Human Resources Churning Management and its Articulation with Organisational Policies

Gestión de Churning de Recursos Humanos y su Articulación con las Políticas Organizacionales

Gestão de Churning de Recursos Humanos e a sua Articulação com Políticas Organizacionais

Olga Alexandra Chinita Pirrolas

PhD Student in Human Resources Development Policies, Institute of Social and Political Sciences, University of Lisbon, Portugal. E-mail: olgaalexandrap@gmail.com

Pedro Miguel Alves Ribeiro Correia

PhD in Social Sciences, Specialty in Public Administration, from the Technical University of Lisbon, Portugal; Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Coimbra, Portugal; Researcher at the Institute for Legal Research (UCILeR), Portugal (funded by FCT under its strategic project: UIDB/04643/2020). E-mail: pcorreia@fd.uc.pt

ABSTRACT
This qualitative study counted with the participation of several organizations, from several dimensions and different activity sectors in Portugal. Through semi structured interviews, the intention was to approach human resources directors in order to obtain important information relevant to analysis of the studied theme. Considering the reviewing of the literature in question, the following investigation question emerged: "What is the influence of human resources policies when it comes to churning?", determining as a general goal: Analyzing the influence of the main human resources policies in churning, and proposing as a specific goal, the elaboration of a theoretical-methodological churning model. After the completion of the content analysis, it's possible to conclude that the main human resources policies, the same ones that involved organizations should prioritize, have a co-relationship with salaries, career progression, development of skills, work schedules and leadership - in which these variables exercise direct influence in the occurrence of churning in human resources.
Keywords: human resources policies; churning; theoretical-methodological model; content analysis.

RESUMEN
El presente estudio cualitativo fue posible gracias a la participación de varias organizaciones, de varias dimensiones y de diferentes sectores de actividad localizadas en Portugal. A través de entrevistas semiestructuradas se pretendió abordar a directores de recursos humanos, con el fin de obtener información relevante para el análisis del tema objeto de estudio. Teniendo en cuenta la revisión bibliográfica realizada, surgió la siguiente pregunta de investigación "¿Cuál es la influencia que tienen las políticas de recursos humanos en el churning?", habiendo establecido como objetivo general: el análisis de la influencia que tienen las políticas de recursos humanos en el churning, y proponiendo como objetivo específico: la elaboración de un modelo teórico-metodológico del churning. Una vez realizado el análisis de contenido fue posible afirmar que las políticas de recursos humanos, a las que todas las organizaciones involucradas deberían dar prioridad, están relacionadas con el salario, la progresión profesional, el desarrollo de competencias, los horarios y el liderazgo. Estas variables ejercen una influencia directa en la rotación de los recursos humanos.
Palabras clave: políticas de recursos humanos; churning; modelo teórico-metodológico; análisis de contenido.

RESUMO
Este estudo qualitativo pautou com a participação de várias organizações, de várias dimensões e vários setores de atividade em Portugal. Através de entrevistas semiestruturadas pretendeu-se abordar os diretores de recursos humanos, de forma a obter informação pertinente para a análise da temática em estudo. Considerando a revisão da literatura, surgiu como questão de investigação: "Qual a influência das políticas de recursos humanos no *churning*?", tendo-se definido como objetivo geral: analisar a influência das principais políticas de recursos humanos no *churning*, propondo-se como objetivo específico, a elaboração de um modelo teórico-metodológico de *churning*. Feita a análise de conteúdo conclui-se que as principais políticas de recursos humanos, as quais as organizações envolvidas, devem dar prioridade estão relacionadas com o salário, a progressão na carreira, o desenvolvimento de competências, os horários e a liderança, exercendo estas variáveis uma influência direta na ocorrência de *churning* de recursos humanos.
Palavras-chave: políticas de recursos humanos; c*hurning*; modelo teórico-metodológico; análise de conteúdo.

Introduction

Within the context of the present economic globalisation and of the social and political complexities stemming from scientific and technological innovations, organisations have felt the need to modify its organisational procedures and policies to face their ongoing problematic of being able to retain their employees (Kamalaveni *et al*., 2019).

The implementation of human resources policies, highlights workers as fundamental elements in the process of goal achievement and decision making around a higher effectiveness and competitiveness in organizations. Through human resources practices and policies, the organizations contribute to the wellness and satisfaction of their workers, creating a sense of personal and professional fulfillment, the last being the main goal of any organization. Therefore, taking a special connotation in the development, valorization, and retention of workers.

The implementation of adequate human resources policies should promote the workers commitment and as a consequence, the acting in good faith and the involvement of the workers to pursue organizational excellency.

As previously stated, in agreement with Pirrolas & Correia (2021a), although churning in human resources is a theme not explored enough, its operationalization triggers the minimization of the resulting costs of replacements, through the strategic implementation of human resources policies.

Being that it is about the context associated with the replacement of workers exiting voluntarily, the concept of human resources churning emerges (Duhautois *et al*., 2016; Pirrolas & Correia, 2021a).

As a way to guide this investigation, based on the literature revision, the next investigation question came to light: "What is the influence of human resources policies in churning?", having as general goal: analyzing the influence of the main human resources policies in churning, proposing as a specific goal the elaboration of a churning theoretical-methodological model, elaborated based on major interview results, where focal human resources policies in action were selected.

This study is structured as follows: in the next point, the literature revision, a brief approach to the human resources policies is made as well as a definition of the human resources churning concept is given. Next, the methodology used is presented, which allows a response to be given, to the investigation question as well as the previously drawn and presented goals. Still, regarding the methodology point, a reference to the method to collect data is made, and the collected data analysis is presented having in consideration the mentioned methodology and applied procedures. Lastly, an allusion to the main conclusions of this study are made, referencing the main limitation and the suggestion propositions to future studies about the subject in question are also presented.

Literature Review

Human Resources Policies

The term "policies" is connected with certain practices that collectively worked in a constructive manner to achieve specific goals (Singar e Ramsden, 1972), this meaning, the application of certain practices with the objective of achieving the desired results.

Regarding the role of human resources policies, Ulrich *et al*. (1991) refers that because the competitive panorama is constantly changing, the need to better adapt their organizational skills in order to better fit the workers, either the clients or also involved interlocutors other needs arise in order to differentiate themselves from competition and to avoid loses.

These organizational capabilities result in the redefinition and redistribution of organizational practices and policies (Ulrich *et al*., 1991). The best organizations at succeeding and that contrast against all others are the ones that assign value to their workers, these being seen and recognized as a main source of profit and wealth.

Mathis and Jackson (2003) refer to the enforcement of human resources policies as conquering and keeping competitive advantage, building powerful central skills, these being defined as a capacity that the organization holds in adding value through their human capital, to distinguish from their competitors in this way.

The valorization of human resources in organizatôns constitutes a source of competitive advantage, and is considered key to their success (Legge, 1995).

Facing the current knowledge era and constant competitiveness, Ulrich (2001) states that, increasingly the necessity of organizations requiring capacities that allow the differentiation against job market competition arises.

In this sense, human resources management inside organizations takes on an especially relevant and strategic role in order to reinforce the churning occurrence derived from the present organizational competitiveness. In the face of this problem, the creation and implementation of organizational policies and practices becomes imperative in order to promote the retaining of their best human resources, playing down the churning costs to keep a leading place opposing competitors and subsequently becoming attractive and recognized in the job market.

Using as reference what was previously stated, Legge (1995), expresses that human resources policies should be integrated in the strategic organizational planning in order to reinforce adequate organizational culture, since that when strategic policies are enforced in organizations, these are contributing to the retaining of human resources, promoting the cutback of churning percentages and in the same sense, they are also contributing to a reduction in costs associated with

replacement of workers that voluntarily left the organization, a phenomenon which is designated human resources churning (Pirrolas & Correia, 2021a).

Hudson (2015) also states that when it comes to the operationalization of the churning concept, organizational performance with preventive and corrective measures, through the implementation of organizational policies, will allow the retaining of the best human resources, cutting costs, generating revenue, growing proficiency, gaining a business activity highlighted spot and keeping profit.

As a continuation of what was previously stated, in the last few years, betting on human resources policies, has been allowing organizations to gain relevance in their functioning, given to the optimization of their processes, the valorization of their human capital, the continuous improvement of policies and procedures enabling the betting of the task adjustment, increasing the employees satisfaction, leading to the maximization of productivity, enabling the profit growth and contributing to a reduction of human resources churning occurrence (Burgess *et al*., 2001; Pirrolas & Correia, 2021a).

Human Resources Churning

Human resources churning is a multifaceted concept, rarely explored in literature with very few studies containing empirical data that analyze influenceable variables.

Although there is complexity and multiplicity in churning concept definitions, in order to guide this investigation, the premise of human resources churning is established as the associated costs regarding replacements coming from voluntary exits in organizations (Pirrolas & Correia, 2021b). Despite this concept being interconnected with turnover (worker turnover), there are differences, while turnover is associated with workers entries and exits (Burgess *et al*., 2000), churning is mainly focused on the specific costs associated with replacements caused by those exits (Pirrolas & Correia, 2021b). In other words, despite its interconnection, churning is only connected to associated costs when it comes to replacements descendent from voluntary exits (Kaye & Evans, 2001).

In this sense Ilmakunnas & Maliranta (2006) refer to two churning types: voluntary churning that is a result of the employee's decision to leave the organization by their own initiative and involuntary churning, that takes places when the decision of the employee exiting the organization is made by the organization itself.

With consideration to voluntary churning as the most troublesome occurance to organizations by the costs that it entails, this investigation is inclined towards voluntary churning.

The voluntary exits by workers from an organization generate costs, resulting in investment losses, due to either initial training or by the exit process with final adjustments in regards to payments, i.e., it generates investment in replacements to balance those same exits. These costs are related to new hirings (recruitment, training, loss of time until the replacement gets to the same level of performance and knowledge and towards an autonomous execution with the same level of skill (Pirrolas & Correia, 2021a).

Having in consideration what was previously expressed, its operationalization becomes imperative, starting from the assumption that through the operationalization of this concept, it will be possible to predict possible exits from the best workers within the organization, enabling the organization to take the necessary precautions, as stated before, through the enforcement of measures and strategic policies in order to hold these employees in the organization, avoiding further costs with exits and new hires. Beyond avoiding those costs, the organizations also avoids the egress of knowledge and skills that employees gain and which the organization invested during training (Pirrolas & Correia, 2020).

Methodology

The present exploratory research follows a qualitative approach, which was defined as an investigation question, "What is the influence of human resources policies in churning?" As a way to answer this question, the general objective was defined as, analyzing the influence of the main human resources policies in churning. As well as proposing the specific goal of elaborating on a theoretical-methodological churning model, in order to analyze the influence that human resources policies exercise on the occurrence of churning.

Data collection

As a data collection method, both a literature revision as well as 20 semi-structured interviews to human resources directors were conducted. The decision of picking this particular demographic, came down to the assumption that we were going to collect data about this specific situation in a real context, which wouldn't be possible in another way. Since this information was gradually acquired, it was possible to deepen certain subjects to a certain extent that would make the answers enriched. The number of interviews followed the Bardin (2011) principal since it's a very particular subject and rarely explored, having the intention to expand the theoretical dominion, deepening the studied theme.

However, it couldn't be verified that the necessity for reduction of the proposed sample was justified by the achievement of saturation, since the collected data was expanded, containing information in text-like form (Rego; Cunha & Meyer, 2018).

The interviews were conducted via online using both "Zoom" app and "Microsoft Teams", using "Linkedin-Corporation" as an invitation canal, since the goal was to reach the highest number of organizations across the country and also the highest number of activity sectors, these methods being this the only possible way to achieve that goal.

Data Analysis

After the data collection, Bardin (2011) recommendations followed, proceeding to the interviews transcription and analysis using the content analysis method.

To proceed to the content analysis, a table was created with the following columns:

Thematic unit, category, recording unit and context unit with references to the respective sources (participant 1 to participant 20), allowing to classify the answers using a thematic analysis, in other words, the counting of one or several subjects or even items of significance, in a coding unit that was previously determined (Bardin, 2011).

The content analysis of the referenced transcriptions of each category had in consideration the research theoretical framework that solidified: a) the operational definition of organizational policies construct as being the main churning factor in human resources and b) based on the interview results, the variables selection that are considered more relevant which make up the theoretical-methodological model in a way to analyze the influence that each variable has in churning, Table 1 and Figure 1.

Table 1 – **Operational definitions of the main constructs under study**

Construct	Definition	Reference
Human Resources Policies	The policies system in human resources are composed of policies that promote mutualism between goals, influence, respect, rewards and responsibility, generating commitment, which in turn produces better economic performance and better human development, being exemples: the reward system, communication, commitment, flexibility and strategic integration.	Devanna, Fombru, Tichy (1984)
Human Resources Churning	It is interconnected with the associated costs of voluntary exits, this being the associated costs of the replacement of workers that left the organization voluntarily (loss of initial investment resulting in costs when the worker leaves the organization)	Pirrolas & Correia, 2021a)

Source: the authors based on the identified references.

Having done a content analysis, 5 factors (Graphic 1) were identified, conducive to the application performance or implementation of improvements when it comes to human resources policies in organizations in order to mitigate churning occurrences.

Graphic 1. **Main operational foci with human resources policies**
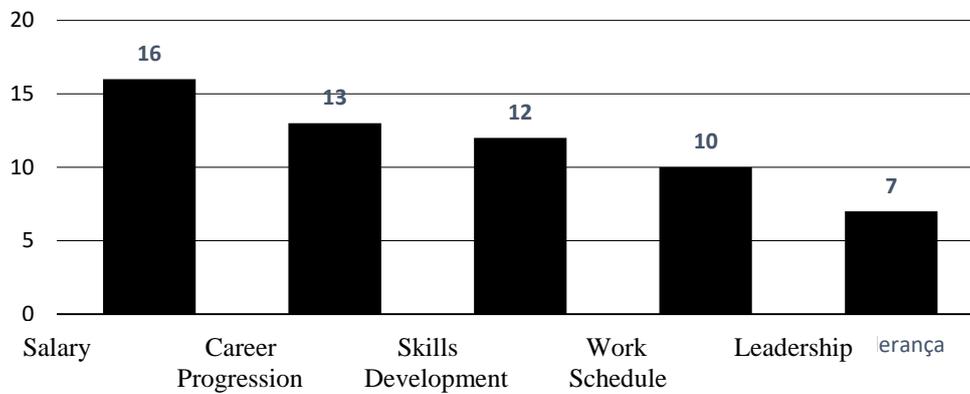
Source: Data retrieved from the interviews

Table 2 – **Operational grounds of the main variables under study**

Variable	Factors	Reference
Salary	Organizations with higher salaries and better benefits reduce their human resources churning rate. Previous studies suggest that organizations that offer low salaries and worse benefits have a higher churning rate, as well as a lower supply of labor compared to organizations that have higher salaries and attractive benefits which have a lower churning rate making the labor supply higher.	Dale-Olsen (2004); Hwang et al. (1998)
Career Progression	Churning mitigation human resources factors are connected with labor satisfaction and loyalty, attractive salaries, development possibilities and career progression. The study showed the main causes for voluntary churning come from organizational factors, these are identified as weak labor conditions such as lack of opportunities for career upward mobility.	Zhao et al. (2018); Sisódia et al. (2017)
Individual Development	Nowadays, one of the main organizational priorities to hold their best employees is to have the ability to offer to employees human resources training in order to contribute to their own professional and personal growth and development. Investing in training contributes to higher self-esteem amongst workers, creating a permanence factor in the organization.	Steil et al. (2016); Saradhi & Palshikar (2010)

Schedules	Leading mitigation factors in human resources churning are related to, amongst others, the possibility of enjoying more flexible work schedules. Factors such as work duration, the schedule in place and the opportunity to have a flexible work schedule, are leading factors that contribute to the rise in satisfaction in organizations.	Kaye & Evans (2001); Pirrolas & Correia (2020)
Leadership	The type of leadership in a team creates satisfaction in remaining within an organization. A good leadership and empathy between workers and their leader is a retaining factor.	Kaye & Evans (2001); Sisodia et al. (2017)

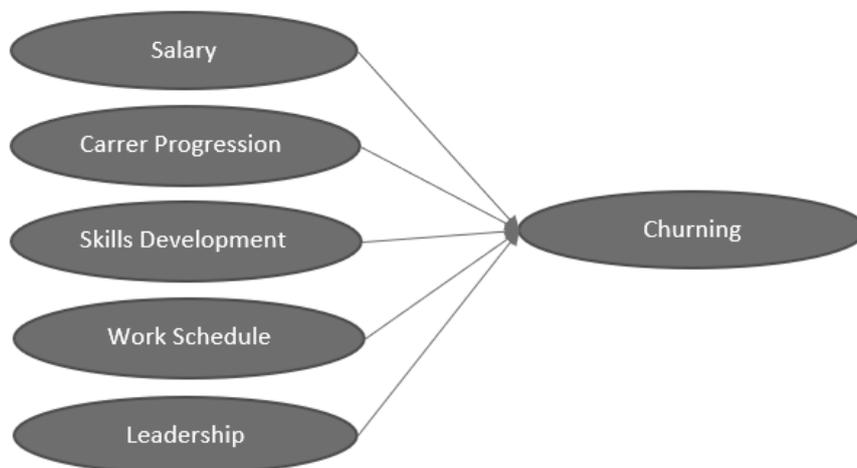*Source: the authors based on the conducted research.

Theoretical-methodological churning model

After identifying the main factors that require organizational intervention, a theoretical-methodological churning model (Figure 1) was designed to analyze the influence that human resources policies have during the occurrence of churning, with the intention to provide an answer to the goal that rules this investigation; analyzing the influence of the main human resources policies in churning.

Considering, as human resources policies, the 5 selected variables, through the content analysis based on the literature revision about the subject, the following proposition was defined:

P1. Human resources policies have a direct positive influence in churning.

Figure 1 – **Theoretical-methodological model of *churning***

Source: The authors based on the results of the interviews

Results analysis

Based on the information collected through semi-structured interviews, keeping in consideration the most relevant answers (participant 1 (P1) to participant 20 (P20)), the human resources policies gain a highlighted place in which involved organizations should intervene due to the fact that they present evidences of a negative influence in the churning occurrence:

Salary

An organization with a regular salary policy increases the retention of its employees, in other words, the retention of workers requires adequate incentives (Kamalaveni *et al*, 2019). Being that monetary remuneration is an essential factor to keep workers within an organization (Milkovich & Newman, 2004). Organizations where compensation is weak foreshadows workers rotativity (Pitts *et al*, 2011). So, some empirical data is presented that corroborates with what was stated previously:

- "[…] if it's for more salary, if someone offers 100 - 150€ more, nowadays there's a large elasticity of exiting for numbers like those […]" (P2).
- "[…] when it comes to salaries… people are not satisfied, the feeling I have is: no one is ever satisfied, because if a person earns 500, they want to earn 600, but if today they earn 600, they want to earn 700… so there's this effect that leaves us never being 100% satisfied" (P5).
- "[…] except when it comes to salaries, everything is great […]" (P6).
- "I think when it comes to improvement, it has to be the salary […]" (P10).

Career Progression

Bassi & Buren (1999) state that career progression and skills development are the key factors of workers retention, these being acquired through training. Following along with this thought process, investing in training is not a cost, it adds value, being an organizational strategy that reflects through training, promotion of growth and organizational survival. Deery (2008) suggests that one of the ways to improve retention and dedication is to enable training opportunities. So, some empirical data is presented that corroborates what was stated previously:

- "[…] change allows a natural upwards career progression, that upwards movement is going to be perceived as quicker, here on X its progression is going to possibly be seen as slower" (P2).
- "[…] lately there has been the opportunity to progress career wise through internal hiring… progression in the logistics field careers to the shopping field […]" (P8).

- "[…] the best majority of exits happen because of professional career motives… the youngest… want to occupy the time while they were studying, having their own skills and now they want to walk other paths" (P20).

Skills Development

Currently workers are encouraged to get involved in career development activities to deal with knowledge changes, skills and necessary capabilities to facilitate mobility. These practices being positively associated with commitment towards the organizations and negatively to the intention of exiting the organization, in other words, an organization that offers opportunities to develop skills, influences the workers emotional commitment to the organization (Ito & Brotheridge, 2005).

The support to the development of skills helps workers in satisfying their needs when it comes to personal growth, through self-development and continuing learning, resulting in the construction of an emotional commitment (London & Smither, 1999). So, some empirical data is presented that corroborates with what was stated previously:

- "[…] they will want to acquire new skills… new cultures… enrich them in a professional sense" (P1).
- "[…] the decision may be about a decision to improve… usually that's the motive, it's about the professional path, the growth […]" (P3).
- "[…] they want to move upwards professionally… but a lot of the time, what's missing is the opportunity to fit them in the organizational chart […]" (P10).

Schedule

The satisfaction with the relationship between work- personal life balance induces a reduction in rotativity, thus Deery (2008) suggests as a retention strategy: flexible schedules, flexible work, appropriate workload, offering adequate daily breaks. The balance between work and personal life increases productivity and competence between workers which leads to commitment and satisfaction (Shrotriya, 2009). So, some empirical data is presented that corroborates with what was stated previously:

- "[…] we get close to 50 weekly hours because of extra hours… having to work until dawn […]" (P1).
- "[…] the health sector is continuous labor… it's 24 hours per day, it's not an office job from 9 to 6, monday to friday… it's shifts… it's heavy […]" (P4).
- "[…] when it comes to women it's hard to manage… working 3 shifts when they have children […]" (P5).

Leadership

The leadership style has a huge influence when it comes to workers retention, Alkhawaja & Arwa (2017) state that the increase of rotativity is due to the unbalance treatment of workers, therefore, the leaders must ask themselves about their personal judgements, preconceived notions and assumptions, which results in higher motivation and organizational efficiency. So, some empirical data is presented that corroborates with what was stated previously:

- "[…] some people complain about the relationship they have with their leadership and with their team… because there's no such thing as perfect people and companies are composed of people… therefore, there's going to be people that adjust better to that leadership style and others that don't and want out… they don't get along with their boss, they don't get along with their colleagues […]" (P4).
- "[…] the way organizations are capable of retaining people… it's being an attractive source, it's all about engagement policies, it's all about the way leaderships in teams manage and guide field teams… it's important to have them satisfied in their workplace […]" (P19).
- "[…] we have a policy and a very strong engagement program…along with training programs… very powerful… to transform the leadership […]" (P19).

In short: through this approach, the salary, career progression, personal development, schedules and leadership were the factors that were possible to be verified as major causes for churning, due to lack of inappropriate human resources policies enforced by the studied organizations.

Conclusion

Through this present empirical investigation it was possible to analyze the influence that human resources policies exercise in the occurrence of churning. The criteria of choice using this data collection method came to the possibility of allowing the deepening of the studied subjects, making them richer in terms of literature and as an empirical study, having in mind the shortage of studies done around this theme.

Through this study, it was possible to identify the main variables that make up the human resources policies construct, being the main variables to have in mind, an improvement point allowing to decrease the human resources churning phenomenon.

In this degree, using the theoretical-methodological model, a specific goal proposed in this investigation, it was possible to analyze the connection between human resources policies and churning, as well as answering the investigational question "What is the human resources policies

influence in churning", through the goal that guides this investigation: analyzing the influence of the main human resources policies in churning.

In the view of the above, being that human resources the most valuable resource to organizations, it's about them that should fall the concerns of keeping them in the organization, through the enforcement and constant improvement of human resources policies, with the intention of avoiding the occurrence of churning, this meaning, unexpected organizational exits that will cause unexpected costs with new hirings to replace workers that voluntarily exited the organization.

This study had some limitations, the unfamiliarity by the selected companies about the subject of human resources churning, having this being replaced by costs associated with voluntary exits of workers, voluntary exits of the organization and replacement hirings.

As suggestions for future studies, the proposition is to approach this using other methodologies for data collection, such as a questionnaire and through the statistical analysis, analyzing the existing connections between the studies variables. Using statistical analysis, measuring the impact that each variable has on human resources churning, in a way to contribute to the increase of literature or empirical studies about the theme of human resources churning. Through this way, correcting existing gaps in this study, it being a qualitative study, only allowing handling of the results using content analysis of the performed interviews and literature revision.

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