

# A Conceptual Paper on Compensation and Benefits, Job Security, Work-Life Balance, Employee Retention and Localization in Oman

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The aim of this paper is to put forward a conceptual model about the effect of strategic human resource management antecedents, mainly highlighting compensation and benefits, work-life balance and job security on the localization (Omanization) policy. Also, it conceptualizes the role of employee retention in localization.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The paper explores existing literature on localization and strategic human resource management antecedents. Also, it reviews literature to come up with a conceptual framework regarding the link between strategic human resource management antecedents and employee retention within the literature.

**Findings:** This paper proposes that there is a positive relationship between strategic human resource management antecedents and staff turnover. Also, this paper demonstrates that there is a positive relationship between employee retention and localization.

**Research limitations/implications:** Empirical research ought to be carried out about the relationship between SHRM antecedents (compensation and benefits, job security and work-life balance and employee retention). Also, it is recommended an empirical study on the relation between employee retention and localization should be conducted.

**Practical implications:** This paper proposes a basis for designing a conceptual framework of strategic human resource management (SHRM) in implementing the localization policy which has potential for the successfulness of the policy in the private education sector.

**Originality/value:** The paper guides the private sector to implement the localization policy. Also, it helps the private education sector to become familiar with the strategic human resource management antecedents that help to enhance employee retention.

**Keywords:** Localization, Strategic human resource management, Compensation and Benefits, work-life balance, Job security, Employee retention.

## 1 Introduction

Localization in the workplace refers to a government policy which aims to replace expatriate positions with suitably qualified local people (Salih, 2010). Localization has been implemented in many countries and is seen as an important policy as it not only helps to reduce their unemployment problem, but also has a positive impact on other social problems such as theft (Forstenlechner, 2010). Furthermore, according to Swailes, Al Said & Al Fahdi (2012) a localization policy contributes to the enhance the standard of living of a nation's citizens.

Oman is a member in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries with a population of 4,617,927 million. Locals represent 2,738,629 and the number of expatriates is 2,732,489 (National Centre for Statistics and Information, 2020) and, according to the available statistics, the median age of the country's citizens is 25.6 years old (World Population, 2020). Also, Oman is one of the countries which relies mainly on oil resources. However, due to the decline of oil resources and a dynamically increasing manpower, the authorities has developed in place development plans that focus on diversification, industrialization, and privatization. The main objectives of these plans are to reduce its dependence on oil and to create more jobs for Omani citizens.

A localization (Omanization) policy was introduced in Oman in 1988 (Al-Lamki, 2000); the main focus of which is on replacing expatriates with Omani people. This policy impacts on employment in all sectors (Matherly, 2014). Thus, Al-Lamki (2000) stresses the significance of corporation and collaboration cross all government organizations in the management of localization (Omanization). Generally, this policy has succeeded in the public sector, achieving a success rate of almost 70 per cent; for example, in the health care sector 67% of nurses in 2010 were Omani (Ali & Alani, 2017).

On the other hand, expatriates represent around 90% of the total manpower in the private sector (National Centre for Statistics and Information, 2015), (Moideenkutty, Murthy, & Al-Lamky, 2016). Thus, the private sector represents a high number of employment opportunities in which Omanis could find secure employment (Matherly, 2014). Indeed, replacing foreign workers with locals in this sector remains one of the government's priorities (Moideenkutty et al., 2016). Therefore, this study investigates the strategic human resource management antecedents on localization.

Oman is a member in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries that applies a localization policy. Many authors point out that implementing a localization (Omanization) policy is quite complicated, especially in the private sector ( Ali & Alani, 2017). The main reason for this is that local people favor working in the government sector as working conditions are more convenient there than they are in the private sector (Al-Waqfi & Forstenlechner, 2010). Specifically, the government sector is likely to offer a higher salary, better benefits, professional development opportunities, lifelong employment and shorter working hours, which are not provided in the private sector (Matherly, 2014).

Further, from the employer's perspective hiring an expatriate will save them money, as an Omani's salary is higher than an expatriate's (Al-Balushi, 2018). Apart from the financial benefits, foreign

workers are generally more skilled (Moideenkytt et al., 2016); furthermore, Al-Waqfi & Forstenlechner (2010) claimed that due to negative stereotypes about the attitude and behaviour at work of local employees, employers in the private sector were reluctant to hire them. However, Al-Waqfi & Forstenlechner (2012) also stated that an employee's attitude could be improved by clearly setting out the rules and regulations of the company. The evidence from this previous literature shows that problems with localization are ongoing and that the Omanization policy is not being appropriately implemented in many organizations; therefore, a study of localization in the workforce is still relevant, and research needs to be carried out to explore this problem further.

Ali & Alani (2017) did a study to analyze the factors that prevent implementing the localization (Omanisation) policy in the private sector, such as in construction, retail and tourism, and found that low salaries and benefits, no career development, job insecurity and work pressure are the main reasons that Omani people do not opt for private sector employment. Al-Hamadi, Budhwar, & Shipton (2007) emphasized that the main challenges concern young Omanis' unwillingness to take up certain positions in the private sector where the work conditions are challenging, and salaries are low. A study conducted by Al-Lamki (1998) found that over 65% of Omani students in the Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) prefer to work in the public sector, they are reluctant to work in the private sector because of salaries, workers' compensation, vacations, retirement plans, social security, educational assistance, workers' compensation, sick leave and working hours.

Furthermore, Al-Balushi (2018) argued that continuity and job security, turnover and retention, working conditions and education all have a serious impact on localization (Omanization) in the hotel industry, here it is the nature of the work that has failed to bring in local employees. Therefore, it is particularly challenging to implement the localization (Omanization) policy and at the same time to develop a competent and productive Omani workforce in order to limit dependence on expatriate expertise in some sectors.

Ali & Alani (2017) stressed that the intentions behind the high turnover rate of Omanis in the private sector are the salary structure, allowances, and promotion system. Where the public sector is more commensurate with the experience and qualification of the employees, this is not the case in the private sector. Hence, employees tend to leave the workplace when there are a lack of career opportunities, poor working conditions and low remuneration (Rawat, 2013).

Employee retention is an important thing that helps organizations to maintain local staff and helps the localization (Omanization) policy to succeed. Employees in the private sector have different characteristics (gender, age, education etc.) and their reasons behind remaining in the workplace will differ accordingly, they may attach more importance to remuneration, job security, work-life balance or career development; therefore, employees' perceptions and expectations from the role may differ from one employee to another.

Many scholars have conducted studies in the hotel industry to identify the factors that help to retain employees and implement the localization (Omanization) policy successfully and have identified several factors: work conditions; leadership; career path; job security; compensation; benefits and a work-life balance. Therefore, this paper expands upon the current literature by integrating SHRM in the context of localization.

## 2 Literature review

### 2.1 Localization in the workforce

Localization has been defined from various perspectives. According to Law et al. (2009) localization is the process involved in the corporate structure of a setting that replaces expatriate managers with local employees. Salih (2010) further clarifies the concept by stating that in localization positions are filled and performed by local employees who are qualified, and it was the lack of qualified locals which led to expatriates initially filling these positions. This shows that providing they are qualified, local employees can replace the work that was previously carried out by expatriates.

Oman is like other Gulf states that have aimed to increase the participation of qualified locals and ensure positions for them in the labour market; therefore, in 1988 the government introduced a localization policy, namely: Omanization (Al-Lamki, 2005). This policy seeks to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency in both sectors, the public and private (Al-Hamadi et al., 2007). Moreover, the main goal of Omanization was to decrease the country's dependence on expatriates and to replace them with local labour to help reduce the number of local jobseekers (Das & Gokhale, 2009).

Omanization targets were achieved in the public sector in the early years. In this sector in 2018, Omanization reached 85% (National Centre for Statistics and Information, 2018). Hence, this sector provided incentives and security to local workers such as better working conditions, better salaries and pension benefits at the end of service.

On the other hand, lately the public sector has shown an inability to absorb Omani labour because the demand for positions is higher than the supply, which has caused a serious problem of unemployment (Al-Hinai, Senthilkumar, & Matipa, 2011). In response to this, the private sector has become a significant source of employment for locals. To increase employment ratios for Omani nationals, the government founded the High Committee for Vocational Training, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. In addition, in 2002 the government founded a new Ministry of Manpower. Moreover, in May 2003, the new Labor Law was adopted (AlBayrakoglu, 2010). Despite the government's effort to increase the number of locals in the private sector, in 2018 85% of workers were expatriates and only 15% represented Omanis, based on the National Centre for Statistics and Information figures, 2018 (National Centre for Statistics and Information, 2018). According to Al-Hamadi et al. (2007), there are several reasons for poor recruitment of nationals in the private sector in Oman. The primary reason is employees' interest in government jobs for their secured employment and other incentives such as wages and benefits, working conditions, working hours and retirement benefits. The second reason comes from the employers' perspective, that is their reluctance to recruit locals as they are unmotivated, less productive and show a higher rate of absenteeism.

Many researchers have studied localization. For example, Moideenkutty, Murthy & Al-Lamky (2016) conducted a study in Oman to test the relationship between localization HRM practices and financial performance. Four items were developed for this study: a training programme; an orientation programme; supervisors were evaluated on their efforts to build the competencies of Omani employees and regular "Omanization Reviews" to evaluate the achievement of Omanization endeavors. The findings were positive after controlling the size, type of firm, the average price-earnings ratio of the industry and localization (Omanization) levels.

As tourism generates economic benefits, another study was done in Oman to investigate the issues that affect localization (Omanization) in the hotel industry. The findings show that the issues that

affect localization are: working conditions; continuity; turnover and retention; skills gaps and shortage; social attitudes (socio-cultural issues) and job security; education and training; and the image of a hospitality occupation (Al-Balushi, 2018). Moreover, Jabeen, Friesen & Ghoudi (2018) investigated the quality of the work-life balance and how it influences job satisfaction and turnover. The relationship between the work-life balance and job satisfaction was positive. However, there was a negative relationship between the work-life balance and turnover intention. This study emphasized the strategic human resource management (SHRM) antecedents that affect employee decisions on whether to leave or stay the workplace and their impact on the localization policy.

## 2.2 Strategic human resource management (SHRM)

Strategic human resource management (SHRM) refers to the process that requires human resource functions to be associated with the strategic objectives of the firm (Bratton and Gold, 2007). SHRM is considered a strategic approach to manage human resources in the organization (Wei, 2006). Also, SHRM defined as “the pattern of planned human resource deployments and activities intended to enable an organization to achieve its goals”(Wright & McMahan, 1992). Basically, it involves general HRM practices, for example, career management, compensation and benefits and job security which mainly focus on employee performance and organization performance (Russo, Mascia, & Morandi, 2018; Kaye, 1999).

Strategic human resource management (SHRM) proves that there is a transformational change in the field of human resource management. SHRM mainly focuses on the role of human resource management systems in organizational performance. It concerns the positive positioning of human resources to attain a competitive advantage. Therefore, successful human resource policies and practices improve the performance in various areas as productivity, quality, and financial performance (Cania, 2014).

Further, SHRM focuses on employees as an essential resource for the organization to gain a competitive advantage whilst at the same time enhancing organizational performance (Katou & Budhwar, 2006, 2007; Pfeffer, 1994). Also, organizations view employees as a unique source, which leads to high performance (Dello et al., 2018). Thus, firms have to manage their human resources effectively and efficiently to meet their goals, as the main purpose of SHRM is to enhance an organization’s performance through their employees. Accordingly, successful SHRM leads to meeting organizational requirements. It can be more effective if the organizations manage their human resource practices and policies that deliver the suitable number of people with the right skills to the organization (Çalışkan, 2010).

Çalışkan (2010) highlights several SHRM antecedents that impact the organizational performance. The SHRM functions are training and development, leadership, work-life balance, job security and job and work design employees (Çalışkan, 2010). Moreover, SHRM involves the general antecedents of HRM. For example, recruitment, selection, career management, compensation and benefits, job security and work life balance. These antecedents concerning both employee outcome and organizational performance (Haque, 2020). According to Delery and Doty (1996) SHRM has different antecedents that help organizations to reach their goals and objectives. The antecedents are job security, work design, career management and compensation and benefits. The organizations that aim to strategically manage their human resources should pay attention to these

antecedents: recruitment and selection of qualified staff; career management; leader support; work-life balance; motivating employees and job security (Cania, 2014).

### 2.2.1 Compensation and benefits

Compensation refers to the reward that employees obtain in exchange for their output in the workplace (Holt, 1993). According to Ivancevich & Glueck (1986), compensation given by the organization to their employees for their effective performance consists of financial and non-financial rewards. In other words, compensation can be defined as the amount of money that an employer provides to the employees in exchange for their time, effort and skills (Christofferson & King, 2006; Erasmus & Schenk, 2008; Mabaso & Dlamini, 2017). Salisu, Chinyio, & Suresh (2015) also point out that compensation is the reward that employees receive for their contribution or performance in the organization. Meanwhile, Berber et al. (2017) stated that compensation could be seen as a systematic approach offered by the employer to their employees in terms of monetary value, or any other benefits, in exchange for the employee's work and services.

Further, an organization can offer any form of reward other than salaries or wages that are paid for in whole or in part by the employer, known as employee benefits (Soon, Brass, Heinze, & Haynes, 2008). Employee benefits can also be in an indirect form, such as a health insurance plan, or shares and retirement plans (Cole, 2002). The compensation package is divided into direct and indirect forms of compensation; the wage/salary aspect is considered direct compensation, but a fringe benefit is considered indirect compensation. Direct and indirect compensation are integrated into a package to enhance employee productivity and organizational achievement (Cascio, 2013). Some companies use viable compensation and benefits packages which include salary, bonuses, stock options, retirement packages and traditional health insurance to retain employees (Iqbal, Guohao, & Akhtar, 2017). Furthermore, Iqbal et al. (2017) stress that when benefit programmes broaden beyond retirement programmes and the traditional health insurance they become more worthy to employees.

Hina, Zamir & Nudrat (2014) viewed employee benefits as any benefits that the organization offers to employees as an add on to their salary. As such, benefits could include health insurance, income protection, savings and retirement programme that provide security for employees as well as their families (Mabaso & Dlamini, 2017). Further, Mabaso & Dlamini (2017) pointed out that compensation could also include fixed and flexible payments tied to performance levels. According to Erasmus & Schenk (2008), compensation involves financial and non-financial rewards that employees receive from the employer as part of organizational objectives. Nabi, Al, Ahmed, & Rahman (2017) stated that compensation is a sum of all rewards that employees receive in return for their service in the workplace.

Employees are a vital resource to achieve organizational goals and objectives (Mabaso & Dlamini, 2017). Therefore, any organization must focus not only on capital investment but also its employees, who are seen as the fundamental source of improvement to gain competitive advantage (Tella, Ayeni, & Popoola, 2007). Thus, employee compensation is amongst the significant practices of strategic human resource management; hence, employers need to attract, retain and motivate employees (Absar, Azim, Balasundaram, & Akhter, 2010).

### 2.2.2 The work-life balance

The work-life balance refers to "...the relationship between the institutional and cultural times and spaces of work and non-work in societies where income is predominantly generated and distributed

through labour markets." (Felstead et al., 2002, p.56). Therefore, a work-life balance helps to improve the resilience and self sovereignty of the worker in the workplace in discussing their attention (time) and attendance in the workplace (Gregory & Milner, 2009). According to Clark (2000) the work-life balance defined as proper performance at work and home with a lowest amount of role conflict.

A work-life balance is about finding the balance between an individual's work and their life (i.e. life outside work) and at the same time feeling relaxed with work and non-work commitments (Igbinomwanhia, Iyayi, & Iyayi, 2012). Moreover, a work-life balance is considered as one of the critical factors to enhance employee satisfaction. Therefore, many companies see the importance of a work-life balance, as it helps to decrease work-family conflict, reduce employee stress, improve employee retention, job satisfaction and a better life balance (Jaharuddin & Zainol, 2019; Susi & Jawaharrani, 2011).

Harrington & Ladge (2009, p.3) support this, stating: Work-life programmes that offer better balance operate in a very specific way that success at home, at work, and in the society are not competing but complementary priorities. Hence, a work-life balance can be seen as person seeking to maintain a balance between work and life which makes the person satisfied (Agha, Azmi, & Irfan, 2017). A work-life balance can be further defined as the ability of the person to find a suitable rhythm that combines their work with their non-work responsibilities, activities and aspirations regardless of age or gender (Felstead et al., 2002).

Shravanthi, Deshmukh, & Deepa (2015) defined the work-life balance as when people have a rate of control over how, where, and when they work. It can be achieved when a person's rights are fulfilled both inside and outside paid work, when it is accepted and respected as being to the mutual benefit of the person, business and society. Therefore, a work-life balance helps to improve the worker autonomy and flexibility in negotiating their presence and attention (time) in the workplace.

### 2.2.3 Job security

Job security is seen as: "...staff continuing to work for a company with no diminution of seniority, pay, pension rights, and other factors." (Meltz, 1989, pp. 149-60). Similarly, Kaliyamoorthy, Shibami, & Nusari (2018) stated that job security is an important function in binding employees with employers. Clearly, employees prefer to leave the workplace when their position is not secure. Lucky, Minai & Rahman (2013) defined job security as an employee's ability to maintain their job and to avoid unemployment. Moreover, it can be seen as the ability to eliminate fear to lose job. Job security, in fact, is important not only for the employees but also for the employer as it helps to retain existing employees and lessen recruitment expense (Senol, 2011). In addition, Brockner et al. (1992, p. 413) define job security as: "...having power and control in a job setting and a guarantee for job future.". In contrast, job insecurity is: "...an involuntary and fundamental fear of losing one's job." (Cheng & Chan, 2008, p.27). Therefore, job security can be utilized as a motivational factor to enhance employee performance and meet organizational goals.

James (2012) stated that job security refers to an assurance to employees to continue in his work due to the general economic status quo in the state. Mainly, it is caring about how the person will keep his/her job (Adebayo & Lucky, 2012). Moreover, job security refers to an employee's ability

to avoid unemployment and to keep their job (Lucky et al., 2013). Additionally, it can be defined as the ability to reduce an employee's panic to lose their jobs (Senol, 2011). Also, according to Herzberg (1968) job security refers to the degree that institutions offer stable positions to their staff. Hence, when employees are in a form of stable employment in the workplace, it can be considered as having job security.

Also, it can be identified as the extent to which a person expects to remain in the job for a longer period (Bibi, Ahmad, & Majid, 2016). Interestingly, De Witte (2005) defines job insecurity as the risk of unemployment.

### 2.3 Employee retention

Many researchers have defined employee retention. Employee retention can be viewed as when an organization encourages employees to remain in the workplace for a more extended period (Das, 2013). Maertz & Campion (1998, p. 49- 81) expressed the view that regarding employee retention: "...relatively less turnover research has focused specifically on how an employee decides to remain with an organization and what determines this attachment...retention processes should be studied along with quitting processes.". Also, employee retention can be stated as: "...an obligation to continue to do business or exchange with a particular company on an ongoing basis." (Zineldin, 2000, p.28). Generally, organizations today put great effort into retaining qualified employees because it is challenging to find. (Das, 2013).

Moreover, employee retention can be defined as a way of keeping qualified staff within the organization (Hughes & Rog, 2008). Hence, employee retention can be seen as a process where organizations establish an environment that motivates employees to stay longer (Singh & Dixit, 2011). Employee retention can also be defined as the practices and policies that organizations implement to prevent an employee from leaving their job (Neog, 2015). Schneider (1987) stated that employee retention is the best practice organizations can follow if they want to retain talented employees with valuable experience when it is challenging to find a replacement in the employment market. Further, employee retention can be described as the ability to hold on to employees for longer than their competitors (Johnson, 2000). Cutler (2001) has argued that employee retention is the primary requirement in any organization in keeping motivated and dedicated human resources staff. This is due to retaining existing staff, rather than hiring new staff, being critical for organizational success. As supported by Walker (2001), retaining employees is about controlling and keeping talented employees' in the organization, as it is the necessary means of achieving competitive advantage among organizations.

It is worth mentioning that Steel et al. (2002) indicated that the reasons that help to keep employees in the workplace are not the same reasons that make them leave. Furthermore, Kossivi, Xu & Kalgora (2016, p.154-164) pointed out that employee retention is: "...a technique adopted by businesses to maintain an effective workforce and at the same time meet operational requirements.". In addition, employee retention refers to the organization's effort to create an environment that encourages staff to stay in the organization by having such policies and practices that address their different needs and wants (Kossivi et al., 2016). According to Akila (2012), stated that employee retention is the process that employees motivated to remain in the workplace for many years. Similarly, Singh & Dixit (2011), employee retention can be seen as different practices that allow employees adhere to an institution for a more extended period.

Naturally, satisfied employees will stay in the workplace for a longer period because they feel their job is more pleasant and enjoyable (Neog, 2015). According to Taplin, Winterton & Winterton (2003) and Amadasu (2003) when suitable employee retention strategies are implemented by organizations, the employees stay in the workplace for the flourishing accomplishment of organizational goals. Apart from employee retention, another important element that needs to be further considered is retaining the valued skills of employees (Acton & Golden, 2003). Although, retaining qualified and skilled employees can be quite challenging within the business environment. Due to this, organizations adopt strategies to enhance employee motivation, engagement, as well as employee retention (Buck & Watson, 2002).

### 3 Hypothesis Development

This paper proposes hypotheses related to strategic human resource management (compensation and benefits, work-life balance and job security), employee retention and localization. Therefore, the following hypothesis are developed:

*Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between compensation and benefit and employee retention.*

*Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between a work-life balance and employee retention.*

*Hypothesis 3: There is a positive relationship between job security and employee retention.*

*Hypothesis 4: There is a positive relationship between employee retention and localization.*

*Hypothesis 5: Employee retention mediates the relationship between compensation and benefits and the localisation policy.*

*Hypothesis 6: Employee retention mediates the relationship between the work-life balance and localisation (Omanization).*

*Hypothesis 7: Employee retention mediates the relationship between job security and localisation (Omanization).*

### 4 Methods

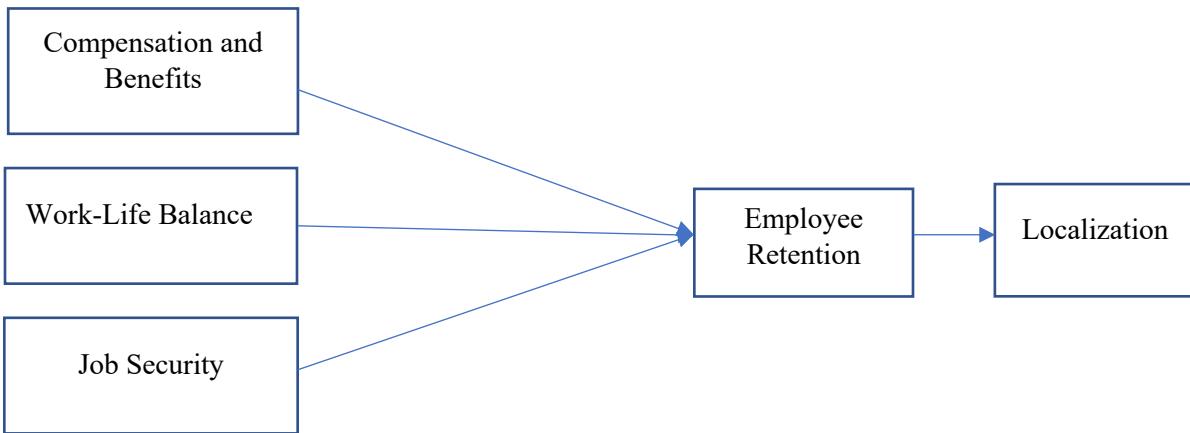
The methodology used for this paper is based on a systematic review of the literature on the localization and SHRM antecedents. This paper mainly focuses on localization in the workforce. Hence, it concentrates on three SHRM antecedents: compensation and benefits; work-life balance and job security. Therefore, keywords were applied to find related articles on the localization and SHRM antecedents. Also, content was focused upon while searching for reliable journal and book chapters from valid sources. Then, the results were sorted into categories related to the relationship between strategic human resources management antecedents and employee retention as well as the relationship between employee retention in localization.

### 5 Findings

From the systematic literature review carried out, the main finding of this study shows that antecedents of SHRM could positively relate to localization. Therefore, this paper conceptualized the model as in the diagram below:

*Conceptual framework of the study*

SHRM antecedents



Compensation and benefits are considered as significant in SHRM and refers to the payment that employees receive based on their contribution to the organization in terms of their performance (Rambur, McIntosh, Palumbo, & Reinier, 2005). Compensation is essential in order to attract, motivate and retain qualified employees (Mabaso & Dlamini, 2017). As supported by Ibrahim & Boerhaneoddin (2010), compensation can help to encourage workers to stay in the workplace for a more extended period. Moreover, Bibi, Ahmad & Majid (2016) pointed out that the fundamental purpose behind an individual's work is the compensation which helps to inspire, attract, and retain skilled employees. Additionally, proper compensation and benefits helps to retain employees and leads to job satisfaction, loyalty and commitment (Mabaso & Dlamini, 2017). Based on these previous studies, it can be concluded that there is a positive relationship between compensation and benefits and job satisfaction, see for example Bakan & Buyukbese, 2013; Judge, Piccolo, Podsakoff, Shaw, & Rich, 2010. Therefore, to ensure employee retention an organization needs to be transparent regarding the payment. Also, salaries must be matched with employees' effort and performance (George, 2015). According to Pullan & Lorbergs (2001), as long as benefits, such as housing allowances and proper medical aid, accommodation fees and travelling fees, are aligned to employees' needs employee satisfaction will be high. Thus, employee retention can be directly influenced by compensation and benefits (Luna-Arcas & Camps, 2008). The previous studies which have discussed the role of compensation and benefits in enhancing employee retention have found that compensation and benefits have a positive relationship with employee retention.

Nowadays, the work-life balance is of significant concern in today's business world. Without it being offered in the workplace, financial payments not sufficient to retain employees for a long period. This is substantiated by Grover & Crooker (1995), who point out that employee commitment will be high if they can achieve the correct balance between work and family responsibilities. Employees questioned on this subject articulated a lower intent to leave the workplace. Ellenbecker's (2004) study revealed that employees tend to seek resilience that will let them maintain fair equity between their personal and professional lives. This balance would be likely to increase employees' commitment in the workplace (George, 2015). Hence, a positive balance between work and personal life in organizations helps to improve employees retention (Leners, Roehrs, & Piccone, 2006). Moreover, Kumar & Patel (2017) pointed out that

there is a direct relationship between employee retention and work-life balance, Karatepe (2013) confirms this by stating that an employee's intention to quit their job may be reduced by offering emotional support through providing a work-life balance. The above studies focus on the relationship between work-life balance and employee retention and show that there is a positive relationship between work-life balance and employee retention.

Job security is considered to be one of the retention strategies which encourages employees to hold on their jobs in their organization and helps to promote positive behaviour in employees, such as self-confidence, which allows them to participate to the organizational goals. In this regard, any policies and practice that enhance job security are the right strategies to generate employee retention (Gberekvie, 2009; Osibanjo, Adeniji, Falola, & Heirsmac, 2014). Employees cited good interpersonal relationships, a competitive salary, a friendly working environment, and job security as key motivational factors that influenced their retention in the workplace (Samuel & Chipunza, 2009). Onwuemene & Oni (2017) claim that to encourage employees to remain for the maximum period, an organization should take a course of actions to meet its employees' needs, such as appropriate rewards, job security and training and development. Certain variables are crucial in influencing an employee's decision to stay in the workplace, such as training and development, a competitive salary package, recognition/rewards for excellent performance and job security (Nwokocha & Iheriohanma, 2012; Samuel & Chipunza, 2009). In addition, Hassan et al. (2011) found that there is a positive relationship between employee retention and job security. Based on the above discussion, according to previous studies there is a positive relationship between job security and employee retention.

Retaining employees is considered as critical to the success of any organization, as it helps to ensure increased product sales, satisfied colleagues and the practical implementation of policies and organizational strategies (Kumar & Mathimaran, 2017). Unfortunately, many organizations in the UAE localization (Emiratization) policy engage in costly one-time initiatives rather than pursuing a step-by-step approach to allow it to succeed (Mellahi, 2007). The strategic implementation of localization programmes needs experts in HRM to make sure that once recruited, locals are helped to develop themselves effectively, whilst at the same time retention interventions can be targeted at high-potential nationals (Scott-Jackson, Porteous, Gurel, & Rushent, 2014). Lynton (1999) emphasized that in order for the localization policy to succeed, an organization must not only attract local employees, but support them. This is supported by Law, Wong & Wang (2004), who claimed that if a localization policy is one of the business objectives, then retention of local employees and their performance are priorities. However, there are many challenges that prevent localization success, organizations need to improve confidence among local staff, which will, in turn, help to increase retention rates (Pegram, Falcone, & Kolios, 2018; Selmer, 2003). Forstenlechner (2008) and Rees, Mamman & Braik (2007) stress that to measure the success of a localization policy in an organization, the measurement should not only be by the percentage of nationals in the workforce but by the retention rates of locals in the organization. A good retention programme helps to retain developed local managers and at the same time will help to increase a company's competitiveness (Law et al., 2004). Although localization helps to strengthen the ethics of local staff, it also significantly helps to enhance the retention of local talent (Kim & Kim, 2017). Based on the above discussion, it can be said that there is a positive relationship between employee retention and localization.

Employee retention is seen as an important strategy that organizations can implement (Buck & Watson, 2002), one which mainly endeavors to motivate staff to stay in the organization for the maximum duration of time (Gomes et al., 2011). Olowu & Adamolekun (2005) emphasized that

employee retention can help any organization in managing and securing a competent human resource. This is beneficial for all organizations (Akila, 2012) as it leads to an organization achieving a competitive advantage (Walker, 2001). Employee retention is developed based on compensation and benefits, work-life balance and job security.

Compensation and benefits are considered as an important factor that helps to enhance employee retention. Additionally, organizations tend to use compensation packages to retain employees who help to improve organizational productivity and performance. Further, organizations that want to achieve their goals and objectives take care of employee compensation and benefits, as inadequate compensation and benefits affect employee satisfaction, performance and decreases employee absenteeism (Feraro-Banta & Shaikh, 2017). According to Werner et al. (2016), employers can support its organization's business strategies by offering compensation and benefits that help to shape a company's culture. This means that any strategy or policy organizations want to implement successfully should offer good compensation and benefits. From the previous discussion, compensation and benefits are considered as a vital factor for the employment decision. Also, employee retention is important in enhancing the relationship between compensation and benefits and a localization policy. Therefore, employee retention helps to make the relationship between compensation and benefits and the localization policy (Omanization) stronger.

The work-life balance, as explained earlier, supports employees to achieve a balance between organizational commitment and their personal responsibilities. Besides, a work-life balance helps employees to make a greater commitment to their job, gives them job satisfaction and helps them to perform better in their role (Igbinomwanhia et al., 2012). Hence, it is beneficial to the employee-organization relationship, which leads to achieving organizational goals as well as high employee retention (Garg & Yajurvedi, 2018; Lazar, Osoian, & Ratiu, 2010). A study that was conducted in the UK found that when employees have a good work-life balance they are more likely to stay in the workplace, manage their tasks, are more loyal and achieve high productivity, all of which helps organizations to implement their strategies and policies effectively (Igbinomwanhia et al., 2012; Ojo, Salau, & Falola, 2014). Further, companies can obtain economic benefits by offering a good work-life balance, as many companies suffer from direct and indirect costs because of a high employee turnover (Harhara, Singh, & Hussain, 2015). A good work-life balance is considered as an essential factor to retain employees, and one which will help to meet localization goals. Thus, employee retention generates the relationship between a good work-life balance and localization (Omanization).

Job security, as has been defined above, refers to an assurance to employees that they can remain in the organization, even when there are economic issues in the country (James, 2012). According to Senol (2011), job security plays a vital role in both the working and social life of employees as it helps them contribute to maintaining peaceful labour relations, increasing organizations' productivity and protecting social balance and values. Further, job security helps to improve positive morale and attitude (confidence) in employees and enables them to contribute their level best to the organizational goals and policies (Onwuemene & Oni, 2017). Regarding this, employee performance is improved by promoting the feeling of job security in the workplace (Gberevbie, 2009; Nwokocha & Iheriohanma, 2012; Osibanjo et al., 2014). Klopotan, Buntak & Drozdek (2016) claimed that the most critical parameters of employee loyalty and retention are job security and a regular salary. Moreover, organizations that promote job security find that it has helped to reduce employee turnover and absenteeism (Adeoye & Fields, 2014). According to Al-Ali, (2008), employees in the public sector receive have greater job security, higher salaries, work fewer hours, and more generous holidays compared to the majority of employees in the private sector.

Therefore, employers in the public sector achieve high employee retention because of the job security offered to their employees compared to employees who work in the private sector. Further, employees in the public sector have a greater sense of self-confidence and contribute maximally to their organization's goals. In other words, when employees perceive threats to their job security, they may not put in their best effort for the achievement of organizational goals and objectives, and they may decide to resign from their position (Akpan, 2013). Job security helps to enhance not only employee retention in the workplace, but also helps to improve their performance.

In general, employee retention will be high either in the public sector or in the private sector when there is job security. Consequently, employee retention helps to strengthen the relationship between job security and localization (Omanization). Therefore, employee retention mediates the relationship between compensation and benefits, work-life balance, job security and localization (Omanization).

## 6 Discussion and Conclusion

Localization is a policy that aiming to enhance the work opportunities for locals. This policy proved to be successful in the public sector in Oman. However, the private sector involves more than 80% of the expatriate which would offer more job chances for locals. In private education sector the total number of local academies are 690 where the expatriates are 2248. This figure reveals that there is a problem in implementing the localization (Omanization) policy.

This paper suggested three SHRM antecedents mainly compensation and benefits, work-life balance and job security that could help to enhance the employee retention at the workplace especially in the private sector. Compensation and benefits are considered as one of the essential antecedents to attract, retain and enhance organizational performance and profit. Iqbal, Guohao, & Akhtar (2017) who point out that organizations that offer a higher level of benefits are more attractive. Hence, the employer should determine the best type of offer that they can provide to employees by comparing them with the offers made by other companies and thereafter adjust the provided salary accordingly. Therefore, organizations should offer a proper compensation and benefits plan for the employees to encourage them to stay at the workplace.

Moreover, a work-life balance is seen as an important antecedent under SHRM. This antecedent helps employees to find a balance between their work and family life responsibilities at the same time without any stress. As a result, employees will also maintain their mental and physical health. In addition, Loan-Clarke et al. (2010) observed that if any firm facilitates for employees the possibility to carry out family obligations the retention of employees increases. Therefore, a work-life balance is important for many people to make the employment decision.

Hence, job security refers to a stable position where employees perceive a sense of security. Also, it can be related to the assurance of not losing the job and remaining at the workplace for a longer period. Insecure jobs leads to a loss of talent. A study conducted by Samuel & Chipunza (2009) found that job security and employee retention are associated. It is clear evidence that employees prefer to leave their job when their organization does not offer secure employment (Kaliyamoorthy et al., 2018). These antecedents help to enhance employee retention at the workplace.

Based on this comprehensive literature review discussion it was concluded that implementing SHRM antecedents (compensation and benefits, work-life balance and job security) would help organizations to implement policies successfully and to achieve the organizational goals and objectives. Therefore, employee retention is seen as a vital component for implementing a localization policy. These antecedents are considered as the key factors in employees' decisions

to apply for and keep positions. Thus, organizations should pay particular attention to these antecedents which encourage employees to remain for a longer period at the workplace especially in the private sector.

## 7 Theoretical Implications

The theoretical contribution of this study is to highlight the strategic human resources management (SHRM) antecedents that help to enhance employee retention as well as the implementation of the localization policy successfully. Compensation and benefits is one of the SHRM antecedents, it is seen as an important antecedent as it helps to attract and retain the right talent (Dessler & Varrkey, 2005). Moreover, employee turnover can be reduced when employees have a good work-life balance (Shravanthi et al., 2015). Job security seen as one of the factors that organizations provide to encourage employees to stay at the workplace (Barbara & Samuel, 2012). All these antecedents help to enhance employee retention at the workplace. Amadasu (2003) point out that employees stay in the workplace to achieve organizational goals and policies. According to various studies that have been conducted in the field of SHRM, the three SHRM antecedents: compensation and benefits; the work-life balance and job security were not discussed within the private and public sectors in Oman. In addition, these SHRM antecedents were not discussed in relation to the localization policy in Oman.

Employees and their capabilities (retention) are valuable assets for the organizations which help organizational polices to succeed. The framework attempts to explore these variables which are expected to boost employee retention in the workplace and help to make the localization (Omanization) policy successful. Thus, this study is expected to add new knowledge regarding the factors that will help to make the localization (Omanization) policy more successful.

## 8 Practical and Social Implications

The practical contribution of this study target is to propose an in-depth comprehension of the role played by strategic HRM (compensation and benefits, work-life balance and job security) in the success of the localization policy in Oman, specifically in private colleges in Muscat. The results of the study will help private colleges, specifically HR Departments, to better understand employee retention leading to the success of the localization (Omanization) policy. Hence, the owners of private colleges will learn how to use the available resources more efficiently to implement localization (Omanisation) successfully and to meet government requirements.

Important information has been revealed by this study regarding the factors that help to retain employees at the workplace. Also, to understand local employees what exactly they need in the workplace. Therefore, understanding their needs helps the organization to design suitable solutions regarding the low levels of locals employed in the private sector in general and especially in private colleges.

Moreover, the result of this study provides useful information to the government of Oman to develop policies that will guide them in assessing the private colleges' implementation of the localization (Omanization) policy. The outcome of this study provides an insight into the problems that occur in private colleges which prevent Omani people from remaining in employment in private colleges. This work could act as the basis of guidelines which can be developed by the government to improve the implementation of the localization (Omanization) policy in private colleges. Also, the government would benefit from this study by knowing the dimensions of SHRM that will possibly increase the number of local employees at the workplace in Oman.

## 9 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Implementing SHRM antecedents in the private education sector would successfully implement the localization policy. The nature of this paper is conceptual; therefore, its recommended that empirical research should be conducted on the relationship between SHRM antecedents (compensation and benefits, job security and work-life balance) and employee retention. Also, it is recommended that empirical research should be conducted on the relationship between employee retention and localization.

## 10 References

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