



Article

Literature Review on Human Resource Churning—Theoretical Framework, Costs and Proposed Solutions

Olga Alexandra Chinita Pirrolas ^{1,*} and Pedro Miguel Alves Ribeiro Correia ^{2,*} ¹ Institute of Social and Political Sciences, University of Lisbon, 1649-004 Lisbon, Portugal² Faculty of Law, University of Coimbra, 3000-295 Coimbra, Portugal

* Correspondence: olgaalexandrap@gmail.com (O.A.C.P.); pcorreia@fd.uc.pt (P.M.A.R.C.)

Abstract: As a result of the complexity and multiplicity of definitions of the concept of human resource churning, to guide this entire research, the cost resulting from replacements was taken as a premise. Although churning is related to turnover, there are differences, turnover has as its focus the turnover of workers and churning is also related to the same approach, but this concept has as its focus the costs associated with the replacements of workers derived from voluntary departures, i.e., churning is only related to the costs of hiring from replacements. Despite the complexity and multiplicity of definitions of the concept of churning, to guide the present research, we chose to adopt as our premise the costs resulting from the voluntary exits of workers, that is, the relationship between resulting costs associated with employee substitutions. The present investigation intended to identify the causes of churning through the identification of its main dimensions. This theoretical research resorted to the following methodology: a literature review and an empirical study review that approached the subject of the churning of human resources. The resulting outcome enabled us to identify how these dimensions had an influence on the management of human resources regarding the mitigation of the occurrence of churning and the application of strategic measures to retain workers. In this regard, we have identified as main dimensions the work environment; leadership; recognition; schedule flexibility; wage; career progression, responsibility, and retention of human resources.

Keywords: churning; dimensions of churning; retention of human resources; causes of churning; management of human resources



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1. Introduction

Despite the complexity and pertinence of the concept of human resource churning, it is a subject that has been little explored by academics and researchers alike. Through this research, we intend to contribute to the expansion of the literature as well as the demystification of a subject of difficult definition due to the multiplicity of concepts (Pirrolas and Correia 2022a).

In the context of economic globalization and constant technological innovation, the concept of churning has been gaining relevance in the field of human resources due to the increase in competitiveness by qualified labour force in the labour market, enabling workers to make the decision to leave their current organization by accepting an offer made by a competing one, a phenomenon defined as churn (Zhao et al. 2018). In this regard, its operationalization becomes relevant due to the difficulty human resources managers have, specifically, regarding the retention of key workers in organizations (Ekawati 2019). Hudson (2015) shows that the operationalization of the concept of churning allows for the possibility of organizations to act with preventative and corrective measures to retain talent within the organization, minimize costs, generate revenue, increase proficiency, stand out in its activity sector, enhance dexterity, and maintain profit margins.

In recent years, due to the process of optimization of resources, procedures and policies, the management of human resources has been playing an increasingly important role in the functioning of companies, allowing for a better adjustment of tasks performed by highly qualified workers in accordance with their personal skills and work experience to maximize productivity, to increase efficiency, to minimize costs and generate workers' satisfaction to consequently promote workers' loyalty (Burgess et al. 2001). The lack of loyalty and a poor labour relationship led to an excess of outputs from organizations. This excess of outputs is known as churn (Zhao et al. 2018).

According to Zhao et al. (2018), human resources are the key driver for the success of organizations, thus, by taking into consideration the needs and expectations of employees, it is through the adjustment of organizational policies that organizations will be able to promote measures that will contribute to the overall satisfaction, loyalty, and good personal relationships of their employees, thus minimizing the occurrence of churning.

Although human resource churning is related to turnover or predicted to be an aspect of turnover, there are differences, turnover has as its main focus the turnover of workers (entries and exits), churning is also related to the same approach, but this concept has as its main focus the costs associated with worker replacements derived from voluntary exits, that is, churning is only related to the costs of hires coming from replacements (Burgess et al. 2000; Pirrolas and Correia 2022b).

In this sense, Zhao et al. (2018) mention that churning is described as the excess of workers who depart from organizations, a phenomenon related to several factors pertaining to labour conditions, such as the pursuit of better wages and the possibility for self-development and career progression. In such cases, due to the absence of strategies for the retention of talents, when competing companies are able to bring over human resources from other companies or when employees decide to depart from an organization of their own will, this usually leads to the loss of qualified workers, who are highly skilled employees that will become a tremendous asset for the competing company and a threat to the company that just lost a valuable resource that could have contributed to its development (Garcia et al. 2017).

Given the above, Kaderábková and Maleček (2015) show that the occurrence of churning is related to the economic situation, i.e., although churning is related to turnover, following as a general principle, employee turnover in organizations and churning focuses essentially on voluntary departures of key employees to other organizations, this situation stems from workflows generated by the economic situation experienced in a given period (Sisodia et al. 2017; Lazear and Spletzer 2012; Saradhi and Palshikar 2010). Kamalaveni et al. (2019) defines key employees or talents of an organization as those who have special characteristics, such as skills, qualities and professional experiences recognized as contributors to the development of organizations.

Talent management is a process of great complexity and is difficult to manage for organizations. A weak operationalization in human resources can be interpreted as over-investment due to the probability of costs resulting from new hiring to replace former workers, a phenomenon called the churning of human resources (Pirrolas and Correia 2022c).

According to Saradhi and Palshikar (2010), some of the causes of churning are directly linked to working conditions that can be related to negative aspects, i.e., conflicts with managers and/or colleagues, lack of recognition, lack of privileges, low wages, poor working conditions and lack of benefits. On the other hand, it can be linked to positive aspects that relate to the increase in the employment rate in the economy, enabling employees to find better working conditions. Thus, understanding why and when employees are prone to leave can lead to retention actions.

Considering the above, organizations lose when not applying retention strategies. Key workers, also designated as talents, are endowed with more working experience, knowledge, solid performances, and skills, thus being considered assets for the development of organizations.

In conclusion, taking into consideration the reviewed literature and the state-of-the-art of the subject studied (retrieved from the empirical research conducted), this study has as its objective the identification of the dimensions of churning and the analysis of its applicability in the management of human resources.

The research is based on the methodology adopted for the retraction of information on the dimensions of churning of human resources, by the reviewed literature and the acquired state of the art, having into consideration the selected dimensions, final considerations, and a proposal for a future study.

2. Methodology

With respect to the adopted methodology, this theoretical research is characterized as descriptive and analytical based on the literature reviewed and the state of the art retrieved from empirical articles that approached the subject of churning of human resources.

This approach follows an interpretative paradigm since it seeks to understand the meaning that each individual or group attributes to a given problem (Schwandt 1994).

In this research, the management control tool “Performance Prism” was applied, according to Pereira (2013) and Freeman (1984), this tool allows the development of strategies and processes by organizations through decision-making to meet the specific needs of all stakeholders. A broad view of the needs of all stakeholders allows for solving or more directly minimizing the risks and opportunities in the organization.

The selection criteria for the literature about churning of human resources that allowed identifying the main dimensions and analysing how such dimensions can influence the churning of human resources was based on the following databases: Researchgate; Google Scholar; B-On; ScienceDirect (Elsevier); Wiley Online Library; Scielo and Sage Journals Online.

Given the scarcity of studies on the subject, the criteria for the selection of the main dimensions of churning in human resources were taken as those most covered in the literature, which met the following criteria: (a) the ones discussing the theme of churning of human resources and (b) based on empirical articles. To identify the relevant literature on the topic, a keyword search was performed: churning; dimension churning; retention of human resources; churning causes; human resources management; employee churning; churn prediction, employee retention; work conditions; talent retention and intention to leave the organization.

Taking into consideration the selection criteria for the identification of literature, we proceeded to read abstracts from articles that allowed us to identify if they had as its subject of study the churning of human resources.

Regarding articles in which the reading of the abstract did not clarify its object of study, their contents were analysed. The criterion for the selection of the articles was based on (a) they had to have been published between 2004 and 2020; (b) they approached the subject of churning of human resources and (c) they retrieved conclusions from empirical research.

In view of the above, the main dimensions addressed in each article were identified by reading the respective titles, abstracts, and keywords. Therefore, articles that addressed more than one dimension were classified as more relevant and their distribution is presented in Table 1.

It should be noted that this preliminary phase, which corresponds to the identification of the main dimensions, is intended for later application and empirical analysis in a future study.

Table 1. Empirical articles regarding the churning of human resources published between 2004 and 2021.

Dimensions of Churning	%	Topics Covered in the Study(s)	N
Retention of Human Resources	22%	Retention of Talents	2
		Retention Strategies	4
Work Environment	15%	Working Conditions	2
		Forecast of <i>Churn</i>	2
Leadership	11%	Employment Flows and <i>Churning</i>	3
Recognition	8%	Job Satisfaction	2
Schedule Flexibility	8%	Working Conditions	2
Salary	22%	Wages and the Labour Market	6
Career Progression	8%	Employee Churn	2
Responsibility	8%	Job Satisfaction	2
Total	100%		27

Source: the authors based on the conducted research.

3. Analysis and Presentation of Results

Twenty articles published in foreign journals were selected, in accordance with the criteria of selection of the dimensions of *churning*. Once the 27 articles were selected, they were grouped according to each dimension presented in Table 2, preceded by their descriptions based on the latter articles.

Table 2. Selected dimensions of *churning* based on empirical studies published between 2004 and 2021.

Framework	Dimensions of Churning	Sources
Working Conditions	Work Environment	Dhanpat et al. (2018)
		Iqbal et al. (2017)
		Silva et al. (2019)
		Rahman et al. (2020)
	Leadership	Akdol and Arikboga (2017)
		Alkhawaja (2017)
		Boushey and Glynn (2012)
	Recognition	Tessema et al. (2013)
		Islam (2012)
	Schedule Flexibility	Nor (2018)
		Nasir and Mahmood (2016)
	Salary	Duhautois et al. (2016)
		Tremblay et al. (2006)
		Milkovich and Newman (2004)
Hytter (2007)		
Pitts et al. (2011)		
Onyango (2014)		
Career Progression	Kamalaveni et al. (2019)	
	Duhautois et al. (2016)	
Responsibility	Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015)	
	Jain et al. (2021)	
Retention of Human Resources	Kerr (2018)	
	Oludayo et al. (2018)	
	Steil et al. (2016)	
	Moreira et al. (2018)	
	Ekawati (2019)	
	Chandrasekara (2020)	

Source: identified references.

3.1. Churning of Human Resources: Dimensions Identified in Literature and the State of the Art

Given the scarcity of empirical studies addressing the topic of human resource churning, twenty-seven articles were searched, through which eight dimensions were selected: work environment with four articles; leadership with three articles; recognition and flexible working hours with two articles each; salary with six articles; career progression with two articles; responsibility with two articles; the retention of human resources with six articles.

A presentation of the definitions of each dimension follows, as well as conclusions resulting from empirical studies related to the dimensions of *churning* of human resources.

According to the literature, considering the references indicated, it can be predicted that the identified dimensions are the basis for the decrease in the occurrence of churning when workers are satisfied with the conditions presented by the organizations, thus becoming evident in the definitions presented below.

3.1.1. Work Environment

According to [Dhanpat et al. \(2018\)](#), the frequent fluctuations in the economy and changes both in demographics and organizations have been the main causes of the *churning* of workers. In this sense, organizations should be focused on retaining their most qualified workers, preventing costs associated with *churning*. Considering the results retrieved from a study regarding factors that could lead to the intention to leave an organization, in a *call centre* allocated in South Africa, it was observed that the work environment is one of the factors directly linked to the welfare of employees and its permanence in the organization. If the latter factor was considered unsatisfactory, this would lead to an increase in absenteeism, emotional exhaustion, and performance dissatisfaction: factors that are associated with the causes of *churning*. It was concluded that a healthy work environment induces greater job satisfaction among workers, reducing the intention to depart from the organization.

According to the authors, a good work environment is rendered through the application of strategies. So, to straighten job safety as a strategy to prevent *churning*, professional stability, attractive salary packages, attribution of benefits, autonomy in the performance of tasks to be performed and equity between co-workers should be considered to that end.

[Iqbal et al. \(2017\)](#) link the work environment with a set of factors that provide for good working conditions, adequate remuneration and equal employment opportunities, which generate a positive environment where workers can exercise their skills and abilities to meet their interests, allowing for a better overall atmosphere and satisfaction in the workplace. Therefore, it is necessary that human resources professionals adopt strategic measures for its promotion. Collected data by the authors regarding a study carried out in educational institutions, private sector organizations and factories (in Pakistan), indicate that human resources are more and more focused on short-term organizational benefits in opposition to a continuous permanence or a long-term one within an organization. This is due to the increase in job offers in periods of economic expansion. As a direct result of the opportunity to obtain better working conditions, workers tend to leave the organization, increasing the rate of *churning*.

[Silva et al. \(2019\)](#) refers that factors influencing *churning* are related to the absence of appropriate retention strategies, the main factor being associated with the work environment, defined as the place where workers perform their tasks, framed in the way workers evaluate incentives and rewards provided by the organization. Overall dissatisfaction, lack of recognition and low wages lead to unhappy workers in the workplace and, hence, are conducive to frequent voluntary exits from organizations (*churning*). According to a study carried out in companies allocated in Brazil, regarding the main factors of attractiveness and retention of talents, it was disclosed that 61% of survey respondents considered the work environment a decisive factor for their permanence or departure from an organization. Vis-à-vis the, to reduce the rate of *churning*, it is fundamental that organizations provide a balance between the needs of the organization and the needs of its workers. Through

a satisfactory work environment for both parties, productivity and profitability can be guaranteed to continue to grow.

Rahman et al. (2020) alludes to results obtained from a study carried out in companies in Bangladesh, regarding the impact that the work environment has on the retention of employees. A company that ensures a comfortable and casual environment increases workers' commitment to stay in the organization in addition to providing workers with the possibility to socialize, share ideas and opinions, learn from other colleagues and to better cooperate through the performance of their duties. In addition to the latter, the opportunity to acquire new sets of skills and knowledge for career development and the attribution of responsibilities and professional recognition are all factors conducive to the increase of self-esteem, that is, factors that contribute to professional valorisation and work involvement; thus, these will be reflected in terms of productive performances by workers. It is mentioned that good leadership, good working conditions and a good working environment provide for a better balance in workers' personal lives which is also considered to be a decisive factor for remaining or departing from an organization.

3.1.2. Leadership

Akdol and Arikboga (2017) refer to leadership as a holistic approach to work, which advocates a sense of community and promotes the sharing of power in decision-making by demonstrating humility and authenticity. A leader develops and ascribes power to employees by withdrawing oneself, aiming to encourage them to be more autonomous, with the goal to promote motivation for employees or within a working team, which contributes to their continuity in the organization.

A study performed by Alkhawaja (2017) aimed to explore how and in what ways the role played by leaders could benefit from applied optimization methods in the retention of employees to allow them to contribute to the progression and development of both the organization and its employees. The author concluded that the organization must find a sustainable relationship between leaders and their employees, stating that leadership styles have a direct impact on *churning* or employee retention, highlighting that leaders should be inclusive and should try to understand the needs of employees. Thus, in this way, the leader will be able to act with corrective measures and adopt strategies to generate motivation and contribute to the reduction of the rate of churning.

A study performed by Boushey and Glynn (2012) considers that one-fifth of an employee's salary is necessary to be able to replace him/her. *Vis-à-vis* the issue of churning, good leadership can be a factor contributing to its decrease, since employees feel supported, recognized, motivated and willing to remain in the organization. On the contrary, if the organization has bad leadership, the employee becomes dissatisfied, demotivated, does not feel committed towards the organization, and, therefore, decides to leave, which contributes to the rise of the churning rate.

In this way, we can predict that the leadership can contribute towards motion and change through planning and setting goals to develop a vision for the future where it is necessary to ensure people's commitment, vision, motivation, and inspiration to achieve a set goal.

3.1.3. Recognition

Tessema et al. (2013) refers to recognition as the appreciation or approval of positive achievements or behaviours performed by an employee or a working team and which could be made by means of a compliment or a personal reference for their performance, including small gestures that are important to employees. In accordance with the authors, studies indicate that employees who feel their work is recognized are more positive and confident in their ability to contribute, that is, recognition can boost productivity, increase satisfaction, and provide for better communication. Hence, employees become more prone to voice and propose new ideas and solutions which consequently improves cooperation.

The authors also state that employees who feel recognized have lower absenteeism rates and the probability of them leaving the organization is reduced.

[Islam \(2012\)](#) states that the theoretical perspective of recognition begins with the idea that self-esteem and human dignity are interconnected through participation within social and professional spheres, in which recognition plays a positive move from a motivational point of view, that is, recognition for the work performed generates emotional and social impact, positively affirming social dignity to the employee, which will play an important role in labour relations. When employees are devoted to their organization, they tend to care about the work they perform and the impact their work has on the organization. In addition, employees care about their self-image associated with their performance, this is later reflected in the results produced. Based on the previous statement, the author argues that human resource management practices that promote recognition must be kept since they reinforce dignity for employees and feelings of belonging to the organization.

3.1.4. Schedule Flexibility

According to [Nor's \(2018\)](#) conducted research, the balance between private and professional life is becoming an essential factor in deciding to remain or depart from an organization. Currently, employees opt for companies that allow them to benefit from flexible working hours, allowing them to better adapt to their job, better manage their workload and manage responsibilities regarding their personal lives.

Through a study analysed by [Nasir and Mahmood \(2016\)](#), it was verified that working conditions are an important factor in the decision to remain in an organization. Amongst the various factors that determine working conditions, it was ascertained that there was a negative impact among employees regarding schedules. To minimize the issue at hand and create a cohesive and satisfied workforce focused on the success and development of an organization, it is imperative to implement a balance between the interests of employees and the interests of the organization by providing flexible working hours. After analysing the resulting effects of implementing schedule flexibility, it was concluded that by achieving a healthy balance between work and personal life the exit rate of employees did, in fact, decrease, which resulted in higher levels of retention of employees in the organization.

3.1.5. Salary

[Duhautois et al. \(2016\)](#) state that in both the literature and empirical studies it is indicated that salary plays the role of the main stabilizing factor of human resources in organizations. To confirm its veracity, the authors empirically investigated the relationship between salary and talent retention in organizations. These results showed that salary is not the only factor, and sometimes it is not even the most important one to retaining employees. Through data analysis, it was verified that in addition to salary, other characteristics related to work were associated with churning, such as the size of the company, educational qualifications and functions performed. It was ascertained that the tax of churning was higher in smaller companies with lower salaries in comparison to larger companies with higher salaries. However, it was also possible to verify that despite their lower salaries, employees with less academic qualifications, working in smaller companies, tend to remain in the organization due to difficulties in finding new jobs. Conversely, it was verified that in larger companies, workers who possess higher wages are also the ones possessing higher academic qualifications; thus, they look for other characteristics or working conditions. Given that it is easier for them to find new jobs, this could lead to an increase in the rate of churning for organizations.

Studies have explored the relationship between salary and employee retention, which have demonstrated the impact that this factor has on retention, and a positive correlation between salary and retention has been found ([Tremblay et al. 2006](#); [Milkovich and Newman 2004](#); [Hytter 2007](#)). In view of the above, [Pitts et al. \(2011\)](#) and [Onyango \(2014\)](#) identified through studies that salary predicts to be a decisive factor in employee turnover, as these studies presented a positive correlation between salary and retention.

3.1.6. Career Progression

Based on several studies, [Kamalaveni et al. \(2019\)](#) argues that one of the most important factors for the retention of employees is the chance for personal and professional development, with the intention to progress in their career path to reach their goals, providing satisfaction, commitment, and loyalty towards the organization which results in the retention of employees. Notwithstanding, for organizations to be able to provide opportunities for career progression they need to invest in professional training so that employees can gain further knowledge and acquire new skills to be able to undertake positions of greater responsibility and complexity.

In a study conducted by [Duhautois et al. \(2016\)](#), they report that the salary factor is not the determining factor in the option to stay in the organization, another factor with a strong impact is related to career advancement opportunities.

3.1.7. Responsibility

A study conducted by [Raziq and Maulabakhsh \(2015\)](#) on the influence that the working environment exerts on job satisfaction in educational institutions, the banking sector and telecommunications companies (in Pakistan), showed that, among the several factors analysed, the feeling of responsibility attributed to employees is considered a motivational factor granting recognition for employees' own worth and the reassurance the company gives for employees' own performance, whether through the allocation of responsibilities in team projects or through the attribution of responsibilities on an individual level. The authors conclude that within this modern era, managing highly qualified human resources becomes a difficult task to deal with. Nonetheless, strategies must be created to identify the needs of their employees and invest in measures that boost motivation and satisfaction to create bonds of trust with employees to provide a balance of interests between both parties, contributing to the permanence of qualified employees in the organization.

[Jain et al. \(2021\)](#) through a study, categorized the workers according to their importance in terms of productivity. Several decision-making methods were used to contemplate the different achievements of the worker, through which the main motivation factors were the level of satisfaction, the evaluation performed, the number of projects assigned, as well as the time spent in the organization, through which appreciation was found in terms of assignment of responsibilities by the workers, contributing to the increase of their self-esteem and satisfaction with the work performed.

3.1.8. Retention of Human Resources

[Kerr \(2018\)](#) stresses that the departure of talents from organizations is a widespread problem in the labour market. Every year, a substantial amount of the labour force changes their employment entity. The author refers that this issue is related to economic cycles. Consequently, during economic downturns, workflows tend to decrease. On the other hand, during economic expansion periods, through the increase in workflows, it is possible to verify an increase in new opportunities in the labour market, originating an increase in the rate of churning depending on the company's characteristics and personal interests of each employee. Thus, the author relates churning to excessive outward flows from qualified employees and the hiring of new employees to face the replacement of workers who left. This phenomenon derives from workflows and from social and corporate economic circumstances.

Data from a study performed by the author, considering various sectors of activity and companies of several dimensions (in South Africa), revealed a churning rate of 56% per year. The churning rate is higher in smaller companies and in companies that pay lower wages. It was also possible to ascertain that both labour flows and workflows vary substantially between sectors of activity, with the rate of *churning* being lower in public-sector enterprises than in private-sector enterprises.

[Oludayo et al. \(2018\)](#) state that talent management is a global challenge, in which the problem exacerbates due to the increase in job offers in competing companies that seek to

attract talented employees. The need to attract and retain talents should be considered as a potential approach to face the current economic boom through the presentation of practical solutions that will allow contributions to the challenge associated with the identification and development of talent. The authors defined problems for the success of talent management: structural, environmental, behavioural, and managerial factors, referring to the relevance of the existence of a positive relationship between organizational management and the attitude of employees through the usage of an individual corporate adjustment.

Most organizations in developing countries seek viable means to retain their workers to make their organizations more attractive by developing the ability to have more skilled human resources. Although companies are developing global systems to identify and develop talents, most companies still face the challenge of getting the necessary number of skilled workers for specific positions at the appropriate time. In this sense, it is necessary to develop efficient strategies for the management of talents, to positively influence the attitude of employees, aiming at their successful retention.

Through a study performed by the authors, consisting of analysing retention strategies of talents in Covenant University (Ota, Nigeria), and its effects on the attitude of employees in relation to the work performed, it was found that 53.9% of the survey respondents were completely satisfied with benefits provided by the company; 53.9% answered that they fully agreed with career progression opportunities, which resulted in more opportunities for professional growth; 64.5% answered that they fully agreed with the adopted organizational policies in regards to the attribution of promotions; 52% of the respondents were in complete agreement in regards to the valorization of talents by the organization and 52.6% answered to be in complete agreement with opportunities provided to participate in further professional training in order to further develop their professional skills and overall performance.

It was ascertained that in matters related to the level of satisfaction, commitment towards achieving goals, organizational values, organizational behaviour, and overall involvement, 53.3% of respondents felt pleased with the work performed. Regarding commitment, 55.9% answered they felt committed towards the company, but not entirely. Regarding overall involvement, 52.6% said they agreed, but not completely.

Steil et al. (2016) state that one of the current main concerns organizations have relates to the retention of employees with specific skills that contribute to the development and goal achievement of the former. The investment lost during recruitment and selection processes, in training, in applied socialization strategies and readjustments that must be made within work teams to integrate newcomers that end up leaving the company, is strenuous and frustrating.

In this context, the authors define the retention of workers as the capacity organizations have in keeping specific people, through the adoption of strategic measures so that these people feel motivated and satisfied regarding work performed and within the company, warding off the idea to leave it. It is a process that consists of the capacity to analyse and improve that relationship, with factors that induce the departure from the organization, taking into consideration the knowledge, creativity, and performance of workers.

This problem may worsen when the loss of professionals occupying strategic positions in the organization, such as the case of executives, occurs. According to a survey which included five thousand executives, estimates showed that the loss of an executive may cost the organization millions of dollars, indicating that 46% of those executives only intended to remain in the organization for a few more years. To address this problem, scientific research has been made to further understand the causes and consequences that lead to the intention to leave an organization and to act with strategic retention measures. However, there are theoretical arguments referring as causes of the difficulty for the retention of qualified professionals: the impairment of creativity and lack of organizational innovation; labour market influencing the offer for better working conditions; the lack of professional training opportunities; dissatisfaction in the workplace; academic qualifications; gender; motivation and opportunities to progress professionally which consequently amount to

costs in selection and recruitment processes; training; distress in the organizational environment and the loss of knowledge and experience accumulated in the organization by the employee who left and in whom investment had been made.

On the other hand, it is necessary to understand and consider the effects that economic cycles have on the retention of workers since studies have shown that workers tend to remain longer during periods of economic downturns (due to a decrease in job offers) in comparison to periods of economic upswings (due to an increase in job offers).

Moreira et al. (2018) state that due to the speeding up in social, demographic, cultural and technological transformations that society has been confronted with in recent years, it is crucial for organizations to re-evaluate and reorganize their structures, processes, organization and working conditions so as to redefine new organizational structures since it is through a more competitive environment that organizations are able to attract and maintain the most creative and skilled professionals that ensure their development.

So, to make sure workers feel accomplished, motivated, and properly prepared to perform different day-to-day tasks, organizations should be more concerned with their workers' well-being. The identification and understanding of perceptions, behaviours, and behavioural intentions of said workers have been a challenge for managers of human resources.

Through this study, the authors intended to analyse research from national and international authors carried out within different organizational contexts focused on the retention and intention to leave an organization. The research showed that the intention to leave an organization is related to several factors, including the feeling of lack of organizational support, job satisfaction and well-being. The purpose of the latter analysis served as an instrument for the diagnosis and evaluation of strategic measures for the retention of workers, in addition to using the latter as indicators for the identification of the needs and the rethinking of adopted organizational policies that should be focused on employees.

Periodic assessments of workers' satisfaction levels and intentions to leave the organization can be an alternative for managers to develop or improve and enhance practices and policies to boost organizational support and to reduce the intention workers might have to depart from the latter.

A study conducted by Ekawati (2019) identified the relevance the application of predictive analysis has regarding the *churning* of human resources, an added value for the prevention of exits of skilled employees from organizations since this is one of the most discussed, more complex topics for the management of human resources. The *churning* of human resources is one of the biggest concerns for organizations, specifically in the current competitive scenario, and human resources are the most asset for organizations. There is a need to implement further strategic measures to predict and minimize the exit of employees in organizations. According to the study, the costs of the voluntary churning of human resources vary between 1.5 to 5 times the annual wage of an employee that decides to leave the organization. Beyond this, the organization is confronted with the need to hire new personnel, the time spent until finding the right substitute for that position, the adaptation period needed until said substitute can properly perform his/her tasks, consequential costs from possible delays in project completion or ongoing services being provided, internal and external client dissatisfaction and co-workers' demotivation due to work overload to meet previously established goals.

Pirrolas and Correia (2021) stress the consequences resulting from these voluntary departures, that is, the costs associated with the latter: associated costs from new hiring, costs associated with the loss of investment in training, loss of knowledge and skills from workers who left and took these with them to other competing organizations. This amounts to an added value for the latter and a loss for the former.

The author states that to address this problem, in recent years, greater importance has been given to the conduct of research regarding the use of predictive analysis of churning of human resources to improve former facts occurring in previous situations.

Chandrasekara (2020) argues that the retention of specific workers in organizations is a critical process since workers are the driving force in helping achieve established targets,

contributing towards the development and success of an organization. On the other hand, it is a critical situation since each worker has their own personal objectives and behaviours, amounting to a challenge that organizations must deal with to successfully manage the interests of each worker.

In this sense, protecting the labour force is crucial to ensure a highly productive workforce and protecting it from a surrounding competitive environment is not an easy task. To be able to keep highly qualified employees is a complex process derived from several factors, factors that must be analysed and tackled to act with strategic measures in a way to be able to keep these employees in the organization. The author states that the main strategic factors of retention are good communication skills with employees (to promote their commitment); providing a good working environment; promoting motivation and providing professional training initiatives. Notwithstanding, it is also imperative that organizations identify workers' expectations to be able to act with necessary changes in a way that they can create and sustain a competitive advantage regarding the competitive labour market.

Taking into consideration the achieved results from a study carried out by the author and the performed descriptive analysis, all independent variables are affected by the retention of workers, motivation, working environment and individual and corporate factors. The results showed that motivational factors such as teamwork, work-family conciliation, fair treatment, and benefits directly influence the retention of workers. Regarding the working environment, it presents a satisfactory relationship towards the retention of workers.

4. Conclusions

4.1. Discussion of Results

This study aimed to identify the dimensions of churning through empirical research studies and analyse how such dimensions can influence human resources management so that organizations can act with strategic measures to retain employees.

To achieve the proposed aim of this study, a theoretical methodology was adopted by examining the available literature and empirical studies about the churning of human resources.

The dimensions were selected based on the frequency of their appearance within the consulted articles. From a total of twenty articles published in foreign journals, eight dimensions of churning of human resources were selected: working environment; leadership; recognition; schedule flexibility; salary; career progression; responsibility and retention of human resources.

Having analysed the selected dimensions by resorting to the literature review, it was concluded that these are the main causes for the occurrence of churning which means that organizations should take these into consideration and act upon them to mitigate the phenomenon of churning.

After analysing each of the dimensions based on the literature and noting the effect they have on the main causes of the occurrence of churning, in addition to concluding that it is on these dimensions that organizations should act to mitigate the phenomenon of churning, these dimensions will be further applied in a future study to be analysed through an empirical study.

As a foundation to the aforementioned, through the results obtained through the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development report in 2015, Gary Desseler and Biju Varkkey analysed a comprehensive approach to employee retention, and, after having identified retention problems, stated the possibility of implementing measures that can be taken to increase employee retention, through salary increases, more efficient hiring, the possibility of career progression, providing flexibility, implementing attractive employee wellness measures, investing in high-performance human resource practises, as well as enabling binding employment contracts. [Priyanka and Dubey \(2016\)](#), through a study in which they conducted an exploratory factor analysis using the principal components

technique, identified workers' main turnover intentions through eight factors: the quality of management practices; low pay; lack of opportunity for career advancement; lack of support from colleagues, supervisors, and family; lack of training; lack of workplace safety; lack of communication and job insecurity.

On the other hand, Kossivi et al. (2016), through various studies on retention factors, highlighted some factors such as development opportunity, work–life balance, compensation, management leadership style, work environment, autonomy, training and development and social support.

4.2. Study Contributions

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

This study developed a theoretical framework by resorting to the selected dimensions which will allow us to further explore each of them so that in future studies the analysis of possible links between the latter can be ascertained through the application of new methodologies to expand empirical studies on this yet unexplored, underdeveloped subject. Insofar as it was possible to determine, this was the first time a study of this nature was conducted in Portugal.

Although the phenomenon of churning is a reality that organizations are confronted with, this is still a very unusual term that should be emphasized more, since it is more focused on the costs that arise from voluntary departures.

The dissemination and use of the term churning in human resource management are appropriate at times of decision and implementation of more sustainable and effective human resource practices and policies.

In terms of applicability for the management of human resources, this is suitable in moments of decision-making and implementation of more sustainable and effective human resource policies.

In terms of contributions to organizational practices, this study claims it is possible to attribute advantages through the implementation and/or improvement of policies and practices of human resources, as well, it has the potential to provide tools intending to be validated in Portugal aiming at gathering the needs for the improvement of working conditions and, at the same time, to evaluate possible constraints.

Through the resulting conclusions retrieved from this study, we propose to contribute towards changes in organizational paradigms that can promote better working conditions, through a preventative model of the causes of churning, contributing to the reduction of the percentage of *churning* in such a way as to reduce costs.

5. Final Conclusions, Study Limitations and Future Studies

This article identified the main dimensions related to the concept of churning (hirings to face the replacement of employees who voluntarily left the organization) through the study of empirical research.

Reflecting on the main dimensions of churning and taking into consideration the economic situation and resulting consequences arising from economic cycles, organizational structures and corporate and workers' characteristic features, it becomes pertinent to operationalize a preventative model of churning to minimize excess hirings due to the need to replace experienced employees who change organizations in the search for better working conditions.

The decrease in the rate of churning can be accomplished through an internal evaluation of the organization taking into consideration the needs of its workers and through the implementation of strategic measures to retain talents in the organization, therefore, preventing costs stemming from hiring, professional training, a decline in productivity, work overload and not to mention the company's image to its clients and the employees who remained in the organization.

This study presents some limitations, emphasizing that one of its limitations is related to the fact that the concept of churning is still an untapped subject, an unknown theme in most organizations in Portugal.

Due to the facts described above, given the little existing literature addressing the topic of human resource churning, the foreign literature that supported the fulfilment of the study's objective, i.e., defining the main dimensions of human resource churning, was based on publications between the period of 2012 and 2020.

Yet another limitation is related to the fact that only one methodology was used, which the authors intend to remedy in future studies through the application of interviews regarding all dimensions selected in this study. It can be conjectured that they will have distinct outcomes. Further, there is an intention to analyse the relationship between variables and to improve them, enabling the onset of further studies with different methodologies about churning of human resources aiming at minimizing its occurrence.

Considering the above, we propose to elaborate an empirical study (based on the previously selected dimensions) that will enable a comparison of the existing literature with empirical data gathered through interviews, which will allow for the elaboration of a theoretical-methodological model of churning of human resources, aiming to analyse the relationship between these dimensions to determine which factors are useful for the retention of talents in the organizations (Yigit and Shourabizadeh 2017).

Study Contributions

Although the concept of churning is interrelated with turnover, this study aimed to focus on a concept that has been little explored and applied in human resource management, namely human resource churning.

Taking into consideration the phenomenon of churning (the costs associated with the needed replacements to tackle voluntary exits of key workers), this study stresses the scarcity of available literature and empirical studies carried out in Portuguese companies, as well as the relevancy of its operationalization, to face the reduction of costs stemming from the latter.

Through this research, it becomes expectable that resorting to the selected dimensions may trigger the appearance of different types of research methodologies, aiming to expand empirical studies to contribute to the increase of available literature and for the dissemination of a subject of scarce visibility on a corporate level in Portugal.

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