A dichotomous perceptions on talent retention factors: Phenomenography strategy

Solaleh Shahvazian, Saeed Mortazavi⃰, Mohammad Lagzian, Fariborz Rahimnia

Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the perception of managers and talents of perceived retention factors in the textile industry in Yazd province, Iran. In this regard, phenomenography is used to map the different perceptions of both talents and their managers. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 22 talented individuals who were selected according to an object-exclusive approach. Similarly, managers were chosen from eight different organizations. Data were transcribed and imported into MAXQDA10 software for analysis from which the identification of codes and descriptive categories were generated. The results of perception analysis of talents revealed 4 influential levels in talent retention that are individual, job, group, and organizational levels. Also, different perceptions of talents are categorized into 17 descriptive categories. The obtained results from the analysis of perceptions of managers depicted three influential levels that are individual, group, and organizational levels and their perceptions are categorized into 13 descriptive categories. The main difference between talents and managers' perception is in factors affecting retention in jobs characteristics. Talented individuals consider autonomy, nature and feedback as desirable characteristics of their job. According to these levels and descriptive categories, two different "outcome spaces" are mapped.

Keywords

Outcome space, Phenomenography, Retention, Talent, Yazd textile.

⃰ **Corresponding Author, Email:** mortazavi@um.ac.ir

Introduction

The highly competitive business environment requires organizations which have the ability to retain talented people in order to remain competitive. In this regard, according to research by the Harvard Business Review of a million employees' data, more employees left organization after just one year working (Gallo, 2015). Another survey was conducted in 2015 by Deloitte among more than 3,300 HR and business leaders in 106 countries. Although the results illustrated that only 7% rated themselves as excellent at retention, the costs associated with losing employees, recruiting, selecting and training new employees often exceeded 100% of the annual compensation for the position. In addition to these direct financial costs, losing employees can also entail work disruptions and loss of organizational memory (Bryant & Allen, 2013). Thus, organizations need to ensure that proper factors are in place to prevent their employees from leaving their jobs.

Around 30 years ago, management literature was accused of being "based on a priori assumptions about what managers actually do and what they should do to be successful" (Luthans et al., 1985: 255). Today, the same seems to be true for the literature on talents. Although managers' perspective about the characteristics of talents and factors influencing their retention have been investigated so far, as it is referred to in the topics of organizational behavior, it is the people's perception that affects their behavior to a higher degree. Therefore, the perceptions of talents about the factors influencing retention will affect their own behavior to remain in an organization. However, the review of literature has shown that only a few studies have been conducted based on data from an actual population of talents. In most studies, the factors affecting retention of talents are derived either from managers or direct supervisors of talents (Dries & Pepermans, 2007), a sample of employees chosen through different sampling methods (Stokes et al., 2013), or all of the employees were considered as talented (Hausknecht, Rodda & Howard, 2009).

According to the aforementioned facts, in the present research, perceptions of talents about the factors affecting retention are

identified. The subjects are selected based on the object-exclusive approach. Also, the perception of managers from the viewpoint of talents regarding factors that affect retention will be extracted. Finally, these perceptions will be compared with each other and the convergence and divergence among perceptions are determined. Thus, the retention phenomenon is investigated from a dichotomy of perceptions: talents and their managers. Conformity of perception also gives us a better understanding on a phenomenon. The closer these two perceptions are together, the more effective strategies can be developed to maintaining talented individuals. In order to explore the factors discussed above, three research questions are addressed, as follows:

1. What is the perception of talents about factors affecting talent's retention in the Yazd textile industry?
2. What is the perception of managers from the point of view of the talents regarding the factors that affect retention of talented people?
3. What are the probable factors that are different in the above two perceptions?

These research questions are answered by an exploratory study done across 8 organizations in Yazd province, Iran. Organizations chosen for this study are amongst the ones selected for their outstanding performance by Iran's ministry of Industry and Mining during the past five years. Although there are many industries in Yazd, the textile industry was chosen for this study since we do not have easy access to the rest of the industries and textile industries are very important in terms of trade, GDP and employment. And, they have significantly contributed to their national economy (Keane & Velde, 2008). The textile industry is also important for Iran since it is a domestic one. It requires a high degree of creativity and innovation. According to a report by the ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade, about 37% of Iran's textiles are produced in Yazd (www.yzd.mimt.gov.ir). As a result, textile industry in Yazd has competitive advantage inside the country and comparative advantage in the region. Therefore, maintaining available occupation and

providing new occupation for this industry is of high priority. Current trend, however, indicates that talented people decide to go into other occupations or even based on their capabilities, they start self-employment in other industries. That is the way Yazd textile industry with a 400 years background is damaged and grounds for job decrease develops at the present circumstances.

Literature review

Definition of talent

Tansley (2011: 266) believes that, "People are rarely precise about what they mean by the term 'talent' in organizations and the implications of defining talent for talent management practice". Review of the literature demonstrates two approaches in the definition of talents: First, Subject approach which focuses on valuable, scarce, inimitable, and difficult to replace individual employees (Thunnissen et al., 2013); Second, Object approach that considers the characteristics of talented people such as abilities, knowledge, and competencies (Nijs et al., 2014). In addition to these approaches, two other perspectives are available in understanding the diversity of definition of talent that are: A) Inclusive perspective that views everyone as talented, and B) Exclusive perspective in which it is not possible for everyone in an organization to be called talented due to the expectation that talented employees should be distinguished from others in terms of their performance, potential and competence (Zhang & Bright, 2012). Table 1 represents how talents are defined considering the blend of approaches and perspectives.

Table 1. The combination of approaches and perspectives on defining talents

Subject approach and Inclusive perspective	Subject approach and Exclusive perspective
Talent management practices are applied to all people throughout the organization.	Focusing on a few key individual responsible in a specific position and chosen due to their high performance or high potential.
Object approach and Inclusive perspective	**Object approach and Exclusive perspective**
Strengthening the potential of all individuals and focus on developmental activities to maximize potential	Allowing a small number of individuals who are different in terms of ability, motivation and commitment.

Following these approaches and perspectives, different definitions are proposed in the literature on talents. These definitions can be categorized as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Definitions of Talent

Approach/ Perspective	Author	Year	Definition
Subject/ Inclusive	Silzer & Dowell	2010	Refers to the entire employees of an organization
Object/ Inclusive	Cheese et al.	2008	The experience, knowledge, skills, and behaviors that a person has and brings to work.
Subject/ Exclusive	Boudreau & Ramstad	2005	Individuals in key positions who have outstanding performance
Object/ Exclusive	Ulrich & Smallwood	2012	Talent = competence [knowledge, skills and values required for todays' and tomorrows' job; right skills, right place, right job, right time] × commitment [willing to do the job] × contribution [finding meaning and purpose in their job] (p. 60)
	Gagne	2000	The superior mastery of systematically developed abilities (or skills) and knowledge in at least one field of human activity, to a degree that places an individual within the top 10% of age peers who are (or who have been) active in that field (p. 67).

Talent retention

There are plethora of definitions provided for retention among which the one proposed by Frank, Finnegan and Taylor (2004) will be addressed here. They defined retention as, "the effort by an employer to keep desirable workers in order to meet business objectives" (p. 13).

The retention of talented people is affected by major economic events like liberalization, privatization, and globalization. Therefore, managing talent retention is similar to managing a river as beautifully described by Punia (2004). Accordingly, talent retention is adhered to as a strategic instrument to ameliorate organizational effectiveness in achieving global competitiveness. Iran has also been influenced by the global economic changes albeit delayed in time to experience the side effects of these changes.

Despite the vast literature on the subject of job turnover, only a few

research studies have been carried out about "talent retention" (Milman & Dickson, 2014). Birt, Wallis and Winternitz (2004) named factors affecting retention to be challenging and meaningful work, opportunities for growth, empowerment, responsibility and honesty of management. According to the results of another study, the factors that contribute to retention include: job satisfaction, employee engagement, managing employee relations with direct supervision as well as other employees, managing expectations and role conflict and opportunities for growth and advancement within the organization (Bryant & Allen, 2013). In a survey which was conducted by the Marmenout and Lirio (2013) in the United Arab Emirates by using a focus group, four main challenges have been identified for the retention of talented women. These challenges are social aspects such as providing social support, previous commitments to family or flexible working hours. Furthermore in another study, the involvement of employees is mentioned as the key to their survival in the organization. The study sample included all employees and no attempt was made to isolate or identify talented people (Budhwar & Bhatnagar, 2007). Also, two factors were considered effective on the retention of talented people: These factors were fair salary higher than average and autonomy in four areas which includes what they are doing, when they do it, whom they do it with and how they do it (Fernández-Aráoz, 2014). Hesselbein, Goldsmith and Beckhard (1997) identified seven factors affecting retention of talented people:

1. to identify employees who need to stay that represents the values which they hold;
2. to inform the people that are important to the organization;
3. to appreciate talents which cannot be done solely through financial payments. Their opinions about the effectiveness of the organization should be taken into consideration and their constructive suggestions should be appreciated;
4. revise the payment system. Keeping talented people is difficult for companies in which merely tenure is a criteria for payments; especially, if the talented people are young;

5. cultural tolerance which implies that a kind of autonomy and freedom of action is awarded to talented people;
6. creating opportunities for growth and improvement that enhances the spirit of loyalty and commitment in talents;
7. creating opportunities for entrepreneurship.

This allows talented people to establish independent units within the organization. In another study the effects of five factors (i.e. salaries, employee benefits, prerequisites, incentives, short-term and long-term incentives) on the retention of executives during 1900 and 2000 and later were measured. The results showed the strong positive impact of these factors on the retention of executives (Ellig, 2013).

Review of the related literature shows that none of the above studies have considered the perception of talented people about the factors affecting retention. The objective of this study is to identify the perceived factors affecting talents retention from the sight of the talent and their managers from the viewpoint of the talents, and then to compare these perceptions to help keep talents in the organization. Based on the approaches and perspectives provided in the literature review of talent identification, this paper uses an object approach to list the characteristics of talents. Individuals are selected that have such these characteristics. Therefore, the approach adopted in this paper is exclusive. As a result, this qualitative study is based on the participation of talented people, and it is context based implying the involvement of the textile industry.

Methodology

According to the research onion presented by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) research philosophy, approach and strategy of this qualitative study are interpretive, inductive and phenomenography. Interpretive philosophy believes in the authenticity of subjectivity versus objectivity, and in its perspective there is no empirical reality which is objective and neutral. Reality is the product of reactions in a specific context and it is dependent on the interpretations of the people (Saunders et al., 2009).

Phenomenography originates from attempts in the 1970s to better

understand academic forms of learning (Marton, 1986). Phenomenography explains the varying ways of experiencing a phenomenon. Phenomenography is based on the idea that different people can have different experiences and concepts about a phenomenon (Marton, 1986). Therefore, it is based on theory of diversity. Phenomenography research methodology consists of four phases (planning, data collection, analysis and interpretation) (Bowden & Walsh, 2000). The focus in the planning phase is on the research purpose, research questions, and determining the planned inputs. In the second phase, in-depth individual interviews are used as a means of data collection. At this stage, the interviewees are specified and open questions are used as much as possible. In the analysis stage, all the interviews are changed into text transcripts. Then, all of the transcripts are read considering the research question and an initial draft of descriptive classification is prepared. The researcher then reads over the transcripts and tentatively allocates a copy of each draft to a descriptive class. An iterative process is also used to create the final descriptive categories (Bowden et al., 1992). In the interpretation stage, the statements that have been processed in the analysis phase are interpreted in the context of the study. Then, the focus of the researcher shifts from the interviews that these statements are extracted from to the meaning of these statements and a "pool of meaning" is formed. Hence, every quote is interpreted according to two contexts: First, interview from which it is extracted; second, pool of meaning to which it belongs. Interpretation is a procedural interaction between these two contexts (Bowden & Walsh, 2000). To provide a general and multi-dimensional picture of a phenomenon, phenomenographists connect and regulate the above mentioned descriptive categories in the larger framework called "outcome space". During the investigation, several "outcome spaces" may be formed and modified so that the researcher reaches a final version. There are three ways to create an "outcome space", that are vertical categories: fixed internal horizon with variable external horizon; the horizontal categories: fixed external horizon with variable internal horizon; and hierarchical categories: internal and external variable horizons.

External horizon is that part of experimental structural element beyond which the person cannot see. Internal horizon is the way the components of a phenomenon are connected to each other, and it is an element of the phenomenon on which we are focusing (Linder & Marshall, 2003: 273). In this study, the following process is followed in order to identify the factors affecting retention of talented people and managers. This process is depicted in the operational framework in Figure 1.
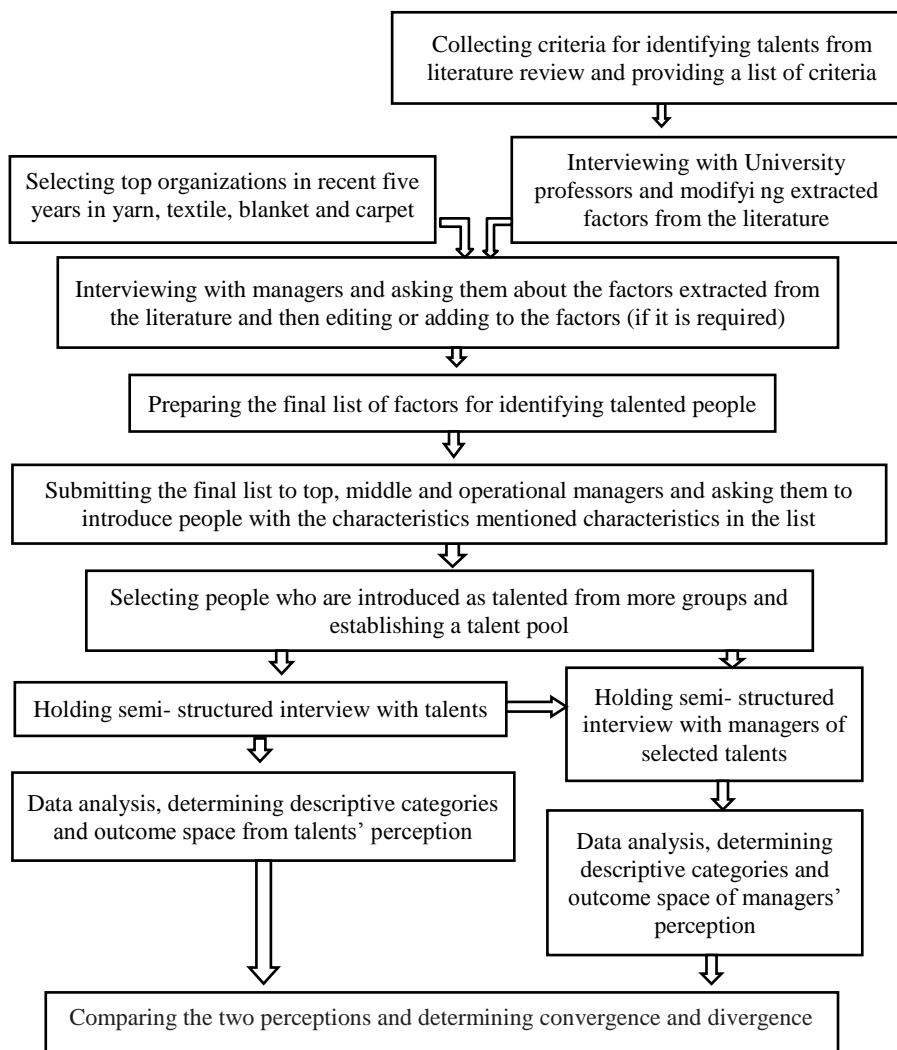
```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Collecting criteria for identifying talents │
│  from literature review and providing a list │
│  of criteria                                 │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        ⇓
┌──────────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Selecting top            │   │ Interviewing with    │
│ organizations in recent  │   │ University professors│
│ five years in yarn,      │   │ and modifyi ng       │
│ textile, blanket and     │   │ extracted factors    │
│ carpet                   │   │ from the literature  │
└──────────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────┘
                        ⇓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Interviewing with managers and asking them   │
│ about the factors extracted from the         │
│ literature and then editing or adding to the │
│ factors (if it is required)                  │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        ⇓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Preparing the final list of factors for      │
│ identifying talented people                  │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        ⇓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Submitting the final list to top, middle and │
│ operational managers and asking them to      │
│ introduce people with the characteristics    │
│ mentioned characteristics in the list        │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        ⇓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Selecting people who are introduced as       │
│ talented from more groups and establishing a │
│ talent pool                                  │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
           ⇓                           ⇓
┌──────────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Holding semi- structured │ → │ Holding semi-        │
│ interview with talents   │   │ structured interview │
│                          │   │ with managers of     │
│                          │   │ selected talents     │
└──────────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────┘
           ⇓                           ⇓
┌──────────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Data analysis,           │   │ Data analysis,       │
│ determining descriptive  │   │ determining          │
│ categories and outcome   │   │ descriptive          │
│ space from talents'      │   │ categories and       │
│ perception               │   │ outcome space of     │
│                          │   │ managers' perception │
└──────────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────┘
           │                           ⇓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Comparing the two perceptions and            │
│ determining convergence and divergence       │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Fig. 1. Operational framework

1. Choosing several organizations from the textile industry. Since the objective of this study is to explore the factors influencing retention of talents from the viewpoints of talented people and their managers, we must follow organizations in textile industry that benefit from this human capital. For this purpose, top organizations of mining and industry were selected in the last five years from the Yazd province. In these organizations, it is more likely that there are talented people who work there. The top units of industry and mining sectors in textile group units include 12 industrial organizations and subgroups of yarn, carpets, clothes and finished fabrics. Top exporters in the last five years were considered to include all top units in the textile industry. The blanket manufacturing subgroup was also added to the population under study and a total of 13 industrial units were included. The first reason for selecting top mining and industrial units was that a comprehensive set of criteria is considered for assessment of top organizations. These criteria include economic growth, the proportion of production to nominal capacity, sales growth, export growth, education, adherence to environmental standards and social responsibility, and so forth.). Second, organizations can participate in this assessment by paying a small fee. Third, the organizations chosen for consideration to receive different public awards are about 85% the same.

2. Identification of talented people. To identify talented people based on non-probable and targeted sampling, the object-exclusive approach described in the research literature was used. At the beginning, several criteria were considered for talented people according to the research literature. These criteria were discussed with four university professors who were familiar with the issue of talented individuals. In the meantime, some of the criteria were modified. Then, for adjusting these criteria with the cultural context of Yazd city and the textile industry, six top managers of this industry were interviewed. Other criteria were also added to the list in this process. Then, these criteria were considered as the final list. These criteria were mentioned in Appendix 1. This list was provided to the managing directors of the organization to nominate people who are

qualified considering these criteria. Also, it was provided to the middle and operational levels in the organization to candidate talented people according to the attached list. Finally, those participants were selected who were introduced as talented by more groups. These selected ones formed the talent pool. This pool includes 59 participants who are the employees at all levels of the organization.

3. Collecting data by holding semi-structured interviews with the talent pool. To begin the interview, some planned inputs were used like definitions of talents and retention. Then, they were asked to give examples of activities which they have done as talented people. At this stage, the mind is prepared to enter the main question: "What makes you continue to work with a particular employer?" Or indirectly, data were collected from their past experiences such as: "Have you ever decided to stay or leave the organization? Why were you in such a position? What factors were available that caused you to decide to stay in the organization?" The interview is then continued until the participants have nothing more to say. The protocol for interview with talents is cited in Appendix 2.

Identifying talented participants and interviewing with them is done until diversity in attitude of retention are fully considered. Also, there is the possibility of data management.

4. Data collection by holding interviews with managers of talents who were interviewed at the previous stage. At this stage, only one criterion for selecting managers was considered. This criterion was that they are the managers of the interviewed talented participants. The operating procedure is exactly the same as before, just the questions are different. At this stage, the main question is: "In your opinion, what factors are important from the viewpoint of Mr. X or MS. Y to keep him in the organization? The protocol for interview with manager is cited in Appendix 3.

5. Data analysis and determination of descriptive categories for talented people. The interviews conducted with the talented people were written down word by word in the form of transcripts. The transcripts were then imported to MAXQDA 10 software. The first level to be distinguished is analysis at the level of words. At this level,

the researcher focuses on the words as they appear in the transcript. At this level one tries, for instance, to find out which different terms are used to refer to a specific object and whether some words co-occur often with other words, or to find relevant segments on the basis of the use of a specific word. The distinguished second level is the level of codes. A code represents an interpretation of the researcher of the exact text in the document. By using codes, the researcher tries to make a link between parts of the text, the conceptual frame and research questions. Therefore, codes are on a more abstract or conceptual level than the words that appear in the text of the document. At the third level, the researcher works at an even more abstract level. After the relevant concepts have been identified based on reading the data material, the researcher may want to search for patterns and relationships between the concepts. At this level, description categories are determined. The three level analysis of transcripts was performed by a team of 4 people. One member of the research team was responsible for reading all the transcripts in the software by considering the research question and write a draft of the descriptive categories with regard to the transcripts. Then, he read the transcripts again and experimentally assigned each code and concept to one of the descriptive categories. Other team members independently worked on the second task. The assignment of codes to categories was compared with each other. Disagreements about descriptive categories or assignment of codes to categories were discussed. The transcripts were then interpreted to determine which meaning pool they belonged to. Moreover, the interview context was extracted from the transcript and the final descriptive categories were defined at the end.

6. Analysis of data from managers' interviews and identification of descriptive categories. In this stage, a process similar to the fifth process was followed. The only difference was that the analyzed data were the results of interviews with managers.

To validate the findings, three things need to be considered: focus, credibility and reliability (Bowden & Walsh, 2000). Regarding focus, at the beginning, research questions were specified keeping research

objectives in mind (exploring factors influencing talents' retention) and it was attempted that these questions be considered as the basis of the interview process. For credibility, a focus group was formed and the interview transcripts as well as the descriptive categories were given to the three member group to study whether the categories were a true reflection of the opinions of the interviewees or not. For examining the reliability, it was asked from another member to assign codes again to descriptive categories to calculate Cohen's kappa coefficient index. In this study, the researcher selected 20% of all the units for interview with managers and talented participants; repeatability index for interviewing with talented ones was calculated 83% and in interviewing with managers was 79%. As this amount is 70% more, it shows close agreement of coders and indicates coding process reliability. Moreover, in this research, according to the view of Guba and Lincoln (1998), the criteria of credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability were used to study reliability. To increase reliability, following cases were considered: triangulation in data source as well as in researchers, electing interviewee who had dealt with the issue and studying different findings and multiple analyses. For promotion of research conformability, researchers had set aside his personal attitudes and opinions in this research process and focused on accurately record of qualitative data. Then, they presented analysis results to three relevant specialist professors and they approved it with few amendments. For transferability, the researchers described research process in details from sampling to data interpretation in details.

7. The mapping of "outcome space" for selecting talented people. At this stage, a puzzle of different interpretations of talent (extracted descriptive categories) was formed.

8. The mapping of "outcome space" for managers

9. Comparing the two perceptions.

Research findings

The interviewees were grouped into two categories: First, talented ones whose presence in the organization can be considered as a

competitive advantage. Second, their managers who have decision power and authority for determining the future of talents in the organization. According to what mentioned by the interviewees, this section is divided into two sub sections:

Findings on the perceptions of the talents

Twenty two talented participants from eight different organizations from a talent pool that contained 59 participants were interviewed in this study. The attributes of the talents are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Talents' attributes

	Sex		Age			Organizational level			Tenure			Leaving the organization	
	F	M	<35	35-45	>45	T[a]	M[b]	O[c]	<5	5_10	>10	Yes	No
N	9	13	3	8	11	2	15	5	3	8	11	7	15
%	41	59	14	36	50	9	68	23	14	36	50	32	68

a: top level   b: middle level   c: operational level

The process of interviewing was discontinued due to the saturation points of view. This means that during an interview with the last four participants (the nineteenth to the twenty-second), they did not refer to any new concepts. After interviewing with the participants, their perceptions were transcribed and imported to MAXQDA. Coded and description categories are extracted as shown in Table 4 for talents. All codes result in the formation of seventeen descriptive categories for talents.

Table 4. Descriptive categories extracted from talents' perception

	Key words	Coded segment	Code	Descriptive category
1	Idea	9	Encourage ideas	
2	Suggestion	2		
3	Doing job in a new way	2		
4	Ideas on selecting cycle	1	Implement ideas	Suggestion system
5	Implementing idea	2		
6	Participating in decision making	4		
7	Informing outcome of investigating ideas	1	Feed back	

Continue Table 4. Descriptive categories extracted from talents' perception

	Key words	Coded segment	Code	Descriptive category
8	Top grade of organization amongst competitors	2	Reputation of organizations	Employer brand
9	Brand	2		
10	Reputation in the future	1	Organizational life cycle	
11	For higher job positions, work experience is better than education degree	1	Promote based on competence	Meritocracy
12	Promoting from inside	1	Promoting system	
13	Promote for better doing job	1		
14	Behavior based on fairness and equity	7	Fairness	Human skills of CEO[a]
15	Respect	4		
16	Appropriate behavior of directing Manager	7	Retaining talents' dignity	
17	Avoid humiliating people	1		
18	Support	6		
19	Understanding talents' need	1	Empathy	
20	Satisfying talents' need	5		
21	Appropriate manner of coworkers	2	Friendly relations between coworkers	The productive atmosphere of co-workers
22	Relationship with coworkers	3		
23	Friendship and intimacy between coworkers	4		
24	Respect for the position	4	Mutual respect	
25	Maintaining dignity and personality of each other	1		
26	Lack of giving personal compliant to management about each other	1		
27	Influencing on others to do purposeful work	1	collective growth	
28	Challenging job	7	Job nature	Job characteristics
32	Team work	2		
33	Freedom to choose how to work	2	Job autonomy	
34	Freedom to choose working hours	1		
35	Freedom to select their subordinates	1		
36	Informing Results of work	1	Feedback	

Continue Table 4. Descriptive categories extracted from talents' perception

	Key words	Coded segment	Code	Descriptive category
37	Privacy	1	Sense of Security	Sense of Psychological calmness
38	Sense of Security	3		
39	Reliable employer	1	Mental well being	
40	Sense of confidence	1		
41	Sense of peace	8		
42	Moving forward	5	To be advanced	Sense of growth and advancement within the organization
43	Knowledge and information	2		
44	Enjoying the new findings	1	Feel of being learner	
45	Research and development technologies	1	Research and development settings	Research and development facilities
46	Growth and advancement opportunities	7		
47	Salary	13	Financial output	Compensation system
48	Benefits	3		
49	Financial/ monetary rewards	8		
50	Punishment and reward practices	1	Reward system	
51	Non-financial	6	Non- financial output	
52	Sense of equity	3	Equity	Sense of equity towards compensation system
53	Performance - income fitness	12		
54	Satisfaction from physical working conditions	2	Consent to physical condition	Sense of satisfaction in relation to working conditions
55	Transportation service	2		
56	Cooling and Heating	1	Working conditions	
57	Entertainment facilities	3		
58	Distance from home	4		
59	To be seen at the organization	3	Acceptance	Recognition
60	To be Appreciated	8		
61	To be Effective	8		
62	Usage of abilities	1	Being needed	
63	Value added to organization	4		

Continue Table 4. Descriptive categories extracted from talents' perception

	Key words	Coded segment	Code	Descriptive category
64	Position according to ability	4	Fitness between person and job	Person -job fit
65	Predicting the next position	1	Career path	Sense of satisfaction in relation to Career path
66	The prospect of progress in enterprise-class	2	Career path	
67	Pleased with respect to future jobs	1	Sense of delighted	
68	Feeling of Ownership	2	To be owner	Sense of ownership
69	Ensure to keep the position	1	Sense of security	Sense of job security
70	Long-term contracts	2	Job security	

a: chief executive officer

According to above descriptive categories, the human skills of CEOs, the compensation system, suggestion system, and atmosphere of co-workers have been repeated more in comparison to other descriptive categories and can explain the importance of these factors in retention phenomenon compared to others as seen from Table 4. In order to determine the relations between the various categories, and since the mind can process visual data more easily, the hierarchical "outcome space" is traced in the following (Fig. 2). The outcome space is hierarchical as both internal and external horizons are variable. The external horizon of experimental structural aspect includes four levels, that are individual, job, group and organizational. In the internal horizon, the individual level includes feelings of the person towards different aspects of the organization. These involve the equity respect to the compensation system, work environment, psychological calmness, job security plus growth and development in the organization. The inner horizon of job level comprises nature of the job, autonomy to choose how to work, whom to work with and working hours. Internal horizon of group level includes CEOs' human skill factors as well as factors of relations with coworkers. All of these levels within the organization are influenced by factors of organizational level such as the compensation and employer brand.
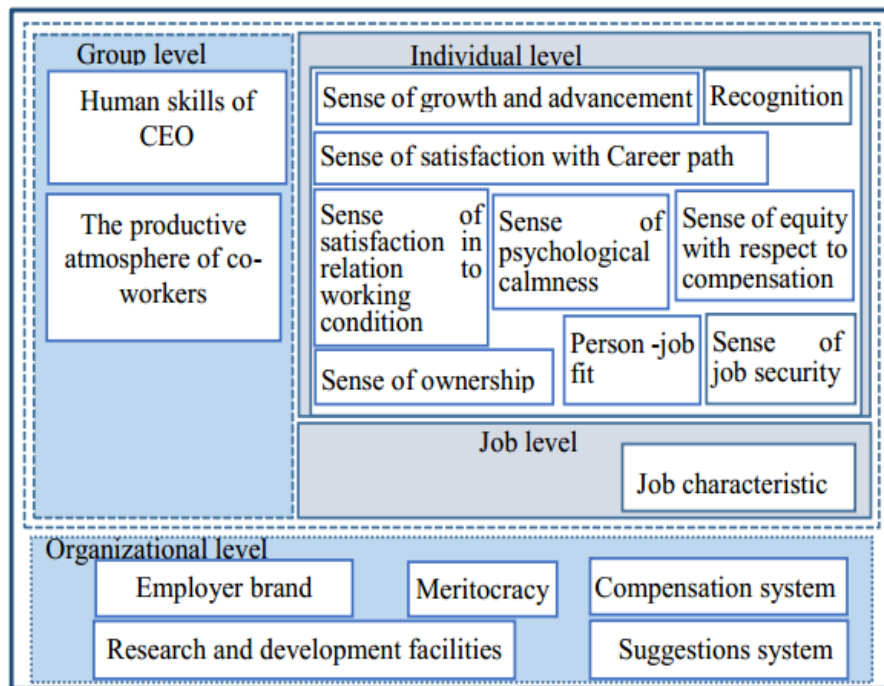
Fig. 2. Talents' outcome space

This outcome space is the result of the total perception of the talented people on the retention phenomenon in organizations and this is the retention behavior pattern of talents. In this outcome space, some descriptive categories are more basic than others. In this study, levels of the individual and job are also drawn more basic than others since talented participants who were interviewed considered these categories as concepts which should primarily be available in the organization.

According to data which were collected from talents, the model of talent retention can be drawn as shown Figure 3.
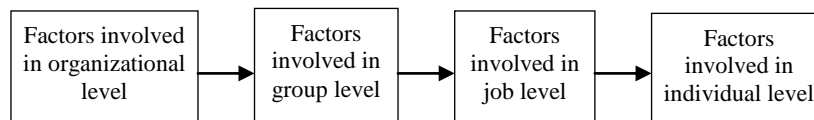
Fig. 3. Model for talents' retention from the perception of talents

Findings on the perceptions of the managers

Among the 13 managing directors of the selected organization, 8 managers interviewed who were the head of the interviewed talented participants. Coded and descriptive categories were extracted as shown in Table 5 for the managers. All of the codes result in the formation of 13 descriptive categories for managers.

Table 5. Descriptive categories extracted from the perceptions of the managers

	Keywords	Coded segments	Code	Descriptive category
1	Each person in his place	1	Having a place according to ability	Person – Job fit
2	Occupation according to specialty	1		
3	The habit of environment	1	Attach to working environment	Workplace attachment
4	Accustomed to co-workers	1	Attach to coworkers	
5	Direct relation with management	5	Information exchange	Partnership
6	Consultations on issues of the organization	6		
7	Management Support	2	Collaborative behavior	
8	Participating talented people in decision-making	6	Joint decision making	
9	Identifying needs	3	Identification of talents' needs	Identifying and satisfying personal needs
10	Understanding the problems	3		
11	Getting involved in talents' issues	2	Satisfying talents' needs	
12	Resolving talents' demand	2		
13	relations between coworkers	2	Friendly relations	Satisfaction from coworkers
14	Interaction between co-workers	1		
14	Respect	9	Respect between coworkers	

Continue Table 5. Descriptive categories extracted from the perceptions of the managers

	Keywords	Coded segments	Code	Descriptive category
15	Salary	5	Salary and benefit	
16	Income	12		
17	Unexpected bonus	1		Compensation system
18	Non- financial reward	1	Reward system	
19	Clarification of reward	1		
20	The image of the organization	1	Reputation of the organization	Employer brand
21	Prestige	1	Brand	
22	Sense of usefulness	1		
23	To be seen	1	To be seen at the organization	
24	To be important	8		Recognition
25	Valuing personality	3	Honoring the talented person	
26	Physical environment	2	Working environment	Working conditions
27	Distance from home	1		
28	Keeping position	3	Job security	Job security
29	Having a specific position after a few years	1	career path	Career path
30	Promotion	4	Promotion	
31	Self-actualization	1		Providing promotion and growth facilities
32	Growth	4	Growth facilities	
33	Growth equipment	1		
34	To be partake	1	To be owner	sense of ownership
35	Feeling of owning the organization	2		

According to the above descriptive categories, almost all managing directors believed that the main factor affecting the retention of talents is the compensation system. Also, mention of respect, identifying and satisfying the needs of the talented and participating them in decision-making is repeated more in organizations as factors affecting retention of talents. In order to have a visual picture of the factors affecting retention of talents, descriptive categories are mapped in the framework of "outcome space". This is illustrated in Figure 4.
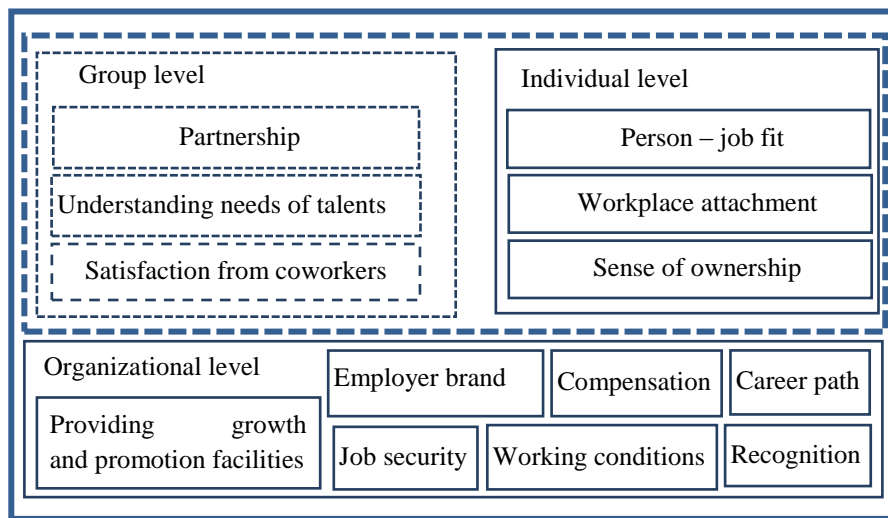
Fig. 4. Managers' outcome space

The "outcome space" of the perceptions of managers is hierarchical as the internal and external horizons are variable. The external horizon of experimental structural aspect includes three levels: individual, group and organizational. In the internal horizon, the individual level includes person-job fit, sense of ownership and workplace attachment. There are factors like understanding and satisfying personal need, partnership and satisfaction from coworkers in the internal horizon of the group level. All of these factors are affected by categories in the organizational level such as compensation, recognition, providing means of growth and promotion. This outcome space is the perception of managers from talented people's opinions about retention based on which managers' behaviors are formed, and they determine their

strategies to retain talented people. In this outcome space, individual level is drawn to be more basic than others since the managers who were interviewed considered these categories as preconception which need to primarily be available in the organization.
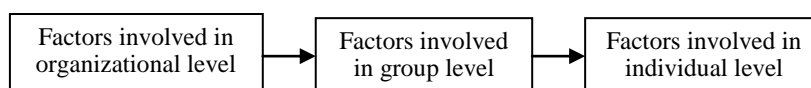

Fig. 5. Model for talents' retention from the perception of managers

Discussion

Every organization has some employees who are superior to the other employees. Such people can do things better than others, and transform the organization into a productive one. Considering the role of these valuable assets in gaining competitive advantages, ways to retain them in the organization are important. In this study, the factors that influence retaining talented people in an organization are extracted by phenomenography. Despite the fact that this research strategy is time-consuming, the results are useful for gaining a deep understanding of the phenomenon from the perspective of a particular group of people. It is a fact that a person cannot identify all aspects of a given concept. Thus, comprehensive information is obtained through the strategy of providing enough time to a person to respond. Moreover, a semi-structured questionnaire for interview is used.

In this study, two different perceptions were extracted through phenomenography. The results of interviews with 22 talents showed four levels, that are individual, job, group, and organizational levels that have an effect on retention. The explored factors explain that talented people decide to stay in an organization if they have a sense of ownership, satisfaction with working conditions, job security, psychological calmness, and equity towards compensation, and they have been accepted by the organization. Also, job characteristic, human skills of CEO, relations among co-workers and inner systems in the organization such as provisions for workers to present their suggestions for improvement are effective in the retention of talents in the organization.

There was a quote about the human skills of CEOs in almost all organizations. Thus, it can be concluded that the reason why employees leave an organization is almost due to the behavior of their managers, not the existing conditions in the organization. Employees who have strong and respectful relationships with the management, their co-workers are more likely to remain in the organization. The perceptions of talents of a specific organization were similar to each other and they were affected by the perceptions of the CEO and his actions. This is consistent with the theory of 'Upper Echelons: The Organization as a Reflection of Its Top Managers' (Smith & Hitt, 2005: 110).

However, the perceptions of the managers about the viewpoints of talents show different results. They believe that the three level factors influencing retention phenomenon including individual, group and organizational. Managers believe that factors affecting retention of talents in the individual level are being the right person for the job; attachment to the work environment. In the group level, factors such as support, joint decision-making, and understanding one's needs are important. And in the organizational level factors like compensation, working environment, employer brand, growth and acceptance influence retention. Therefore, managers consider the role of the individual in the retention of talents to be less important than the role of the organization and group.

The results show that retention of talented people is more complex and less predictable, but it is not random. This behavior always follows its own model and rules. The pattern can be observed in the "outcome space" framework presented in the paper. Therefore, understanding the patterns and rules can prepare the ground to facilitate the retention of talents despite available complexities. This issue is consistent with Chaos Theory (Lorenz, 1963).

What is different between the two perceptions is listed as follows: First, grouping the same factors into a different level. This means that some factors from the perceptions of talents are grouped into individual level, whereas the same factors from the perception of managers of the viewpoints of the talented are at the organizational

level such as working condition. Second, the factors affecting retention of talents are different. These two perceptions are compared in Table 6.

Table 6. Comparison between the perceptions of talents and managers

Factors those are the same between the two perceptions	Factors those are grouped in different levels	Factors those are different among perceptions	
		Talents'	**Managers'**
Person – job fit	Working conditions	Collective growth	Direct relationship with managers
Participating in decision making	career path	Manager's behavior based on fairness, equity and respect	attached to working environment
Managers' support	recognition	The productive atmosphere of co-worker	
Understanding and satisfying talents' need	Growth and advancement	Making suggestions on the selection cycle	
Promotion	Job security	Job characteristic	
Employer brand		Sense of psychological calmness	

As it can be seen from the above Table, sense of satisfaction in relation to working condition is considered as a variable at individual level in the perceptions of talents, whereas working condition is a factor at the organizational level in the perceptions of managers. This means that in the managers' perspective, working condition is a part of the inner system and it is under their own control. Thus, they consider the role of the individual in retention less important than the role of the organization and management. Other factors listed in column 2 act like working condition.

One of the aspects of this paper that makes it distinguished from other papers is that in order to discover the factors for talent retention in this study the interviews were done with an actual population of talented people who were selected through object-exclusive approach, while as it was mentioned in the introduction, in other similar works, the perceptions of managers or whole employees have been extracted from interviews (Stokes et al., 2013; Hausknecht et al., 2009). The

similarities and differences in the findings of previous studies about the views of all employees and/or managers about the factors affecting retention along with the findings of the talents are reported in Table 7.

Table 7. Comparison of factors influencing retention in earlier studies

Descriptive categories resulting from this study	Previous studies	Factors affecting retention in previous studies	
Job characteristic	Birt et al., 2004; Fernández-Aráoz, 2014; George, 2015; Hesselbein et al., 1997	Challenging and meaningfulness of the job Independence in type, method and time of doing the work and independence in selection of team	
Sense of growth and development in the organization	Milman, 2003; Birt et al., 2004; Echols, 2007; Hausknecht et al., 2009; Bryant & Allen, 2013; George, 2015; Hesselbein et al., 1997	Opportunity for development	
Human skill of CEO	Milman, 2003; Bryant & Allen, 2013	Managing relations with directors and other employees	Similarities of this paper and previous studies
compensation	Milman, 2003; Echols, 2007; Hausknecht et al., 2009; Fernández-Aráoz, 2014; Ellig, 2013; George, 2015; Hesselbein et al., 1997	External Salaries and bonuses	
recognition	Hesselbein et al., 1997	Informing the people who are important for the organization	
Person-job fit	George, 2015	Person-job fit	
Sense of satisfaction with working conditions	Milman, 2003; Hausknecht et al., 2009; George, 2015	Conditions of the work environment	
Employer brand	Milman, 2003; Hausknecht et al. 2009	Prestige and reputation of the organization	
	Birt et al., 2004	Having responsibility	
	Birt et al., 2004	Honesty of management	
	Hausknecht et al., 2009; Bryant & Allen, 2013	Job satisfaction	
	Hausknecht et al., 2009; Bryant & Allen, 2013	Organizational commitment	Factors presented in previous studies as factors influencing retention
	Bryant & Allen, 2013	Managing role expectations	
	Bryant & Allen, 2013	Role conflict	
	Marmenout & Lirio, 2014; George, 2015	Providing social support	
	Hausknechtet al., 2009; Marmenout & Lirio, 2014	Flexible working hours	
	George, 2015	Work-life balance	

Table 7. Comparison of factors influencing retention in earlier studies

Descriptive categories resulting from this study	Previous studies	Factors affecting retention in previous studies
Career path Job security The productive atmosphere of coworkers Sense of psychological calmness Sense of ownership Human skills of CEOs Understanding talents' needs Respect for position Suggestion system Promotion		Factors influencing retention of talented people from the view of talented people

In this study, different aspects of management behavior which go back to mutual promises between talented people and managers are taken into consideration. Moreover, if an employee has a talent by which he can make a sustainable competitive advantage for the organization, the manager should treat him with justice, understand his/her needs, pay attention to his ideas and support him/her. This is consistent with psychological contracts of Rousseau (1989). One of the other differences of this paper with the previous studies is sense of psychological calmness which can be due to the special cultural characteristics of the people of Yazd, especially the religious values in this province. This is consistent with psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999). The factor which has been mentioned as influential in retention in almost all previous studies by both managers and employees is the opportunity for development which is totally consistent with Servant leadership theory (Greenleaf et al., 2002) and the fact that the leader of an organization is responsible for the development and growth of his/her subordinates. In many studies, positive effect of learning on retention is confirmed (Govaerts et al., 2011; George, 2015). In general, if we consider Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory as two groups of human needs, the view of talented people about the factors influencing retention is that the

mentioned factors in individual and job level are hygiene factors while group and organization level are motivational factors to maintain talents.

According to interviews conducted with talented people, men and women are different in terms of their perception regarding factors that affect their retention. These differences can be provided in terms of proposition.

a) Working conditions, safety and psychological calmness, respect, recognition and friendly relationship have more impact on the retention of women than their salary.

b) Compensation and rapid internal promotion are stronger predictors for the retention of men than women.

c) The human skills of CEOs are a strong predictor of retention of talents in an organization.

It is also suggested that extracted descriptive categories of this study become a questionnaire and can be classified in large scale ratings in the form of quantitative research in order to determine the priority of these factors or the correlation between the factors and retention. Priorities could be used to make decisions about how to maintain talented people and these could be submitted to the organization. Also, talents centers could be established at industry level to identify talents of each industry considering criteria outlined in Appendix 1. Or, at a micro level, human resources departments of any organization could consider these criteria in their recruitment.

Due to the importance of talent retention in organizations; therefore, it is recommended that managers take talent retention issue seriously, use experience of successful organizations in talent management and employ the result of research works done about the factors affecting retention.

One problem with this research was also convincing managers to allow researchers to interview with talented ones. The managing directors were afraid that those interviewed with on the phenomenon of retention might suppose that they are seen as especial people and expect a raise in salary or increased job benefits. The managers thought that the interviewed participants may consider leaving the

organization if their demands were not met. Due to these limitations, it is recommended that a research study be carried out in order to investigate whether identifying a particular group as talented individuals will lead to further demonstration of competence behavior by potentially talented people based on self-full filling prophecy or not.

Appendix 1

Identification criteria of talented people considering objective-exclusive approach and opinion of academic and industrial experts.

No	Identification criteria for talented people
1	Ready to learn and to change and seeking for new experiences and knowledge
2	Enjoying capacity for analyzing situations and key issues and evaluating possible choices
3	proportionality with organization as culturally and personality
4	Respecting job values and norms
5	Commitment to organization and his job
6	Watchful, and having high and especial ability in reasoning, inference, guess and understanding varied and unusual relations and merging ideas.
7	Getting feedback from others in order to improve his performance
8	High capacity in making accurate and applicable decisions for diverse areas
9	Ability of influencing on others
10	Seeking for improvement in his professional career
11	consistency in the pursuing or doing works
12	Facing the problems in spite of challenges to attain difficult goals
13	Presenting new ideas and lack of routine look to issues
14	IQ is high
15	higher ability to perform his task than those previously working in this post or than others with similar post in another organizations
16	Diagnosing organization problems and providing ways for solution
17	Requiring to be successful and performing his capabilities
18	Having probe behaviors to clarify situations by collecting information (This behavior is beyond the individual scope and expertise.)
19	Having capacity to recognize his and others' feelings
20	Ability to create and maintain constructive relationships with others, helping others and sensibility to satisfy others' needs.
21	Having critical mind
22	Involving in organization issues
23	Interested in work

Appendix 2

Protocol for Interview with talented people

1. Please present a background of your activities as a talented person.

2. What are the features of a talented person based on your experience?
3. What are the activities you do as a talented person in the organization?
4. Have you ever thought of staying or leaving the organization?
   - Why were you in such situation?
   - What were you looking for at this situation?
   - Why did you do these works at that situation?
5. Can you give us some examples of reasons that caused you stay in the organization?
6. What were the factors provided in the organization which caused you to decide to stay?
7. What are the factors affecting you to stay in the organization?
8. What are the factors that cause you to continue working with a certain employer?
9. What are the ways to sustain talented people in the organization?
10. Let's review together, I asked you about retention factors, Can you give an example?
11. Do you have any other idea?

Appendix 3

Protocol for interview with managers

1. Who is called a talented person in an organization?
2. Have you ever cooperated with a talented person?
3. What factors do you think are important for Mr. /Ms…….. in relation to retention in organization?
4. What are effective factors for retaining talented people in their own opinion?
5. Are the factors that you mentioned really important for retention from talented people view?
6. Have talented people ever wanted to leave the organization? Have you talked to them? What were their factors to stay in the organization?
7. Can you explain a bit more?
8. What do you mean by what you stated?
9. Do you have any other idea on this issue?

References

Birt, M., Wallis, T., & Winternitz, G. (2004). Talent retention in a changing workplace: an investigation of variables considered important to South African talent. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 35(2), 25-31.

Boudreau, J. W., & Ramstad, P. M. (2005). Talent ship, talent segmentation, and sustainability: A new HR decision science paradigm for a new strategy definition. *Human Resource Management*, 44(2), 129-136.

Bowden, J., & Walsh, E. (2000). *Phenomenography*. Melbourne: RMIT university press.

Bowden, J. A., Dall'Alba, G., Laurillard, D., Martin, E., Marton, F., Masters, G., Ramsden, P., Stephanou, A., & Walsh, E. (1992). Displacement, velocity and frames of reference: Phenomenographic studies of students' understanding and some implications for teaching. *American Journal of Physics*, 60(3), 262–269.

Bryant, P. C., & Allen, D. (2013). Compensation, benefits and employee turnover: Hr strategies for retaining top talent. *Compensation & Benefits Review*, 45(3), 171-175.

Budhwar, P. S., & Bhatnagar, J. (2007). Talent management strategy of employee engagement in Indian ITES employees: key to retention. *Employee Relations*, 29(6), 640-663.

Cheese, P., Thomas, R. T., & Craig, E. (2008). *The talent powered organization: Strategies for globalization, talent management and high performance*. London: Kogan Page.

Dries, N., & Pepermans, R. (2007). "Real" high-potential careers. *Personnel Review*, 37(1), 85-108.

Echols, M. E. (2007). Learning's role in talent management. *Chief Learning Officer*, 6(10), 36-40.

Edmondson, A. (1999). psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(2), 350–383.

Ellig, B. R. (2013). Attracting, motivating and retaining executives: lessons from years as an HR executive. *Compensation & Benefits Review*, 45(2), 75-87.

Fernández-Aráoz, C. (2014). Talent management, 21st- century talent spotting. *Harvard Business Review*, 92(6), 46-56.

Frank, F. D., Finnegan, R. P., & Taylor, C. R. (2004). The race for talent: retaining and engaging workers in the 21st century. *Human Resource Planning*, 27(3), 12-25.

Gallo, A. (2015). Setting the record straight on switching jobs. *Harvard*

Business Review, October 2015, 34.

George, Ch. (2015). Retaining professional workers: what makes them stay?. *Employee Relations*, 37(1), 102 - 121.

Govaerts, N., Kyndt, E., Dochy, F., & Baert, H. (2011) Influence of learning and working climate on the retention of talented employees. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 23(1), 35-55.

Greenleaf, R. K., Spears, L. C., & Covey, S. R. (2002). *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness*. U.S.A.: Paulist Press.

Guba, E. G; Lincoln, Y. S. (1998). Compettig paradigms in qualitative reaearch. in Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds), *the Landscape of qualitative reseach*. Theories and Issues, 195-220.

Hausknecht, J. P., Rodda, J., & Howard, M. J. (2009). Targeted employee retention: Performance-based and job-related differences in reported reasons for staying. *Human Resource Management*, 48(2), 269-288.

Hesselbein, F., Goldsmith, M., & Beckhard, R. (1997). *The organization of the future*. The Drucker Foundation. San Francisco: Jossey- bass publisher.

Keane, J., & Velde, D. W. (2008). *The role of textile and clothing industries in growth and development strategies*. Investment and Growth Programmed Overseas Development Institute.

Linder C. & Marshall D. (2003). Reflection and phenomenography: Towards theoretical and educational development possibilities. *Learning and Instruction*, 13(3), 271–284.

Lorenz, E. N. (1963). Deterministic non-periodic flow. *Journal of the Atmospheric Sciences*, 20(2), 130–141.

Luthans, F., Rosenkrantz, S. A., & Hennessey, H. W. (1985). What do successful managers really do? An observation study of managerial activities. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 21(3), 255-70.

Marmenout, K., & Lirio, P. (2013). Local female talent retention in the Gulf: Emirati women bending with the wind. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 25(2), 144-166.

Marton F. (1986). Phenomenography – a research approach to investigating different understandings of reality. *Journal of Thought*, 21(3), 28-49.

Milman, A. (2003). Hourly employee retention in small and medium attractions: The Central Florida example. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 22(1), 17-35.

Milman, A., & Dickson, D. (2014). Employment characteristics and retention predictors among hourly employees in large US theme parks

and attractions. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 26(3), 447-469.

Nijs, S., Gallardo-Gallardo, E., Dries, N., & Sels, L. (2014). A multidisciplinary review into the definition, operationalization, and measurement of talent. *Journal of World Business*, 49(2), 180-191.

Punia, B. K. (2004). Employee empowerment and retention strategies in diverse corporate culture: A prognostic study. *Vision- The Journal of Business Perspective*, 8(1), 81-91.

Rousseau, D. M. (1989). Psychological and implied contracts in organizations. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 2(2), 121-139.

Saunders, M., Lewis, Ph., & Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research methods for business students—5th edition*. England: Pearson education.

Silzer, R. F., & Dowell, B. E. (Eds.). (2010). *Strategy driven talent management: A leadership imperative*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Smith, K. G., & Hitt, M. A. (2005). *Great minds in management*. Hambrick, D.C. (1984). *Upper Echelons Theory: Origins, Twists and Turns, and Lessons Learned*. United States: Oxford University Press, 109-127.

Stokes, P., Ghosh, P., Satyawadi, R., Prasad Joshi, J., & Shadman, M. (2013). Who stays with you? Factors predicting employees' intention to stay. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 21(3), 288-312.

Tansley, C. (2011). What do we mean by the term "talent" in talent management?. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 43(5), 266-274.

Thunnissen, M., Boselie, P., & Fruytier, B. (2013). Talent management and the relevance of context: Towards a pluralistic approach. *Human Resource Management Review*, 23(4), 326-336.

Ulrich, D., & Smallwood, N. (2012). What is talent?. *Leader to Leader*, 63, 55–61.

Zhang, S., & Bright, D. (2012). Talent definition and talent management recognition in Chinese private owned enterprises. *Journal of Chinese Entrepreneurship*, 4(2), 143-163.

www.yzd.mimt.gov.ir