

Enhancing Employee Retention in the UAE Oil and Gas Sector: The Role of Training, Intrinsic Motivation, and Job Satisfaction

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Abstract

In today's business environment, effectively managing human resources is crucial for boosting productivity and optimizing resource use. Employee retention is a major concern, especially in the UAE's Oil and Gas sector, where high turnover rates are prevalent. Research highlights that employee satisfaction, significantly influenced by training, is essential for improving retention. Training enhances employees' skills and knowledge, fostering greater commitment and dedication. Tailoring training programs to specific needs is vital for increasing employee engagement and retention. Despite this, there is limited empirical research on how training development impacts employee retention in the UAE's oil sector. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between training and development and employees' intrinsic motivation and satisfaction and consequently influence employees' retention. Based on a survey of 321 ADNOC employees, the research finds that training and development positively influence employee retention and intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction also positively affect retention. These insights contribute to understanding how aligning training and development with the Psychological Contract can effectively enhance employee retention in the UAE's oil and gas industry.

Keywords: Training, Intrinsic, Motivation, Satisfaction, Employees, Retention, UAE.

Introduction

The oil and gas (O&G) industry is pivotal to the economy of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), particularly through its largest national oil company, the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) (ADNOC, 2021). ADNOC is a major economic driver, providing substantial employment opportunities and contributing significantly to the nation's GDP (Ben Yedder, 2021). The UAE's strategic role as a leading global energy supplier further emphasizes the importance of maintaining a strong and efficient workforce within this sector. However, the growing complexity and volatility of the business environment, driven by globalization, technological advancements, and changing workforce demographics, have intensified the

need for organizations like ADNOC to effectively identify, recruit, and retain talented employees (Al Jawali, Darwish, Scullion, & Haak-Saheem, 2022).

In response to these challenges, the UAE government introduced the Worker Welfare Policy aimed at enhancing employee satisfaction and productivity (Naidu, Nyarko, & Wang, 2023). Despite these efforts, many companies in the UAE, including ADNOC, face significant challenges related to employee retention. The turnover rate, which reached 28% in the UAE (Alshehhi, Jano, & Kudus, 2023), is especially high in the O&G industry (Naseer, Saabri, & Shayea, 2022). ADNOC struggles to retain competent employees who are crucial for advancing its strategic objectives (Tian et al., 2020). Although the O&G industry is vital to the UAE economy, a significant proportion of its workforce consists of expatriates, who often prioritize opportunities in their home countries or other regions, resulting in high turnover rates. The reliance on expatriate labor, which made up 91% of the workforce between 2017 and 2019 (Haak-Saheem, 2020), along with the under-representation of Emirati nationals in the private sector (Jelili, 2010; Qambar, 2015), exacerbates retention challenges. Furthermore, finding the right skills in the labor market at the right time remains a significant obstacle, complicating efforts in training and development (Junaid Khan & Iqbal, 2020).

The literature on employee retention emphasizes the importance of training and development as a key strategy. Numerous studies suggest that training and development are essential for improving employee retention, as they provide a distinct approach to enhancing organizational performance, reducing turnover, and achieving a sustainable competitive advantage (Aripin et al., 2021; Tien Thanh & Thu Ha, 2023). Due to the increased flexibility of occupations, businesses also view staff retention as a challenge. Islam, Mendy, Haque, and Rahman (2022) highlighted that employees who engage in more training programs exhibit a higher level of commitment compared to their peers. Pandey, Singh, and Pathak (2021) argued that achieving commitment and retention requires training programs that are fully based on needs assessment. Training and development help eliminate inefficiencies, support employees' self-improvement, and anticipate the need for suitable employees to meet business objectives (Islam et al., 2022), thereby enhancing their satisfaction.

Training is also recognized for fostering a sense of belonging among employees (Fletcher, Alfes, & Robinson, 2018). It increases employee satisfaction, gives them a competitive advantage over their peers, and helps them become valuable team members. Additionally, training enhances job knowledge and skills (Ahmed, Khan, Thitivesa, Siraphatthada, & Phumdara, 2020). The literature has established that training equips employees with the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform their jobs effectively. However, employees cannot execute their tasks efficiently without motivation and access to a conducive work environment (Barker & Christensen, 2019). Motivation, as shown by Lin-Siegler and Luna-Lucero (2016), is a tool for improving performance through learning.

Despite extensive research on the importance of training and development, there are still theoretical gaps that need to be addressed (Okomgboeso, 2018). One significant gap is the specific impact of tailored training programs on employee retention in the O&G industry (Al Hammadi, Sidek, & Al-Shami, 2019). While general training and development have been widely studied, the unique needs and challenges faced by employees in this sector require

further exploration. Another gap lies in the interplay between job satisfaction and employee motivation. While motivation has been linked to retention, the role of job satisfaction in this context requires a more nuanced exploration, particularly in how it influences employees' decisions to remain with or leave an organization (Karam, Ashill, Jayashree, & Lindsay, 2022). Addressing these gaps could lead to the development of more targeted and effective retention strategies.

The objectives of this research are to examine the effect of training and development on employee retention in the UAE's O&G industry, particularly within ADNOC, and to develop strategies to address these challenges. By addressing these objectives, the study aims to provide actionable models for ADNOC and other companies in the O&G sector to improve their retention strategies and maintain a stable and skilled workforce. This research is crucial for ADNOC to enhance its competitive edge, reduce turnover costs, and ensure the sustainability of its operations in an increasingly complex and volatile business environment. This study is crucial as it addresses the high employee turnover in the UAE's oil and gas industry, particularly within ADNOC, a key driver of the nation's economy. Given the industry's heavy reliance on expatriate labor and the under-representation of Emirati nationals, finding and retaining skilled employees is a significant challenge. Therefore, by examining the impact of tailored training and development programs on employee retention, this research aims to develop targeted strategies to enhance job satisfaction, motivation, and commitment. The findings will offer practical solutions to improve workforce stability and sustainability in the O&G sector, ensuring ADNOC remains competitive and operationally efficient.

Literature Review

Training and Development on Employees Retention

Training and development are crucial components of human resource management (HRM) that directly impact employee retention. In industries such as oil and gas, continuous skill enhancement is vital due to the rapidly evolving technological landscape. Effective training and development programs equip employees with the necessary skills to perform their jobs efficiently and prepare them for future roles within the organization. Research has shown that training and development opportunities are significant predictors of employee retention. For example, Al-sharafi, Hassan, and Alam (2018) emphasize that in the telecommunication sector, employees who perceive their organizations as investing in their professional growth are more likely to stay. This finding is consistent with studies in other sectors, such as the oil and gas industry, where training and development have been linked to higher retention rates (Al Hammadi, Sidek, & Al-Shami, 2019).

H1. There is a significant positive relationship between training and development and employee retention.

Training and Development on Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal drive that encourages individuals to perform tasks for their inherent satisfaction rather than external rewards. In the workplace, intrinsic motivation is closely associated with employees' engagement, creativity, and overall job performance. The role of intrinsic motivation becomes even more critical in knowledge-intensive sectors, where innovation and problem-solving are key to organizational success.

Herzberg's two-factor theory suggests that intrinsic factors such as recognition, responsibility, and personal growth significantly contribute to job satisfaction and employee retention (Fletcher, Alfes, & Robinson, 2018). Intrinsic motivation fosters a deeper connection between the employee and their work, leading to higher engagement and a greater likelihood of staying with the organization.

H2. There is a significant positive relationship between training and development and intrinsic motivation.

Training and Development on Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a multi-faceted concept that includes factors such as work conditions, compensation, opportunities for advancement, and relationships with colleagues. High job satisfaction is often a key determinant of whether employees remain with their current employer or seek opportunities elsewhere. According to research by Barkhuizen and Gumede (2021), job satisfaction is strongly correlated with lower turnover intentions. Employees who are satisfied with their jobs are less likely to leave, thereby reducing the costs associated with hiring and training new employees. In the context of ADNOC, enhancing job satisfaction through strategic HRM practices is vital for retaining skilled employees and maintaining operational excellence (Al Jawali et al., 2022).

H3. There is a significant positive relationship between training and development on job satisfaction.

Intrinsic Motivation on Job Satisfaction

Intrinsic motivation plays a significant role in shaping an employee's job satisfaction. Employees who are intrinsically motivated tend to find more meaning in their work, leading to higher satisfaction levels. Herzberg's two-factor theory supports this notion by identifying intrinsic factors such as achievement and recognition as key contributors to job satisfaction (Fletcher, Alfes, & Robinson, 2018). In a study conducted by Al-sharafi, Hassan, and Alam (2018), it was found that employees in the telecommunications sector who were intrinsically motivated reported higher levels of job satisfaction. This finding aligns with the oil and gas sector, where intrinsic motivation is linked to improved job satisfaction and retention rates (Al Hammadi, Sidek, & Al-Shami, 2019).

H4. There is a significant positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction.

Job Satisfaction and Employee Retention

Job satisfaction is a critical predictor of employee retention. Satisfied employees are more likely to remain with their organization, reducing turnover rates and the costs associated with recruiting and training new staff. According to Al-sharafi, Hassan, and Alam (2018), higher job satisfaction is directly linked to reduced turnover intentions in various sectors, including telecommunications. In the oil and gas industry, job satisfaction is crucial due to the specialized skills required for many roles. Studies have shown that employees who are satisfied with their jobs, particularly regarding career development and work-life balance, are more likely to stay with their current employer (Fletcher, Alfes, & Robinson, 2018). This is

especially true in organizations like ADNOC, where retaining skilled employees is essential for maintaining the company’s operational success (Alshehhi, Jano, & Kudus, 2023).

H5. There is a significant positive relationship between job satisfaction and employee retention.

Research Methodology

A quantitative research methodology was employed, utilizing a questionnaire to gather data. The sample for this study was randomly selected from the operations department of ADNOC. The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan equation, resulting in a total of 321 employees. The intrinsic motivation measurements were adopted from (Steele-Johnson, Beauregard, Hoover, & Schmidt, 2000) (Fryer Jr, 2011), job satisfaction from (Ply, Moore, Williams, & Thatcher, 2012) and training and development from (Jayakumar, 2014) (Umasankar, 2015). The measurements were also validated from expert in ADNOC. A smartpls was used to perform the analysis.

Code	Factors and Items	References
	Training Development	
TandD1	Our Company conducts extensive training and development programs for Employees	(Umasankar, 2015)
TandD2	There are formal training evaluation methods to assess the effectiveness of the training.	
TandD3	Training and development have resulted in higher employee performance in our Company.	
TandD4	The company supports me in my efforts to continuously Improve my knowledge and skills	(Jayakumar, 2014)
TandD5	The company provides a program of training and development activities that meets the needs of Employees	
TandD6	The company continuously updates and improves its training and development programs	
TandD7	Training and development give employees an opportunity to learn the skills and behaviors that will help them to get rewarded and promoted	
TandD8	In general, I am satisfied with the range of training and development opportunities available	
	Retention	
ER1	I’m planning on working for another company within a period of three years	(Kyndt, Dochy, Michiels, & Moeyaert, 2009)
ER2	Within this company my work gives me satisfaction	
ER3	If I wanted to do another job or function, I would look first at the possibilities within this company	
ER4	I see a future for myself within this company	
ER5	It doesn’t matter if I’m working for this company or another, as long as I have work	

ER6	If it were up to me, I will definitely be working for this company for the next five years.	
ER7	If I could start over again, I would choose to work for another company	
ER8	If I received an attractive job offer from another company, I would take the job.	
ER9	The work I'm doing is very important to me	
ER10	I love working for this company	
ER11	I have checked out a job in another company previously.	
	Intrinsic Motivation	
IM1	I enjoyed doing this activity very much.	(Fryer Jr, 2011)
IM2	This activity was fun to do.	
IM3	This activity did not hold my attention at all.	
IM4	I would describe this activity as very interesting.	
IM5	I thought this activity was quite enjoyable.	
IM6	While I was doing this activity, I was thinking about how much I enjoyed it.	
IM7	I thought this was a boring activity.	
IM8	I enjoy participating in this task very much.	(Steele-Johnson et al., 2000)
IM9	I think I am pretty good at this task.	
IM10	I put a lot into this task.	
	Job Satisfaction	
JS1	The amount of personal growth and development I get in doing my job.	(Ply et al., 2012)
JS2	The feeling of worthwhile accomplishment I get from doing my job.	
JS3	The amount of independent thought and action I can exercise in my job.	
JS4	The amount of challenge in my job.	
JS5	The amount of pay and fringe benefits I receive.	
JS6	The amount of personal growth and development you get in your job.	(Bettencourt, Gwinner, & Meuter, 2001)
JS7	The feeling of worthwhile accomplishment you get from doing your job.	
JS8	The amount of support and guidance you receive from your supervisor.	
JS9	I get a personal feeling of satisfaction doing my job	(Baronas & Louis, 1988)

Discussion of the Results

According to the path coefficients as shown in Figure 1, this study reveals that the structural model, based on data acquired through PLS-SEM, provides strong support for the proposed hypotheses regarding the relationships between intrinsic motivation (IM), job satisfaction (JS), employee retention (ER), and training and development (TandD). The analysis assessed

these hypotheses using path coefficients, t-values, and p-values at a significance level of 0.05. The results confirm significant positive associations across all the variables, thereby validating the proposed hypotheses.

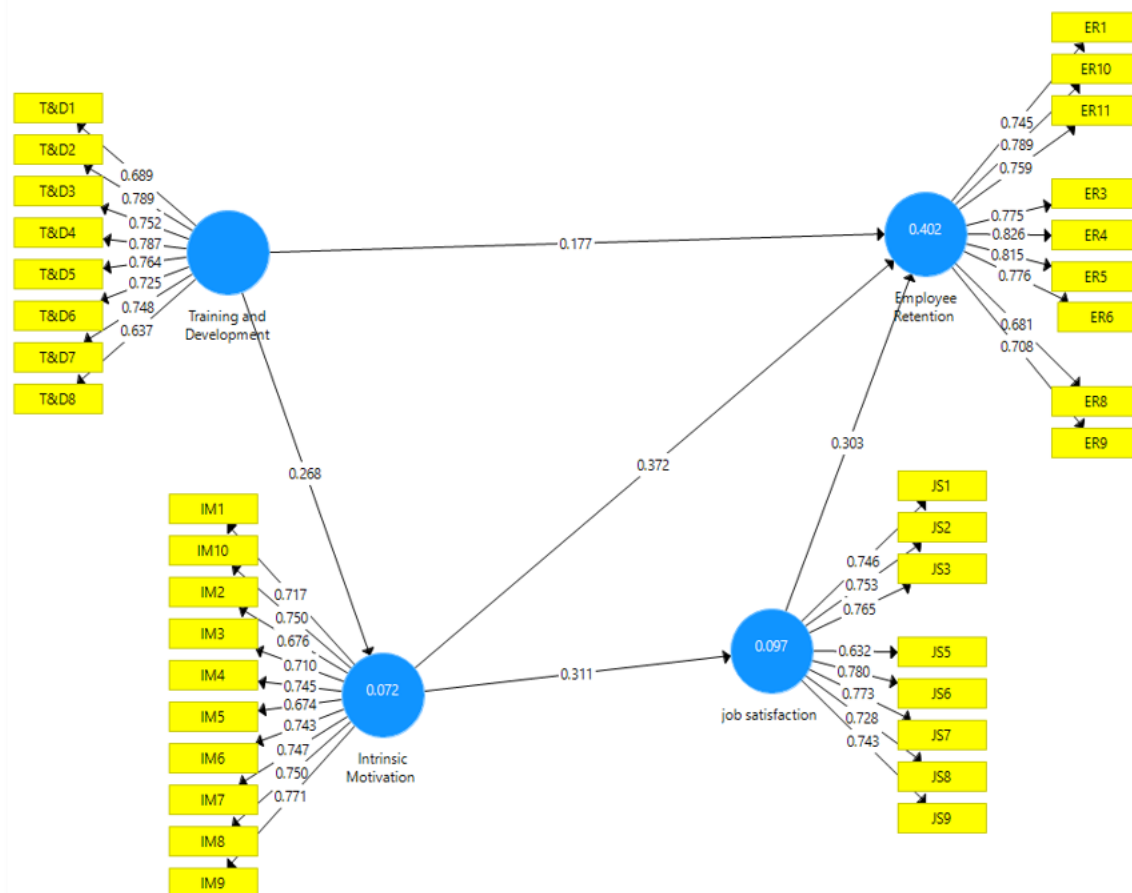


Figure 1: Path coefficient Structure Model

Results and Discussion

As shown at Table 1, this study reveals that the structural model, based on data acquired through PLS-SEM, provides strong support for the proposed hypotheses regarding the relationships between intrinsic motivation (IM), job satisfaction (JS), employee retention (ER), and training and development (TandD). The analysis assessed the hypotheses using path coefficients, t-values, and p-values at a significance level of 0.05. The results confirm significant positive associations across the variables, thereby validating the proposed hypotheses. Employee retention is crucial for maintaining a skilled workforce and achieving organizational stability. First, retaining employees involves motivating them to stay until project completion or beyond. Despite varying research outcomes, the study confirms a positive association between training and employee retention. The path coefficient of 0.177, t-value of 3.032, and p-value of 0.002 indicate significant support for H1. This aligns with findings by Al-sharafi et al (2018), and underscores the value of training in enhancing retention, particularly in the UAE oil and gas sector where skill development is critical for both employee satisfaction and organizational success. Second, intrinsic motivation drives individuals to engage in activities for the inherent satisfaction they provide, distinct from extrinsic motivators. The study reveals a significant positive relationship between training and intrinsic motivation, with a path coefficient of 0.311, a t-value of 4.367, and a p-value of 0.000.

This supports H2 and aligns with research by Haryono et al (2020), and Jurburg and Mateo (2017), highlighting the role of training in fostering intrinsic motivation.

Third, motivation plays a key role in employee retention, influencing productivity and reducing turnover. The study finds a significant positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and employee retention, with a path coefficient of 0.372, a t-value of 5.919, and a p-value of 0.000. This supports H3 and aligns with Haider and Ahmad (2016), demonstrating that motivated employees are more likely to stay with their organization. Fourth, understanding the link between intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction is vital for improving employee engagement. The study finds a positive relationship, with a path coefficient of 0.311, a t-value of 5.692, and a p-value of 0.000. This supports H4, and agrees with Lee and Hwang (2016), suggesting that enhancing intrinsic motivation contributes to greater job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is a strong predictor of employee retention. Finally, the study shows a significant positive relationship with a path coefficient of 0.303, a t-value of 5.324, and a p-value of 0.000. This supports H5, and confirms findings by Kurdi et al (2020), indicating that job satisfaction leads to higher retention rates.

Table 1

Hypotheses and Results

Hypothesis	Results	Statistical Support
H1: TandD → ER	Path coefficient = 0.177, t-value = 3.032, p-value = 0.002	Supported
H2: TandD → IM	Path coefficient = 0.268, t-value = 4.367, p-value = 0.000	Supported
H3: IM → ER	Path coefficient = 0.372, t-value = 5.919, p-value = 0.0000	Supported
H4: IM → JS	Path coefficient = 0.311, t-value = 5.692, p-value = 0.000	Supported
H5: JS → ER	Path coefficient = 0.303, t-value = 5.324, p-value = 0.000	Supported

Theoretical Contribution

This study significantly advances theoretical understanding of employee retention within the unique context of the oil and gas industry, specifically focusing on ADNOC. It emphasizes the roles of training and development, intrinsic motivation, and job satisfaction, offering an alternative perspective on retention strategies. For researchers, this study provides empirical evidence that continuous training plays a critical role in enhancing intrinsic motivation, which directly correlates with higher job satisfaction and employee retention. Moreover, it extends the application of social exchange theory by demonstrating how these dynamics operate in the O&G sector within developing nations like the UAE. The findings also contribute to psychological contract theory by exploring the relationship between training and development and intrinsic motivation, offering a validated model for improving employee retention in the oil industry, which has often been overlooked in academic research.

Practical Contribution

This study holds substantial practical value for both policymakers and organizations, particularly those in the UAE's strategic sectors like oil and gas. It provides actionable recommendations for ADNOC to strengthen its employee retention efforts, directly supporting the UAE's 2031 talent attraction and retention strategy. By implementing the study's findings, ADNOC can enhance its reputation as an employer of choice through robust training and development (T&D) programs that not only build employee skills but also foster job satisfaction. For industry leaders, the research underscores the critical role that tailored T&D initiatives play in reducing turnover, improving engagement, and driving long-term organizational stability. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of creating a motivating work environment that recognizes employee achievements and promotes personal growth, aligning with the UAE's vision of becoming a global hub for top talent. Therefore, this research benefits both ADNOC and similar organizations looking to enhance their workforce sustainability while contributing to national development goals.

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