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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON JOB HOPPING IN SRI LANKA: A STUDY ON GENERATION ‘Y’ EMPLOYEES

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Abstract

Job Hopping is a major challenge that can be observed in the today's labor market, with the new generation working in the modern world of work. The researcher sheds light on this matter from the employees' and employers' point of view, with the intention of identifying the reasons, challenges and consequences of job hopping. This study concentrates on the Sri Lankan context as the studies in the western organizational contexts regarding Job Hopping, may not be applicable to organizations in Sri Lanka, due to economic, social and cultural differences. As per the findings related to Sri Lankan context, the first five reasons for employees to job hop are, pay package, career growth, working environment and culture, reputation of the organization and job security. The researcher also found differences in the nature of job hopping with regard to gender, level of education, industries the employees are employed in, and also the uncertainty avoidance behavior of employees in Sri Lanka. However, both employees and HR managers see the pros and cons of job hopping, and accept employee behavior of job hopping.

Key Words: Job Hopping, Generation 'Y'ers, Labour Turnover

1. Introduction

With the changing paradigm of Human Resource Management, employees are considered a major capital for today's organizations (Armstrong, 2011, p. 11). As it is further emphasized by Armstrong (2011) it is necessary to adopt a longer term perspective in managing people and consideration of people as a potential asset, rather than merely a variable cost. Organizations' success is dependent on their ability to attract, develop and retain [Emphasis added] talented employees (Sims, 2007, p. 4). But employee turnover; especially voluntary turnover has been increasingly becoming a challenge for today's human resource managers (Hom, Mitchell, Thomas, & Griffeth, 2012).

Having ample opportunities in the job world, people tend to change the organizations of employment (Job Hopping) based on various factors. Thus, it is worthy to view through the lens of HR managers, the factors that influence job hopping, so that this challenge can be explored further.

The ultimate result of turnover can be in various forms. Hom et al, (2012) identify post-exit destination of leavers to be another job, full-time parenting, educational pursuits etc. In case of the post-exit destination becomes another job, there are more consequences to be faced by managers of organizations. Maliranta, Mohnen, and Rouvinen, (2008, p. 3) state that,

“labour mobility [Emphasis added] is among the most likely ways of knowledge transfer.”

According to personal observations of the researcher, this behaviour of employees, moving from one organization to another, is more common among employees who are less than 30-35 years of age on average. The background study on this research revealed that the currently employed people who are less than 35 can be categorized as Generation ‘Y’ers.

However, there are various aspects addressed in past research to identify the reasons behind this behaviour, which are termed as labour mobility, voluntary turnover, inter-firm mobility or as ‘Job Hopping’ as termed in this study. However there is a dearth of studies done on the concept locally creating a solid background to explore job hopping within the Sri Lankan context.

2. Objectives of the Study

As per the introduction to the study given above, the main objectives of the study are, a) To identify the reasons for job hopping in the Sri Lankan context, b) To explore the nature of job hopping in Sri Lanka, c) To assess how employees perceive job hopping, and d) To assess how employers perceive job hopping, specifically among Generation Y employees.

This paper flows with the literature review, research methodology, discussion, findings and the conclusion.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Defining Job Hopping

According to Khatri et al. (1999), the definition of job hopping behaviour varies from one country to another. In the study of Khatri et al. (1999), the behaviour of employees changing their jobs or organization of employment from time to time has been termed as voluntary turnover, employee turnover and as job hopping. According to Ghiselli (1974), some workers have the natural internal impulse to move from one job to another job for sometimes

no rational reason (as cited by Feng & Angeline, 2010). This has been identified by them as a ‘hobo syndrome’ and defined as “... the periodic itch to move from a job in one place to some other job in some other place”. Khatri et al. (1999) extends the definition of “hobo syndrome’ of Ghiselli (1974) by adding social influences or turnover culture to the definition of job hopping. But none of the above authors specify whether this leads to a change in the profession or area of specialization or discipline; or merely a change in workplaces retaining within the same discipline or profession. However, they have mentioned that the driving force for job hopping can be either a personal itch or social influence. However, there are two components that can be discovered of this entire behaviour. The first is, employees leaving the current organisation; and the second is, joining another organisation. The research of Taylor and Zimmerer (1992), concludes that voluntary turnover is only a part of job hopping.

Therefore, the definition of job hopping with reference to this study will be ‘employees shifting from one organization to another at the employee’s discretion’.

3.2 Nature of Job Hopping

As it was cited by Khatri et al. (1999), several studies have reported that higher the age, tenure and the income level of the employee, lower the turnover; i.e. intention to quit (Arnold & Feldman, 1982; Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Gerhart, 1990).

Cotton and Tuttle (1986) suggest that the more educated the employees are, the more they quit. Many research studies have come up with a link between labour mobility and the training level of employees. Korpi and Mertens (2003) claim that mobility after completion of an apprenticeship is relatively high.

The nature of job hopping also differ based on the industry that the employees work for. For example, once an employee gain industry specific skills or occupation specific skills, such employees would hop among several firms in the same industry,

but not in different occupations (Korpi & Mertens, 2003).

The findings on Job Hopping in relation to the gender are very contradicting. Weisberg and Kirschenbaum (1993) have found females quit more while Berg (1991), while Miller and Wheeler (1992) and Wai and Robinson (1998) found no relationship between gender and Job Hopping. Meanwhile there are findings from Elaine (1997) and Summers and Hendrix (1991) (as cited by Khatri et al. (1999), that claim males are more likely to quit than females.

Chew (1996) states that job hoppers used to find alternative employment before quitting their jobs but the trend is to leave even before they have secured any alternative appointments (as cited by Feng & Angeline, 2000).

Hamori (2010) finds that 30% of moves from one organization to another are demotions and 24% of moves are from a small name to a big name involving step down in title. She further states that 17% had experience in three or more industries.

As it is described above the nature of job hopping can be explored in terms of age, education level, industry, gender etc.

3.3 Reasons for Job Hopping

Past researchers have found several reasons that result in job hopping. Once all these factors are considered broadly, they can be categorized into three groups as personal, organizational and social.

As Taylor and Zimmer (1992) explain, overwork, insecurity, confusion, downsizing are some reasons for voluntary turnover and they can be considered as organisational factors. Some other organisational factors that can lead to high level of job hopping are lack of training, lack of career opportunities and challenging work provided by the organization, leadership problems (Hartman & Yrle, 1996), unfair treatment for a co-worker, being passed over for promotion, or being asked to do something against one's beliefs (Mitchell et al., 2005).

Some of the personal factors that result job hopping are, the need to work in teams, need for better pay, and the need for connection and challenge (Alper, 1994). Other person specific reasons for job hopping as demonstrated by Taylor and Zimmer (1992) are emotional stress, overwork and insecurity. They are identified as the person specific reasons because the stress, workload etc. are determined based on the each person's capacity. Apart from these, a person can be influenced to decide to quit from a work place for personal reasons such as family obligations, location problems, problems with other employees, need to change or to try new places, peers leaving the place (Hartman & Yrle, 1996), changes in family situation, a desire to learn a new skill or trade or an unsolicited job offer (Mitchell et al., 2005).

However, it should be noted that 'pay' was not emphasized in past literature as a reason for job hopping. Supporting that, James (1991) stated that "Money is not the main reason" for labour turnover which Khatri et al. (1999) concluded in their study that satisfaction with pay was important only in one industry (retail) out of six.

As noted by Abelson (1993), reasons such as social pressure from core workers (also called peer pressure) can create a turnover culture which will result the employees hop to another job.

While all reasons described above were from the micro context, there are reasons from the macro context that result in many people to hop jobs. Leidner and Smith (2013) have found that fast growing economies and changing demand for labour has lead lifetime employment outdated. They have come up with more reasons apart from monetary and micro factors such as globalization and short-termism which have made a shift in employment behaviour. Seeing the matter from a macro perspective, Inagami (1998) also states that labour shortages in certain economic sectors or conditions will also result in people changing the organization of employment.

3.4 Consequences of Job Hopping

3.3.1 Consequences of Job Hopping to employers

Khartri et al. (1999), stress that organizations suffer from low productivity, high cost of recruitment and poor quality of products and services due to high turnover, which in turn can be explained as high Job Hopping.

It is a common fact that organizations have to bear the cost of replacing an employee (Leidner & Smith, 2013; Fallick, Fleischman, & Rebitzer, 2006, Mitchell et al., 2005). Cost of replacement will include advertising, processing of candidates, interviewing, selection and finally the training costs. The other direct cost related to job hopping can be exit interview time, administrative requirements, payout of unused vacation time, the cost of temporary workers or overtime for co-workers etc. (Mitchell et al., 2005).

Apart from the direct costs discussed above, there can be indirect costs that are related to Job Hopping that give an advantage to the competitors at less or no cost.

Not only Job Hopping, even the employees having the expectation to change the organization of employment will affect negatively even to the performance of the organization (Pearce and Randel, 2004). According to Hauw and Vos (2010), these expectations of employees can have a detrimental effect on organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment, job performance and *intention to stay* [Emphasis added].

While this is the case for most of the employers, blue chip companies such as Apple, Time-Warner, Sun Microsystems and British Petroleum have publicly stated that their human resource practices such as career planning counselling encourage their employees to consider organization mobility to develop their employability, self-reliance, career planning (Pearce & Randel, 2004).

3.3.2 Consequences of Job Hopping to the employees

Concluding an eight-year research project, Hamori (2010) writes, it is not true that switching employers offer a fast track to the top jobs because the “footloose executives are not more upwardly mobile than the single-company colleagues”. Korpi and Mertens (2003) say that too frequent job switches may lead to loss of human capital and become a signal of limited employability.

Having said that, it is noteworthy that Thorman (2012) comes up with ten plus points of job hopping that ultimately inspire people to job hop. She identifies job hopping as an opportunity for employees to widen the choice of jobs and as a “precursor to the future of careers”. Fox’s (2012) opinion on job hopping is that people need to change their places of employment even when they are comfortable at the current working place.

3.5 Defining Generation Y

Delcampo et al. (2011) and Cennamo and Gardner (2008), state that it is difficult to precisely define generations. Instead, a generation can be defined as a collective set of attributes, behaviours, core values and experiences (as cited by Helyer & Lee, 2012). Cennamo and Gardner (2008) cite a definition of Kupperschmidt (2000) for Generation as “an identifiable group that shares birth years, age location, and significant life events at critical developmental stages”.

In the study of Helyer and Lee (2012), the Generation Y is considered as people who were born in between the year 1979-1991. According to that definition, age of a Generation ‘Y’er must be 22-34 years by now [in 2013]. Weyland (2011) defined Generation Y as those who were born in the 1980s and 1990s. In another study which was focused on Generation Y, the Generation ‘Y’ers were defined as those who were born in between the years 1982-1995. Cennamo and Gardner (2008) consider the ones who were born in 1980 and afterwards as Generation ‘Y’ers.

According to Cui, Trent, Sullivan and Maitru. (2003), generations 'Y'ers must be 19-35 years in 2013 because they consider Generation 'Y'ers as the 71 million individuals born between 1977 and 1994.

3.5.1 Characteristics of Generation 'Y'ers

Almost all the studies done on Generations have found that by nature, Generation 'Y'ers are less loyal to their working organizations (D'Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008; Helyer & Lee, 2012). As it is cited by Hauw and Vos (2010), these employees' expectations regarding employer inducements are extremely high (Smola & Sutton, 2002; Twenge and Campbell, 2008). Generation 'Y'ers are achievement oriented, team oriented, challenge colleagues, tech-savvy and family centric (Kane, 2011). Zemke et al. (2000), (as cited in Cennamo & Gardner, 2008) finds Generation Y'ers valuing work/life balance, life styles, career development and overseas travel more than other generations. According to Cennamo and Gardner (2008), the values of Generation 'Y'ers are more freedom-related. The expectations of Generation 'Y'ers respectively are the work life balance, social connections and career advancement, training and development and meaningful well paid jobs (Hauw & Vos, 2010). However, they [Generation 'Y'ers] by nature are skills-hungry as cited by D'Amato and Herzfeldt (2008) and less concerned about job security (Dries et al, 2008).

It is noteworthy the review of literature on the reasons for job hopping, 'money' or 'the pay' was not given emphasis as expected. Supporting that, Weyland (2011) states that Generation 'Y'ers' main concern is to do meaningful work in an environment that gives them stimulation, responsibility, fun and flexibility, but not to earn salary and status. This is in par with the study of Zemke et al. 2000, who said that the Generation 'Y'ers look for career development. However Dries et al. (2008) show that salary is still an important work value that helps to determine career success for all generations (as cited by Hauw & Vos, 2010).

Going by the definition given by Delcampo, Haggerty, Haney, and Knippel. (2012) for Generations, the common attributes of Generation 'Y'ers mentioned in almost every research study, is that they are more willing to change jobs (Helyer & Lee, 2012; Weyland, 2011; Deloitte, 2009). Considering this attribute as the pertinent collective feature to define Generation Y, employees who are under 35 years of age by the year 2013 will be considered as Generation 'Y'ers for this study.

3.6 Job Hopping and Generation Y

When all the characteristics of Generation 'Y'ers and reasons for job hopping are taken into consideration, a close relationship can be observed. Evidencing that fact, in the study of Helyer and Lee (2012), they say that it is often stated that Generation 'Y'ers are "more willing to change jobs if they are not fulfilled or satisfied with the balance between personal and professional life or employment benefits such as gym membership, flexible working, holidays and so on". They further state that Generation 'Y'ers are difficult to recruit, retain, motivate and manage. Yet, Generation 'Y'ers will be the highest performing workforce in history.

With a contradicting view, Weyland (2011) claims that accommodating motivational factors of Generation 'Y'ers is not something tiring ("does not require huge amount of extra effort"), but something that needs a different thinking. Having a similar finding, Deloitte (2009) mentions that Generation 'Y'ers value opportunity over job security and trust superiors expecting to work with them.

Whatever said and done, it is the Generation 'Y'ers who will be in the workforce at present and in the future. What employers can and have to do is to understand the generation, their pluses and minuses and to get the best out of them, fulfilling their expectations. Thus, it can be concluded that it is meaningful and is of worth to seek a way for Human Resources Managers to retain generation 'Y'ers, who are now [2013] in the workforce and will be in the workforce for next 20-30 years.

4. Research Methodology

This study is an exploratory study that aims to see how a particular behaviour of the society has been evolved. The reasons for job hopping and the nature of job hopping are to be investigated mainly through interviews.

As Saunders et al. (2009) suggest, this research falls under interpretivism philosophy as interpretivism philosophy is highly appropriate for researches which fall into the fields like business and management, organizational behaviour, human resources management. Following the inductive approach, a close understanding of the research context will be achieved through a collection of qualitative data, utilizing the qualitative methodology.

The researcher utilized the below methods to arrive at solutions for the research questions. The researcher expects to identify the perceptions of job hopping among the employers and managers by interviewing them.

3.6.1 Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data was utilized to conduct this research because, primary data are useful to find research specific findings while secondary data are useful to analyse findings of previous research studies. Semi-structured interviews were used as the main data collection tool in this study.

3.6.2 Sampling

The researcher used non-probability sampling as the issue studied is usually not equal in all cases (i.e. Subjective judgements), so the population is unknown. In this study, both snowball sampling and convenience sampling was used due to the fact that it is difficult to identify the members of the desired population.

Considering the time constraints and to maintain the level of quality of the

study, the sample size for this study will be 30. Since the research questions are more related to the employee side, 80% of the sample (i.e. 25 individuals) will be employees. For respondent triangulation purposes, the other 20% of the sample is HR managers.

The researcher also tried to maintain the balance between the males and female interviewees. The sample of 25 employees consists of 14 males and 11 females. All the interviewees were knowledge workers as the researcher wanted to maintain a balance in terms of living status, education level etc. as well.

Accurate, unbiased primary data were directly collected from the sample through in depth interactive personal interviews, conducted according to a pre-planned structure.

Data collected from in-depth interviews were summarized through a process of transcription. Thereafter the data with similar nature were taken under broader headings which was used for analysis.

4 Data Analysis, Research Findings and Discussion

4.1. Frequency of job hopping

The researcher firstly wanted to see the frequency of job hopping in Sri Lanka. The calculation was done, considering the number of years employees work in one organization. As it was clearly

As it is clearly shown in Table 1, the employers can expect that their employees in general will retain at the organization for 3 years. This is a finding that is consistent with the findings of past literature that said that the average number of years an employee retain in one organization is 3.3 years (Leidner and Smith, 2013).

Table 1: Average number of years employed in one organization

Employee	Female	Male
#1	3.5	
#2		1.6
#3		1.7
#4	1.7	
#5	4.5	
#6		3.5
#7		1.5
#8		3.5
#9	3.5	
#10		3
#11		1
#12		9
#13	3.8	
#14	2	
#15		2
#16	3.5	
#17		1.7
#18	2	
#19		1.7
#20	3.5	
#21		4
#22		6.5
#23	0.8	
#24		1
#25	1.5	
Average No. of years employed in one organization	2.8	3.1

Source: Researchers' own construction based on interview data

5.2.2 The reasons for job hopping in Sri Lanka

Reasons for job hopping clearly has two parts to it. One is the reasons that make employees leave one organization and the second is the reasons that employees join another organization.

4.2 Reasons to leave an employer

As it is very clearly depicted in the Table 2, the very first reason an employee considers to retain or leave an employee is 'the pay/salary'. Once the basic salary component is met, employees start to worry about the other facilities. The higher the position of the employee, higher their expectations for the other benefits. However, what the researcher could understand when

analysing the results was that, the employees do not consider the pay and the other benefits separately but the compensation package as a whole. Even though some employees did not specifically mention 'other benefits' when stating the reasons for quitting, they meant pay/salary with the need of benefits too. Yet, basic pay/ salary is much helpful to attract employees while the benefits help to retain them. Thus this is a fact that is contradicting with what James (1991), who said "money is not the main reason" for labour turnover. Yet it can be argued that James (1991) was not mentioning the Generation 'Y'ers. Still in the list of job expectations of Generation 'Y'ers prepared by Hauw and Vos (2010),

Table 2: Reasons to leave an organization

Factor	A (25)	B (22)	C (13)	D (6)	E (1)	F
Pay	14	12	9	2	1	37
Career path	11	10	3	3		27
Management problems	4	7	2			13
Job security	3	5	1	2		11
Other benefits and facilities	2	5	3	1		11
Work load	4	1	4	1		10
Reputation of the organization	3	3	3		1	9
Working culture	4	1	2	1		8
Working environment		4	3	1	1	8
Underemployment	3	2	2	1		8
Nature of the field	2	2	3			7
Training and learning opportunities	1	4	2			7
Working hours	2	1	4			7
Personal reasons	1	3		1		5
Need for new experience/change	3	1				4
Better offers	2	2			1	4
Marriage	2		1			3
Involuntary reasons	3					3
Personnel development	2		1			3
Location	1			2		3
Challenging work		2	1			3
Designation			2			2
Work just for satisfaction	1			1		2

Source: Researchers' own construction based on interview data

A= Number of times the reason has affected to leave/retain the first employment

B= Number of times the reason has affected to leave/retain in the second employment

C= Number of times the reason has affected to leave/retain in the third employment

D= Number of times the reason has affected to leave/retain in the fourth employment

E= Number of times the reason has affected to leave/retain in the fourth employment

F= Total number of times the reason has affected the employees to leave organizations

the pay factor found to be the last/sixth factor. Weyland (2011) also stated that their [Generation 'Y'ers] main concern is meaningful work, responsibility and flexibility, but not to earn salary and status. However the research demonstrates that that the reality in Sri Lanka is more or less supported by Dries et al. (2008) who said that salary is still an important work value that helps determine career success for all generations.

As the Table 2 shows, the second most mentioned reason that makes

employees leave an organization is career growth. Employees in Sri Lanka seem to be very vigilant about their career prospects. Being Generation 'Y'ers, as Delcampo et al. (2011) claimed, they contribute now for the future. This is consistent with the findings of the Hartman and Yrle (1996) who also found career advancement as a reason for voluntary turnover. This reason must have a link between the age of the employees as well. Cennamo and Gardner (2008) find career advancement as one of the expectations of Generation 'Y'ers.

The third major reason that influence employees leave organizations need to be emphasized because this is an organizational factor that sometimes made employees compromise their high pay and other factors too to leave the organization. That is the problems with the management. Weyland (2011) also said that this is a characteristic of Generation 'Y'ers to leave jobs, when the leadership is weak, even when they enjoy the work.

The researcher can agree with the reasons found by Taylor and Zimmer (1992) as this study also proves that work overload and insecurity are reasons for job hopping. However work overload was not a problem especially for male employees (except for females who had family obligations) given that they are compensated for their extra work. Though Deloitte (2009) also mentioned that Generation 'Y'ers value opportunity over job security, it is not the case in Sri Lanka. Even the employees of the sample of this study, considered job security considerable in many cases.

Another major factor which was not emphasized in the past literature, but was considered mostly by the Sri Lankan employees is that of the reputation of the company. It is a fact that is considered by employees from the first employment itself. This mainly influence employees to retain in a certain organization though there were some other unhappy situations, and also to leave the current employee once they get an opportunity in more reputed company.

Work culture and work environment is the other factor that was significant in the Sri Lankan context, but was not emphasized enough in the past literature. This was not discussed under the characteristics of Generation 'Y'ers either. Yet, many people were affected by this to leave organizations. In certain cases, though every other expectation was met, employees had decided to leave organizations as they were not happy with the working environment or culture.

Even though the work-life balance was explained as a major value of Generation 'Y'ers by Zemke et al. (2000),

working hours were a factor of concern due to family obligations for females only. None of the males complained about working hours emphasizing on the need to contribute to families. The researcher assumes that now the male employees leisure also is combined with the organizations because employers arrange events, provide facilities like gym and sports. Evidencing this factor, there was an employee in the sample who has been looking for an organization with these facilities where he can enjoy his life. But it seems that the female employees get little opportunity to engage in those events when compared to males, due to family commitments. On the other hand there was a female in the sample who said that she has lost time at home due to the events organized by the employer, even during weekends (employee #9).

Taylor and Zimmer (1992) came up with the fact of downsizing as a reason for voluntary turnover. In this study, that factor did not pop up as it is, but it is covered under job security and involuntary turnover. Under job security, the stable nature of the organization had affected employees to retain, which is the opposite of the fact mentioned by them. Under involuntary turnover in this study, there were two cases where employees had changed their organization of employment due to management requests (management requests as a result of downsizing), and due to company close downs (extreme status of the process of downsizing). However it should be stated that there were no cases as mentioned by Taylor and Zimmer (1992) where employees leave organizations as their peers were influenced by downsizing.

Michell et al. (2005) and Abelson (1993) stated that employees are influenced to job hop at times where co-workers are unfairly treated. Yet, this also is not a reason that any of the employees in the sample came up with. Thus it is questionable if the peer pressure is not a reason for Sri Lankan employees to leave an organization though

Though D'Amato and Herzfeldt (2008) said that Generation 'Y'ers are skill hungry, the lack of training and need for challenging work were named as reasons for

leaving an organization by very few employees in the sample. This makes it hard to recognize training opportunity and learning culture as a major factor that result employees to job hop, as Hartman and Yrle (1996) did.

There were employees who job hop with a thinking that “it’s enough with this company”. They sometimes say that they job hop for a change. As Khatri et al. (1999) said, there are employees who job hop for no reason, even for fun. The reason employees in this nature come up with is ‘need for change’. However, it should be noted that, as many HR managers in the sample claimed, employees tend to think this way after a long stay with one organization. Yet, when considered the sample of this study, there was a minority of employees who job hop with no reason and think that employees should change organization of employment after some time. The ‘some time’ the employees mean and the ‘long stay’ employers mean differ. Yet, the time periods all of them mentioned were more than the average number of years employees retain in one organization, which is three years. In the researcher’s point of view, this nature of employment should not be considered as something that is strictly related to Generation ‘Y’ers because even in 1974, Ghiselli (1974) said that some workers have the natural impulse to move from one job to another. Thus the findings about hobo syndrome can be justified, which explains that the employees may change their organization of employment even when they are satisfied with the employer. It is also important to note that there were two employees out of the sample of 25, who spoke against this behaviour. That was basically because they find going to a new job itself is stressful due to uncertainty and ambiguity that requires numerous adjustments, as explained by Mitchell et al. (2005).

Even though Abelson (1993) and Leidner and Smith (2013) describes how macro factors i.e globalization, fast growing economies, changing demand for labour etc. affect lifetime employment, the researcher

found that these macro factors have not influenced individual employees in making decisions about changing their organizations of employment. Nevertheless, the fact of changing demand may be represented by the ‘better offers’ employees talked of in this study. Yet, the employees considered them individually as an offer came to them as a result of their good performance and high level of experiences, but not as a changing demand of an economy.

4.3 Reasons to join a new organization

As it is illustrated in Table 3, the first factor considered by an employee to join an organization is its compensation package. If this is elaborated, this means that, whatever the reason an employee leave an organization, the first factor they would look from another organization to join is the compensation package.

The second factor that the employees consider when joining a new organization is the reputation of the company. This shows that, the reputation of the company helps HR managers to identify the competitive factors for them.

Job security is the third factor that makes employees join another organization.. It was said previously that job security is a reason for employees to leave the employer, despite how good the employer is, when there are opportunities in more secured organizations. As an evidence, job security has become the third important factor that employees think of when joining another organization.

‘Working environment and organizational culture’ is another important factor that employees consider, when joining an organization. Employees came up with this reason mostly due to unpleasant experiences that they have had in their careers.

The factors explained above are the major factors that the researcher came across. Taking all into consideration the Table 4 provides an overall idea about the reasons for job hopping.

Table 3: Reasons to join a new organization

Factors considered	# of first choices	# of second choices	# of third choices	Total # of choices
Pay	10	9	5	24
Reputation	2	6	4	12
Job security	6	2	2	10
Working environment and organization culture	2	3	4	9
Other benefits	1	2	4	7
Growth potential/career	0	1	3	4
Industry/ Profession	2	0	0	2
Fixed working hours	0	2	0	2
Exposure/ experience	0	0	2	2
Designation/ position	2	0	0	2
Proper leadership	1	0	0	1
Work life balance	1	0	0	1
Training opportunities	1	0	0	1
Manageable work	0	0	1	1

Source: Researchers' own construction based on interview data

Table 4: Reasons for job hopping

Reasons to leave or retain in an organization	Reasons to join an organization
Pay package	Pay package
Career growth	Reputation of the organization
Management issues	Job security
Job security	Working environment and culture
Workload	Career growth
Reputation of the organization	Industry/ Profession
Working environment and culture	Working hours
Underemployment	Exposure/ Experience
Industry/ Profession	Designation
Training and Learning opportunities	Leadership

Source: Researchers' own construction based on interview data

4.4 Nature of job hopping in Sri Lanka

Job Hopping and Gender

In the past literature, there were many contradicting views about job hopping and gender. While some people find males

job hop more than the females or vice versa, Miller and Wheeler (1992) and Wai and Robinson (1998) found no relationship between gender and job hopping.

However, in this study the researcher came up with a statistical finding

and also an observational finding. According to the statistical analysis, female employees job hop than males (Table 1).

Yet, many females who now feel satisfied with the employer do not have an intention to quit again. However, when the majority of males are not satisfied with their employment, they intend to quit further. With that background, what the researcher found is that by nature, females in general tend to stop job hopping when they find an employer who meet their expectations.

As it is shown in the Table 1, since the female employees in the sample who said that they have no intention to quit, had not worked with their current employer so long, so that their average number of years in one organization are low. In case of male employees they have spent a similar number of years in one organization and have the intention to quit further. This can be considered by the HR managers when recruiting to the different nature of the positions.

Job hopping and education level

Korpi and Mertens (2003) said that there are clear differences in inter-firm mobility according to education level. A difference of job hopping behaviour due to education level also could have been observed by the researcher as well.

This relationship between job hopping and level of education is linked to the level of expectations of the employees. As it was supported by HR manager #4, there is a vast difference between the expectations of an employee with advance level qualification and an employee with a degree. As a result of this high level of expectations of degree holders, they tend to look for better job opportunities with better salaries and other benefits. But the advance level qualified employees hesitate initially to job hop as their competition is higher compared to degree holders. Thus they tend to retain at an organization they find comfortable with. As HR manager #1 said when employers obtain a masters degree, they try to move to another organization as the employer fail to meet their increased level of expectations.

Thus it can be concluded that the higher the level of education, the higher the level of job hopping and this gives implications for HR managers regarding training and learning opportunities.

Job hopping among industries

The researcher also observed that except for employees who have gained specialised skills in certain industries, all the other employees job hop among different industries in their career. But the nature of their jobs in all organizations was very similar. For example many of the individuals who had specialized in various areas of IT, have worked in education, hospitality, insurance, telecommunication industries and also in the IT industry itself such as software development companies. On the other hand the employees who have specific skill areas that can be made use of only in one industry, has hopped only within that industry. The best example for this is the marine and shipping industry.

When employees talked about the marketability of themselves, this industry specific knowledge factor came into discussion because they have less opportunities to apply.

This finding is supported by Korpi and Mertens (2003), who say that employees with industry specific skills hop among firms in the same industry. This gives an implication to the nature of training to be given to retain employees.

Job Hopping and level of acceptance of uncertainty

The researcher had a separate question to check if they accept the risk of not getting a job within a reasonable time period after leaving an organization or leave the organization only when they find another job. The conclusion the researcher came up with is that, in general, employees in Sri Lanka do not accept the risk, so that they normally leave an organization after they find another organization. This implies the opportunity HR managers have to retain an employee if they have a good sense of employee behaviour.

Job hopping with lower designation

The main reasons for job hopping with lower designation was, moving to reputed organizations with taller hierarchies. The employees who were in an upper position sometimes moved to a lower position with an intention to climb up in a more sophisticated career path.

Employee perception about job hopping

The majority of the employees in the sample believed positively about job hopping. As they claimed job hopping can be a good answer to avoid the monotonous nature of jobs, to avoid dissatisfaction that they feel after some time in one place, and to meet changing expectations of people.

Though it is a minority, there were employees who believed that employees should stop job hopping at the moment that they feel their expectations are met. Yet this becomes invalid according to the view of the majority who say that the expectations of people keep changing. The employees were aware of the consequences of job hopping, so that they believed that one employee should stay in one organization for at least three years. Yet there were employees who had left organizations after one day of employment too. Their perception is that no one should suffer because of their employment as that would affect every other facet of life.

However, it was mainly females who talked about these consequences and negative points of job hopping, while the majority of males tried to see the positive nature of job hopping.

Employer perception about job hopping

Today's HR managers do not consider job hopping as much of a challenge due to favourable labour supply for them, so that do not take specific actions to retain them. Instead, the employers take advantage of job hopping. The reasons they see as the reasons for job hopping are, pay, working environment, better opportunities, migration and personal matters. They also have specifically identified that the Generation 'Y'ers job hop than the other

employees in the past. This is backed up by the characteristic of generation 'Y'ers which say that they are loyal to their professions but not to the organizations. Most of the employees do not take special actions to mitigate job hopping. The main consequence of job hopping as they see is the cost of replacement.

The HR managers admit job hopping as a general behaviour of employment and do not see it as an unfair practice by the employees. However, HR managers now justify job hopping provided that they job hop for reasonable matters as they see benefits of job hopping to employees' careers.

5. Conclusion

According to the findings of this study, the average number of years an employee would retain in an organization is 3 years. The first five reasons that influence employees to job hop respectively are, pay package, career growth, working environment and culture, reputation of the organization and job security. It was female employees who were influenced to job hop due to reasons such as personal matters, working hours and overwork. Social influence and peer pressure did not appear as a reason to job hop in Sri Lanka, for knowledge workers. Apart from that, training and learning opportunities were also not a major requirement of Sri Lankan employees that result job hopping. The macro factors such as globalization and changing demand for labour that were discussed in the literature review were not notified by neither the HR managers nor employees as reasons for employees to job hop, and job hopping were mainly influenced of individualistic matters.

In the general, male employees job hop continuously in their career while female employees initially job hop than the male employees to find the organization they fit in, and stop job hopping thereafter. With regard to the level of education of employees, the more the employees are educated, the more they job hop. Yet, the level of job hopping of the employees who have gained specialised skills is lesser.

Unlike it was generalised in the past literature, as the Generation “Y” employees are less considered about job security, employees in Sri Lanka do consider job security as a major fact and tend to avoid uncertainties, avoiding risks.

In the HR managers’ point of view, the main reasons that result in job hopping are, pay, working environment, better opportunities, migration, and personal matters. Even though none of the HR managers saw job hopping as a challenge, they see the cost of replacement as a major consequence of job hopping. Knowledge spillover, leak of trade secrets were not considerable consequence for HR managers as it was expected. However, HR managers do not see job hopping as a threat; instead they looked at job hopping in an optimistic manner. The common perception was that, job hopping is justifiable given that employees job hop due to reasonable matters and job hopping does speed up employees’ career growth.

6. Practical Implications

HR managers can consider the frequency of job hopping as a period that they can find out what employees to be retained in the organization. Identification of employee expectations would also help to visualize employees future potential if they retain with the organization.

On the other hand, HR managers can consider job hopping as an opportunity to get rid of employees who really do not add value to the organizations. With the pertaining labour laws and customs in Sri Lanka, having to manage individuals that do not fit with the organization is a huge pressure for HR managers as there is always room for mistakes in recruitment. Allowing such employees to job hop makes room in the organization for new blood.

Providing the employees with industry-specific training would help employers who want to retain the employees.

As it is found in this study, many Sri Lankan employees make arrangement for a new organization before they leave the

organization. Thus, if HR managers are alert about employees’ behaviours, they can get to know about the people who are to quit. This helps employers to act accordingly depending on the importance of the person to the organization.

7. Limitations of the study

The sample size for this study is relatively small and this may hinder the ability to generalize the findings of the study. When the composition of the sample of 30 individuals is considered, 25 were employees and 5 were employers. Therefore the representativeness of the employers/HR managers’ views about job hopping is limited.

A considerable number of employees were interviewed over the phone especially in cases where the researcher did not have a close relationship with those interviewees. The researcher found it difficult to keep the conversation long enough when the interviewee was in their office environment at such times.

8. Implications for future research

This research was focused only on knowledge workers. Future research can be extended towards operational level employees.

This research was a cross sectional analysis that looked at the matter of job hopping from a helicopter view. There are certain industries that face high threat of the sustainability due to the job hopping behaviour of employees (e.g.: industries with trade secrets). Future research also can be done in depth to identify the real reasons for job hopping in such industries.

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