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AUTHORS
Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun
Md. Nazmul Hasan

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Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun (Bangladesh), Md. Nazmul Hasan (Bangladesh)

Factors affecting employee turnover and sound retention strategies in business organization: a conceptual view

Abstract

“Employee turnover” as an expression is broadly used in business organization. Despite the fact that several studies have been performed on this topic, little research has been conducted on examining the causes and leading factors of turnover as well, as advising some feasible approaches, which can be applied by bosses to ensure that employees will continue in their respective organizations to enhance organizational effectiveness and productivity. The main purpose of this study is to determine the reasons and key factors in the perspectives of the relevant literature and identify to the intention of employee turnover. This conceptual paper also suggests various possible strategies on how to minimize the turnover and retain employees in the organizations. Hence, the paper has proposed a conceptual framework that shows the major variables in explaining the phenomenon of employee turnover and addressing sound retention strategies to handle these issues.

Keywords: employee, turnover, factors, causes, retain, leave, strategies, organization.

JEL Classification: J63, L22.

Introduction

In the era of globalization, it has been regarded to be a key issue to deal with employee turnover for any business organization. Chan et al. (2010) also state employee turnover as a serious issue, particularly in the area of human resource management. To fulfill the basic needs and provide a good working environment, good pay and other benefits in an economic approach is quite multifaceted and burdensome to an organization. Every business desires to increase the productivity and lessen turnover, thereby leading to be profitable. Employee turnover supervision is an obligation to attain organizational goals effectively. However, high turnover would bring devastation to the business in the form of both direct and indirect costs. Direct costs are referred to costs such as expenses on recruitment, selection, orientation, workshop and training for the fresh employees. Indirect costs are indicated to spending on education, condensed self-confidence, stress on the existing worker and the collapse of social capital. Moreover, high employee turnover will put at risk on reaching the organizational goal. To combat the challenges in the cutthroat business world, management has considered employee turnover as a major concern and initiated some measures to retain them in the organizations.

However, due to the less attention, top management does not concentrate on this major issue. They are perhaps little capable of realizing the situations about how employee turnover has a detrimental effect on the productivity of the organization. Therefore, it is more significant to conduct the research on employee turnover to help business organizations by identifying their problems, analyzing the information and recommending possible solutions in recent time.

The purpose of this research, therefore, is to find out the various causes and influential factors of employee turnover in business organization. This study also explores some sound retention strategies on how an organization can retain employees and minimize the rate of turnover. Based on previous studies, this research has been performed nationally and globally to uncover a variety of factors in relation with employee turnover affecting the industry for their productivity.

1. Literature review

Employee turnover is delineated to a situation in which employees depart the organization for several reasons, and thus, negatively affect the organization in terms of overall expenditure and the abilities to distribute the minimum required services (Yankeelov et. al., 2008). When employees leave the organization, this may not only impact on organization but also on workforce itself. Due to its depressing impact, employee turnover has been considerable topic for scholars, academics and managers.

The reasons for individual turnover intention are age, gender, marriage, education levels and years of working in the organization (Liu and Wang, 2006). Previous studies found that the rate of female employee turnover is higher, as compared to male employees. It can be associated with women duty that women need to give birth and take care of the family. Therefore, this is a pressing issue that needs to be dealt with urgently. Though employees work in units or positions for a long period, they feel tired and tend to leave the jobs. According to Ma et al. (2003), “Employees with young, inexperienced and high education level tend to have low level of satisfaction about jobs and careers, and have lower commitment to the organization, these negative attitudes are associated with turnover intention”. One of the key factors of turnover intention is Individual aptitude. When individuals have strong ability, or individuals are not core competent at their...
job and cannot progress them completely in the organization, they are prone to turnover intention (Chen and Li, 1998). For employees aged over 30, individual responsibilities is also a factor to consider them leaving the organization. We can study this when the more responsibility (such as workers are the single father or mother, or their income is the main source, etc.) persons bear in the family, the lesser the possibility of their turnover (Zhang and Zhang, 2003)). In short, all these individual factors directly influence the turnover intention, or indirectly affect on them through the rule of other variables.

Interpersonal relationship amid the different departments has a significant impact on employee turnover intention. When an organization or a department have intricate interpersonal relationship, there are many sections or small groups, it may be complicated for employees to deal with the relationship with coworkers and managers, or the workers are to spend a lot of energy to have relationships within the organization or the department, they are rather likely to leave the job (Zhang, 2016).

Training and learning opportunities will also have considerable effects on employees staying in the organization. If the company does not provide them the opportunity to learn, they cannot improve their skills and abilities. In other words, employees are most unlikely to get self-realization so that they cannot continue to grow in the company. As a result, employees may tend to quit the job (Liu et al., 2006).

Pearce and Mawson (2009) have described contradictory effect regarding the low rate of training in the organization, leading to poor job performance and higher rate of employee turnover. On the other hand, some organizations, which provide appropriate training program for their employees’ learning and skill development, achieve the high ratio of success and helping to minimize the level of employee turnover. Therefore, employees might have greater commitment to their job and full encouragement to stay in the organization (Amos et al., 2008).

However, one of the significant effects of turnover is to increase cost due to recruiting and training new employees. It costs businesses money to call for interview and hire candidates. Besides, it is a costly process that skilled workers rarely spend the time and contribute in income-generating activities, because they provide training to new workers. In other words, experienced workers are responsible for training new employees so that they are less able to concentrate on their normal job duties. In a small business, the owner himself might have to train new employees. In addition, the combined effect of the negatives can result from high turnover, leading a firm to generate less profit. Anything that leads to increase costs or reduce productivity, income will tend to reduce profit. Evidence for this is provided by the Harvard Business School, when businesses experience higher turnover, they will get lower profit margins (Zeynep and Robert, 2008). It often takes months or years for a new business to achieve profitability due to increase of unexpected costs as high turnover and needs to start new venture to make a profit.

Thirty nine cases regard as job satisfactions have been assessed in the past fifty years and it was discovered that all but four studies demonstrated negative relationship (Firth et al., 2007). By contrast, Simon and Kristian (2007) opine that job satisfaction is one of the predictors of turnover intention. In the perspectives of Western research, several studies have found that job-related factors are the key determinants of job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intentions among employees. (Boxall et al., 2003, Malhotra et al., 2007; Meyer and Smith, 2000). A different study illustrates that both lower job satisfaction level and organizational commitment are associated with the higher rate of turnover (Zhao and Zhou, 2008). However, Zuber (2001) states that “turnover may matter more in organizations where jobs are not standardized and procedures do not exist for transmitting knowledge to new members”.

Employees possibly exit the organization due to economic reasons. Michal et al. (2001) have used the economic model to predict labor turnover in the market. Some socio-economic factors such as economic development level, condition of labor market, employment structure, job opportunities, property enterprise, transport and communication, accommodation, education and medical facilities, living cost, quality of life and so on all have an influence on the intention of employee turnover (Huang and Huang, 2006). Economic growth, short supply of organization personnel, better employment opportunities increase will lead to turnover intention. The nature of organization affects the intention of employee turnover. Members of staff in state-owned organizations have the highest level of turnover intention, the next is workers in private organizations, and the final is staff in foreign funded organizations. Generally, these three types of business organization have the higher rate of turnover intention, more than the average. To a certain extent, transportation, shelter, schooling and health care facilities are negatively interrelated to the employee turnover. Under the circumstance of high expenditure of living, in order to make a living, the likelihood of employee turnover will reduce. Employees are likely to choose to quit the current job for getting the chance of high-paid job in pursuit of a better quality of life (Zhao et al., 2003).

Experts also have opined that overall corporate culture of an organization affects the employee turnover. However, the most important issue here is the trust in and respect for the management team. If organizations appreciate employees, treat them with respect, and provide compensation, benefits, and perks that demon-
strate respect and caring, they will stay in the organization. In other words, employees appreciate a workplace in which communication is transparent, management is accessible, executives are approachable and respected, and direction is clear and understood (Huselid, 1995). In addition, a lack of recognition is one of the significant factors that may contribute to turnover. Organizations must provide a lot of genuine appreciation and recognition as icing on the cake for employee retention. Otherwise, there is a probability that employees tend to leave.

Apart from the debate of employee’s turnover, many researchers have attributed the theories of employees’ retention as an important topic of inquiry. Employee retention is an effort by a business to maintain a working environment, which supports current workforce in remaining with the company. Retaining skilled employees would be a serious concern for organizations in the face of ever increasing high rate of employee turnover at national and global level (Samuel and Chipunza, 2009). Literature has overwhelmingly proved that valuable workforce or functional workforce retention can play a significant role for the survival of an organization. As a result, this could have adverse effect on productivity and profitability (Bogdanowicz and Bailey, 2002).

Many experts agree that employees’ retention policies are aimed at addressing the various needs of employees to enhance their job satisfaction and reduce the substantial costs involved in hiring and training new staff. It is essential for an organization to maintain corporate strategic advantage by retaining the hardworking and talented employees. Hence, managers must understand the difference between a valuable employees and an employee who does not contribute much to the organization so that they can design appropriate strategies to retain the potential employees. These strategies may range from lucrative rewarding packages to involving employees in every sphere of the functioning of the organization (Mak and Sockel, 2001).

Previous empirical studies have observed that factors such as competitive salary, friendly working environment, good interpersonal relationships and job security are the key motivational variables that can lead to retain them in the organizations (Samuel and Chipunza, 2009; Kinnear and Sutherland, 2000; Maertz and Griffeth, 2004). Two factor theory proposed by Herzberg et al. (1959) is an important theory that explains what satisfies or dissatisfies employees and, hence, serves as an important framework for employee retention.

1.1. Voluntary and involuntary turnover. While employees quit the job from an organization, it is stated as voluntary turnover (Noe et al., 2006). It is set off the decision of the employee. Another definition is furnished by Egan et al. (2004), indicating “An instance of voluntary turnover, or a quit, reflects an employee’s decision to leave an organization, whereas an example of involuntary turnover, or a discharge, reflects an employer’s decision to terminate the employment relationship”. Voluntary turnover can be affected by not having job satisfaction, job stress, as well as due to getting a better job at another organization, a conflict with a manager, or personal matter such as staying home and giving enough time to the family member (Manu and Shay, 2004). It is, therefore, essential to reflect on attractions such as alternatives whilst appearing to voluntary turnover. Nevertheless, voluntary turnover can be foreseen and, in turn, be managed. Chiu and Francesco (2003) define involuntary turnover as “… an instance of involuntary turnover, or a discharge” that “reflects an employer’s decision to terminate the employment relationship”. Involuntary turnover includes retirement, death and dismissal. Employee turnover is regarded as involuntary when leaving the job to take care of seriously sick family member or to accompany a spouse to remote area. Therefore, employees have no control over and decide to quit the job (Martin and Martin, 2003).

1.2. Avoidable and unavoidable turnover. Avoidable turnover has been described as the one organization can prevent through recruiting, assessing and motivating employees more efficiently and effectively (Luecke, 2002). So any business organization requires verifying whether voluntary turnover has been dealt with properly. Such confirmation is also needed, because this will lead to take the necessary initiatives to enhance the employee retention. The phenomenon of turnover is psychosomatic, managerial and expensive (Weisberg and Kirschenbaum, 2002). There is currently no conventional model to understand the route of turnover as a whole. A variety of factoring is applied to evaluate the causes of employee turnover. It contains personal factoring, job content factors, working environment and external factoring. Chiu et al. (2002) have stated that “Unavoidable turnover results from life decisions that extend beyond an employer’s control, such as a decision to move to a new area or a job transfer for a spouse”. However, almost eighty percent of turnover is due to recruiting mistakes, several of these mistakes can be avoided. Organizations have a need of taking certain measures while selecting and evaluating potential employees.

2. Conceptual framework

According to Saunders et al. (2007), “A conceptual framework indicates how the researcher views the concept involved in a study, especially the relationship among concepts”. It can guide research by providing an illustration of theoretical constructs and variables of interest. Designing a conceptual model begins with conducting a thorough review of the literature. Peer-reviewed journal articles, books/monographs, conference papers, theses/dissertations and other relevant references have investigated for conducting this research. Therefore, researchers have developed a con-
ceptual framework based on the causes and influencing factors of employee turnover, as well as sound retention strategies for minimizing employee turnover.

Based on the previous findings of theoretical literature and the need for more studies, below is the proposed research framework for this study.

![Conceptual framework](image)

**Fig. 1. Conceptual framework**

### 3. Causes and influencing factors

Turnover, in essence, results from job dissatisfaction for individual employees in the workplace. However, being dissatisfied in a job is not the only reason for leaving the company. When employees possess skills that are in demand, they are likely to be tempted by a high salary, more benefits or better potential for career development. Consequently, it is sometimes necessary to understand and identify the difference between employees who are unsatisfied, leaving the job and those who quit for other reasons. There is a variety of causes and influential factors that result in employees’ turnover of an organization.

#### 3.1. Managerial factors

High employee turnover is caused by the instability in the management of an organization. Employees are more inclined to stay and work when the organization is stable and friendly working environment (Bergmann and Scarpello, 2001). The obligation of a quantitative approach to managing the employees has led to disillusionment of employees and so it directs to turnover. Because of this, managers should not apply the quantitative approach in supervising their employees (Dress and Shaw, 2001). Approving a cost oriented approach to labor turnover increases employee turnover (Liu, Liu and Li, 2006). If managers take steps to cut the labor turnover, it is essential to avoid all these approaches (Dobbs, 2001). Organizations could eventually reduce in size turnover unless organization has performed as well-balanced communication system between managers and workers (Griffith and Hom, 2001).

Zhang (2016) has quoted that “The participation degree of company or department decision also positively influences the level of job satisfaction, in turn, directly or indirectly affect turnover intention”. Employees feel satisfied about their work and stay longer in their positions to get them involved in the organizational decision making process. For this reason, workers should understand concerning issues that influence working environment (Khatri et al, 2001). One argument put forward is that a high turnover of labor possibly implies poor staffing and selection policy, poor supervisory system, weak grievance procedure and lack of motivation. All these issues can result in high labor turnover in the sense where there have been no appropriate managerial guidelines on personnel issues and, thus, employees decide to leave the job (Lambert et al., 2001).

#### 3.2. Working environment

If working environment is low-grade due to lack of all the basic facilities such as proper lighting, working in a space with some natural light, ventilation, air conditioning system, open space, restroom, lavatory, furniture, safety equipment while discharging hazardous duties, drinking water and refreshment, workers will not be capable of facing up the difficulty for a long time (Singh, 2008). Besides, a bad boss creates an adverse working environment, thereby leading the employees to leave the job.

#### 3.3. Pay

According to Shaw et al (1998), “Pay is something given in exchange for services rendered in an organization”. It has played a significant role in retaining and rewarding high quality human resources. To be more precise, one of the critical factors of employee turnover is lower salary. When employees receive lower salary and insufficient financial rewards, they tend to stay no longer with the organization (Lavob, 1997). It is often said that job dissatisfaction is the major cause of poor pay scale procedure, leading employees to leave the job. A good illustration of this is that a new employee may guess why the person next to him gets a high salary for what is supposed to be the similar job (Dobbs, 2001). A common opinion is that good pay can be a strong determinant of job satisfaction that leads to achieve higher productivity in the organization.

#### 3.4. Fringe benefit

A fringe benefit is a meandering incentive contracted to an employee or a group of employees as a part of executive membership, which has
an effect on performance and employee retention (Alexander et al., 1994). It can be argued that benefit scheduling is a critical section of human resource planning process on account of huge expenditures and financial resources approved for the future (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996). At the managerial level, a fringe benefit is critical to attract, retain and motivate the employees who may continue to work for organizational success. One reason for this is that fringe benefits play an important role to persuade individual’s interest to work with an organization. In fact, numerous organizations provide fringe benefits, incentives and recognize employee’s performance, directing a device of motivation (Lee and Mitchell, 1994).

3.5. Career promotion. In wide terms, reward program demonstrates the broad theory of compensation strategy which is described as the “deliberate utilization of the pay systems as an essential integrating mechanism through which the efforts of various sub-units or individuals are directed towards the achievement of an organization’s strategic objectives” (Labov, 1997). The best way of promoting and motivating employees would be a combination of pay, promotion, bonus and other kinds of rewards to achieve organizational performance (Ting, 1997). The reason behind is that lack of promotion and ordinary work responsibilities considerably can lead to the intention of turnover (House et al, 1996). To an extent, employees consider leaving the organization due to the ineffective performance assessment and perceptions of job unfairness (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996). By implementing “job enrichment” programs, organization would be capable of retain employee and to provide the opportunities for better career development (Magne et al., 1996).

3.6. Job fit. According to Campion (1991), Selection process is related to the fit between the candidate and the job. O’Reilly et al (1991) argued that job satisfaction levels will go up if there is a good fit between qualities of the applicants and the job. Therefore, it is imperative to have a good fit between what the candidate wishes for and what the organization requires. Organizations will increase the productivity if they recruit the suitable employees and take necessary measures to increase job satisfaction. On the other hand, turnover will not be minimized until employees are not satisfied with the job. As a result, management needs to deal with the pressing issue of employee’s turnover and job satisfaction. Thompson et al. (2006) state that “A happy worker is a productive worker”.

3.7. Clear job expectation. If organizations cannot fulfill the highest capacity of personal job demand, employees may have a feeling of job dissatisfaction that result in turnover intention. One of the major causes of employee’s turnover is that employees depart the organization, while newly hired employees do not get their job expectations. Secondly, some employees are rather unlikely to be in a situation to tolerate few managers or supervisors and, hence, they come to a decision leaving their positions (Makhubu, 2006). As a consequence, it is more imperative for an organization to understand employee’s job anticipation and, side by side, take necessary steps to fulfill their needs.

3.8. Perceived alternative employment opportunity. Employees leave the organization if there is a possibility to get an alternative work (Luthans, 1995). However, it can be argued that this is an unmanageable issue, depending on the external environmental factors, such as job availability and the rate of unemployment. A study conducted by Carsten and Spector (1987) found considerable relationship between job availability and voluntary turnover. To be more precise, perceived alternative opportunity may also be exaggerated by the market condition and educational background (Jacob, 1998). We observe this when personnel with higher educational background is more qualified and experienced so that they can perceive alternative job opportunity (Cotton and Tuttle, 1986). In other words, higher educated employees have more chance of upgrading their positions in comparison with less educated employees and are likely to consider their qualification as a competitive advantage.

3.9. Influence of co-workers. In 2002, a study carried out by Martin and Martin (2003) of 477 workers in 15 companies investigates the reasons why employees are intended to quit the job. One of their major findings is that “co-workers intentions have a major significant impact on all destination options — the more positive the perception of their co-workers desire to leave, the more employees themselves wanted to leave”. In fact, job change acts as a form of social pressure or rationalization on employees while co-workers intend to leave their positions.

4. Sound strategies to minimize employee turnover

It is uncompromisingly indispensable to stay put the potential employees in the organization. Managers need to arrange training and learning program how to focus on key employee satisfiers and dissatisfiers so that they can make a well balanced job design and control system to retain employees in the organizations (Staw et al., 1986). One of the major causes of job dissatisfaction is poor income, which may result in employees leaving the organization. Therefore, it is more essential to build up a sound retention plans and have a good relationship between managers and workers in any organization.

4.1. Recruiting suitable employees. According to Hulin et al. (1985), staffing is designed at providing a pool of latent human resources from which business organization can select the suitable employees on the basis of job condition. Hence, if the organizations try to minimize the rate of employee turnover, it is required to ensure that the suitable applicants have considered for recruitment and selection in the job.
cost-measures, and work with them cooperatively.

According to management experts, one key argument put forward is that a good boss needs to provide employees with a direction and feedback, spend time in one-to-one meetings, and take care genuinely about their concerns and provide tools for personal and professional development. An employee reports to undermine the employee’s confidence, and commitment to have a toxic relationship with the individual. A bad boss is one of the reasons why employees quit their job. A good illustration for this is that boss keeps update information that employees need to succeed. He or she cannot perform his job or accomplish his goals without their help. So, manager shares a critical interdependence with employees. If manager rarely supports them to complete the tasks successfully, they cannot perform well in their assigned responsibilities. In fact, employees will not progress without the information, perspective, experience, and support of manager (Maertz and Griffeth, 2004). Based on a recent study, it can be argued that direct and indirect effect of managerial support on turnover cognition represent inconsistency of the reason of manager on turnover intention (Campbell and Allen, 2007).

4.4. Training and development. Management should initiate to create an environment, where key information has been freely communicated. Employees have the opportunities to be well-informed and insightful for further career development, as well as variety form of training program will rationally be foremost to an organization. Therefore, this will result in retaining the employees and have a positive impact on organizational productivity (Singh, 2008).

4.5. Identifying the economic problem. Generally, employees are most likely to generate the turnover intention due to a variety of economic reasons (Steers and Mowday, 1981). If we provide evidence, Ford’s car plants have experienced a significant number of employee’s turnover frequently reaching rates as high as 300 to 400 percent per year. When the company enables to realize and identify the problem, a decision has approved to increase the basic wages doubled from 2.50 dollars to 5.00 dollars per day and, by doing so, the rate of labor turnover has radically reduced (Muchinsky and Tuttle, 1979).

4.6. Job satisfaction. The job content and autonomy are the two major job related motivational factors that lead to an increase of employees job satisfaction. Once employees realize that they are authorized to take part in the decision-making process, they could be motivated and desire to do their best for the organization. Shahzad et al. (2008) state that “Turnover studies primarily have established that satisfaction with supervision promotes job retention without necessarily identifying specific behaviors by supervisors that commit employees to the company”. Experts have identified some factors that are likely to make employees satisfied at work such as good pay, friendly working environment, cooperative colleagues, career counseling and opportunities for training and development (Sherman and Snell, 1998). It is also noted that “employees desire managers who realize and treat them fairly” (Daley and Kirk, 1992). Unless managers are fair, logical and caring to their employees, it is fairly likely that they will not be happy about their jobs.
4.7. Unionization. One of the major advantages of labor unions for organizations is that they lead to less employee’s turnover. It is quite probable that employees will not leave their jobs as frequently if they are the members of labor union. One cause for this is that they have to pay dues to be a part of the union, and they typically do not want to lose their position in the organization. Labor unions are organizations in which employees bond together to create a collective voice for negotiations with employers. Previous studies suggest that labor union may be capable to provide a safe and better working environment by the negotiations between labor and management, resulting in lower turnover (Ferguson, 1986).

Another benefit is that labor union by their effective working can improve employee satisfaction. While employees deal with unions, they are likely to be more satisfied, as they have a voice to speak to the employer and get higher wages on average and fringe benefits packages. Therefore, labor unions help in reducing the rate of labour turnover and developing systematic grievance settlement procedures leading to harmonious industrial relations. Trade unions can, thus, contribute to the improvements in level of production, productivity and discipline, thereby improving quality of work-life (Martin and Martin, 2003).

4.8. Organizational culture. A well-developed organizational culture is one of the factors that influence the employees to stay put in the organization. If employees are not being contented with the culture, work environment, organizational structure, the probability is that they will quit the job (Mowday et al., 1982). It is often said that organizations are able to attract and motivate employees by practicing the best organizational culture. Thus, it may lead them to continue work in the organizations.

4.9. Balancing work and family life. There can be avoided various retention problems if the organization finds a solution to help employees to effectively control their commitment at home and at work (Tsere-Yieth et al., 2004). It is also probable that parents are supposed to take responsibilities, while this comes up to the caring for the family. If we take an example, parents may help to bring back children from school. The study also suggests that flexible working hour can lead to deal with a better work-life balance and, by doing so, can counteract job stress (Boxall and Purcell, 2003). Hence, managers should be provided the flexible working hour opportunities for their employees.

Conclusion
Management should instigate further programs to understand why employees quit the organization and identify the issues that attract and retain them in the organizations. Job satisfaction is the key determinant of turnover intention. Hence, if the above sound strategies are applied, there is a possibility that business organizations continue to exist in a vibrant environment by taking into account their workforce as a vital resource. Many experts are of the view that employees are the staying power of any organization so organizations necessitate taking initiative to implement the employees’ motivation process, thereby enhancing the overall employees’ performance by providing quality products and offering excellent services. It is also required to realize the employee turnover intent. Around fifteen percent of the workforce intends to leave, which are likely to result in actual turnover if mitigating strategies are not put in place. It is less expensive to retain the employees than to recruit, train and place new ones. Therefore, every organization will have necessary measures to fill employee vacancies and need to develop robust retention strategies to prevent further employees leaving. As a consequence, the intent of this paper in discovering the factors and narrating them to the study is to present a general viewpoint of what the organization necessitates to identify and anticipate, as well as what are the diverse streets available for future reflection to deal with major issues relating to employee turnover.

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