

# A Quantitative Study on HR and Talent Management in the Service Industry: A case of Bahrain

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Given that talent retention hinges on how best an organisation can entice, preserve, attract, improve, manage, retain and maintain necessary talents, a fitting question is ‘what are the determinants of talent retention?’ To answer this question, the current study examined the effects of training, pay-for-performance, non-monetary rewards and working conditions on talent retention. Data was obtained from 476 employees in Bahrain’s service industry. The data was analysed using PLS-SEM’s measurement model and structural model evaluation. The results obtained from the running of PLS-SEM’s algorithm indicate that training and development, non-monetary rewards, and working conditions are significant determinants of talent retention. This implies that need-based training and development, relevant non-monetary rewards, and conducive working conditions should be entrenched in organisations in order to enhance talent retention in Bahrain and elsewhere in the world. While the impacts of training, pay-for-performance, non-monetary rewards and working condition on talent retention are relatively high, there are other unidentified variables that could have impacts on talent retention. Hence, future research should endeavour to identify those factors.

**Key words:** *Training, pay-for-performance, non-monetary rewards and working condition, talent retention.*

## Introduction

Human capital is one of the most critical success factors in any organisation because it is a major source of competitive advantages. Nowadays, many organisations have realised that if talents are well managed and retained, there is no limitation for growth (Campbell & Wiernik, 2015). Scholars such as Ismail, Abdul-Halim and Joarder (2015, 2017, 2017) argue that organisational success is majorly dependent on human capital. Many organisations are of

the opinion that retention is a strategic concern which could be used to attain a competitive edge (Walker, 2001; Youndt Snell, Dean & Lepak, 1996). Many organisations are engaging in the war for best talent by focusing on getting competitive advantages over competitors (Ferguson & Brohaugh, 2009).

It is, however, worrisome that talent retention has become a serious challenge across the world. As such, many firms are now actively addressing the issue of talent retention because of its negative cost implications (Smith, Stanz & Bussin, 2015). When talents or groups of competent employees leave an organisation voluntarily, such organisation incurs more costs because they need to recruit, train and develop new employees (Aslam, Rehman, & Imran 2015; Muqadas, Rehman, & Aslam, 2017). According to Nyberg and Ployhart (2013), an inability to retain skilful and competent employees may affect the performance, competitive advantages and productivity of organisations.

As noted by Zahoor, Ijaz, and Muzammil (2015), retention is considered a significant element of human resource strategies, starting from the selection of the right employees, continuing to the practicing programs for retention of potential employees, and ending with their commitment to and engagement with the organisation. Similarly, Stockley (2013) viewed talent retention as a mindful and thoughtful approach to fascinate, improve, attract and retain people with skills and abilities to meet current and future contingencies of organisations.

Thus, talent retention hinges on how best an organisation can entice, preserve, attract, improve, manage, retain and maintain necessary talents (D'Annunzio-Green, 2008). Talent retention focuses on identifying skills, recognising abilities, managing people and retaining them for effective actualisation of business strategies that organisations use (Ballestores, 2010). According to Ibiduni, Osibanjo, Adeniji, Salau and Falola (2016), talent retention ensures that organisations have the right people with the necessary abilities and skills to activate and actualise business strategies (Ahmed, Umrani & Chauhan, 2018).

With a global increase in loss of talent, the need for talent management and retention becomes imperative for senior managers in many multi-national companies (Vaiman & Collings, 2014). Very limited studies have focused on talent retention, while there is a preponderance of studies on talent management, talent attraction, talent paradigms, fostering talent opportunities, talent engagement, and talent development (e.g. Bhamagar, 2008; Huang, 2001; McDonnell, Lamare, Gunnigle, & Lavelle, 2010; Sharma, Agarwal & Ganjiwale, 2011; Ringo, Schweyer, DeMarco, Jones & Lesser, 2008; Powell & Lubitsh, 2007). Nevertheless, it has been argued that the ultimate objective of all talent management policies and strategies is built upon talent retention (McDonnell Lamare, Gunnigle, & Lavelle, 2010; Thunnissen, 2016). In this sense, retention becomes the main strategy rather than the outcome (Allen, 2008).

Talent retention is a multi-dimensional factor of an organisation's human resource policies. It begins with recruiting the right people in an organisation and ends with integrating them into the organisation's business portfolio (Harathova, 2009; Hughes & Rog, 2008). There seems to be a paucity of studies on talent retention, particularly in Bahrain's service industry, despite a scholarly call for its exploration (see Ibiduni et al., 2016 Scullion, Vaiman & Colling, 2016; Mughal, 2019).

Moreover, training, pay-for-performance, non-monetary rewards and working conditions, which are important human resource practices, are considered in this study, since employees are not able to function effectively without them. Additionally, talent retention may not be actualised without the consideration of some important human resource practices because of their influence on employee retention (Daifallah & Bassam, 2017; Imna & Hassan, 2015; Joarder, Sharif & Ahmmmed, 2011; Mohd Zin, 2017). It is against these backdrops that the study seeks to examine whether training, pay-for-performance, non-monetary rewards and working conditions influence talent retention in the context of Bahrain. This will hopefully enrich the existing literature in the HRM research field.

### **Hypotheses Development**

Based on the issues identified and discussed in the introduction, there is a need to examine the effect of training and development, pay-for-performance, non-monetary rewards and working conditions on talent retention in the context of Bahrain.

#### ***The relationship between training and development and talent retention***

Elnaga and Imran (2013) view training and development as programs that provide workers with information, new skills, or professional development opportunities. They further state that in order to prepare workers to do their job as desired, organisations need to provide training so as to optimise their potentials. In the present situation around the world, training and development are among the key human resource management practices that lead to enhanced skills, abilities, knowledge, as well as positive attitudes and behaviours of employees resulting in profit (Mozammel, 2019; Tangthong, et al., 2014).

Numerous research findings (e.g., Daifallah & Bassam, 2017; Juhdi, Pa'wan & Hansaram, 2013; Kakar, Raziq & Khan 2015; Karve & Dias, 2016; Zahoor, Ijaz & Muzammil, 2015) have found a significant relationship between training and development and talent/employee retention. Moreover, in the context of employment relationships, when the management of an organisation provides employees with sufficient training and development opportunities, it will send a message to the employees that the organisation cares for them (Aguinis & Kurt Kraiger, 2009). Such employees will tend to remain in the organisation and perform their job effectively and efficiently. Based on a review of literature, it is hypothesised that

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Training and development has a significant positive effect on talent retention.

### ***The relationship between pay-for-performance and talent management***

Pay is the most central issue in attracting and keeping talents. Inadequate payments, salaries or rewards negatively affect employee retention (especially talented employees) (Chepchumba & Kimutai, 2017). Pay-for-performance refers to any type of reward individuals receive in exchange for performing organisational tasks. The desired outcome is employees who are attracted to their work, satisfied, and motivated to do a good job for their employer (Ivancevich, 2004). Pay for performance refers to incentives linking some portion of a pay cheque directly to results or accomplishments (Kreitner & Kincki, 2010). Hence, it is extra compensation offered by an organisation to its employees above their basic wages and salaries (Shaikh, Shah, Shah & Nawaz, 2019; Rao, 2010; Kreitner & Kincki, 2010). Cornelius (2001) averred that organisations motivating with pay may create a centre of attention and keep hold of qualified personnel, thereby reducing recruiting costs.

Similarly, Nelson and Quick (2005) posited that when workers are well paid, they become reluctant to change jobs. A number of studies (e.g., Borstoft & Marker, 2007; Edward, 2011; Msengeti & Obwogi, 2015; Osibanjo, Adeniji, Falola & Heirsmac, 2014) have established that a relationship exists between pay-for-performance/compensation and employee retention. Chew and Chan (2008) also found a significant positive relationship among employee perceptions of pay, justice and retention. Chiu, Luk and Tang (2002), as well as Lockwood and Ansari (1999), also found similar findings in their studies. Based on a review of literature, it is hypothesised that

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Pay for performance has a significant positive effect on talent retention.

### ***Non-monetary rewards and talent retention***

Non-monetary rewards encompass verbal praise, achievement, responsibility, freedom, job satisfaction, job security and personal growth (Sammer, 2011). There are quite a number of studies that have found non-financial rewards to be positively related to talent/employee retention. For instance, in a study conducted by Pillay (2009) on nurses, it was established that non-monetary rewards are one of the important strategies to raise talent/employee retention. Non-monetary rewards, which include promotions, childcare facilities, extended leave and recreation facilities, have been reported to significantly enhance talent/employee retention.

Mason (2001) and Robbert (2005) found that recognition, a kind of non-monetary reward, is a powerful motivational and retention strategy for any organisation. They suggest organisations that want to motivate and retain their talented employees should be ready to adopt recognition

as a form of non-monetary reward. In a study by Ngcobo and Naidoo (2015), it is revealed that non-financial rewards are an important factor in talent retention that cannot be overlooked. Cheema, Shujaat and Alam (2013) also confirm the existence of a positive, significant relationship between non-monetary rewards and employee motivation. Supporting the view of Cheema, Shujaat and Alam (2013) is a submission by Dzuaranin (2012). It indicates companies that only focus on monetary incentives to motivate their employees must also introduce non-monetary rewards to increase the motivation level of their employees. Based on the review of literature, it is hypothesised that

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Non-monetary rewards have a significant positive effect on talent retention.

### ***The relationship between working conditions and talent retention***

Working conditions are the total cluster of physical, psychological and behavioural elements in the workplace (Danica & Tomislav, 2013). According to Gerber, Nel and Van Dyk (1998), they include psychological working conditions and the physical layouts of a job. However, Greenslade and Paddock (2007) believe that working conditions generally encompass a range of issues from workloads and scheduling to system-wide issues like professional identity and scope of practice. Quiet a number of studies have confirmed that a relationship exists between working conditions and talent/employee retention (Arthur, Bell, Donerspike & Villado, 2001; Chaminade, 2007; Veitch, Charles, Newsham, Marquardt & Geerts, 2004; Ibiduni et al., 2016).

Moreover, Micklewright et al (2014); Muhammad, Omar, Khaled and Husam (2013); and Sellen (2016) found working conditions to be some of the major reasons why employees quit their job, particularly the talented ones. In line with a review of literature, it is thus hypothesised that

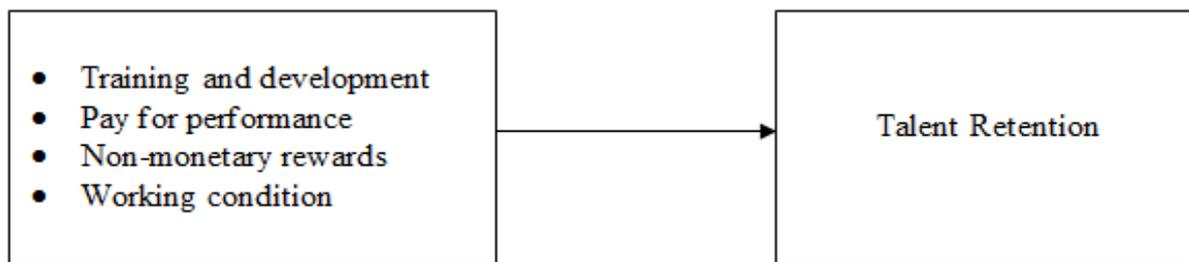
**H<sub>4</sub>:** working conditions has a significant effect on talent retention.

Overall, the current study aims to test the effects of training and development, pay-for-performance, non-monetary rewards and working conditions on talent retention in the context of Bahrain. This investigation aims to confirm the social exchange theory (SET) in Bahrain's context, given that it has been widely used to study organisational behaviours in an attempt to better understand the reciprocal or exchange relationship that develops between employees and organisations (Ahmed, 2019; Baran, Shanock & Miller, 2012; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In an organisational context, the essential principle of social exchange theory is that individuals and organisations enter into reciprocal relationships in which the organisations provide supportive, fair, and just environments in exchange for loyalty and commitment from employees (Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002). Based on this, it can be argued that individuals who

receive something valuable, such as training, monetary and non-monetary rewards, and good working conditions from their organisations, will feel obligated to reciprocate. The employees' reciprocal acts can include higher organisational commitments and loyalty and decreased intentions to leave the organisations. Conversely, when employees perceive that those factors are inadequate, retention becomes more difficult, particularly of talented people, because many firms are readily prepared to tap from their intellectual capital (Khalid, Pahi & Ahmed, 2019; Allen, Bryant & Vardaman, 2010). Figure 1 represents the research framework of the study.

### Figure 1

#### *Research framework*



### Methodology

Structural equation modelling using SMART PLS 3.0 was deployed to assess the hypothesised relationships (Hair et al., 2014). Therein, the study followed a two-step process, i.e. the assessment of the measurement model followed by the assessment of the structural model (Hair et al., 2016). Structural equation modelling using partial least square has gained much prominence and thus received much scholarly attention in the recent past (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt & Ringle, 2019; Afsar, Umrani & Khan, 2019). The measurement model takes into account the assessment of the model to confirm convergent validity and reliability. The structural model assesses the significance of the path coefficients (Hulland, 1999).

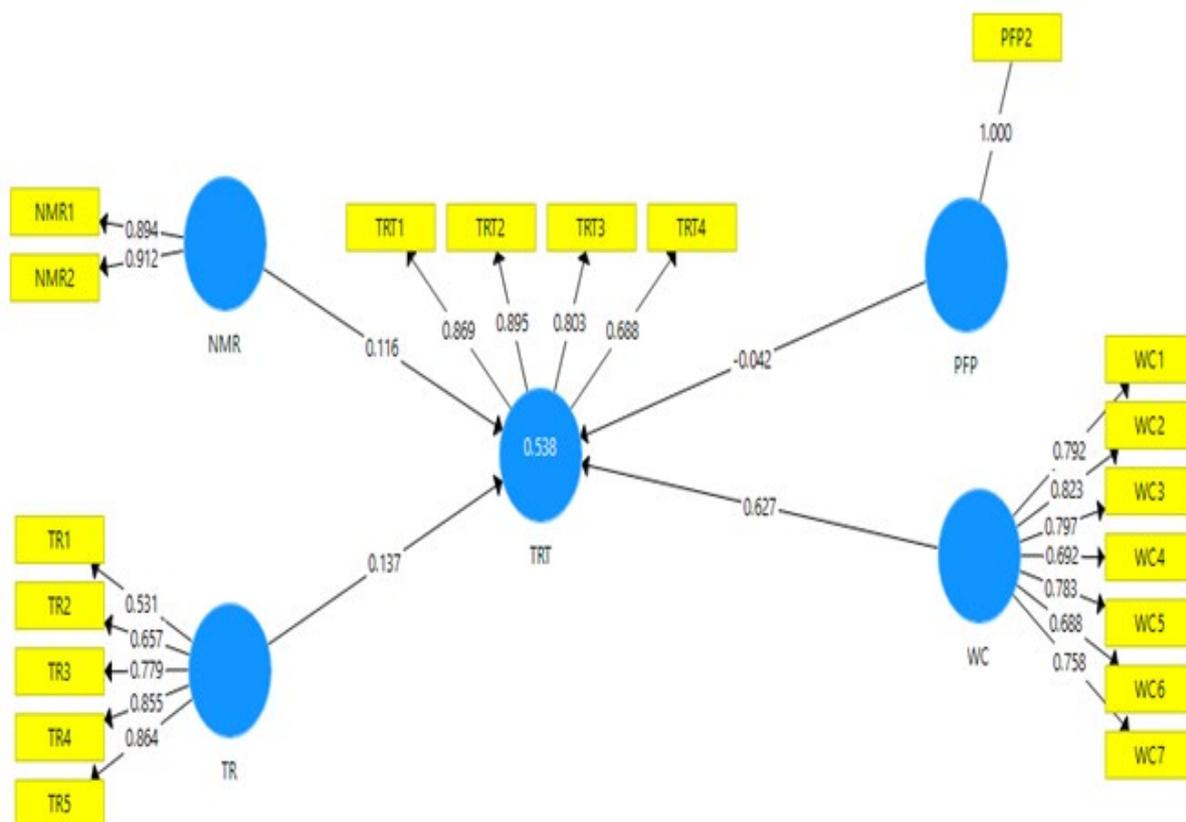
### Results

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey approach. Therefore, data was obtained from the employees in Bahrain's service industry. Out of 497 questionnaires distributed to the respondents, only 483 questionnaires were returned, and only 476 questionnaires were usable for data analysis. This represents a 95.8 per cent response rate, which is quite acceptable. The data was analysed using PLS-SEM's measurement model and structural model evaluation (see Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017). The instruments measuring talent retention (4 items) were adapted from Marguerite (2015), but the instruments of training and development (5 items), pay for performance (2 items), and non-monetary rewards (2 items) were adapted from Martinaityte (2014). The seven items that measure working conditions were adapted

from Uline and Tschannen-Moran (2008). All the items were scaled with a 5-Likert scale. Additionally, demographic information about the respondents signifies that they are of diverse backgrounds in terms of age, gender, education, and working experience, indicating generalisability of the results obtained from the data collected from such respondents.

The results obtained from the assessment of the measurement model confirmed this study's construct validity and reliability, given that the content validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the constructs are confirmed. The information in Table 1 and Figure 2 indicates that the outer loadings of the individual items of each construct are above the threshold value of 0.5 (see Hair et al., 2011), except that only one item was deleted from the pay-for-performance construct. This result confirms indicator reliability. In addition, the information in Table 1 and Figure 2 confirms internally consistent reliability and convergent validity assessment as the composite reliability values are well above the threshold of 0.70. Additionally, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are above the threshold of 0.5 (see Hair et al., 2017). The information contained in Table 2 indicates that HTMT values for all pairs of constructs in a matrix fell below the threshold value of 0.90. This confirms the discriminant validity of the constructs.

**Figure 2**  
*Measurement model*



**Table 1**

*Measurement model evaluation*

<b>Internal Consistency and Convergent Validity</b>					
<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Loadings</b>	<b>CA</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>AVE</b>
Working Conditions	WC1	0.792	0.880	0.907	0.583
	WC2	0.823			
	WC3	0.797			
	WC4	0.692			
	WC5	0.783			
	WC6	0.688			
	WC7	0.758			
Training & Development	TR1	0.531	0.819	0.860	0.559
	TR2	0.657			
	TR3	0.779			
	TR4	0.855			
	TR5	0.864			
Pay-For-Performance	SCA1	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Non-Monetary Rewards	SCA14	0.894	0.775	0.899	0.816
	SCA18	0.912			
Talent Retention	SCA2	0.869	0.832	0.889	0.668
	SCA3	0.895			
	SCA4	0.803			
	SCA6	0.688			
<b>Discriminant Validity: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)</b>					
	NMR	PFP	TR	TRT	WC
NMR					
PFP	0.441				
TR	0.304	0.430			
TRT	0.479	0.353	0.438		
WC	0.469	0.442	0.452	0.816	

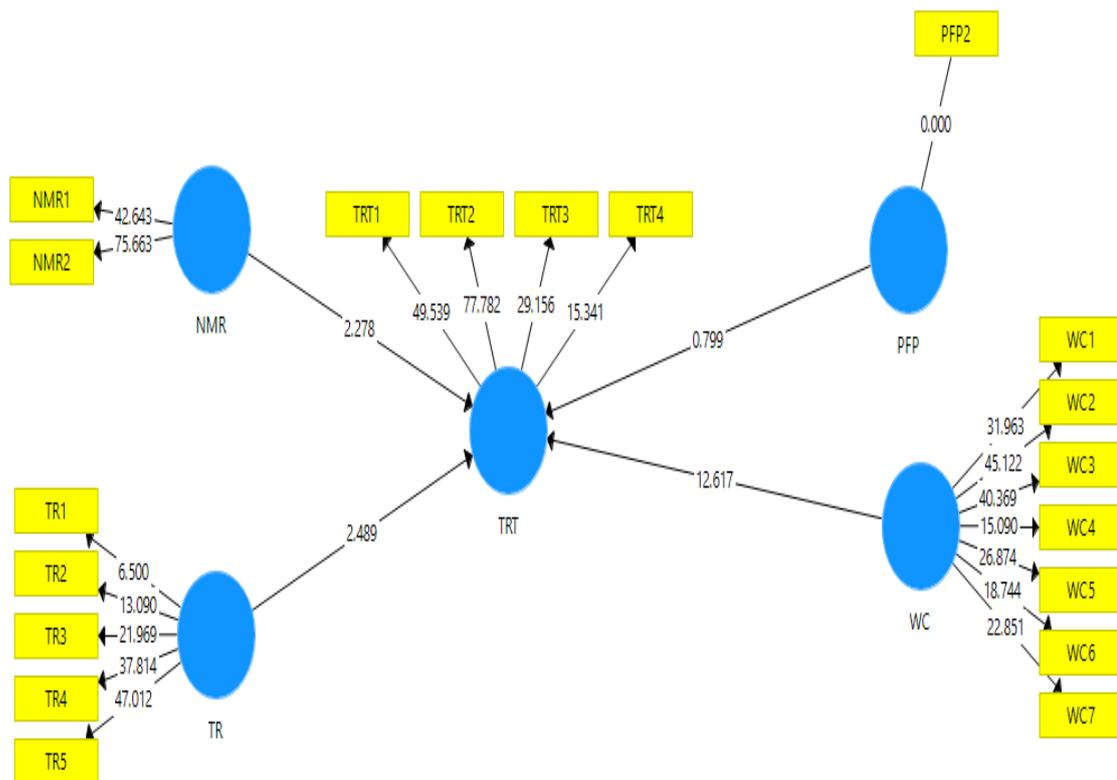
**Note:** CA: Cronbach Alpha; CR: Composite Reliability; AVE: Average Variance Extracted; AM: Ambidexterity; DC: Dynamic Capabilities; SCA: Sustainable Competitive Advantage.

The evaluation of structural model yielded results that determine the hypotheses' validities. An R square value of 0.377, which is depicted in Figure 2, indicates that this study's independent variables together explain 54% of the variance in talent retention. Also, the result obtained from running the PLS-SEM algorithm ( $\beta = 0.137$ ,  $t = 2.489$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ;  $\beta = 0.116$ ,  $t = 2.278$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ;  $\beta = 0.626$ ,  $t = 12.617$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicates that training and

development, non-monetary rewards, and working conditions have significant positive impacts on talent retention (see Table 2 and Figure 3). However, the relationship between pay-for performance is found to be non-significant and negative ( $\beta = -0.040$ ,  $t = 0.799$ ,  $p > 0.10$ ).

In terms of the size of effect of each construct, training and development, non-monetary rewards, and working conditions explain the variance in talent retention with effect sizes of 0.030, 0.023, and 0.606 respectively. This indicates the substantial impacts of the three constructs on talent retention.

**Figure 3**  
*Structural model*



**Table 2**  
*Structural model evaluation*

	BETA	STDEV	T Stat	P Values	2.5%	97.5%	Decision
<b>Direct Paths</b>							
TR -> TRT	0.137	0.055	2.489	0.013	0.026	0.246	Supported
PFP -> TRT	-0.040	0.052	0.799	0.425	-0.149	0.061	Not Supported
NMR -> TRT	0.116	0.051	2.278	0.023	0.024	0.215	Supported
WC-> TRT	0.626	0.050	12.617	0.000	0.526	0.718	Supported

## **Discussion**

The findings of the current study reveal that training and development, non-monetary rewards, and working conditions are significant determinants of talent retention. This confirms the findings of existing literature (see Karve & Dias, 2016; Cheema, Shujaat & Alam, 2013; Ibiduni et al., 2016; Micklewright et al., 2014). On this basis, organisational management is advised to put in place need-based and fitting training and development, relevant non-monetary rewards, and conducive working conditions. The end-result of this is talent retention. No organisation can afford high talent turnover because this will definitely affect productivity, creativity, innovation and consequential organisational success. Training and development that is tailored towards the needs of employees and is consistent with present dynamic environments consequently results in creativity and innovation required for success.

Likewise, conducive working conditions, together with non-monetary rewards, stimulate employees' motivation and commitment to the extent that employees would not like to leave the organisation. Nevertheless, pay-for-performance is found to have a non-significant negative relationship with talent retention. This could be connected with the fact that pay-for-performance, despite that it is effective in enhancing employee productivity and performance, could lead to negative outcomes if it is not linked to a fair performance appraisal system (see Ismail, Abdul Halim, & Joarder, 2018).

## **Conclusion**

Overall, training and development, non-monetary rewards, and working conditions are found to be significant determinants of talent retention. With these findings, it could be asserted that this study has expanded the scope of the existing body of knowledge in human resource management research. The practical implications are that stakeholders in Bahrain's service industry should integrate the three constructs (i.e., training and development, non-monetary rewards, and working conditions) in the organisational strategies of firms in the industry. Although the impacts of the independent variables of this study on talent retention are relatively high, there are other unidentified variables that could have an impact on talent retention. Hence, future research should endeavour to identify those factors.



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