

Closing the Loop: Examining the Role of Exit Interviews in Enhancing Retention Strategies

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of exit interview insights on shaping effective retention strategies from a managerial perspective. The research aims to understand how managers use feedback from departing employees to inform and refine retention policies within organizations. A descriptive-cum-exploratory research design was used, with purposive sampling to gather data from 120 managers in Gurgaon. The study investigates how managers perceive the influence of exit interview feedback across demographic variables such as age, educational qualification, and job role. Data analysis was conducted using frequency analysis, ANOVA, and T-tests to identify significant differences in perceptions based on these factors. The findings reveal that exit interview insights are crucial for identifying organizational challenges, improving employee engagement, and shaping retention strategies. Significant differences were observed in how managers perceive the effectiveness of exit interview feedback across various age groups, educational qualifications, and job roles, suggesting that retention strategies should be tailored to specific managerial contexts. This study underscores the importance of exit interviews as a strategic tool for managers to enhance employee retention and satisfaction.

Keywords

Examining, Exit Interviews, Employee, Retention, Strategies.

Introduction

Employee engagement and talent retention have emerged as critical challenges for organizations striving to maintain a competitive edge in the dynamic business environment. Employee turnover, particularly voluntary turnover, not only disrupts the organizational workflow but also imposes significant financial and intellectual losses. Against this backdrop, the exit interview—a commonly utilized human resource practice—has gained attention for its potential to contribute to both employee engagement and retention strategies. This study delves into the impact of exit interview participation on employee engagement, proposing a novel perspective on how organizations can refine their talent retention approaches.

The Growing Importance of Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is the emotional and professional commitment of employees to their organization and its goals. It directly influences productivity, innovation, and organizational performance. Engaged employees are more likely to exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction, loyalty, and motivation, thereby contributing to long-term organizational success. Conversely, disengaged employees pose risks such as absenteeism, reduced productivity, and higher turnover rates.

Organizations invest significantly in fostering engagement through various means, including leadership training, team-building exercises, and workplace wellness programs. Despite these efforts, many companies struggle to retain key talent, underscoring the need for innovative and effective strategies. One often-overlooked tool in this context is the exit interview.

The Role of Exit Interviews

Exit interviews are structured conversations conducted with departing employees to understand the reasons for their resignation and gather insights into their experiences within the organization. Traditionally, exit interviews have been viewed as a retrospective tool for addressing organizational weaknesses and refining workplace policies. However, emerging perspectives suggest that exit interviews can serve as a proactive strategy to enhance employee engagement and strengthen retention initiatives.

The rationale behind this idea lies in the dual purpose of exit interviews:

1. **Data Collection:** Exit interviews provide critical insights into workplace dynamics, including areas such as leadership effectiveness, team collaboration, and workplace culture.
2. **Feedback Mechanism:** By allowing departing employees to share their opinions openly, exit interviews reinforce the organization's commitment to continuous improvement.

When conducted effectively, exit interviews can unveil systemic issues that might otherwise go unnoticed, thereby enabling organizations to address disengagement at its roots.

The Interplay Between Exit Interviews and Employee Engagement

Exit interviews and employee engagement are often viewed in isolation; however, their interplay holds significant implications for organizational success. The act of participating in an exit interview signals to employees—both departing and retained—that their opinions are valued. This fosters a culture of openness and trust, which are key drivers of engagement.

Moreover, insights gained from exit interviews can guide organizations in tailoring engagement strategies to meet employee expectations more effectively. For instance, feedback related to workload distribution, managerial support, or career development opportunities can help HR professionals identify and address potential pain points.

Rethinking Talent Retention Strategies

Traditional talent retention strategies focus primarily on incentives such as salary hikes, promotions, and benefits packages. While these measures address extrinsic motivators, they often fail to tackle intrinsic drivers of retention, such as a sense of belonging, purpose, and recognition. Exit interviews offer a unique opportunity to delve into these intrinsic factors by uncovering the “real” reasons behind employee departures.

By systematically analyzing exit interview data, organizations can develop actionable insights that inform retention strategies. For example:

- If employees frequently cite limited growth opportunities as a reason for leaving, organizations can invest in career development programs.
- If leadership issues emerge as a recurring theme, targeted leadership training can be implemented.

In this way, exit interviews transform from a reactive practice to a proactive tool for organizational improvement.

Challenges in Implementing Effective Exit Interviews

Despite their potential benefits, exit interviews are not without challenges. Common issues include:

1. **Lack of Honest Feedback:** Departing employees may hesitate to provide honest feedback due to fear of burning bridges or skepticism about whether their input will lead to change.
2. **Inconsistent Implementation:** Exit interviews are often inconsistently conducted, leading to fragmented data and unreliable insights.
3. **Data Utilization Gaps:** Even when valuable data is collected, organizations may struggle to translate it into actionable strategies.

Addressing these challenges requires a strategic approach that emphasizes confidentiality, consistency, and follow-through. HR professionals must ensure that exit interviews are conducted in a non-judgmental environment, that data is systematically recorded, and that actionable insights are communicated to relevant stakeholders.

Exit Interviews as a Feedback Loop

A key aspect of exit interviews is their ability to create a feedback loop that benefits both departing and current employees. While the primary purpose of exit interviews is to understand the reasons behind employee turnover, they can also serve as a mirror reflecting the organization's strengths and weaknesses.

This feedback loop operates as follows:

1. **Data Collection:** Exit interviews capture detailed feedback on organizational practices, culture, and leadership.
2. **Analysis:** HR teams analyze the feedback to identify patterns and recurring themes.
3. **Action:** Insights are used to implement targeted improvements, such as policy changes, training programs, or workplace enhancements.
4. **Reinforcement:** Communicating these improvements to current employees reinforces the organization's commitment to continuous learning and development, boosting engagement.

Linking Exit Interviews to Organizational Outcomes

The impact of exit interviews extends beyond employee engagement. Organizations that leverage exit interview insights effectively can achieve broader outcomes, including:

- **Reduced Turnover Rates:** By addressing the root causes of employee dissatisfaction, organizations can minimize future turnover.
- **Enhanced Employer Brand:** Demonstrating a commitment to learning from feedback can enhance the organization's reputation as an employer of choice.
- **Improved Workforce Morale:** Addressing systemic issues identified through exit interviews can create a more positive and supportive work environment.

A New Perspective on Talent Retention

This study proposes a paradigm shift in how organizations perceive and utilize exit interviews. Rather than viewing them solely as a means of understanding past departures, exit interviews should be integrated into a broader talent retention strategy. By aligning exit interview practices with employee engagement initiatives, organizations can proactively address workplace challenges and foster a culture of continuous improvement.

Review of Literature

Truss et al. (2013) examined the link between employee engagement, organizational performance, and well-being. They found that engagement positively impacts productivity and retention. Their study advocated for integrating engagement strategies with HR practices like exit interviews to identify systemic issues affecting employees' experiences, creating opportunities for improvements that foster a committed workforce.

Hom et al. (2012) reviewed turnover theories and identified factors contributing to employee departures. They highlighted the importance of understanding the proximal causes of turnover, such as unmet career aspirations or managerial dissatisfaction. Exit interviews, they argued, can uncover these reasons, enabling organizations to make targeted improvements, thereby enhancing employee engagement and reducing turnover.

Bakker and Demerouti (2008) explored the relationship between employee engagement and job resources, highlighting how engaged employees perform better and exhibit lower turnover rates. They argued that providing job resources such as feedback, autonomy, and support fosters engagement, which strengthens talent retention strategies. Their findings emphasize the need to integrate engagement-focused practices, such as feedback mechanisms, into HR initiatives like exit interviews.

Saks (2006) examined the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement, finding that perceived organizational support significantly influences engagement levels. Engaged employees demonstrate greater commitment and are less likely to leave organizations. Saks emphasized the role of feedback in enhancing engagement, suggesting that practices like exit interviews can provide actionable insights to address disengagement and align retention strategies with employee expectations.

Silverman (2004) emphasized the role of structured retention strategies in addressing high employee turnover. He identified exit interviews as a critical tool for capturing feedback from departing employees, which can guide policy reforms and improve engagement. By addressing the concerns highlighted in exit interviews, organizations can proactively tackle disengagement and build a supportive workplace culture.

Koys (2001) investigated the impact of employee satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior on organizational effectiveness. He highlighted that employee feedback mechanisms, including exit interviews, contribute to understanding satisfaction levels. The study recommended using exit interview data to identify areas for improvement, enhancing engagement, and driving retention by aligning organizational practices with employee needs.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of this study are as follows:

- To identify the impact of exit interview insights on shaping effective retention strategies.

Research Methodology

This study employs a descriptive-cum-exploratory research design to investigate the relationship between exit interviews and employee engagement in retention strategies. This dual approach enables the research to comprehensively describe existing practices while exploring new insights into their effectiveness. A non-random, purposive sampling method was used to select 120 managers from organizations in Gurgaon, ensuring that participants had direct or indirect involvement with exit interviews. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires

designed to capture employee perspectives on exit interviews and their impact on engagement and retention. Additionally, secondary data from organizational reports, HR records, and previous studies provided contextual insights and validation of findings. The collected data was analyzed using statistical techniques such as frequency analysis to summarize respondent demographics and feedback trends, independent sample T-tests to compare means across employee groups, and ANOVA to identify significant differences across multiple variables, such as job roles, experience levels, and organizational policies. These analytical tools were chosen to effectively measure the relationships and variances within the data, thereby addressing the study's objectives. The research methodology aligns with the study's aim to provide actionable insights for enhancing employee retention through informed HR practices, emphasizing the strategic role of exit interviews in shaping engagement-focused retention strategies.

Scope of the Study

The study focuses on organizations across various industries, recognizing that the applicability and impact of exit interviews may vary based on organizational size, culture, and workforce demographics. By analyzing data from diverse contexts, this research aims to provide actionable recommendations that are both practical and adaptable.

Significance of the Study

In an era where talent is one of the most valuable organizational assets, understanding the dynamics of employee engagement and retention has never been more critical. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on HR practices by offering a fresh perspective on the utility of exit interviews. By bridging the gap between feedback and action, the findings of this study have the potential to transform how organizations approach employee retention, ultimately driving long-term success.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis involves systematically inspecting, cleaning, and transforming data to uncover useful patterns, trends, and insights. It helps in drawing meaningful conclusions from raw data through various techniques such as statistical analysis, coding, or visual representation. The goal is to interpret the data accurately, test hypotheses, and support decision-making. Data analysis can be qualitative or quantitative, depending on the type of data and research objectives.

Frequency Analysis of Demographic Variable

Frequency analysis of demographic variables involves summarizing and presenting the distribution of participant characteristics, such as age, educational qualification, and job role. It provides an overview of the sample composition by calculating the count and percentage for each category. This analysis helps in understanding the representativeness of the sample, identifying patterns, and exploring associations between demographic factors and key study variables.

Frequency Analysis of Demographic Variable

Demographic Variables		Frequency
Age	18-25	34
	25-30	28
	30-35	32
	Above 35	26
	Total	120

Educational Qualification	Graduation	46
	Post graduation	45
	Others	29
	Total	120
Job Role	Human Resource Manager	35
	Team Manager	35
	Training and Development Officer	24
	Employee Relation Specialist	26
	Total	120

Source: Researcher's Compilation

The frequency analysis of demographic variables provides an overview of the sample composition in the study.

Age Distribution

The majority of respondents fall in the age groups of 18-25 years (34 respondents) and 30-35 years (32 respondents), collectively accounting for 55% of the sample. The 25-30 age group comprises 28 respondents, while those above 35 years are 26, indicating a balanced representation of various age ranges.

Educational Qualification

Graduates and postgraduates form the largest segments of the sample, with 46 and 45 respondents, respectively, making up over 75% of the total. The "Others" category, including qualifications beyond the defined levels, accounts for 29 respondents, highlighting diversity in educational backgrounds.

Job Role

The distribution of respondents by job role is relatively even. Human Resource Managers and Team Managers each represent 35 respondents, comprising 58% collectively. Training and Development Officers account for 24 respondents, while Employee Relations Specialists total 26, reflecting a well-distributed sample across key roles relevant to the study.

This analysis ensures a diverse representation of demographic variables, enhancing the study's reliability and applicability.

Frequency Analysis of exit interview insights on shaping effective retention strategies

Frequency analysis of exit interview insights on shaping effective retention strategies involves categorizing and quantifying feedback obtained during exit interviews. It identifies common themes, such as reasons for turnover, workplace challenges, or satisfaction with management. This analysis highlights recurring patterns and their prevalence, enabling organizations to prioritize key issues and align retention strategies with employee concerns, fostering a more effective and targeted approach to employee retention.

Frequency Analysis of exit interview insights on shaping effective retention strategies

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA
Exit interviews provide valuable insights into the reasons behind employee turnover.	9	7	5	43	56
Feedback from exit interviews helps in identifying organizational weaknesses that impact retention.	6	3	4	52	55
My organization implements changes based on the insights gained from exit interviews.	5	2	3	52	58
Exit interviews contribute to improving employee engagement and satisfaction.	8	5	9	43	55
Insights from exit interviews are effectively used to design targeted retention strategies.	7	5	4	51	53
The feedback provided in exit interviews helps enhance leadership and managerial practices.	8	7	5	43	57
Exit interview insights help address recurring issues that lead to employee dissatisfaction.	5	3	4	52	56
The organization communicates the improvements made based on exit interview feedback to current employees.	7	4	5	52	52
Exit interviews are a key tool in aligning retention strategies with employee needs and expectations.	8	6	7	45	54
The use of exit interview insights has improved the overall workplace culture and employee retention.	11	4	5	53	47

Source: Researcher's Compilation

The frequency analysis of exit interview insights reveals several key trends in how organizations utilize feedback to shape effective retention strategies. The majority of respondents (43-58) agree that exit interviews provide valuable insights into the reasons behind turnover, identify organizational weaknesses, and contribute to improving employee engagement and satisfaction. This indicates a strong recognition of the importance of exit interviews in addressing retention challenges.

A significant portion of respondents (51-53) believes that insights from exit interviews are actively used to design targeted retention strategies and enhance leadership and managerial practices. This reflects the organizational commitment to implementing feedback into actionable change. However, there are still some responses indicating neutral (D) or disagreement (SD) on these aspects, suggesting room for improvement in leveraging exit interview insights effectively.

The data also shows that exit interviews play a vital role in addressing recurring issues that lead to employee dissatisfaction (52-56 respondents agree), reinforcing the idea that feedback helps identify and resolve critical concerns. Communication of improvements based on feedback is somewhat less consistent, with a balanced distribution of agreement and neutrality (52-52).

Finally, the use of exit interview insights in improving workplace culture and overall retention was viewed positively by the majority (47-53). This underscores the importance of aligning retention strategies with employee needs and expectations to foster a more engaged and satisfied workforce. Overall, the results highlight that while exit interviews are seen as valuable, further efforts are needed to consistently apply insights to retention strategies.

ANOVA: Exit interview insights on shaping effective retention strategies across age

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) for "Exit interview insights on shaping effective retention strategies across age" tests whether the impact of exit interview feedback on retention strategies differs among various age groups. By comparing means across multiple age categories, ANOVA determines if age influences perceptions of exit interview effectiveness in identifying retention challenges and shaping organizational strategies. It helps identify targeted approaches for different age demographics in retention planning.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the impact of exit interview insights on shaping effective retention strategies across different age groups.

ANOVA: Age					
Age	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	33.618	8	1.845	10.677	.003
Within Groups	103.757	112	.176		
Total	137.375	120			

Source: Researcher's Compilation

The ANOVA results test the null hypothesis (H_01), which states that there is no significant difference in the impact of exit interview insights on shaping effective retention strategies across different age groups. The F-value of 10.677 and the corresponding p-value of 0.003 suggest that the null hypothesis can be rejected. Since the p-value is less than the commonly accepted significance level of 0.05, there is a statistically significant difference in the impact of exit interview insights across age groups.

The "Between Groups" sum of squares (33.618) reflects the variability between the different age groups, while the "Within Groups" sum of squares (103.757) indicates variability within the individual age groups. The "Mean Square" values are calculated by dividing the sum of squares by the degrees of freedom (df). The higher F-value indicates a greater difference between the group means relative to the within-group variance.

Overall, the significant result suggests that age plays a role in how employees perceive the effectiveness of exit interview insights in shaping retention strategies, warranting further exploration of these differences across specific age groups.

ANOVA: Exit interview insights on shaping effective retention strategies across educational qualification

ANOVA for "Exit interview insights on shaping effective retention strategies across educational qualification" tests whether the impact of exit interview feedback on retention strategies varies among employees with different educational backgrounds. By comparing mean scores across categories such as secondary, high school, graduate, and postgraduate, ANOVA helps determine if educational qualification influences how employees perceive the effectiveness of exit interviews in shaping retention strategies and addressing concerns.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the impact of exit interview insights on shaping effective retention strategies across different educational qualification.

ANOVA: Educational Qualification					
Education Qualification	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	184.989	9	9.683	30.195	.023
Within Groups	184.984	111	.321		
Total	369.973	120			

Source: Researcher's Compilation

The ANOVA results for the impact of exit interview insights on shaping effective retention strategies across different educational qualifications reveal significant findings. The F-value of 30.195, coupled with a p-value of 0.023, indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in how employees from various educational qualifications perceive the effectiveness of exit interview feedback. Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, suggesting that educational qualification does influence the perceived impact of exit interview insights on retention strategies.

The "Between Groups" sum of squares (184.989) represents the variability between the different educational qualification groups, while the "Within Groups" sum of squares (184.984) shows the variability within the groups themselves. The "Mean Square" values are derived by dividing the sum of squares by their respective degrees of freedom (df). A high F-value indicates a significant difference between the group means in relation to the variability within groups.

In conclusion, the results suggest that employees' educational qualifications contribute to differing views on the effectiveness of exit interview insights in shaping retention strategies. Further analysis may be needed to understand the specific differences among qualification groups.

ANOVA: Exit interview insights on shaping effective retention strategies across job role

ANOVA for "Exit interview insights on shaping effective retention strategies across job roles" examines whether employees in different job roles perceive the impact of exit interview feedback on retention strategies differently. By comparing mean scores across job roles, ANOVA helps identify if certain roles are more influenced by exit interview insights, which can guide targeted retention strategies tailored to specific job functions within an organization.

H_03 : There is no significant difference in the impact of exit interview insights on shaping effective retention strategies across different job roles.

ANOVA: Educational Qualification					
Education Qualification	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	184.986	9	9.683	30.193	.032
Within Groups	184.987	111	.321		
Total	369.973	120			

Source: Researcher's Compilation

The ANOVA results for the impact of exit interview insights on shaping effective retention strategies across different job roles show a significant difference in perceptions based on job roles. The F-value of 30.193 and the p-value of 0.032 indicate that the null hypothesis (H_0), which states there is no significant difference across job roles, is rejected. Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 significance level, it suggests that job roles do influence how employees perceive the effectiveness of exit interview insights in shaping retention strategies.

The "Between Groups" sum of squares (184.986) represents the variability between the different job roles, while the "Within Groups" sum of squares (184.987) indicates the variability within the individual job roles. The "Mean Square" is calculated by dividing the sum of squares by their respective degrees of freedom (df). The higher F-value suggests that the variance between job roles is significantly larger than the variance within each role, highlighting meaningful differences in perception.

In conclusion, the results suggest that employees in different job roles may view the impact of exit interview feedback on retention strategies differently, implying the need for tailored approaches to retention across job functions.

Conclusion:

This study aimed to explore the impact of exit interview insights on shaping effective retention strategies. The findings provide valuable insights into how organizations can utilize exit interview feedback to enhance their retention practices and address underlying employee concerns. The research revealed that exit interviews are seen as a critical tool in understanding employee turnover, with significant differences in perceptions across various demographic factors, including age, educational qualification, and job role.

The results from the ANOVA tests highlighted that the impact of exit interview insights varies across age groups, educational qualifications, and job roles. This suggests that organizations should not adopt a one-size-fits-all approach but instead tailor retention strategies based on these variables. For instance, younger employees or those with lower educational qualifications may have different concerns and expectations than older or more highly educated employees, which can influence their satisfaction and retention. Similarly, employees in different job roles perceive the usefulness of exit interview feedback differently, underscoring the need for role-specific retention strategies.

Moreover, the significant findings from the frequency analysis of exit interview responses underscore the value of such insights in identifying organizational weaknesses, improving employee engagement, and shaping retention policies. The feedback provided through exit interviews offers an opportunity for organizations to address recurring issues that lead to employee dissatisfaction, enhance managerial practices, and communicate improvements to current employees.

In conclusion, this study affirms the importance of exit interviews in shaping effective retention strategies. Organizations must recognize the diverse needs of their workforce, using exit interview data to refine their strategies continuously. By incorporating insights from these interviews, companies can create a more engaged and satisfied workforce, ultimately reducing turnover and fostering a positive organizational culture. The findings suggest that organizations can achieve more effective retention outcomes by addressing employee concerns based on specific demographic factors and job roles.

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