
Chapter XVI

Job Satisfaction in the Information and Communication Sector: The Case of Egypt

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ABSTRACT

The information and communication technology industry is growing worldwide, penetrating all sectors and services. Therefore, organizations are formulating different formulas and mechanisms to provide a competitive and challenging working environment to attract the best human resources around the globe to join their infrastructure build-up in terms of humanware. Egypt, as a developing country, has been investing heavily in building its information and communication technology infrastructure with a focus on human resources. However, many organizations are continually faced with various challenges to keep their key human resources due to the emerging offerings and opportunities at various levels locally, regionally and internationally. This chapter presents the findings of a research that was conducted in Egypt in 2001 with a primary objective to understand the overall level of job satisfaction among employees in the ICT sector in Egypt. The research aimed at identifying the major factors that affect their satisfaction and highlighting the driving forces leading to the “brain drain” of skilled ICT professionals to jobs overseas.

The research assesses the major aspects affecting job satisfaction and ranks them by importance. Moreover, the empirical evidence illustrates the willingness of ICT professionals to seek job opportunities abroad, and the major forces leading to brain drain. Within the

scope of the research, job satisfaction is studied as a function of four groups of job aspects, namely, economic, social, training and development, and psychological aspects. Economic aspects cover variables such as pay, rewards and benefits. Social aspects include relationships with colleagues, teamwork and working conditions. Training and development covers the amount of training received by employees and their access to technologies. Psychological aspects include factors such as interest and scope of work, challenges and disciplinary procedures. The survey was conducted among ICT professionals employed in key ICT companies operating in Egypt, as well as companies in other sectors including financial institutions including organizations from the private sector, governmental organizations and multinational firms. The research is important to assess the problems faced by many organizations in Egypt due to the brain drain of its skilled ICT professionals to jobs overseas due to clearer career paths and advancement opportunities, better access to new technologies and higher pay. Respectively, the findings of the research represent important guidelines for various organizations to be able to retain its ICT skilled professionals in Egypt and similar environments.

OVERVIEW

The past few years were marked with explosive growth in the information technology sector. The phenomenon of rapid integration of technologies by massive businesses and the increasing importance of information and communication technology¹ for economic development and advancement has created a globally significant increase in demand for highly skilled information technology expertise. ICT workers are needed in nearly every industry, whereby many computer scientists, computer engineers, systems analysts and computer programmers work for governmental institutions, insurance companies, academic and financial institutions. In order to maintain competitive edges and cost-efficient operations, high tech and non-technology companies and institutions are competing for the same workers. On the other hand, the supply of such employees grew at a slower pace, thus further raising global competition among companies and employers. This shortage in ICT professionals has plagued the sector by enormous levels of employee turnover, and job-hopping from one company to another and from one country to another.

The fierce and global competitive market has created high escalations in salaries paid to ICT professionals, whereby labor employed in the ICT sector has become relatively paid better off than others in similar positions in different industries. Natarjan (2000) asserts that the ICT sector has clearly different measures than other sectors. For example, a fresh graduate with minimal ICT knowledge is paid more than an executive in other fields. Respectively, the concept of rewards has undergone a sea change in the information age (Natarjan, 2000).

It is important to note that employers in this tight labor market have been suffering from high turnover rates and difficulties in employee recruitment, retention, and retraining. Furthermore, the global competition has led to a case of "brain drain," whereby countries are losing their most skilled professionals to other countries. In that context, the brain drain scenario has been significant in the IT sector in Egypt, whereby the majority of skilled employees have been seeking jobs abroad aiming for higher pay and more opportunities for training and development. With the increasing importance of the industry in Egypt, failure to meet demand for IT professionals could have severe consequences for the economy's competitiveness and growth, thus creating urging needs to retain skilled professionals and

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