

The Influence of Human Resource Management Practices on Employees Intention to Early Retirement: A Case Study of Ministry of Health, Kingdom of Bahrain

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to examine the prior existence of push-pull factors that influence employees' intention to early retirement and the influence of the new policy on these push-pull factors. Since the announcement of incentives for voluntary retirement, the issue has taken a serious level and caused unnecessary anxiety among current employees who otherwise have to take on extra burdens. A mixed approach is used to better understand this phenomenon. Opinion on the intention of early retirement of current employees is investigated through a survey and whether such opinion is supported among employees who have submitted for early retirement through interviews. The findings indicate a significant influence on HRM push factors and external pull factors on employees' intention to resign early. The external pull factor seems to override the HRM push factors. This observation is supported by those who have submitted for early retirement. This phenomenon seems to have been accelerated by the government monetary rewards policy introduced for employees to take on voluntary retirement. The findings indicate the importance of introducing targeted policy approaches rather than introducing a general policy to minimize negative implications on health employees in Bahrain.

Type of Paper: Exploratory

Keywords: Conceptual Frame, HRM Practices, Employee Intention, Early Retirement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the onset of oil price fluctuations, Bahrain has brought forth multiple approaches to minimise the impact on its economy. One such move is to reduce the financial burden by encouraging voluntary retirement across all ministries. However, some ministries were more negatively affected. One such ministry is the Ministry of Health. The number of people applying for voluntary retirement is significantly high (Figure 1 and Table 1). This has put a burden on health provision and affected the quality of services rendered, besides putting a barrier to Vision 2030 on the nation's health. Further, it has increased anxiety among employees who had to bear with the extra committal.

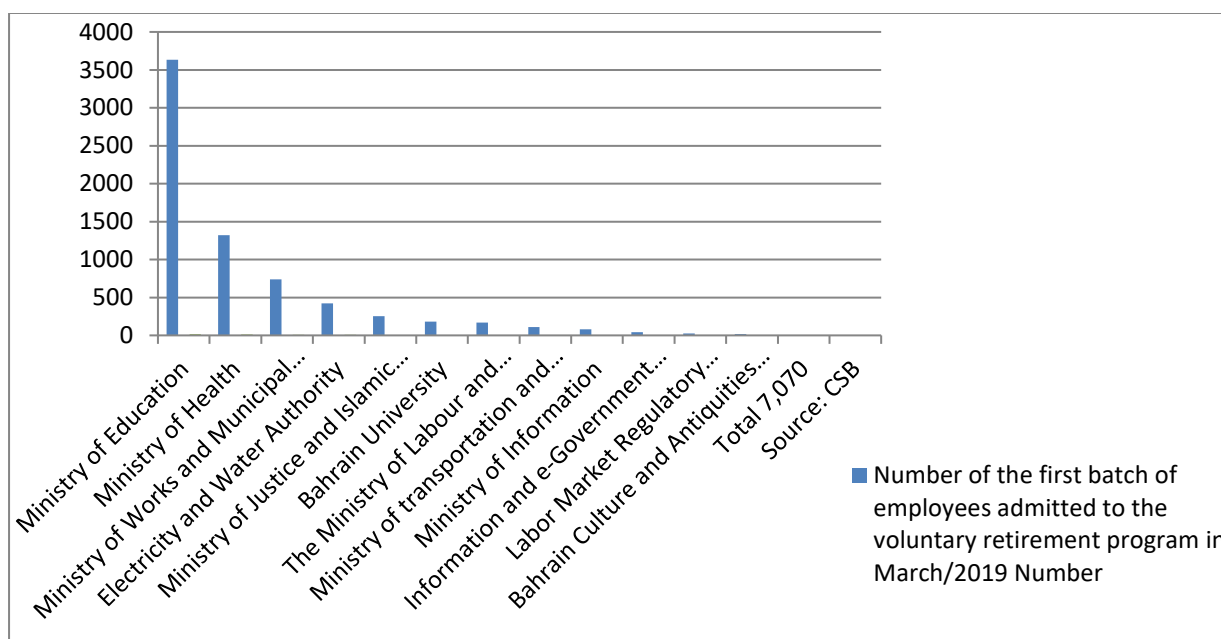


Figure 1.1 Voluntary retirement in various Ministries

Table 1.1 MOH employees 2015 – 2017

MOH employees 2015 – 2017					
Year	Total employees	Bahraini employees		Non- Bahraini employees	
2015	9,773	7,756	79.4%	2,017	20.6%
2016	9,279	7,284	78.5%	1,995	21.5%
2017	8,901	6,976	78.4%	1,925	21.6%

Source: (MOH, 2019)

But what is seemingly bothering these people, who appear to be waiting for such an announcement, and eagerly accepting those offers even though they are meagre to sustain a minimum standard of living. This phenomenon is even seen among young staff who opted for this scheme. The government's aim of encouraging them to go into business has not materialised. There may be other reasons that may have originated from HRM practices that push them from the system. Or the external environment that is pulling them away. Chiedu, et al., (2017) reported that, when an employee is not satisfied with their job, they have a higher chance of voluntarily leaving their position. Hence, this article will explore push and pull factors and their significance in the Bahrain Ministry of Health (MOH).

1.1 Aim of the research

This study, therefore, is intended to investigate the push and pull factors through the following RQs. That tests the proposition that internal HRM policies push and external pulls that may, in addition to incentives, may likely influence the thought of opting for early retirement. Six RQ are formulated for this purpose.

Research Question
Q1: Is there an intention to retire early among employees of public health centres under the MOH Bahrain?
Q2: Is there a push-factor from HRM practices on employees of public health centres under the MOH Bahrain?
Q3: Is there a pull-factor from external factors on employees of public health centres under the MOH Bahrain?
Q4: What are the most influential factors of HRM that affect employee of public health centres under the MOH Bahrain?
Q5: Is there a relationship between HR practices and intention to retire early among employees of public health centres under the MOH Bahrain?
Q6: Is there external mediating factors influencing HRM practices and the intention to retire early among employees of public health centres under the MOH Bahrain?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Lack of employee retention strategies in the health care industry leads to organizational profit loss (Cloutier, 2015). A study by Chan and Morrison, (2000) found among nurses in a large hospital who left the job mentioned reasons such as inadequacy of staffing, poor salary and welfare as primary influences on their intention to leave, while other studies have revealed reasons for motivational variables. Likewise, Hancharik, (2008) found that hospitals with higher use of technology generally had higher retention rates, although the magnitude of these correlations was relatively small. Also, Brooks, (2009) indicated that medical personnel at both medical centres were intrinsically motivated by work and achievement and providing superior patient care. The medical personnel requested autonomy in their work sites and synergy with leadership. Medical personnel did not achieve accomplishments in their job for recognition, but took on additional responsibilities to provide superior patient care and customer service. The study concluded that there was no relationship between motivational factors and the preferred leadership styles. Michael and Chipunza (2009) say the influence of motivational variables on both public and private sector organizations were to a very large extent influenced to stay in their respective organizations by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. Such variables include training and development, challenging/interesting work, freedom for innovative thinking, and job security. Also, Bowles and Candela (2005) survey of 3077 nurses demonstrated that thirty percent of respondents left in 1 year and 57% left in 2 years. The findings have implications for nursing and hospital administrators for improving the work environment and retention rates of recent registered nurse graduates. The study stated patient care issues, such as unsafe nurse-patient ratios, were perceived as the most negative aspects and the most frequent reason for leaving. Similarly, Downing, (2010) indicated that the reasons for the low levels of job satisfaction are lack of professional opportunities at work, the amount of control and responsibility given to critical care nurses, and a balance of family and work. Canada by Blakeley (2008) remarked incentives might encourage nurses not to retire early and stay longer in employment.

The study mentioned that the increasing number of nurses taking early retirement will lead to exhaustion of the nursing workforce. Agreeing to the above comments, Spence Laschinger (2009) emphasised the need for having an environment that fosters high quality supervisory and collegial working relationships to ensure highly skilled nurses will remain engaged in their work. Such engagement leads to job satisfaction, as seen in their study on hospital pharmacists (Nyame-Mireku, 2012). In a like manner, Phippes, (2016) stated that there is a significant relationship between pay, promotion, supervision and intent to quit. They suggested nursing leaders should have an awareness of the variables necessary for retaining novice nurses in the workplace. And identify and implement strategies to retain trained employees as is the case among lab staff where high voluntary turnover is a major issue (Phippes, 2016). The strategy needs to incorporate future support measures to promote the development of the capacities of older people to an adequate level for young people and middle-aged people (Sato and Persons, 2017). Therefore, it is important to have a well-managed HRM who can well harness human resources that can mediate the development of climate scenarios, fulfil psychological contract, organizational commitment and participation in the work which later relate to more enjoyment of work and commitment to the organization (Polat, et al., 2017).

Other factors that are important for retention are (a) healthy work environment, (b) manager relationships, and (c) training and development as identified by Knight, (2018) in their human capital theoretical approach to retention among health workers. The study indicated the importance of having a strong manager and employee relationship as a retention strategy. Knight also commented that leaders who apply effective strategies to retain employees may increase employee job satisfaction, leading to a decrease in employee turnover. Employees who are satisfied with their job are more productive and efficient, which positively affects business profitability. Similar factors were also found to be relevant by other researchers. These studies found that factors such as satisfaction, engagement, and commitment are influenced by several variables such as: employee recognition, compensation, relationships, organizational culture, programs, leadership, communication, training, and career development (Maloni, et al., 2017; Simon, 2019; Chaney, 2019). These authors agree that an effective employee retention strategy could reduce burnout, increase growth, maintain quality care and sustain daily operations.

In Arab countries, studies of employee retention and early retirement intention have been very few and far apart. A field study by Amamari, (2007) on Qatari female teachers who plan for retirement, said there are several factors that push teachers to think about retirement. Generally, these factors are administrative, professional, social and personal factors. In a like manner, Al-Qahtani, (2009) reported that the level of tendency of security men in security organizations to early retirement

is weak or low and the reasons for early retirement among security men are average. However, the administrative implications of samples of an early retirement sample in study subjects affect a relatively large proportion of the security apparatuses of the Ministry of the Interior in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In UAE, Alnaqbi, (2011), says government organizational hierarchy and its related HRM practices are the major concern and the reason why public sector employees leave the system. The study emphasized reducing hierarchy in the workplace, and empowerment and accountability in areas of work. These findings were also similar in Libya. In this context, Aldamoe, et al., (2012) study on HR practices for all government organizations in Libya shows that HRM practices significantly affect organizational performance to a greater extent. Hence, it is a significant predictor of organizational performance. Others like Salah and Habtoor, (2017) analyse the intentions of managers to retain old employees in the institutional sector in Libya, through observed behaviours and actions, and conclude the behavioural belief that has significantly influenced the intention of managers to retain older employees. A similar conclusion was seen in Kuwait, by Alzayed and Ali Murshid (2017). Their study in Kuwait to examine the factors that influence the employee's intention to leave important current employment in the Ministry of Information, found there is an important role of bureaucratic and routine in organizations to shape employee decisions. There was no significant influence of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information employees' perception of support (social support, supervisory support, training, and empowerment) on an employee's intention to leave, but the perception of complexity (job stress, the locus of control and role ambiguity) has a positive effect on the employee's intention to leave.

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

Super's (1980) Theory of Vocational Development is centered on the Life-Career Rainbow (LCR). Super (1980) postulated that each individual takes on multiple roles or life spaces, often simultaneously and to varying degrees (i.e., citizen, worker, parent), and each of these roles is enacted in different theatres or life-spans (e.g., home and workplace). Individuals move through five life-stages at various rates and their career decisions are often made in the context of personal as well as situational career determinants (Super, 1980). According to Blustein (1997), the malleability of this theory also integrates well with the social constructionist perspective, and could be used to better understand the unique needs of older individuals by considering educational disparities and oppression, among other cultural and social factors. This theory does directly address retirement as a stage of working life, including work choices and the reasons for them at retirement age, though the retirement process also acknowledges the role of cultural and other minority status issues in work/retirement decisions, and is widely known and applied (Watanabe-Muraoka, Senzaki, and Herr, 2001). Savickas (2005) expanded on the work of Super (1980) and focused on how individuals construct life roles, including their careers, framed within the environment and other life domains in the Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2005). Career construction theory is applicable to retirement decisions and counselling with older workers. The theory does view career development as a fluid, lifelong process, as opposed to one that ends once an initial career decision has been made. Career Construction Theory and the construct of adaptability are broad enough to be directly applicable to the retirement phase of life, though the application of this theory to retirement is not directly addressed by existing literature.

In the Multicultural Career Theories (Cultural), there is decreased emphasis on individual traits, while adding an increased focus on cultural context and social barriers. These frameworks do not directly identify retirement as a stage of working life, they are flexible enough to be potentially applied to career decisions in retirement, given their consideration of both social context and diversity among individuals. According to Leong and Hartung (1997), barriers to professional care include cultural norms of seeking support from community members, mistrust of the healthcare system, language, and learned helplessness (i.e., a long-term career seems unattainable) due to unequal opportunities and discrimination. Their strength is their acknowledgement that any career decision can be influenced by culture, as well as social determinants. Therefore, are highly applicable to retirement decision making.

Theory of Work Adjustment suggests that career decisions are made based on the fit between the person and the environment, and both the individual and the employer make these decisions. Dawis et al., (1964) proposed that individuals tend to adjust to their workplace or seek out new employment based on their level of satisfaction with their work (i.e., the degree to which their needs are met). Further, employers provide reinforcement (e.g., retention, recognition, promotion) based on the person's satisfactoriness (i.e., the degree to which each employee is meeting the needs of the employer). Regardless of age, internal and external gauges of fit often determine job satisfaction. This theory proposes an appropriate framework from which to understand retirement decisions. Some empirical evidence supports the use of the theory with minority cultural groups,

2.2 Retirement based Theories

Disengagement theory suggests that older adults tend to be less connected socially, the decreased interactions are associated with how they view themselves, and the type of relationships they maintain will shift given their decreased involvement in formerly central roles (Cummings et al., 1960). This theory does not take a developmental approach and does not focus on retirement as a career phase; however, retirement is associated with having fewer life spaces and transition in interaction styles. The disengagement and reengagement process are viewed in a positive light when the decision is voluntary and based on balancing work and life satisfaction; however, many individuals feel forced into disengagement and experience a loss of independence. The Theory of continuity is based on the premise that older adults who preserve a similar lifestyle in retirement as they previously had will have a higher level of psychological well-being (Atchley, 1989). According to Feldman and Beehr (2011), bridging employment among other gradual transitions into retirement helps older adults to maintain structure and their self-image through meaningful activities. Specifically, research on bridge employment corroborates the basic tenets of continuity theory in that individuals who enjoy their work or succeed in their careers tend to choose same-career bridge employment whereas other-field bridge employment often occurs in response to job strain (Gobeski & Beehr, 2008). Continuity theory recognizes the disadvantages of a complete cessation from work without having other aspirations. Therefore, this model addresses retirement as a stage of life and recognizes that well-being is connected to balancing work and life satisfaction. The Role theory by Linton (1936, cited in George, 1993) links roles with status and other social affiliations such as age, race, religion, sex, and socioeconomic status. According to George (1993), transitions in life such as retirement are associated with role theory in that individuals enter and exit various roles as they move from one life stage to the next. Although laws protect older adults from most forms of mandatory retirement, the perception that retirement is involuntary is more likely to occur when this role does not align with social expectations of retiring at a specific age (van Solinge and Henkens, 2007). Moreover, when retirement is viewed as involuntary, it has a negative impact on self-efficacy and the ability to adjust (van Solinge and Henkens, 2005).

2.3 The Research Framework

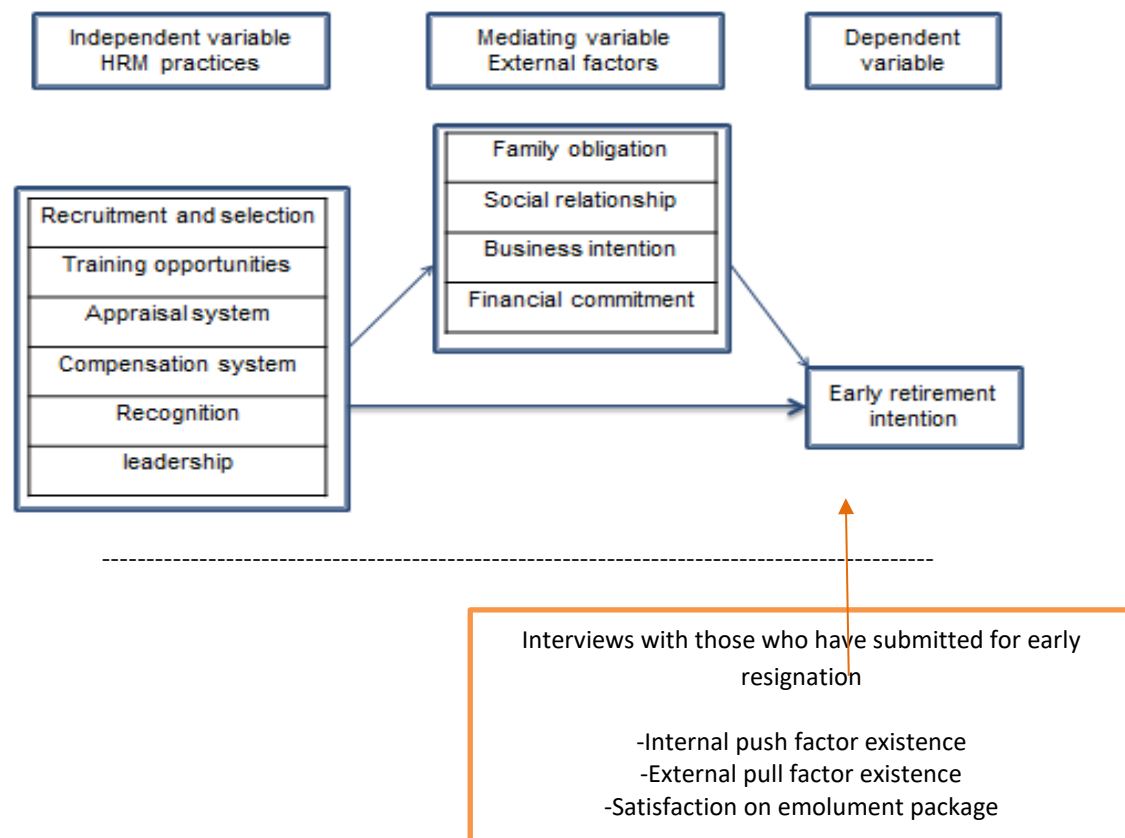


Figure 2.1 CF design

The CF follows closely the theoretic structure given earlier and the necessary aspect is captured next; negative noise, interaction and early retirement intention.

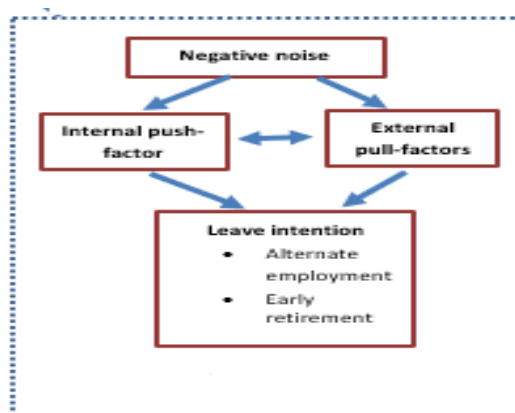


Figure 2.2 Aspects of Process

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses the mixed method. The questionnaire survey to understand the push-pull factors on current employees. And interview with employees who have submitted resignation, but still in service, to understand the existence of the P-P prior to resignation submission.

According to MOH statistics of 2017, the Ministry of Health's workforce was about 8,901 employees. The government healthcare industry includes two types of establishments, which are primary healthcare and secondary healthcare (referral). This study focused on primary health, the first reference for a patient care branch in the Health Centres division, which has 26 health centres geographically distributed among five health regions. As the five health regions operate uniformly, hence a single region was selected using a simple random sampling technique.

Sampling units: The third health region was chosen randomly, which includes 529 employees, 472 of them are Bahraini employees.

Table 3.1 Bahraini Employees at health centers divided as specialties

Health region	Distribution of Bahraini employees by specialties in the regions				
	Physician	Dental	Nurse	Allied services	Total
Health region 1	52	67	97	171	387
Health region 2	43	64	86	218	411
Health region 3	70	65	129	208	472
Health region 4	42	68	109	156	375
Health region 5	50	56	106	172	384
Total	257	320	527	925	2029

Source: MOH 2017 online archive

Sample size:

Table 3.2 Weightage of sample size (Source: MOH archive)

The weightage and Responses of participants				
Physician	Dental	Nurse	Allied	Total
70	65	129	208	472
The weightages of specialties among the sample size				
32	29	58	94	213
The received participants responses				
20	17	43	71	151
Percentage of participation				
62.5%	59%	74%	75%	71%

Table 3.3 Specialties distributions at health region three

	Engineer HC	Isa town HC	Jedhafs HC	Aali HC	Jaber Alsobah HC	Total
Physician	28	11	10	9	12	70
Dental	24	8	8	8	17	65
Nurse	34	23	23	23	26	129
Allied	48	44	34	32	50	208
Total						472

Sampling Techniques: The specific region includes 472 Bahraini employees and 213 samples have been statistically drawn for the questionnaire. The two genders must participate in the study by a disproportionately stratified sampling method in order to represent the male category adequately, because their proportion is small compared to female numbers. The sampling has been conducted by stratified sampling method through dividing the population into a number of uniform groups. The specialists were divided into four basic groups. They are doctors (family physicians), nurses, Oral & Dental Services and the Administrative Services unit (allied services unit). The administrative services unit includes most specialties. An online method to distribute the questionnaire on the samples in order to take advantage of the remaining time, due to the delay that occurred.

Validity and Reliability: In addition to diligent review of questionnaires by experts, a pilot study was conducted on 30 likely respondents (not used in the final survey). The values are within the norms of research. The calculated Cronbach alpha values for all scales exceed the minimum acceptable alpha value of 0.80 (Anh and Matsui, 2012) at 0.9 for a combined 36 items. All items are tested for linearity, normality and are within acceptable norms.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

The first theme (RQ1): Is there an intention to retire early?

Table 4.1 Intention to early retirement responses

Intention to early retirement										
Question		S. A	A	N	D	S. D	Mean	Std. dev	Direction	Rank
1) The intention of early retirement always in my mind	N	66	45	17	17	6	3.98	1.169	Agree	4
	%	44%	30%	11%	11%	4%				
2) If I have not some financial commitments then I retire early as soon as possible	N	71	41	19	17	3	4.06	1.109	Agree	2
	%	47%	27%	13%	11%	2%				
3) Early retirement will give me the opportunity to involve in a society that I have been left because of my work commitments	N	62	54	16	16	3	4.03	1.061	Agree	3
	%	41%	36%	11%	11%	2%				
4) Early retirement for me is better than continuing in my job	N	37	43	33	29	9	3.46	1.221	Agree	5
	%	25%	28%	22%	19%	6%				
5) Definitely, I don't feel any desire to retire early	N	2	7	12	48	82	4.33	.907	S. Agree (-)	1
	%	1%	5%	8%	32%	54%				
Weighted mean							3.9735	Agree		
Std. deviation							.90057			

The **weighted mean average here is 3.9735** with a std. deviation of .90057, indicating intention to retire early (based on scale Table below).

Level	Interval	Difference	Likert-Scale	
Very Low	1.00 – 1.79	0.79	Highly disagree	1
Low	1.80 – 2.59	0.79	Disagree	2
Medium	2.60 – 3.39	0.79	Neutral	3
High	3.40 – 4.19	0.79	Agree	4
Very High	4.20 – 5.00	0.80	Highly agree	5

(b). The second Question (RQ2): Is there a push-factor from HRM practices on employees of public health centres under the MOH Bahrain?

Table 4.2 Descriptive Statistics for Influence of HRM practices

HRM influences' variables					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Selection Items	151	1.75	5.00	3.8974	.78224
Training Items	151	1.67	5.00	4.2428	.75222
Appraisal Items	151	2.00	5.00	3.7969	.79347
Compensation Items	151	1.67	5.00	3.7748	.80328
Recognition Items	151	1.00	5.00	3.4790	.95961
Leadership	151	1.00	5.00	3.0773	.88648
HRM practices influence	151	1.72	5.00	3.7114	.67926
Valid N (list wise)	151				

The factors of HRM practices do contribute to the push factor. The highest issue is with training and the nominal influence being leadership.

(c). The third question (RQ3): Is there a pull-factor from external factors on employees of public health centres under the MOH Bahrain?

Table 4.3 Descriptive Statistics for External Factors

External Factors affecting early retirement intention					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Family caring items	151	1.00	5.00	3.6291	.88321
Social Relations items	151	1.33	5.00	3.6336	.84831
Own Business Intention items	151	1.33	5.00	3.5364	.91892
Financial Commitments items	151	1.67	5.00	4.2340	.79888
External Factors	151	1.75	5.00	3.7583	.68676
Valid N (list wise)	151				

External factors do have an effect on early retirement.

(d). The fourth question (RQ4): What are the most influential factors of HRM that affect employees of public health centres under the MOH Bahrain?

Table 4.4 Important Factor Frequencies

Important Factor Frequencies					
		Responses		Percent of Cases	Rank
		N	Percent		
Important Factor	Career development	30	21.0%	21.0%	2
	Training opportunities	20	14.0%	14.0%	3
	Appraisal system	6	4.2%	4.2%	4
	Compensation system	87	60.8%	60.8%	1
Total		143	100.0%	100.0%	

The highest HRM issue is the compensation system, 60.8%. This is followed by career development, 21.0%, followed by training opportunities, 14.0%, while the lowest is the appraisal system.

Question 5; The fifth (RQ5): Is there a relationship between HR practices and the intention to retiring early among employees of public health centres under the MOH Bahrain?

Table 4.5 Multi Regression of HRM variables

Model Summary (dependent variable: early retirement intention)						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.608 ^a	.370	.344	.72950		
ANOVA ^b						
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Regression	45.023	6	7.504	14.100	.000 ^a	
Residual	76.631	144	.532			
Total	121.654	150				
Coefficients ^a						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
	(Constant)	1.009	.363		2.782	.006
	Selection and appointing	-.023	.124	-.020	-.186	.853
	Training opportunity	.247	.125	.206	1.980	.050
	Appraisal system	.107	.108	.094	.989	.32
	compensation system	.329	.111	.294	2.968	.004
	appreciation and recognition	-.181	.105	-.192	-1.726	.086
	Leadership style	.320	.111	.315	2.885	.005

A. Based on the model summary, HRM push factors, contribute to 37% ($R^2=0.37$ and standard error of 0.729) towards early retirement intention.

B. The ANOVA test value for F-test is 14.1 with a p-value of 0.000 is significant.

C. The original equation below:

$$\widehat{EP} = (-.023X1 + .247X2 + .107X3 + .329X4 + -.181X5 + .320X6 + 1.009)$$

Is adjusting for insignificant variables, the final estimated regression equation is: -

$$\widehat{EP} = (.247X2 + .329X4 + .320X6 + 1.009)$$

Where; X1= Selection and appointing, X2= Training opportunity, X3= Appraisal system, X4= compensation system, X5= appreciation and recognition, X6= Leadership style

The internal factors do influence intention to retire early, albeit with different weights.

Question 6 Are there external mediating factors influencing the intention to retire early among employees of public health centres under the MOH Bahrain?

Sobel Test

Using the coefficient and standard error of direct relationship and coefficient and error with the mediator are identified as external effects here. The test value is significant at the 2-tail at a bench mark margin of 0.05.

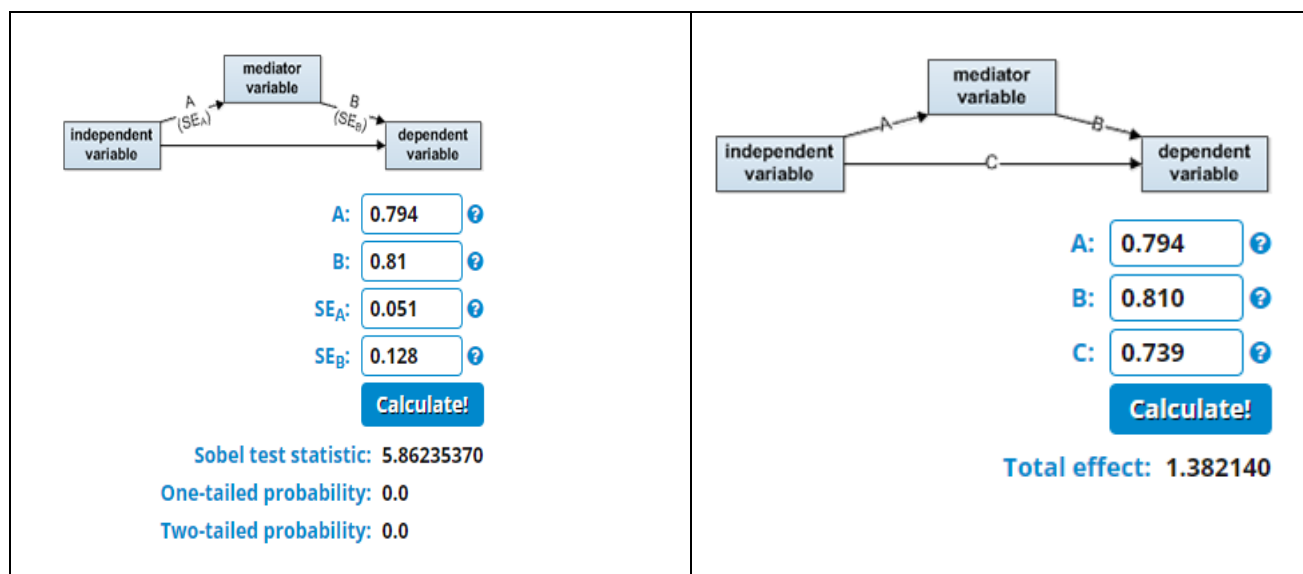


Figure 4.1 Sobel and Kenny and Baron Test Results

The effect of mediating influence cannot be discharged in the direct relationship. Based on the sample size, it can be said to be medium effect. As for the Kenny and Baron test, the result indicates a large overall effect. The difference is due to an error introduced in Sobel and generally considered as a superior test. However, in both cases the effect is prominent.

The reason for early retirement: Interview analysis

Table 4.6 Summary of frequency

Responses	Frequency	-push/pull/financial benefits	Theme codes 1-internal HRM practices 2-external environment 3-financial gains
Family commitment...external environment	7	pull	2
Voluntary retirement perks...policy issue	3	benefits	3
HRM issue...with No prospect/work environment/leadership	6	push	1
Start business...external environment	1	pull	2

Interviews of those who submitted voluntary retirement and waiting to move out of the system do indicate the influence of both push-pull factors. Voluntary retirement perks seem to be an attraction, but the poor working environment/prospects is a major concern.

5. CONCLUSION

The empirical study generally indicates a level of association between the factors investigated and leaving the system early among public health care workers. Many studies have supported this assertion. Early retirement due to health, high physical work demands, high work pressure, low job satisfaction, and lack of physical activity in leisure time are ubiquitous ((Van et al., 2010; Yun Doo Lee et al., 2018). It is a process of adjustment that is influenced by earlier life experiences and decisions, emphasizing the interdependence of family, work, and community, the importance of context in time and space (Gettings and Anderson (2018). This research also concurs with this view; the interaction of factors over time. And when the government displayed financial constraints and encouraged early retirement along this line, some capitalised on it and submitted early retirement. In essence, the intention has translated into early retirement action when the right opportunity comes along in this process. That was when the government introduced voluntary retirement with better financial benefits to encourage early retirement among some members of health workers.

Generally, the results show employees were not satisfied with some elements of HRM practices. In consonant with view of Livanos and Nunez. (2017), Myllyntausta, et al., (2021). Zuelke, et al., 2020. Usually, financial considerations override the leave intention (Livanos & Nunez, 2017). But this research showed a reversal. When incentives are right, some are

motivated to leave, to remove the simmering perennial strain of insufficient financial resources in a system that seems to care less. The grievance includes insufficient family time, social relations hinderance and financial commitments. This means that as the employee has a perception of the positive conditions in his work, then he will be less affected by external factors and vice versa. The economy may also work as a pull factor according (Carlstedt et al., 2018). Low income predicts early retirement as it pays off better to continue working when you have a higher income because the early retirement scheme “income” is relatively low. However, the opposite is also true. In this research, when sufficient benefits are given, it can attract early retirement. More leisure time appears strong for older workers towards retirement (Sewdas, 2017).

These push-pull factors are common occurrence in the current workplace. This research confirms the phenomenon among health workers in Bahrain. High work demand, quantitative demands, and heavy workloads are vital push factors (de Oliveira et al., 2017). And financial possibility was a significant factor among Canadian registered nurses, but not among Canadian retired allied health professionals (Hewko et al., 2019). Hence, the influence varies, and in the context of Bahrain health workers, the intention is an ongoing dilemma, but decisive decisions made are influenced by rewards, in it seems to attract semi-professionals based on the interviews. The pull factors had played a significant role in their decision. This is confirmed among those who have submitted resignations. The push-pull influence is evidenced, with retirement benefits an overriding influence. The finding is consistent with what was reported (Blachut, 2012). Alberto, (2000) suggested that the absence of an appropriate rewarding system may increase the probability of turnover among employees. The key factor was also seen in this research, an inverse relation between job satisfaction and intentions to leave. However, the current findings showed a low level of satisfaction towards HRM practices among the MOH employees which impacts their intentions to stay.

The findings were similar to the previous studies, like what was reported by Alnaqbi (2011). Location, motivation, employment status, communication, mentoring, HR practices, job satisfaction and job security, reward, and organizational leadership have affected employee opinion (Laing, 2019). The data analysis showed employees who feel negative HRM practices will have a higher perception of leaving, similar to the argument of previous studies (Kumar Singh, 2018; Nwabuzor, 2018; Singh, 2018; Laing, 2019). As for external factors, most of the employees responded that their jobs interfere with their family life and social relations. The employees are not able to adequately balance social and family time.

The findings also showed two important correlations, between the HRM practices and the factors affecting retirement. This observation is not surprising as studies on employees in health service professions found high levels of stress-related disorders (Wieclaw et al., 2006; Garcia, 2014) indicate job stress, turnover and long-term sick leave being ubiquitous (Coomber and Barriball, 2007; Josephson, 2008). Primary health care research undertaken in many countries has confirmed the presence of high levels of stress and high job demands and has led to poor mental and physical health for many levels of health-based employees (Galdikien, 2014; Teles, 2014) that leads the employees either to leave the system or consider leaving the system.

In conclusion, this research supports both contentions, positive and supportive to the research dimensions. However, the direct correlation between HRM practices and employee intention to stay was less than the external factors. This was also confirmed by participants in the interview who reported HRM practices have an impact on their retirement decisions. Other studies found various combinations of these variables having different influences (Imna and Hassan, 2015). Hence, it is recommended that any policies that attracts attrition should be thoroughly studied prior to implementation, albeit as it draws the wrong employees and put strain on current environment.

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