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DEVELOPING A MODEL TO IDENTIFY THE FACTORS AFFECTING TURNOVER OF KNOWLEDGE-BASED EMPLOYEES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF KHORASAN-REGIONAL-ELECTRIC-COMPANY AND KHORASAN-RAZAVI- OIL-PRODUCTS-DISTRIBUTION-COMPANY

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to identify the factors affecting the turnover of knowledge-based employees in a comparative study of Khorasan Regional Electric Company and Khorasan Razavi Oil Products Distribution Company. The statistical population included 77 knowledge-based employees of the National Oil Products Distribution Company and 125 employees of Khorasan Regional Electric Company. The factors, affecting the employees' turnover, were identified through exploratory studies and a survey from experts using Delphi technique. Finally, 7 factors, 35 components, and 167 items were identified. The results of structural equation modeling showed that factors affecting the turnover of knowledge-based employees can be classified into five classes, including environmental, organizational and structural, occupational, juridical, value and ideological factors in Oil Products Distribution Company, and seven factors, including organizational and structural, occupational, juridical, value and ideological and management factors in the Regional Electric Company.

Keywords: Turnover, Knowledge-Based Employees, Khorasan Regional Electric Company, Khorasan Oil Products Distribution Company, Job Opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

Mass production-based traditional environments of 20th-century consider employees as the components of the production chain and the most valuable members who are able to work hard and perform their tasks uniformly and repetitively with their physical and technical skills, and their motivation depends on the payment proportional to production rate and job security (Kazenbach et al., 2003). However, with moving towards knowledge-based economy, traditional methods of managing organizations has been diminished and instead of that, knowledge and information of knowledge-based employees have been replaced with relative advantages based on raw materials and industries such as steel and oil (Afjei and Ghaffari, 2013). In fact, today's postindustrial community is an information society, where "power-enhancing" technologies are gradually replaced with "knowledge-enhancing" technologies. It is clear that in an era in which knowledge is considered as the most important factor in creating the value and competitive advantage of organizations, maintaining and retaining the knowledge-based workforce is one of the most important tasks of human resource management (Abtahi and Salavati, 2006).

Knowledge-based employees are those people who have a high level of skill, education, technological literacy of data, and ability to communicate with new perspectives and insights which lead to more effective decision making and the establishment of appropriate processes and solutions for solving organizational problems (Allison, 2000). From national perspective, knowledge-based workforces and experts of the country are considered as the most important and most valuable assets of that country which are national wealth of each land, because the effective presence of knowledge-based workforces increases the speed of development and minimizes the time required to achieve it (Davenport et al., 2004). The growing demand of employers to recruit skilled forces and the willingness of knowledge-based and capable employees to take on valuable jobs have led to a battle called ad talent battle (Carol Tensley, 2011). In this battle, successful organizations are seeking to improve their own strategies and policies and procedures in order to attract, develop and maintain the talents they need to sustain their economic viability. In other words, they seek to manage the talents. The lack of flexibility of organizations in responding to the urgent needs of well-trained employees and the inability to use the capabilities of these forces have made it necessary to assess the factors affecting the turnover of knowledge-based employees systematically. Therefore, turnover of knowledge-based employees in companies, where great number of knowledge-based employees are working due to the nature of their activities, is very important issue. In addition, general policies of the resistance economics announced by Supreme Leader emphasize on making all executive and economic affairs knowledge-based (Articles 1, 2, 22 of General Policies for Resistance Economics), providing and identifying the factors maintaining the knowledge-based employees in the body of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran are also prerequisites for the realization of the general policies of the resistance economics. Given what was stated, the main questions of this research are: what is the pattern of the factors affect the turnover of knowledge-based employees in the Khorasan Regional Electric Company and Khorasan Razavi Oil Products Distribution Company? And what are the similarities and differences between the factors affecting the turnover of knowledge-based employees in the two research groups?

THEORETICAL PRINCIPLES OF RESEARCH

Knowledge-based employees

Knowledge-based workforce is the one who uses knowledge, theory and concept rather than physical force (Drucker, 1999). The knowledge-based workforce is the one involved in knowledge work. Knowledge-based employees have a high level of skill, education, technological literacy and recognition power. These cases include the ability to observe, combine, interpret data and interact with new perspectives and insights leading to more effective decision-making, creating processes and solutions to solve organizational problems (Aluson, 2000). Knowledge-based workforces are people who deal with information and knowledge and are trying to create innovation by producing, developing and using it in an organization. They can solve organizational problems with the help of knowledge. They can create value-added in organization and use their intelligence to transform the idea into product, service or process (DaneshFrad, 2006). Knowledge-based employees are those employees who have special capability and skill in addition to having academic studies and working in different engineering and research and development department, whose involvement in the organization can be effective in value creation and creating the competitive advantage (Gholipour, 2013).



Turnover of knowledge-based employees and the factors affecting it:

The turnover intention is the voluntarily will of individuals to end cooperation with an organization. This might never be realized, but it may show its effect in cases such as absenteeism, negligence, vandalism and so on (Rasouli et al., 2012). Turnover means one's separation from the organization, where he or she works (Philips & Roper., 2009). The turnover intention is defined as willingness to leave the organization and to resign, which does not necessarily lead to real resignation and turnover, but it refers to possibility of leaving the relationship with the organization in the near future (Akhbari et al., 2012).

Accordingly, types of turnover can be divided into four classes:

The first class is the turnovers controlled by the organization and the employed person.

The second class is the turnovers controlled by employed people and they are voluntarily, but they are not controlled by organization and they are inevitable.

The third class includes those services that are under the control of the organization, but are not under the control of the employee.

The fourth class is the turnovers which are neither controllable by the organization nor by the employed person, in other words they are involuntarily and inevitable (Asili and Ghadirian, 2006).

The second class of turnover was considered in this research.

In survival and turnover of knowledge-based employees, various factors are involved. Using a review of related literature, examination of the status of the studied organizations and summing up the results of the Delphi stages and after confirming the model by the expert group, the factors affecting the knowledge-based turnover (7 factors, 35 components and 167 items) were identified, which included the following factors:

Individual factors: It refers to the factors related to the person and they are inherent and acquired (Morhed and Griffin, 2007).

Job factors: It refers to Job-related factors leading to job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction

Organizational factors: It refers to the factors which are within the organization's internal borders and more controlled by the organization's management (Seyyedjavadin, 2008).

Environmental factors: It refers to the factors affect the survival of employees in the organization from inside or outside of the organization (Ghazizadeh et al., 2006).

Value factor: It refers to factors reflecting the organization's beliefs and priorities from the aspects of professional ethics and organizational missions, and guides the employees' behavior.

Legal factor: It refers to rules and regulations of the organization (TaghipourErmaki, 2016).

Management factors: It refers to the factors associated with the management style of the organization affecting the survival of the employees (Ranjbar and Shafiezadeh, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

In this research, the researcher tried to use a comprehensive approach and develop a conceptual model for this study by collecting and studying a number of different theories and models of job turnover of knowledge-based employees and by collecting the views of the various experts. As the present research is considered among the developmental-applied studies in term of objective, the research type is mixed (exploratory mixed study). In this research, based on a qualitative approach and Delphi method, in order to identify the factors affecting the turnover of



knowledge-based employees, the initial conceptual model was formed. Then, using case studies and survey-based information, the designed model derived from the Delphi method was tested and evaluated. The statistical population consisted of all knowledge-based employees (employees identified based on knowledge-based employees' questionnaire) in the summer of 2017. At the time of the research, they had it has been past at least one year since their employment in one of the companies mentioned above. The required sample size was estimated to be 202 people. Accordingly, 77 knowledge-based employees of Khorasan Razavi National Oil Products Distribution Company and 125 knowledge-based employees of Khorasan Regional Electric Company were selected as the sample.

In the first step of this study, a questionnaire consisting of the factors, components and items proposed by the researcher to identify the knowledge-based employees (in the first part) and to identify the factors affecting the turnover of knowledge-based employees (in the second part) was provided to experts to state their views on the importance of mentioned factors and components in the model assessing the factors, which affect the turnover of knowledge-based employees. They provided also some suggestions and reformations for these components, which the results of this step along with the suggestions and reformations were transferred to the second step of Delphi. At this step, another questionnaire was developed based on the results of the first Delphi step, which asked the experts to state their views on each of the components and items accepted in the first step, in the form of the 5-point Likert Scale with 5 options of "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The results of this step showed that there is still no consensus on the components and items considered to measure the components and items of each of the factors affecting the turnover of knowledge-based employees. Thus, based on the findings of this step, the third step of Delphi also began.

In the third step of implementation of the Delphi technique, the Delphi panel members reached to consensus on the items proposed for measuring the components and items of the each of the factors affecting the turnover of knowledge-based employees and all of the proposed items had a mean higher than 4.5 and the distribution of experts' group answers tended towards the options of "strongly agree" and "agree". Thus, given the consensus obtained among the members of the group of experts and considering the value of Kendall consensus coefficient, obtained 0.82 for identifying the knowledge-based employees and 0.79 for evaluating the factors affecting the turnover of knowledge-based employees, it can be concluded that components and items presented in the form of a conceptual model of the research can be used in the studied population after the implementation of the Delphi technique. Given the results of the Delphi steps and confirming the model by the group of experts, components and items of turnover of knowledge-based employees (7 factors, 35 components and 167 items) were identified. Figure 1 presents the conceptual model of research derived from the Delphi plan (views and opinions of experts).



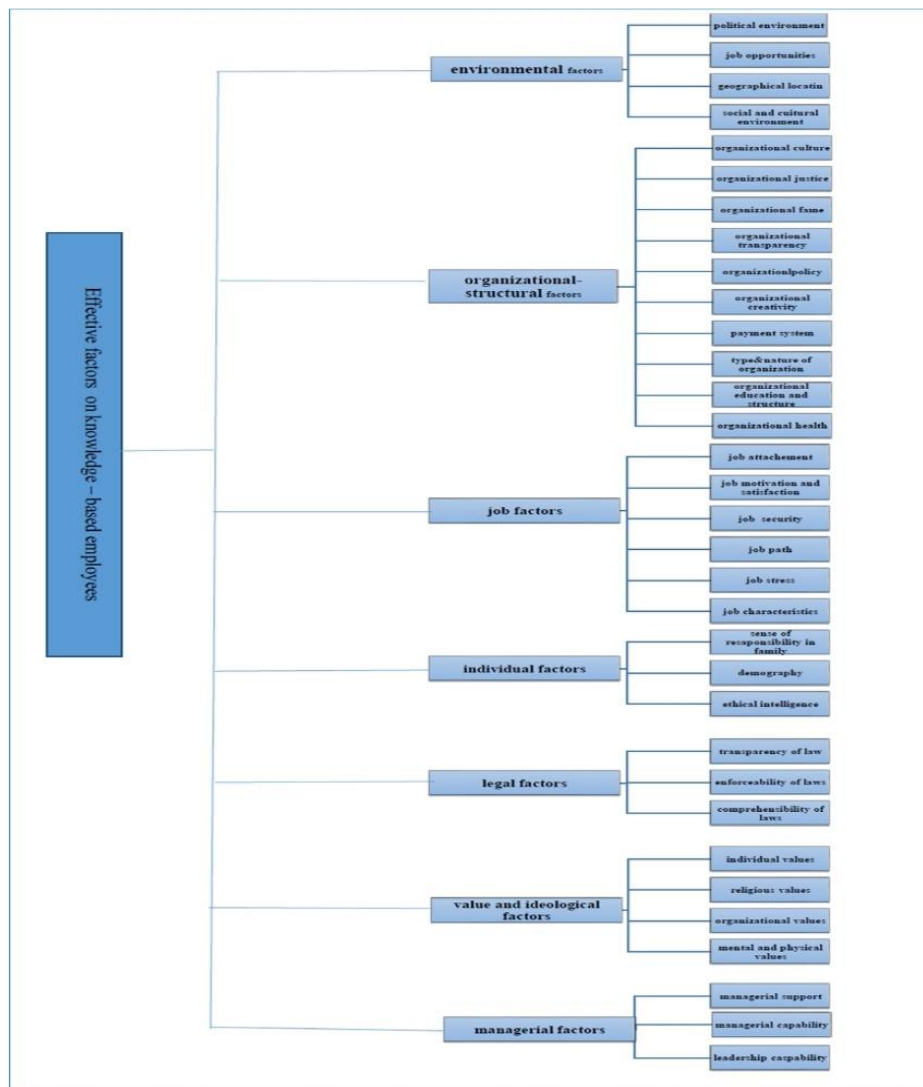


Figure 1: conceptual model derived from Delphi plan

RESEARCH RESULTS

In this section, the results of the opinions and views of 202 knowledge-based employees about the factors affecting the the turnover of knowledge-based employees have been presented and finally, after answering the research questions, the final model for both companies is confirmed by the factor analysis method. The results of structural equations showed that factors affecting the turnover of knowledge-based employees in Oil Distribution Company could be categorized into five environmental, organizational and structural, occupational, juridical and legal, and value and ideological categories. In this section, the results of the views of 202 knowledge-based employees on the factors affecting the turnover of knowledge-based employees were collected and presented. Finally, after answering the research questions, the final model for both companies was analyzed by confirmatory factor analysis. The results of structural equations showed that the factors affecting the turnover of knowledge-based employees in Oil Products Distribution Company can be classified into five environmental, organizational and structural, occupational, juridical, and value and ideological classes.

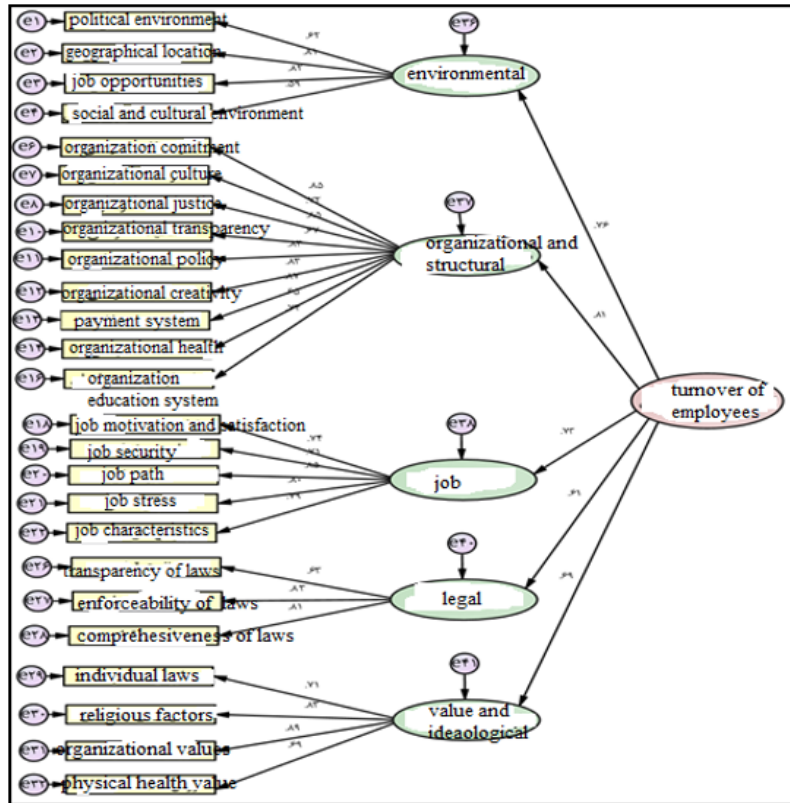


Figure 2: Second-order measurement model for the Oil Products Distribution Company after modifications along with the standardized coefficients

Figure 2 shows that among the five factors, organizational and structural factor with coefficient of 0.81 is the most important factor in turnover of knowledge-based employees in Oil Products Distribution Company, followed by environmental factor with a coefficient of 0.76, occupational, value and ideological and juridical factors, respectively. This figure also shows that in the environmental factor, job opportunity with the coefficient of 0.82 is the most important component. In organizational and structural factors, organizational communication with the coefficient of 0.85 is the most important component. In the occupational factor, the job path with a coefficient of 0.85 is the most important component, in the juridical factor, the enforceability of laws with a coefficient of 0.83 is the most important component, and in the value and ideological factor, organizational value with the coefficient of 0.89 is the most important component.

Moreover, the results of structural equations showed that the factors affecting the turnover of knowledge-based employees in the Regional Electric Company can be categorized into seven organizational and structural, occupational, juridical, value and ideological, managerial, environmental and individual classes. In fact, four factors affecting the turnover of knowledge-based employees at Oil Products Distribution Company are also observed in the Regional Electric Company, but management factor is specific to turnover of knowledge-based employees in the Regional Electric Company (It should be noted that the two environmental and individual factors were among the factors affecting the turnover of knowledge-based employees in the Regional Electric Company, excluded in the final model).

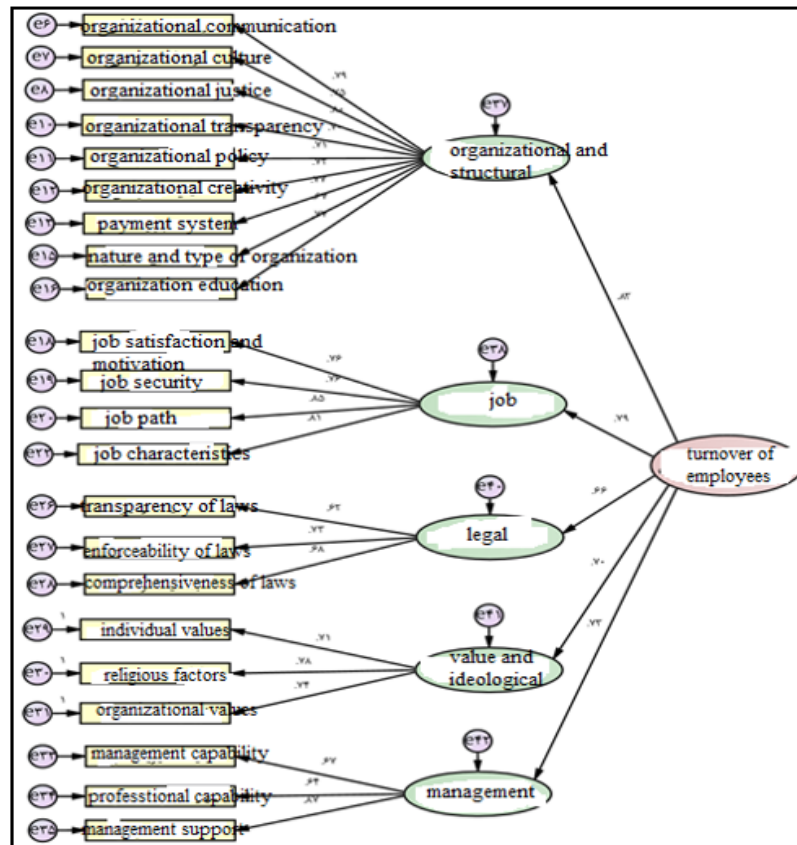


Figure 3: Second-order measurement model for KhorasanRazavi Regional Electric Company after modifications along with standardized coefficients

Figure 3 shows that among the five factors, the organizational and structural factor with coefficient of 0.83 is the most important factor in the turnover of knowledge-based employees in the KhorasanRegional Electric Company (This factor is also the most important factor in the Oil Products Distribution Company), followed by occupational factor with a coefficient of 0.79 (This factor ranked third in Oil Products Distribution Company), management factors with a coefficient of 0.73, value and ideological factors, and juridicalfactors, respectively.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Comparing the results of this study with those of previous studies indicates significant level of similarities and differences in the results. It should be noted that the identification and classification of the components and items of the turnover of knowledge-based employees in knowledge-based organizations have not been performed comprehensivelyas this study did, and the similar studies have merely examined very limited number of factors and components. The results of the similar studies are summarized here. Results of this research are consistent with those of the research conducted by Samimi, Hosseini, Abasatian, and Shafaghi (2015). Samimiet alconsidered performance evaluation system, communications, development and education, job analysis and design, employment policies, job path planning, rewards and wages as the factors involved in the survival of knowledge-based employees.Rasouli and Rashid (2013) view thathuman resource policies, including development of skills, service compensation,

participatory opportunities, organizational support and justice can predict the willingness to survive through job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and trust in management.

Gholipour, Amiri, Mehdizadeh and Zamanfar (2013) consider job satisfaction, payment, justice and work autonomy are the factors affecting the maintenance of knowledge-based employees. Karampour, Ahmadi, Safari Kahreh and AssadollahiDehkordi (2013) consider lack of job security, payment system, and lack of appropriate promotion as the factors affecting the turnover of knowledge-based employees. Seyyed Ali Akbar Afjeh and AelSalehGhaffari (2013) considered job path and appropriate organizational promotion, creation of space for individual knowledge, and participation in development decision-making, communication development, Independence in action, rewards and payment system, challenging job, participation in organization's strategic goals as the factors affecting the survival of knowledge-based employees and unmet job expectations and reduced job status as factors involved in turnover of knowledge-based employees. Asili and Ghadirian (2009) consider management factors as the most important factor in turnover of knowledge-based employees. Yumi, Zehen and Quing (2008) consider ignoring psychological expectations of knowledge-based employees as the most important factor in their turnover. Reddy and Gandro (2014) consider the appropriate and fair payment system, challenging work, empowerment, and the development of flexible working policies as the most important factors for maintaining the knowledge-based employees, and applying flexible strategies such as flexible working hours, creating more opportunities and learning, and creating a work environment as challenged in removing these barriers. Mua (2013) considers job design to increase intrinsic motivators, competitive financial rewards, flexibility and empowerment, justice, equality, respect and attention, a suitable environment where a person can develop his / her talent, learning from his or her mistakes, leadership actions satisfying a knowledge-based employee that why the company should be managed by himself or herself (management factors) and an organizational structure with no unnecessary bureaucracy (structural and organizational factors) as the factors affecting survival of knowledge-based employees. Aisli (2000) considers that motivational factors such as success in job, gratitude, progress in work, the possibility of growth and health factors such as wages, job security, job status, and links with counterparts, quality of supervision are both effective in job satisfaction and survival of knowledge-based employees. Chandranshusinha and Ruchisinha (2012) considers factors of Meritocracy and relationship-oriented, reward and development-orientation, and attention to job path progress as the factors affecting the survival of knowledge-based employees. Karen Carleton (2011) considers challenging and meaningful working environment, development of job path and providing appropriate resources, increasing involvement, and creating a supportive environment as the factors affecting the survival of knowledge-based employees.

Research recommendation

Given the definition provided on the knowledge-based employees' survival, if the future opportunities, both material and emotional, are considerable in the organization and its loss is considered important for the knowledge-based person, the rate of survival in the organization would be higher. Leaving the benefits, either material benefits such as involvement or non-material benefit, such as learning opportunities and job and educational promotion, job stability, study opportunities, rapid access to information resources, and the use of management information system and knowledge management and geographic location, if its value is high



compared to what one gains from ne opportunity, would be difficult for the person so he or she would show higher tendency to survive in the organization. Based on the research results, environmental factors (political environment, geographical location, job opportunities, social and cultural environment), organizational and structural factors (organizational communication, organizational culture, organizational justice, organizational transparency, organizational politics, organizational creativity, payment system, organizational health, organization training structure), occupational factors (job satisfaction and motivation, job security, job path, job stress, job characteristics), juridical factors (transparency of laws, enforceability of laws, comprehensiveness of laws), and value and ideological factors (individual values and religious factors), organizational values (considering value for physical health) as the factors affecting the knowledge-based turnover in Oil Products Distribution Company. In addition, structural and organizational factors (organizational communication, organizational culture, organizational justice, organizational transparency, organizational policies, organizational creativity, payment system, organizational health, organizational education structure), occupational factors (job satisfaction, job motivation, job security, job path, job stress, juridical factors (transparency of laws, enforceability of laws, the comprehensiveness of laws), value and ideological factors (individual values and religious factors, organizational values and considering value for physical health) and management factors (the ability to manage individuals, professional ability of individuals, management support) are among the factors affecting the turnover of knowledge-based turnover in Khorasan Regional Electric Company. Therefore, the importance of all main and underlying factors should be taken into account by executive officials of human resources management in the public sector in order to maintain the knowledge-based workforce. In line with realization of these factors, the following recommendations are presented:

- Creating a knowledge-based culture at different levels of management (especially, high management of organization).
- Emphasizing on obliging the organization to knowledge trends;
- Using knowledge-based managers at different levels of the organization;
- Examining the weaknesses of the organization from the perspective of knowledge-based management;
- Organizing ceremonies, gatherings and meetings with the participation of knowledge-based workforces to achieve a common language with them;
- Transforming the organization's perspective to the knowledge-based workforces to achieve a better understanding of the strategic direction of the organization and to coordinate the organization's goals with their goals in the organization;
- Establishing the necessary infrastructure in the organization before implementing the knowledge-based employees' recruitment programs; since these types of programs will fail due to lack of these fields and preparations or will not lead to expected outcomes;
- Comprehensive planning with regard to evaluation of knowledge-based employees' performance, payment system of knowledge-based employees, balance between life and work of knowledge-based employees, educating and training the knowledge-based employees, job promotion path of knowledge-based employees, and using counselors and



experts of various sciences such as human resource management experts, organizational experts and behavioral science experts.

- Establishing a specialized working group in organization recruitment unit to employ knowledge-based employees.
- Honoring the values of knowledge-based employees.
- Developing and implementing comprehensive strategies by the government to recruit knowledge-based employees
- Providing the structural, juridical and cultural foundation for the fulfillment of each of the effective factors affecting the recruitment of employees.
- Guiding the managers of public organizations and the executive authorities of country toward being knowledge-based
- Developing and implementing the strategic plans and policies in order to fulfill each of the factors affecting recruitment of employees
- Recruiting knowledge-based employees by public organizations and executive authorities and officials of the country
- Reengineering knowledge-based employees' jobs with the aim of enriching the jobs and giving challenging nature to the jobs.
- Developing appropriate job path for knowledge-based employees
- Revision of the organizational structure given the knowledge nature of organizations in order to smooth the structure and create more mobile space for knowledge-based employees

Moreover, the researcher argues that as long as talent management, as the main strategy of these two companies and all knowledge-based companies, has not been included systematically in the context of human resource strategies and policies, any solution to maintain knowledge-based employees might be a temporary solution, and does not solve the problem completely. By applying talent management, it is ensured that each of the employees with specific talents and abilities would be employed in the right job. Talent management, as a management tool, empowers managers and brings flexibility consistent to changing conditions of market. Talent management is important for two general reasons: First, effective talent management implementation leads to the successful acquisition of talents. Second, employees are selected for key positions in the future. The second case called "succession development management" has attracted the attention of many organizations. Talent management is a new approach, which can create a change in human capital management and resolve the weaknesses and shortcomings of the traditional approaches. Therefore, it can be suggested as an appropriate tool for management of traditional human resources in Iranian organizations. However, talent management implementation in organizations should be planned; otherwise, organizations will soon forget this very important approach. It is suggested that a systemic perspective to talent management in knowledge-based companies, including Khorasan Regional Electric Company and Khorasan Razavi Oil Products Distribution Company to be introduced. Paying attention to only one component of the talent management process (maintaining knowledge-based employees) does not help much to develop and solve it.



The four main dimensions proposed by the researcher' on the talent management system are as follows:

1. The system input involves fundamentals factors of talent managementso that implementation of the talent management process in the organization requires these inputs. Factors such as an agreed organizational definition on talent management concepts and related activities, supporting talent management affairs at the highest levels of the organization, examining talent management abilities in long-term and short-term, linking talent management with the strategic objectives of organization's human resources.
2. The talent management process as a system processor through which organizations can recruit, select, use, develop and maintain knowledge-based and talented individuals.
3. The third part is the output of system, which includes improving individual performance (individual growth, development of talented individuals, satisfaction of talented individuals, increase of value added of knowledge-based employees) and organizational performance (recruiting the talented individuals and gaining competitive advantage).
4. The fourth dimension of this system can also be considered as factors influencing the system, based on the environmental conditions of the organization, including external and internal environment.

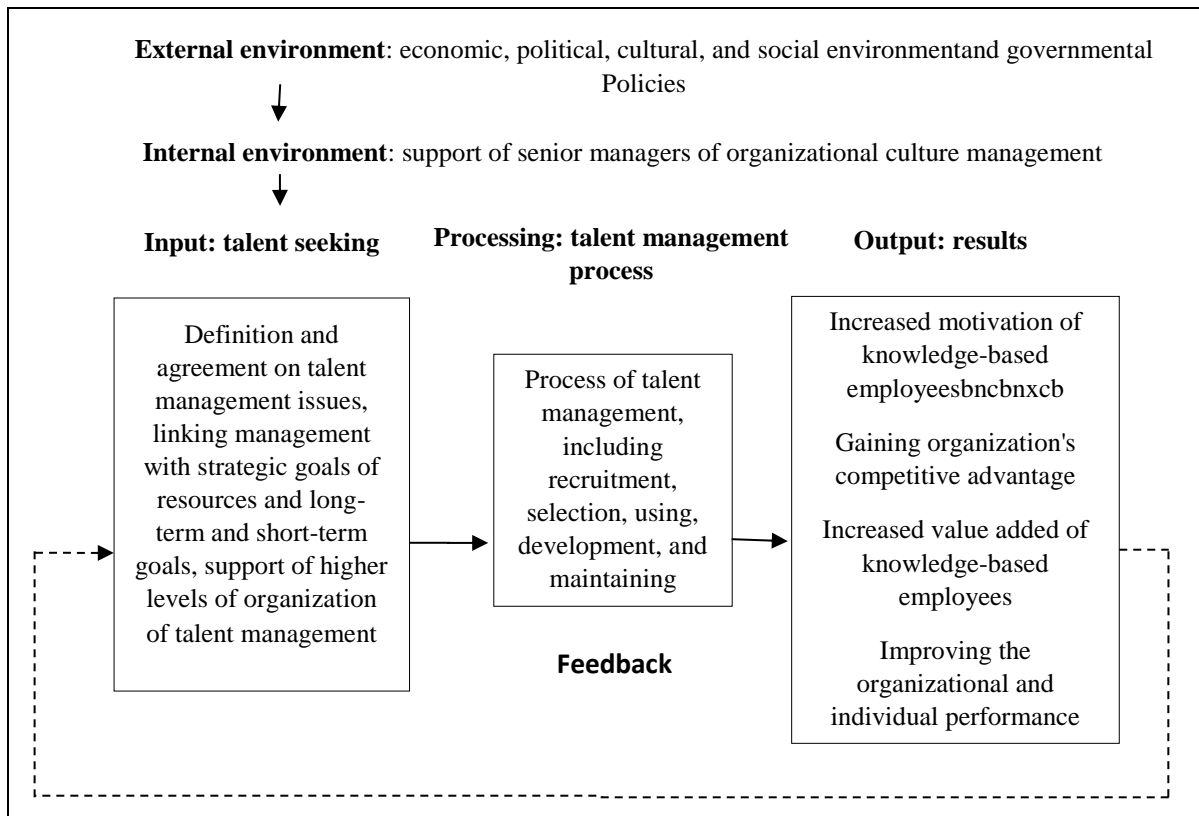


Figure 4: systemic model proposed to develop talent management



At the macro level, it is also suggested that the government consider the implementation of the talent management process in evaluating the performance of organizations, as one of the performance evaluation indicators of one ministry be the implementation of talent management. Another important point which should be noted is that talent management requires serious determination and comprehensive support by the employees and managers of the organization, which can be helpful in this regard. Accordingly, it is suggested that talent management culture to be institutionalized among the managers and employees and all organization to accept and perceive that talent management has a deep effect on organization's performance. For this purpose, attention should be paid to underlying factors leading to its realization. It is also recommended that this important issue to be considered as one of the country's development and progress indices by government and parliament more serious than before, especially in national bills and laws.

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