



# The relationship between talent management, job satisfaction and voluntary turnover intentions of employees in a selected government institution

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**Dates:**

Received: 11 May 2020

Accepted: 08 Dec. 2020

Published: 25 Feb. 2021

**How to cite this article:**

Barkhuizen, N.E., & Gumede, B. (2021). The relationship between talent management, job satisfaction and voluntary turnover intentions of employees in a selected government institution. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management/SA Tydskrif vir Menslikehulpbronbestuur*, 19(0), a1396. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v19i0.1396>

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**Introduction:** Talent management plays an essential role in the retention of competent employees in the workplace.

**Research purpose:** The main objective of this research was to determine the relationship between talent management, job satisfaction and voluntary turnover intentions of employees in a selected South African government institution.

**Motivation for the study:** Talent management research within the context of South African government institutions has yet to reach its full potential.

**Research design, approach, and method:** This study followed a quantitative research design. Data was collected from employees at the head office of the selected government institution ( $N = 208$ ). A Talent management measure, job satisfaction questionnaire and a voluntary turnover intention questionnaire were distributed.

**Findings:** The results showed a weak leadership talent mindset. Talent management practices such as talent development, performance management, talent retention strategies and compensation practices were poorly applied. Almost half of the sample was dissatisfied with their jobs, whilst 68% considered quitting their jobs. Talent management practices were significantly related to job satisfaction and voluntary turnover intentions. Job satisfaction moderated the relationship between talent management and voluntary turnover intentions.

**Management implications:** Government leaders are encouraged to adopt a talent mindset that will instil a talent culture where talented individuals are allowed to add value and contribute to the success of the institution.

**Value add:** This research adds to the limited body of research done on talent management in the public sector context.

**Conclusions:** This research highlights the importance of talent management in contributing to critical individual outcomes required for sustainable government institutions.

**Keywords:** government institutions; job satisfaction; leadership talent mindset; talent management; voluntary turnover intentions.

## Introduction

The field of talent management (TM) has gained a lot of interest amongst researchers and practitioners over the past two decades. Studies show that TM has predictive potential for various individual and organisational outcomes in the Southern African context (Barkhuizen, Lesenyeh, & Schutte, 2020; Masale, 2020; Mokgojwa, 2019). Yet, the conceptualisation of talent and TM remains a pressure point in academic literature, which in turn undermines the practical application thereof in the workplace (Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunissen, & Scullion, 2020). According to Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2020), questions remain as to how TM is defined and implemented within organisations. This can be a consequence of scholars who have differing opinions on whether talent is inborn or acquired (Meyers, Van Woerkom, & Dries, 2013). Others debate the contextual meanings and jargon that organisations globally use to coin workplace talent (Wiblen & McDonnell, 2020). The authors believe that individuals are born with a unique gift(s). These gifts need to be uncovered and cultivated for individuals to be recognised as a talent in the workplace, and enable them to make a valuable and distinctive contribution towards achieving organisational goals. Talent, therefore, is a combination of talent intelligence competencies (Visser, Barkhuizen,

& Schutte, 2018), complemented by the willingness and ability to acquire and maintain core employability skills (Barkhuizen, 2015).

As for a basic approach to TM, the majority of definitions appear to include the concepts of 'attraction', 'development' and 'retention' of core skills (Davies & Davies, 2010, Fitzgerald, 2014, Lockwood, 2006). Other authors follow a more 'strategic' approach to TM by defining it as 'integrated systems and processes', 'corporate strategy', 'achievement of business goals', 'competitive advantage' and 'sustainability' (see Bethke, Mahler, & Staffebach, 2011; Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Sparrow, Hird, & Cooper, 2015).

For this study, TM is defined as a strategic process that should be integrated with the business and balanced scorecard of organisations. Talent management should be value-driven and encapsulate a compelling talent value proposition (Saurombe, Barkhuizen, & Schutte, 2017) that will enable talented employees to be a return on investment for any company (Yapp, 2009). Talented individuals can, therefore, be the critical role players for the competitive advantage and survival of any organisation in an ever-changing business world (Rabbi, Ahad, Kousar, & Ali, 2015).

The main objective of this research was to determine the relationship between TM, job satisfaction and voluntary turnover intentions of employees in a selected South African government institution.

More specifically, the following research questions are addressed:

- What is the relationship between TM and job satisfaction?
- What is the relationship between TM and voluntary turnover intentions?
- What is the role of job satisfaction in the TM-voluntary turnover intention relationship?
- To what extent do participants differ in their perceptions of TM practices based on their demographic characteristics?

This research is motivated by the fact that context is often ignored when doing TM research (see Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020). King and Vaiman (2019) posit that organisational TM operates within a broader macro-level context with micro-level TM (i.e. talent management practices) embedded in the macro-TM system. As such, we argue that the validity and contribution of TM in the South African context and especially the government sector has yet to reach its full potential. For the same reason, we also chose voluntary turnover intentions as a possible outcome of TM for local government employees in this study. A study by Hom, Lee, Shaw and Hausknecht (2017, p. 539) focused on 100 years of research on employee turnover. They concluded that researchers need to 'delve into context-specific investigations of turnover' instead of following a 'one size fits all' approach. Previous research showed that TM predicts voluntary turnover intentions in other contexts (Kwaeng, Barkhuizen,

& Du Plessis, 2018; Theron, Barkhuizen, & Du Plessis, 2014). Lastly, we chose job satisfaction as a possible moderator in the TM-turnover relationship. According to Aziri (2011), job satisfaction is one of the most complicated aspects for managers in managing their employees. Moreover, job satisfaction is consistently related to the productivity and performance of businesses via employee motivation, which is pivotal for the survival of any institution (Pang & Lu, 2018). Talent management appears to have a significant impact on the job performance of government employees via job satisfaction (Magolego, Barkhuizen, & Lesenyeh, 2013).

We believe that this research can make a useful contribution to the TM practice and outcomes thereof for South African government institutions. Khilji, Tariq and Schuler (2015) challenge governments' involvement in attracting and developing national talent and the effective mobilisation of expertise across government institutions. In South Africa, public institutions are struggling to attract and retain talent because of high competition levels, as the private sector can entice potential staff with packages and other benefits that exceed what the government can offer (Khan, 2018). Moreover, budget constraints in public institutions negatively affect the running of the institution, and have a detrimental effect on personnel (Ganyaupfu, 2019). The staff turnover and vacancy rate have been high over the recent financial years, and the institution continually loses talented employees (Ogony & Majola, 2018). A report by Mzezewa (2019) shows that the voluntary turnover rate for public sector employees ranges between 4% and 7%. Therefore, a study on TM, job satisfaction and voluntary turnover intentions is imperative from a research point of view.

## Literature review

### Managing talent through a talent-career life cycle

This study adopts the talent career life cycle framework of Schutte and Barkhuizen (2016) to determine the practices that should ideally form part of the TM processes of talented individuals in the workplace. This framework includes the following TM practices: talent mindset, talent branding, talent onboarding and deployment, talent engagement, talent development, talent performance management and recognition, talent compensation and talent retention practices.

#### Talent mindset

The leadership talent mindset is critical to ensure that TM strategies are supported throughout the organisation (Tladi, 2016). A talent mindset can be defined as the conviction that talented employees add value to the bottom-line of any organisation (Luna-Arocas & Morley, 2015). A study by Sadeli (2012) shows that leaders need to initiate and implement talent practices to understand what fundamental factors would attract high-potential individuals. Leaders can further develop learning and development programmes to build organisational competence through talent pools and smooth succession pathways. Talent stakeholders should create a talent culture whereby individual talents are aligned with

organisational goals (Saurombe et al., 2017), and enabled to perform optimally (Mokgojwa, 2019). A recent study by Masale (2020) showed that leadership drive and foresight is a significant predictor of organisational values and norms, strategic direction, success orientation and organisational dynamics and innovation. Studies show that leadership is an essential factor in the attraction of Generation Y employees (Bussin, Mohamed-Padayachee, & Serumaga-Zake, 2019). Zaharee, Lipkie, Mehlman and Neylon (2018) found that all age groups view quality talent leadership as necessary. Other research shows that talent leadership is a consistent predictor of the voluntary turnover intentions of employees in government institutions (Matobako & Barkhuizen, 2017). Moreover, significant discrepancies prevail between management levels and their perceptions of the application of TM practices. The trend to emerge is that top and senior managers experience a more positive implementation of TM practices compared to middle- and lower-level management, as well as supervisory and operation staff (see Barkhuizen & Veldtman, 2012; Masale, 2020).

### **Talent branding**

According to Wilska (2014), employer branding is an important short- and long-term strategy to acquire top talent. Saurombe et al. (2017) found that fringe benefits/incentives and remuneration, leadership and managerial support, work-life balance, performance management and development, occupational health and safety, and job security are essential components of the talent employment brand of public sector institutions. Rudhumbu, Chikari, Sivotwa and Lukusa (2014) found those additional factors such as an open, friendly and honest workplace environment; the recognition and rewarding of employee competencies; employee-friendly recruitment processes and a dynamic, high-performance culture is vital to attract and retain talent. A study by Maurya and Agarwal (2018) showed that TM practices such as fair rewards and remuneration and work-life balance were the most effective predictors of a compelling organisational brand.

### **Talent onboarding and deployment**

According to Pike (2014), the primary goal of employee onboarding programmes is to ensure an optimal fit between a new employee and the job/organisation, which in turn should translate into higher levels of job performance. A great deal of research shows that a job-person match is not only essential to reduce stress but also prevent turnover intentions (Kumar & Jain, 2012). Mokgojwa (2019) found that talented employees value jobs that are in line with their qualifications, experience, skills acquired and life purpose. Moreover, the talent onboarding processes and induction are essential to building a culture of trust between the employer and newly hired talent employee (Caldwell & Peters, 2018). Molefi (2015) found that poorly applied TM practices could result in a breach of the psychological contract in the employer-employee relationship.

According to Campbell and Hirsch (2013), talent deployment can be achieved by implementing career movement opportunities for talented individuals and prioritise high potential individuals for the pivotal jobs in the organisation. The early identification of talent pools is supported by succession planning methods to nurture and maintain talent pools for business continuity. Muslim, Haron and Hashim (2012) advise that succession planning and the identification of talent pools should be a formalised and long-term strategy for any organisation. Muslim et al. (2012) further advocate that organisations reduce conflict by filling the right candidate with the right qualification in the correct position. Moreover, in a more home-grown approach from within, when employees see institutions giving promotions, it motivates and allows individuals to take responsibility and stretch themselves further (McCaffry & Sexton, 2018).

### **Talent engagement**

A great deal of research is devoted to understanding the concept of 'engagement' in the workplace. Researchers use the terminologies such as 'job engagement', 'employee engagement' and 'work engagement' interchangeably. For this research, we coin the concept of talent engagement as those employees who display a high level of energy, who are willing to invest a lot of effort in their jobs and who are fully devoted to achieving work tasks and to perform (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). In essence, talent engagement implies that the individual employee is satisfied with the job, and they are keen on doing their duties (Mathafena, 2015). Talent engagement is dependent on the availability of resources such as management and collegial support, clear job and performance expectations, compensation and work values (Kotze, 2018).

### **Talent development**

Studies by Lesenyeho (2017) and Saurombe et al. (2017) show that opportunities for training and development, and career advancement are critical considerations for employees to join a preferred employer of choice in the government sector. Organisations are positively perceived if they display the desire to improve talent (Saurombe et al., 2017). Van Dyk (2009) maintains that employees who consider a career path in the public sector should be exposed to developmental opportunities and widening of their skills to benefit the organisation, themselves and the community at large. According to Roman (2011), career growth, learning and development are the most critical motivational aspects for retention. As such, employers should focus on implementing career development programmes not merely aimed at supporting individual development, but to engage and retain their employees (Alias, Noor, & Hassan, 2014). According to Diseko (2015), the development of public servants can improve their efficiency in service delivery. Bussin and Thabethe (2018) found that employees aged between 19 and 29 years had a higher preference for learning and development of career paths compared to other groups. Barkhuizen (2013) found that those employees with a lower level of education, such as a Bachelor's degree experienced fewer talent development opportunities compared to those with post-graduate qualifications in government institutions.



### Talent performance and recognition

According to Masri and Suliman (2019), TM and performance management are strategic tools that can assist in the implementation of strategic objectives that can in turn, enhance employee and organisational performance. Organisations are responsible for creating a talent culture that will enable employees to contribute to their strategic objectives (Masale, 2020) and to keep talent performance sustainable (Vural, Vardarlier, & Aykir, 2012). Vural et al. (2012) further found that talent performance systems are pivotal to keep talent committed towards their jobs. Talented employees therefore need role clarity, opportunities to apply skills, and participate in career decisions to achieve career success (Lesenyeh, 2017). Altındağ, Çirak and Acar (2018) found that fair and trustworthy performance appraisal systems, as well as the management of performance appraisals, are essential to instil feelings of trust, a sense of belongingness and job satisfaction for talented individuals. A study by Marcus and Gopinath (2017) showed that Generation Y and Z employees perceive that institutions do not set achievable targets to earn performance rewards and are impartial in its rewards and recognition.

### Talent compensation

Talent compensation and rewards are rapidly growing research fields. The latest prominent definition of total rewards refers to the components of compensation, well-being, benefits, development and recognition (WorldatWork, 2020). Compensation plays an essential role in the attraction and retention of talented employees. Slechther, Hung and Bussin (2014) found that talent attraction depends on a reward package that includes high levels of remuneration as well as benefits and variable pay. According to Bryant and Allen (2013), factors such as compensation structure, compensation procedures, types of compensation, perceived fairness and equity in salary, and linking compensation and benefits are essential solutions to retain talent in the workplace.

In the public sector, pay and employee benefits policies are subject to a collective bargaining process by all stakeholders, mostly unions and politicians (Knies, Boselie, Gould-Williams, & Vandenabeele, 2018). There are monetary and non-monetary incentives that act as motivators for employees to remain in the organisation. The higher the incentives an employee receives, greater is the loss if the employee exits the organisation (Van Dyk, Coetzee, & Takawira, 2013). Organisations predominantly use competitive pay packages as an effective retention strategy (Roman, 2011). Bussin and Toerien (2015) advocate a holistic approach to total rewards in companies is required to prevent increased turnover and job-hopping. According to Pregnotato, Bussin and Schlechter (2017), Generation Y considers a comprehensive rewards package such as benefits, performance, recognition, remuneration and career advancement as essential components in their decision to remain in an organisation.

### Talent retention practices

Research to date shows that talent retention practices remain one of the most neglected methods in the TM process (Barkhuizen et al., 2020). Most of the time, government institutions do not have retention practices in place or managements neglect to have frequent talent retention conversations with employees. Lewis and Sequeira (2012) believe that the design and implementation of employee retention strategies is a skill that management should prioritise. Mandhanya (2015) found that additional factors such as recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation packages, working environment, recognition, and rewards and leadership are significantly related to employee retention policies practised by the institution. Shipena (2019) revealed that government employees who had fewer chances for promotion experienced a weaker application of talent retention practices. Molefi (2015) found that public sector nurses working overtime perceived that their institution is less inclined to retain their services compared to those working fewer hours in a work week.

### Outcomes of talent management: Job satisfaction and voluntary turnover intentions

#### Talent management and job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is an essential attitudinal variable to research because of its strategic importance for organisational functioning (Sila & Širok, 2018), and as a critical talent indicator (Paadi, Barkhuizen, & Swanepoel, 2019). Job satisfaction has been defined in various ways that involves the individual's attitude to aspects of the work and the work context. According to Roman (2011) job satisfaction is a consequence of the degree of pleasure that one derives from compensation, management support, promotion opportunities, work environment, organisational culture, colleagues and the duties executed. Job satisfaction can also include employees' feelings towards their organisations' performance, policies and general human resource (HR) practices (Dixit & Arrawatia, 2018; Theron et al., 2014).

There is some research evidence to link TM with job satisfaction in the public sector. Magolego et al. (2013) found that talent is a positive predictor of job satisfaction in a sample of local government employees. Similar results were obtained by Dixit and Arrawatia (2018), who found that TM in general and TM practices had a direct impact on the job satisfaction of employees. A study by Hafez, AbouelNeel and Elsaid (2017) showed that TM components, such as motivating outstanding performance, training and development, and job enrichment had a positive effect on job satisfaction. Senona (2017) found that TM practices such as talent strategy, staffing (deployment), talent acquisition, talent retention and financial rewards were significant predictors of the job satisfaction of public school teachers. Paadi et al. (2019) found that the availability of talent internship programmes for public

sector, early-career employees significantly enhanced their job satisfaction:

**H1:** Talent management would be a significant positive predictor of the job satisfaction of government employees

### Talent management and voluntary turnover intentions

Arshad and Puteh (2015) regards turnover as an individual's behaviour of leaving the organisation. According to Uğural, Giritli and Urbański (2020), employees are the custodians of a voluntary movement of turnover, whilst involuntary turnover involves processes initiated by organisations to terminate the service of employees. Voluntary employee turnover is an area of concern because of the costs associated with it (Surji, 2013). Moreover, talent turnover has a direct negative impact on organisational effectiveness (Ahmed, Sabir, Khosa, Ahmad, & Bilal, 2016). Managers should therefore have regular talent retention conversations with employees to mitigate risk factors that can result in voluntary turnover intentions (Mokgojwa, 2019).

Research studies to date consistently relate TM to talent retention. The talent mindset of managers appears to be one of the main predictors of the turnover intentions of talented employees (Matobako & Barkhuizen, 2017). Other talent factors contributing to voluntary turnover intentions in the workplace include inadequate compensation (Theron et al., 2014), a lack of meaningful work (Saurombe, 2015), poor workforce planning, talent retention strategies and talent development opportunities (Masale, 2020) and inferior talent branding, talent deployment and talent engagement (Shipena, 2019). Lee and Jimenez (2010) found that a performance-based supporting supervision combined with a performance-based reward system reduced the likelihood of voluntary labour turnover. A study by Bussin and Thabethe (2018) showed that a monthly salary is mostly related to attracting, retaining and motivating employees:

**H2:** Talent management would be significantly negatively related to the voluntary turnover intentions of government employees

### Job satisfaction as a moderating variable between talent management and voluntary turnover intentions

Although job satisfaction is a consistent, intervening variable in many studies, research on the effect of job satisfaction in the TM-voluntary retention relation has yet to emerge. Masale (2020) found that a combination of positive, work-related outcomes (i.e. job satisfaction, hope, locus of control, meaning, productive organisational energy and organisational commitment) partially moderated the relationship between talent culture and the intention to quit. There is some evidence that job satisfaction can play a moderating role between TM dimensions and turnover intentions. A study by Turgut, Bekmezci and Ateş (2017) showed that job satisfaction partially moderated the relationship between servant leadership and employee turnover intentions. Kwaeng

et al. (2018) found that job and organisational satisfaction moderate the relationship between recognition and voluntary turnover intentions, as well as managing talent and voluntary turnover intentions.

In light of the above discussion, we predict that:

**H3:** Job Satisfaction moderates the relationship between talent management and voluntary turnover intentions of government employees

## Research design

### Research approach

A quantitative research approach was followed using surveys to collect data. A cross-sectional research design was adopted whereby data was collected at one point in time. Cross-sectional research is ideally suited to test the relationship between the variables in this study, which is TM, job satisfaction and voluntary turnover intentions (Field, 2019). This research falls within the positivist research paradigm. Positivism implies that the research methodology applied to collect data is objective or detached to measure variables and test hypotheses to derive causal explanations (Antwi & Kasim, 2015).

### Sampling

The head office of the respective institution was identified as the unit of analyses for this study. The researchers approached chief directors, directors, assistant directors, middle managers and the lower levels of staff to obtain a comprehensive overview of TM practices and their outcomes in the institution. The stratified random sampling technique used in the study resulted in a diverse group of respondents. Five hundred questionnaires were distributed to managers and employees at the head office. The total number of respondents was  $N = 208$ , which represents a 42% response rate. According to Nulty (2008), internal surveys generally receive a 30% – 40% response rate.

Most of the respondents in this study were female (56.3%), aged between 40 and 49 (42.3%), from the African ethnic group (82.7%), and Sepedi-speaking (16.3%). The respondents had a Bachelor's degree as their highest level of educational qualification (31.8%) and employed in operational positions (38%). The majority of the participants were employed in the institution for 6 and 10 years (38.5%), and employed in their current job for 6 and 10 years (45.7%), never been promoted (58.2%), and working between 31 h and 40 h per week (53.8%).

## Research method

### Measuring instruments

A TM measure (Barkhuizen, 2018a) was used to measure the participants' perceptions of the current application of TM practices. The TM measure consists of 48 items and measure eight TM practices. The TM practices include talent mindset, talent branding, talent onboarding and deployment, talent

engagement, talent development, talent performance management and recognition, talent compensation, and talent retention practices. Respondents were requested to indicate their responses on a six-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly Disagree (1)' to 'strongly agree (6)'. The questionnaire obtained acceptable reliabilities of  $\alpha$  ranging from 0.793 to 0.920 (Shipena, 2019).

A job satisfaction questionnaire (self-developed) was used to determine the level of job satisfaction with several aspects of the work itself, and the working environment. The questionnaire consisted of 10 items. Each item referred to a feature or factor that enforces or reinforces job satisfaction in the working environment. The questionnaire was distributed to subject matter experts to verify the face and content validity. The response choices offered for each item or statement is 'strongly disagree (1)' to 'strongly agree (6)'. The reliability of the questionnaire was established in the present study.

The final questionnaire used in the study was the employee retention questionnaire (Barkhuizen, 2018b). This consisted of up to six items and determined the employees' intentions to quit the institution. The respondents in the study were requested to rate the items on a six-point scale from 'strongly disagree (1)' to 'strongly agree (6)'. This questionnaire obtained an acceptable internal consistency of 0.921 (Shipena, 2019).

Biographical information such as gender, age, ethnicity, home language, highest educational qualification, job level, years of employment in current organisation and job, promotion opportunities and working hours were gathered from the respondents.

## Research procedure

The researchers obtained ethical clearance before the commencement of the study. The top management of the government institution granted permission to do the research. The researchers distributed the questionnaires both, as hard copies and electronically. The confidentiality of the respondents was maintained at all times.

## Statistical analyses

Statistical analysis was carried out using the SPSS software (SPSS Inc., 2019). The reliability and validity of the TM measure, job satisfaction questionnaire, and the voluntary turnover intention measures were determined using exploratory factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Pearson correlation analyses and hierarchical regression analyses were applied to determine the relationships between the variables in this study. The following guidelines (see Cohen, 1988) were used to determine the magnitude of the relationships where significance was obtained:  $r \leq 0.29$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$  (statistically significant relationship),  $0.30 \leq r \leq 0.49$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$  (practically significant, medium effect) and  $r \geq 0.50$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$  (practically significant, large effect). Multivariate analyses of variance were used to determine whether there

were any significant differences amongst demographic groups based on TM.

Hierarchical regression analyses were used to determine the moderating effect of job satisfaction between TM and voluntary turnover intentions. The guidelines of Baron and Kenny (1986) were followed. Four steps are involved. First, the predictor variable (i.e. TM) of voluntary turnover intentions is added; second the moderator variable (i.e. job satisfaction). Third, both the predictor and moderator variable are added. The final step involves adding the interaction variable (i.e. multiplying the predictor value with the moderation variable) together with the predictor and moderator variable. The result of the interaction variable must be significant for moderation to occur. In line with the recommendation of Cohen (2008), both the independent (predictor) and moderator variables were centred on reducing multi-collinearity.

## Ethical considerations

The research was subjected to ethical clearance at Southern Business School. At the time of the research, SBS did not have a system whereby ethics numbers were provided to students. Student numbers were used; refer to the attached letter. Ethical clearance number: 21510675

## Results

### Factor and reliability analyses

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity was performed on the three measures to determine its suitability for factor analyses. The measures obtained the following KMOs: TM, 0.930; job satisfaction, 0.860, and voluntary turnover, 0.902. The measures all complied with the guidelines of  $KMO \geq 0.60$  (Hair, Black, & Babin, 2010) and were subsequently subjected to an exploratory factor analyses.

### Talent management

The principal component factor analyses for the TM measure initially resulted in an eight-factor solution. The TM measure was subsequently subjected to a principal component factor analysis using varimax rotation. The results showed eight underlying factors for the TM measure: talent onboarding and deployment (factor 1), talent performance management and recognition (factor 2), talent mindset (factor 3), talent engagement (factor 4), talent development (factor 5), talent compensation (factor 6), talent branding (factor 7) and talent retention practices (factor 8). The factors explained 73.233% of the total variance. Eight items were deleted because of problematic loadings. The remaining items showed acceptable loadings of above 0.50.

### Job satisfaction

Principal components factor analyses resulted in one underlying factor for the job satisfaction measure. The factor

was labelled job satisfaction and explained 49.665% of the total variance. All items showed acceptable loadings.

### Voluntary turnover intentions

Principal components factor analyses resulted in one underlying factor for the voluntary turnover intention measure. The factor was labelled job satisfaction and explained 71.982% of the total variance. All items showed acceptable loadings.

The descriptive statistics and reliabilities of the measurements are reported in Table 1.

The results in Table 1 show acceptable to excellent Cronbach's alphas of  $\alpha \geq 0.70$  (Field, 2019) for the different factors. As regards the results on TM, about half of the participants experienced a lack of talent mindset in the institution. Also, the institution seems to lack opportunities for talent development, poor performance management practices and limited talent retention strategies. Almost 40% of the sample perceived inadequate talent compensation practices. The results further showed that more than 60% of the sample experienced a positive talent brand and felt that they are employed in a job that is in line with their skills, competencies, and experience. About 75% of the sample appeared to be engaged in their careers. The results further showed that about 45% of the sample was not satisfied with their jobs, whilst 68% of the sample considered quitting their jobs.

The next section reports on the testing of the hypotheses developed for this study.

### Testing of hypotheses

Pearson correlation analyses were used to test the first two hypotheses set for this study:

**H1:** Talent management would be a significant positive predictor of the job satisfaction of government employees

**H2:** Talent management would be significantly negatively related to the voluntary turnover intentions of government employees

The results of the hypotheses testing are reported in Table 2.

**TABLE 1:** Descriptive statistics and reliabilities of the measurements.

Measurement dimensions	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	$\alpha$
<b>Talent management practices</b>					
Talent mindset	3.1760	1.26430	-0.021	-1.042	0.912
Talent branding	4.1490	1.15157	-0.752	-0.053	0.871
Talent deployment and onboarding	4.1484	1.34165	-0.624	-0.449	0.939
Talent engagement	4.5500	1.13708	-1.066	0.716	0.875
Talent development	3.4238	1.27485	-0.269	-0.919	0.915
Talent performance management and recognition	3.0192	1.18878	0.071	-0.692	0.896
Talent compensation	3.8017	1.26574	-0.371	-0.552	0.853
Talent retention practices	3.5938	1.42853	-0.333	-0.841	0.732
<b>Job satisfaction</b>	3.4793	1.05354	-0.322	-0.483	0.882
<b>Voluntary turnover intentions</b>	4.1827	1.38643	-0.656	-0.245	0.917

SD, standard deviation.

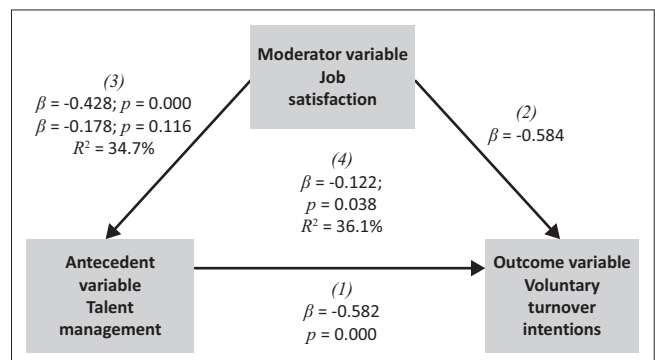
The results in Table 2 show that all TM practices (i.e. talent mindset, talent branding, talent onboarding and deployment, talent engagement, talent development, talent performance and recognition, talent compensation and talent retention) are practically, significantly and positively related to the job satisfaction. The effects were large.

The results support Hypotheses 1 that TM practices would be significantly positively related to job satisfaction.

The results further revealed that all TM practices (i.e. talent mindset, talent branding, talent onboarding and deployment, talent engagement, talent development, talent performance and recognition, talent compensation and talent retention) are practically, significantly and negatively related to the voluntary turnover intentions of staff. The effect of talent development was large and for the remainder of the TM practices were medium.

The results support Hypothesis 2 that that TM practices would be significantly negatively related to voluntary turnover intentions.

Hierarchical regression analyses were used to test the moderating effect of job satisfaction TM and voluntary turnover intention. A second-order factor analysis was performed on the TM measure (total variance explained, 65.298%). All variables were centred for the analyses. The results are reported in Figure 1.



**FIGURE 1:** Regression analyses: Talent management, job satisfaction and voluntary turnover intentions.



**TABLE 2:** Pearson correlation analyses between talent management, job satisfaction and voluntary turnover intentions.

Variables	Talent mindset	Talent brand	Talent deployment	Talent engagement	Talent development	Talent performance management	Talent compensation	Talent retention	Job satisfaction	Voluntary turnover
Talent mindset	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Talent brand	0.597** 0.000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Talent deployment	0.520** 0.000	0.515** 0.000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Talent engagement	0.460** 0.000	0.593** 0.000	0.593** 0.000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Talent development	0.591** 0.000	0.470** 0.000	0.720** 0.000	0.575** 0.000	-	-	-	-	-	-
Talent performance management	0.546** 0.000	0.495** 0.000	0.519** 0.000	0.462** 0.000	0.685** 0.000	-	-	-	-	-
Talent compensation	0.434** 0.000	0.416** 0.000	0.467** 0.000	0.339** 0.000	0.447** 0.000	0.532** 0.000	-	-	-	-
Talent retention practices	0.301** 0.000	0.403** 0.000	0.318** 0.000	0.341** 0.000	0.377** 0.000	0.541** 0.000	0.472** 0.000	-	-	-
Job satisfaction	0.619** 0.000	0.623** 0.000	0.685** 0.000	0.575** 0.000	0.702** 0.000	0.724** 0.000	0.634** 0.000	0.580** 0.000	-	-
Voluntary turnover	-0.403** 0.000	-0.432** 0.000	-0.383** 0.000	-0.369** 0.000	-0.506** 0.000	-0.481** 0.000	-0.437** 0.000	-0.447** 0.000	-0.548** 0.000	1 -

\*\*, Denotes significant relationships between the variables. Below are the cut-off points for statistical significance:

$r \leq 0.29$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$  (statistically significant relationship),  $0.30 \leq r \leq 0.49$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$  (practically significant, medium effect) and  $r \geq 0.50$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$  (practically significant, large effect).

The first step reveals a significant negative relationship between TM and voluntary turnover intentions ( $\beta = -0.582$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), an indication that weak TM practices are associated with higher voluntary turnover intentions. Talent management explained 33.9% of the variance in voluntary turnover intentions ( $R^2 = 0.339$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). The second step reveals a significant negative relationship between job satisfaction and voluntary turnover intentions ( $\beta = -0.584$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), an indication that employees with lower levels of job satisfaction would experience higher levels of voluntary turnover intentions. Job satisfaction explains 30.1% of the variance in organisational commitment ( $R^2 = 0.301$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). The third step in the moderation analyses yielded a significant prediction result for TM and voluntary turnover intentions ( $\beta = -0.428$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) but a non-significant prediction result for job satisfaction and voluntary turnover intentions ( $\beta = -0.178$ ;  $p = 0.116$ ). Talent management and job satisfaction (and its covariates) explained 34.7% of the variance in voluntary turnover intentions ( $R^2 = 0.347$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). The final step with the adding of the interaction variable (talent management  $\times$  job satisfaction) yielded a significant result ( $\beta = -0.122$ ;  $p = 0.038$ ), with a slight increase in the total variance explained ( $R^2 = 0.361$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Job Satisfaction, therefore, moderates the relationship between TM and voluntary turnover intentions.

Based on the above results, we accept Hypothesis 3 that job satisfaction moderates the relationship between TM and voluntary turnover intentions.

In this study, we were also interested to determine how the participants perceived TM practices based on their demographic characteristics. The results of the Manova analyses between TM and demographic variables are reported next.

The results in Table 3 show that significant differences exist between demographic groups and TM practices based on their job level. Regarding job level, post-hoc analyses revealed that middle management perceived a higher level of talent deployment than those employed on operational level ( $F_{[3,205]} = 4.127$ , partial eta, 0.058). The effect was small. The results further showed that senior management experienced a higher level of compensation compared to lower-level management and operational-level employees ( $F_{[3,205]} = 4.196$ , partial eta, 0.059]. The effect was small.

## Discussion

The main objective of this research was to determine the relationship between TM, job satisfaction and voluntary turnover intentions of employees in a selected South African government institution. We also explored the possible moderating effect of job satisfaction in the TM-voluntary turnover intentions relationship. Lastly, we investigated whether significant differences exist between the participants in their perceptions of TM practices based on their demographic characteristics (i.e. gender, age, ethnicity, home language, highest educational qualification, job level, years of employment in current organisation and job, promotion opportunities and working hours). This research was motivated by the fact that little knowledge currently exists on the application of TM practices in the context of the South African government itself and the outcomes thereof (i.e. job satisfaction and voluntary turnover intentions) on individual employees.

Concerning TM practices, the results showed that the government institution lacks the leadership talent mindset to recognise the value that talented people can add to the institution. According to Masale (2020) a lack of leadership talent mindset and drive undermine the creation of a talent culture and the strategic direction required to ensure the success



**TABLE 3:** Manova analyses between talent management and demographic variables.

Demographic variables	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gender	0.956	1.141	8.000	199.000	0.337	0.044
Home language	0.602	1.255	80.000	1207.287	0.069	0.061
Age	0.845	1.424	24.000	571.961	0.088	0.055
Highest educational qualification	0.796	1.445	32.000	724.407	0.055	0.055
Years of work in organisation	0.842	1.081	32.000	724.407	0.350	0.042
Years of work in current job	0.862	1.251	24.000	571.961	0.190	0.048
Promotion changes	0.888	1.308 <sup>b</sup>	16.000	342.000	0.189	0.058
Hours work	0.925	0.648	24.000	571.961	0.901	0.026
Job level	0.801	1.875	24.000	566.161	<b>0.007**</b>	0.071

\*\*, Indicate significant difference.

of the institution. Consequently, talented employees will not be able to function optimally in the workplace (Mokgojwa, 2019) and may seek employment opportunities elsewhere (Motabako & Barkhuizen, 2017). The critical effect of a leadership talent mindset in individual behaviours can, therefore, not be underestimated (Turgut et al., 2017; Zaharee et al., 2018).

In this study, a lack of career development opportunities also emerged as a problematic TM practice. This is an area of concern as career development is a critical factor in employees' decision to seek employment with a prospective employer (Lesenyeho, 2017; Saurombe et al., 2017). Moreover, as mentioned by Roman (2011), opportunities for career growth and development are some of the critical factors that drive the turnover intentions of employees. As with previous research, talent development was significantly related to voluntary turnover intentions, implying that employees are likely to leave the organisation because of a lack of career development and growth opportunities (Masale, 2020). Furthermore, poor talent development practices also significantly reduced the job satisfaction of employees (Hafez et al., 2017).

The management of talent performance emerged as an area of great concern in this study. About half of the participants experienced a mediocre application of performance management practices. Effective talent performance management practices are essential strategic tools to ensure that the strategic objectives of the organisations are met through the optimal performance of talent (Masri & Suliman, 2019). Moreover, the fair and trustworthy application of performance management systems and appraisal contributes to feelings of trust, belongingness and job satisfaction of talented employees (Altindağ et al., 2018). Our results showed that poor talent performance management had a direct impact on the job dissatisfaction of employees (see Hafez et al., 2017). Moreover, poor performance management also enhanced the voluntary turnover intentions of employees (see Lee & Jimenez, 2010). The recognition and rewarding of talent and a high-performance culture is, therefore, essential to retain talent (Rudhumbu et al., 2014).

The results showed that about 40% of the sample perceived inadequate talent compensation practices. Consequently, public sector institutions are at risk of talented employees being poached by the private sector because of higher salary offerings (Khan, 2018). Public sector compensation is already

a complicated bargaining process that involves a vast majority of stakeholders (Knies, et al., 2018). Institutions should, at a minimum, possess a properly assembled compensation structure, compensation procedures, and differentiation in types of rewards to retain key talent (Bryant & Allen, 2013). The results of this study support Senona (2017) in that inadequate compensation can reduce the job satisfaction of employees and enhance voluntary turnover intentions (Kwaeng et al., 2018; Theron et al., 2014). The results of this study also showed that senior management experienced better-structured compensation compared to lower-level management and operational-level employees. A possible explanation for this finding is that management earn higher salaries and incentives as they move up the ranks. Another reason can be found in the popular press that continues to highlight discrepancies in the remuneration of higher-level management. Schlechter et al. (2014) advise that institutions can benefit from introducing more compelling reward practices as a method to motivate employees at all job levels.

The participants furthermore highlighted a lack of retention strategies in the institution. These results are concerning as about 68% of the sample voluntarily considered quitting their jobs. As mentioned by Mokgojwa (2019), managers should have frequent talent retention conversations with talented individuals to ensure they are continually committed to the institution. In this study, a lack of talent retention strategies had a significant impact on the job satisfaction and voluntary turnover intentions of employees. In line with Lewis and Sequeira (2012), we argue that the design and implementation of employee retention strategies should be a skill and priority by management.

In this study, about 60% of the sample perceived a somewhat adequate talent brand and talent onboarding and deployment processes. The talent employer brand is essential to attract and retain key people and support the short- and long-term strategies of organisation (Wilska, 2014). The results of this study further showed that the perceived talent brand has a significant impact on the job satisfaction and voluntary turnover intentions of employees. Government institutions should therefore develop compelling talent value propositions to support the employment brand of the institution (Saurombe et al., 2017) that can foster positive work-related behaviours and prevent turnover.

Although most of the participants displayed a positive attitude towards talent onboarding and deployment, more attention should be devoted to expanding the effectiveness of these practices for the entire talent workforce. The induction of new talent as well as matching talent with the right positions and institutional culture is of considerable significance if institutions are to build a trust relationship with individuals and ensure optimal performance (see Caldwell & Peters, 2018; Kumar & Jain, 2012; Pike, 2014). The breach of the employer–employee trust relationship and subsequent psychological contract (see Molefi, 2015) at the start of a new incumbent's employment can translate into higher voluntary turnover intentions (Shipena, 2019) and undermine business continuity (Campbell & Hirsch, 2013; Muslim et al., 2012). In line with Senona (2017), we also found that a mismatch between employee–employer expectations as far as TM practices in the institution is concerned. Poor deployment significantly reduced the job satisfaction of talented employees. The regression analyses in this study revealed that onboarding and talent deployment practices have a spillover effect on the job satisfaction and subsequent voluntary turnover intentions of employees. These findings again emphasise the importance of a well-established onboarding process right at the start of the TM process to ensure the continued employment of talented employees. Middle management in this study reported a higher job-person match compared to lower-level employees. One can argue that management is more established in their positions whilst operational level employees still have to craft their career paths in the organisation. This assumption is open for speculation, and follow-up research is required to explain these findings.

A surprising result of this study is that employees seemed to be highly engaged in their jobs and willing to walk the extra mile for the institution. In line with Kotze (2018) the authors argue that institutional resources such as the relatively well implemented talented brand and talent onboarding practices could enhance talent engagement. The present study showed significant relationships between talent branding, talent onboarding and talent engagement.

Lastly, we found support that job satisfaction moderates the relationship between TM and voluntary turnover intentions (see Kwaeng et al., 2018). These results provide evidence that individual attitudes, in this case job satisfaction, can diminish the adverse consequences of weak TM for the individual and broader organisation by reducing voluntary labour turnover. The prevention of voluntary turnover is essential for the effectiveness and survival of government institutions (Ahmed et al., 2016; Pang & Lu, 2018).

### **Implications for human resource managers and practitioners**

The results of this research have important implications for HR managers and practitioners. The weak application of TM practices in this study highlights the call for HR

managers and practitioners to play a more active business partner role and ensure that TM becomes a strategic imperative for government institutions. As evidenced in the present study, the absence of adequately assembled TM practices contributed significantly to the voluntary turnover intentions of government employees. High labour turnover can diminish institutional effectiveness and sustainability and prevent government institutions from delivering essential services to the broader public. The lack of leadership mindset and support for TM requires from HR practitioners to educate government leaders on the strategic institutional importance of TM. Leadership talent mindset and commitment is pivotal to ensure institutional and broader societal efficiency through talented employees. A TM strategy that is aligned with the goals of the institution can also assist in eradicating the disconnect between the perceived effectiveness of TM practices between the different job levels in the government institution. A more integrated and strategic TM approach can foster an institutional culture of inclusivity that is essential for the enhancement of positive, work-related outcomes such as job satisfaction and talent retention.

### **Limitations and recommendations**

As with any research, this study also had some limitations. First, a cross-sectional research design was used, which limited the researchers to make cause and effect inferences over a more extended period. Longitudinal studies could be beneficial to determine the interrelationships between TM, job satisfaction, and voluntary turnover intentions over multiple periods to allow for the prediction of staff turnover in any give situation. This study yielded some exciting results that could not be explored because of its quantitative and objective nature. A mixed-method research approach using semi-structured interviews can determine, for example, the reasons behind the high work engagement levels of employees, whilst experiencing poor TM and leadership practices.

### **Conclusion**

The study emphasised the importance of TM in the productivity and sustainability of government institutions. The research and practice of TM has still to gain its full contextual potential. In this study, our focus was on the government in a developing context such as South Africa. Based on our findings, more research is required to understand TM in multiple, global, contextual domains. This will also allow for cross-cultural comparisons, and prepare government institutions more adequately to manage global talent effectively. Finally, government leaders are also encouraged to adopt a talent mindset that will instil a talent culture where talented individuals are allowed to add value and contribute to the success of the institutions.

## Acknowledgements

### Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

### Authors' contribution

N.B. constructed the article and did the statistical analyses  
B.G. collected the data and provided editorial inputs.

### Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

### Data availability

Data is available on request.

### Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in the article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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