
- Passion (2 people)
- Seriousness (1 person)
- Feedback, appreciation on emotional background (1 person)
- Stability (1 person).

With the last question in the interview guide, what are your career aspirations for the future, we wanted to find out what the interviewees' wishes are from a professional point of view and what are their career development trends in IT. Thus, 2 interviewees, who are also in management positions, want to focus on the more human side rather than the technical side, either by growing the team or developing soft skills. So, these are the two trends in terms of employee development for the interviewees: soft skills and courses, technical certifications, depending on the job and professional needs.

Conclusions

Staff retention, especially in IT, has been, is and will be a general problem if companies try hard to attract the most qualified employees, even if it means chasing other companies' employees. Thus, the main and general purpose of this paper was to build a picture of those aspects that can enhance IT employee retention during the pandemic.

In order to accomplish the objectives of this research, the investigation was based on data provided by a preliminary research, supported by the semi-structured interview. Therefore, to begin with we checked and outlined the interviewees' degree of commitment to the organization.

From the data analysis we found that half of the interviewees believe that their commitment to the organization is strong, they identify with the company's values and there is a strong employee-employer connection. In the case of these interviewees the commitment was either generated over time, having worked for the company for many years, or due to holding a management position, but there were cases where the commitment was generated by the involvement of superiors. In terms of how this commitment is manifested, we can mention the connection, the pride of working at the company, the identification with the company's values, the active participation in extra work events, such as: development programs, team building, charitable or sustainable programs in which members of the organization or some teams participate together, passion and involvement at individual level. There were also individuals who do not feel a connection to the organisation at this level, but feel a connection to colleagues, to the workplace community, which is due to the company. And at the opposite pole we identified 4 interviewees who said that there is no engagement of any kind for them, the reasons being: lack of interest from the board or the fact that they are not yet fully integrated, being at the beginning of their journey in the company. So, the degree of organisational commitment depends to a large extent on the attention paid to the needs of employees and even on their length of service in the company. Depending on these employees become connected or alienated from the company.

We then set out to test whether interviewees understand the role and importance of retention strategies. The absolute majority of employees stated that staff retention is an important practice, and every company should implement such strategies. According to the interviewees, the reasons why the implementation of retention strategies is important are the following: constant market development, high demand, the possibility to work remotely anywhere in the world which gives employees the freedom to work at any company worldwide, the shortage of IT staff, the high volume of competition, counteroffers, to bring profit to the company in the long term, to reduce recruitment costs, tuition costs, etc., or the practice of headhunting by rival companies.

In order to better outline the retention strategies used in the company where the interviewees work, we used that set of solutions for managing retention formulated by Phillips et al. mentioned in the conceptual framework. Thus, according to the answers given by the respondents, companies in general resort in the first phase to appropriate salaries to attract and retain employees, after which they try to provide a work-life balance, respecting contractual conditions and the time off of each employee. Furthermore, companies try to provide as pleasant a working environment as possible and offer help with integration into the job, perhaps even retraining advice, with the aim of making the employee compatible with the job. Finally, we investigated to find out what factors can increase interviewees' staff retention, and for this we asked them to provide us with a top three factors by which a company has managed to retain them for longer. In conclusion, the main and most frequently mentioned were the salary and benefits the company offers, the collective and respectively good relationship with

colleagues, the working environment and the development opportunities available to employees within the company. Linking to the theoretical part of the paper, according to Herzberg's dual factor theory salary, benefits, collective, interpersonal relations fall into the group of "hygiene factors", as they are meant to prevent employee dissatisfaction and not to increase satisfaction, while career development and growth fall into the category of motivational factors, which indeed increase motivation and thus employee retention.

In conclusion, at the heart of employee retention are the 'hygiene factors' mentioned above, and motivational factors provide a plus. From the discussions, most employees are satisfied with what the company is offering them, however 7 respondents had already thought about leaving the job, but there was only the intention to resign without acting on it, represented by level three in Mobley's model.

Bibliography

1. Abassi, S. M. (2000). Turnover: the real bottom line. Public Personnel Management, 333-342.

2. Abelson, M. A. (1987). Examination of avoidable and unavoidable turnover. Journal of Applied Psychology, 382–386.

3. Chelcea, S. (2001). Tehnici de cercetare sociologică. București, România: Școala Națională de Studii Politice și Administrative.

4. Dogar, N. (2014). Relations between organizational commitment and demographic factors: a research in banking sector. *Academicus International Scientific Journal*, (10), 103-115.

5. Gorde, S. U. (2019). A Study of Employee Retention. JETIR, volume 6, Issue 6, 331.

6. Hom, W. P. (2020). Employee Retention and Turnover. Why Employees Stay or Leave. New York: Routledge.

7. Hur, Y. (2018). Testing Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation. Public Organiz Rev 18, pp. 329-343.

8. Krackhardt, D. P. (1985). When friends leave: A structural analysis of the relationship between turnover and stayers' attitudes. Administrative Science Quarterly, 244-246.

9. Leena James, L. M. (2012, July - September). Employee Retention Strategies: IT Industry. SCMS Journal of Indian Management, pp. 79-87.

10. Maertz, P. C. (1998). 25 years of voluntary turnover research: a review and critique. In International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology 1998 (pp. 49-81). Purdue University.

11. March, J. G. (1958). Organisations. London: Wiley.

12. Mitchell, T. R. (2001, December). Why people stay: Using job embeddedness to predict voluntary turnover. The Academy of Management Journal, pp. 1102-1121.

13. Nazia, S. B. B. (2013). Employee retention practices In Indian corporate-a study of select MNC's. International Journal of Engineering and Management Sciences, Vol. 5, Nos. 1/2, 366-367.

14. Obrad, C. (2018). Cercetarea sociologică de la proiect la raport. Timișoara: Editura de Vest.

15. Phillips, J. J. (1945). Managing employee retention: a strategic accountalbility approach. British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data.

16. Șandor, S. D. (2013). Metode și tehnici de cercetare în științele. Tritonic.

17. Taylor, S. (2010). Resourcing and talent management. 5th Edition. London: Chartered Institute of Personal Development.

18. Zinger, D. (2012). The Zinger Employee Engagement Model. Retrieved from www.davidzinger.com: http://www.davidzinger.com/zinger-model/