



Research Paper**EXIT INTERVIEW: AN APPROACH TO EMPLOYEE RETENTION**¹Dr. K. Jagannayaki, ²Dr. T. Vara Lakshmi, ³K. Neeraj sai singh,¹ Professor, ² Professor, ³ K. Neeraj sai singh

MBA, Institute of Aeronautical Engineering, Dundigal, Hyderabad, Telangana-500043

ABSTRACT

Employee retention has become a major concern for modern organizations operating in an increasingly competitive and fast-changing business landscape. Rising levels of employee turnover place a significant financial and operational burden on organizations by increasing hiring and training expenses, while also leading to the loss of valuable skills, experience, and institutional knowledge. Exit interviews play an important role in human resource management by providing organizations with direct insights into the reason's employees choose to leave. The research analyzes feedback obtained from departing employees to identify the primary factors contributing to voluntary attrition, including workplace satisfaction, organizational culture, compensation structures, career development opportunities, and leadership support. Through systematic analysis of exit interview responses, organizations can detect recurring issues and shortcomings in existing HR policies and practices. The study demonstrates that well-designed and consistently conducted exit interview processes support informed decision-making, improved workforce planning, and more effective retention strategies.

Keywords: Modern organizations, organizational culture, compensation structures, career development opportunities, leadership support. valuable skills

Received: 23-11-2025

Accepted: 30-12-2025

Published: 09-01-2026

I. INTRODUCTION

An exit interview is a formal conversation or survey conducted with an employee who has decided to exit an organization, mostly during their notice period. The main objective is to gather honest feedback about their overall experience, reasons for leaving, and suggestions for improvement.

It can be conducted in person, over the phone, or through an online questionnaire, usually by the HR department or a neutral third party. The feedback collected helps the organization:

- Understand the root causes of employee turnover
- Identify workplace issues or management gaps
- Improve employee satisfaction and retention strategies

- Enhance company policies, culture, and practices
- Detect patterns in employee attrition
- Uncover internal organizational issues
- Identify improvement opportunities in leadership and culture
- Help in building better retention strategies.

An exit interview is a valuable tool for organizations to learn from departing employees and create a better environment for current and future staff.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In today's increasingly volatile and competitive IT industry, retaining skilled employees has become a strategic imperative. Organizations such as Cognizant invest significant resources in attracting and developing talent, yet face consistent challenges in retaining them. High attrition rates have become a pressing concern,

leading to operational inefficiencies, increased recruitment and training costs, and a loss of organizational knowledge. Despite deploying numerous engagement initiatives, wellness programs, and career development efforts, employee turnover persists—highlighting a critical disconnect between organizational efforts and employee expectations.

III. NEED & IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Employee turnover has become a major challenge for organizations due to increasing competition, changing employee expectations, and dynamic work environments. When employees leave an organization, it results in loss of talent, increased recruitment and training costs, reduced productivity, and disruption of work culture. Therefore, understanding the **real reasons behind employee exit** is essential for effective human resource management.

Exit interviews provide first-hand information from departing employees about organizational policies, leadership style, work culture, compensation, career growth, work-life balance, and job satisfaction. The need for this study arises to systematically analyze exit interview data and identify the **root causes of employee turnover**, which are often not revealed through regular employee feedback mechanisms.

IV. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study evaluates exit interviews' role in identifying the underlying causes of employee attrition and their potential to contribute to effective employee retention strategies at Cognizant. As a global leader in IT services, Cognizant employs a large and diverse workforce, making talent management a critical function. Given the scale and complexity of its operations, this study specifically narrows its scope to how the exit interview process is designed, executed, and utilized within selected business units or locations of Cognizant in India.

V. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the current exit interview practices at Cognizant
2. To identify the key reasons for employee turnover as reported during exit interviews
3. To evaluate how exit interview data is processed, interpreted, and utilized by the HR department
4. To assess the impact of exit interviews on the development of employee retention strategies
5. To determine the effectiveness of the current exit interview system in retaining top talent
6. To propose recommendations for improving the exit interview process at Cognizant

I. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

H0 (Null Hypothesis):

Exit interview feedback has no significant impact on employee retention strategies.

H1:

Exit interview feedback has a significant impact on employee retention strategies in an organization.

Secondary / Specific Hypotheses

H2:

Organizations that systematically analyze exit interview data experience lower employee turnover.

H3:

Exit interview insights significantly help in identifying key reasons for employee attrition

VII. METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive in nature, and structured questionnaires were shared with HR professionals and former employees (who have exited within the past 1–2 years) to gain direct insights into their perceptions of the exit interview process.

SOURCES OF DATA

- 1 Primary Data
- 2 Secondary Data

Primary Data

The primary data is collected through a well-structured questionnaire, in Cognizant

VIII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- ❖ Limited Access to Confidential Data
- ❖ Sample Size Constraints
- ❖ Time Limitation

IX. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study by **Robin Waite (2024)** highlights that exit interviews are a valuable tool for obtaining honest feedback from departing employees. These interviews can shed light on several key areas, like Workplace Culture: Employees may provide insights into the overall work environment, including team dynamics, organizational values, and the level of support they received from their colleagues and supervisors. If an employee leaves due to cultural misalignment, the feedback gathered can help the organization understand what changes are needed to improve the culture.

The **PuzzleHR 2024** Exit Survey found that burnout was a significant factor in employee departures, contributing to 21% of the total turnover. Burnout refers to a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress, typically due to high workloads, lack of support, or unclear expectations. The fact that 21% of employees left due to burnout suggests that the work environment in these organizations may have been overwhelming, leading employees to feel emotionally drained and unable to perform effectively.

Nosratabadi et al. (2022) conducted a systematic literature review that explored the application of artificial intelligence (AI) models across various stages of the employee lifecycle, including recruitment, development, retention, and offboarding. Within the context of retention and offboarding, the study emphasizes how AI can enhance the effectiveness of exit interviews by identifying patterns in employee behavior, reasons for attrition, and predicting future turnover risks.

Steil et al. (2022) present a comprehensive literature review on human resource (HR)

churning, which refers to the repetitive cycle of hiring and losing employees. The study explores the theoretical underpinnings of employee turnover, highlighting key factors such as job dissatisfaction, lack of growth opportunities, poor leadership, and mismatched expectations between employers and employees. The authors emphasize that frequent turnover results in significant direct and indirect costs for organizations, including recruitment expenses, training costs, loss of institutional knowledge, and decreased team productivity.

Dhanpat et al. (2019) An empirical study was conducted in the call center sector to investigate the elements that affect employee retention and the desire to leave. The research pinpointed several critical factors contributing to employee turnover, such as job-related stress, insufficient career advancement opportunities, lack of recognition, inadequate supervisory support, and an imbalance between work and personal life. These elements were shown to have a significant effect on employee satisfaction and, consequently, their choice to remain with or depart from the organization. The study offers quantitative data indicating that when employees perceive a lack of support, feel undervalued, or are overburdened, their propensity to look for other job opportunities rises. Notably, the results advocate for the implementation of exit interviews as a strategic method to gain insight into these fundamental issues. By gathering honest feedback during the offboarding phase, organizations can identify trends in turnover behavior, particularly in high-pressure settings like call centers. The study advises HR professionals to leverage the findings from exit interviews to create focused retention strategies, including leadership development, wellness initiatives, clear pathways for career advancement, and

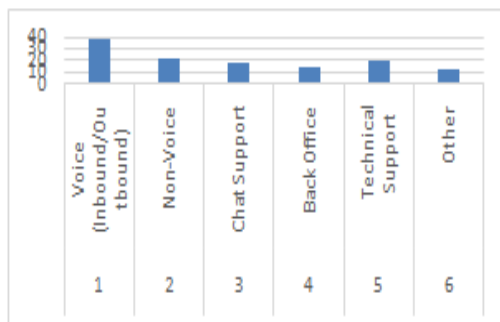
enhanced recognition systems. In summary, Dhanpat et al. emphasize the necessity of systematically reviewing exit interview data to tackle the root causes of employee attrition and enhance retention rates.

X.DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

Table No. 1

Type of Process Worked In

S.No	Response	No. of respondents
1	Voice (Inbound/Outbound)	38
2	Non-Voice	22
3	Chat Support	18
4	Back Office	15
5	Technical Support	20
6	Other	12
Total		125



INTERPRETATION:

- Voice Processes (38 respondents) form the largest group, suggesting that customer-facing roles are a major area of employment. These roles often have high stress and turnover, so organizations should focus on stress management and better communication training for these employees.
- Technical Support (20 respondents) also shows a considerable number, which typically involves skill-based work. Providing ongoing technical training and career growth paths may help with retention.
- Non-Voice (22 respondents) and Chat Support (18 respondents) are also significant, pointing to the growing demand

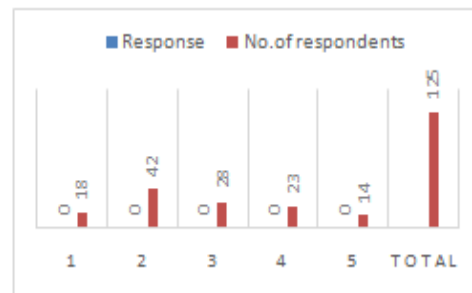
for support channels beyond voice. Ensuring adequate tool support and manageable workloads can enhance satisfaction in these roles.

- Back Office (15 respondents) and Others (12 respondents) have relatively lower numbers, but their needs shouldn't be overlooked. Customized retention strategies based on process type are essential.

Table No. 2

How would you rate your overall job satisfaction?

S.No	Response	No. of respondents
1	Very Satisfied	18
2	Satisfied	42
3	Neutral	28
4	Dissatisfied	23
5	Very Dissatisfied	14
Total		125



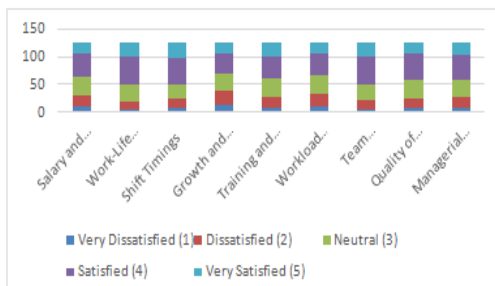
INTERPRETATION:

- The data shows that 48% of employees were satisfied with their jobs, while 30% expressed dissatisfaction. 22% remained neutral. This indicates a moderate satisfaction level overall, but also highlights areas for improvement. To boost retention, Cognizant should focus on addressing concerns revealed during exit interviews—such as career growth, work culture, and leadership support.

Table No. 3

How satisfied were you with the following aspects? (Rate 1 = Very Dissatisfied to 5 = Very Satisfied)

Aspect	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Salary and Benefits	11	33	37	32	12	125
Work-Life Balance	16	25	39	22	23	125
Shift Timings	16	21	40	32	16	125
Growth and Promotion Opportunities	13	24	39	34	15	125
Training and Development	11	24	39	31	20	125
Workload and Performance Pressure	14	29	36	29	17	125
Team Collaboration	9	21	34	38	23	125
Quality of Work Tools/Software	10	20	42	36	17	125
Managerial Support	8	19	35	40	23	125

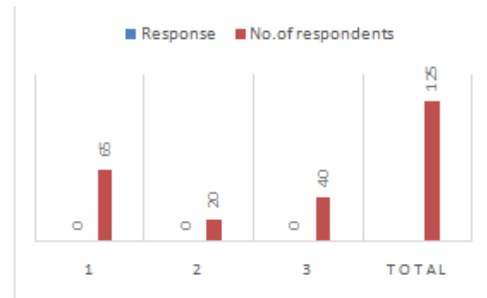
**INTERPRETATION:**

The table shows that most respondents rated the aspects between **3 and 4**, indicating a moderate to positive level of satisfaction. **Salary, benefits, and growth opportunities** received average ratings, suggesting scope for improvement. **Work-life balance and shift timings** show mixed responses, reflecting varied employee experiences. Higher ratings for **team collaboration and managerial support** indicate relatively strong interpersonal and leadership practices. Overall, the findings suggest that while the work environment is generally satisfactory, focused improvements in compensation, workload management, and career development could enhance employee retention.

Table No. 4

Was your work recognized and appreciated regularly?

S.No	Response	No. of respondents
1	Yes	65
2	No	20
3	Occasionally	40
Total		125

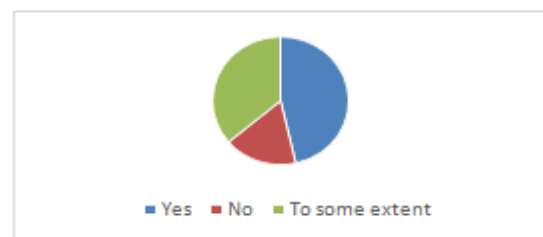
**INTERPRETATION:**

While 52% of employees felt their work was regularly recognized and appreciated, a notable 48% either did not feel recognized (16%) or experienced it only occasionally (32%). This signals a gap in consistent employee recognition. To improve retention, Cognizant should implement structured recognition programs and encourage managerial appreciation to foster motivation, loyalty, and a stronger sense of belonging.

Table No. 5

Did you feel your role aligned with your skills and career goals?

S.No	Response	No. of respondents
1	Yes	58
2	No	22
3	To some extent	45
Total		125



INTERPRETATION:

Only 46% of employees felt their roles were fully aligned with their skills and career goals, while 54% either disagreed (18%) or were only partially satisfied (36%). This indicates a misalignment that may contribute to disengagement and turnover. Cognizant should consider conducting skill audits, offering internal mobility opportunities, and customizing role assignments to better match individual career aspirations—thereby enhancing employee satisfaction and retention.

Table No. 6

What was your primary reason for leaving?
(Select all that apply)

Reason	Count	Percentage
Better Salary/Benefits	48	38.4
Career Growth Opportunities	56	44.8
Higher Studies	22	17.6
Health Issues	10	8
Family/Personal Reasons	27	21.6
Shift Timings/Night Shift	18	14.4
Workload/Stress	35	28
Relocation	16	12.8
Lack of Recognition	29	23.2
Work Culture/Management	33	26.4
TOTAL	125	

**INTERPRETATION:**

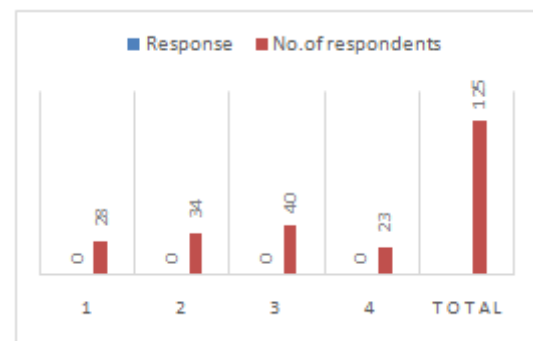
- The top reasons for leaving were lack of career growth (44.8%), better salary offers (38.4%), and workload/stress (28%). Other key issues included poor work culture, lack of recognition, and unfavorable shift timings.
- To improve retention, the company should focus on: Clear growth paths, Competitive pay, Recognition programs, Better workload management, Healthier work culture. These

actions can reduce attrition and boost employee satisfaction.

Table No. 7

When did you start thinking about leaving the organization?

S.No	Response	No. of respondents
1	Within the first 3 months	28
2	After 6 months	34
3	After 1 year	40
4	After 2+ years	23
Total		125

**INTERPRETATION:**

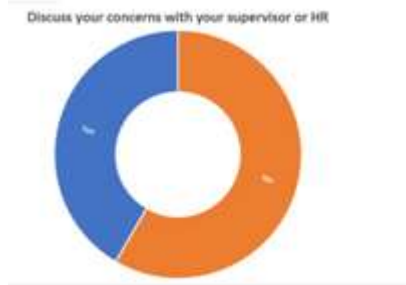
The majority of employees (75%) considered leaving within the first year, indicating early disengagement or unmet expectations. This highlights a need for:

- Stronger onboarding and mentoring
 - Realistic job previews
 - Regular check-ins during the first year
- Early intervention can significantly reduce premature attrition.

Table No. 8

Did you discuss your concerns with your supervisor or HR before deciding to leave?

S.No	Response	No. of respondents
1	Yes	52
2	No	73
Total		125

**INTERPRETATION:**

A significant 58% of employees did not discuss their concerns before leaving. This indicates:

- Lack of open communication channels
- Low confidence in conflict resolution by HR/supervisors

Recommendation: Foster a culture of trust, active listening, and timely grievance redressal to encourage early dialogue and reduce preventable attrition.

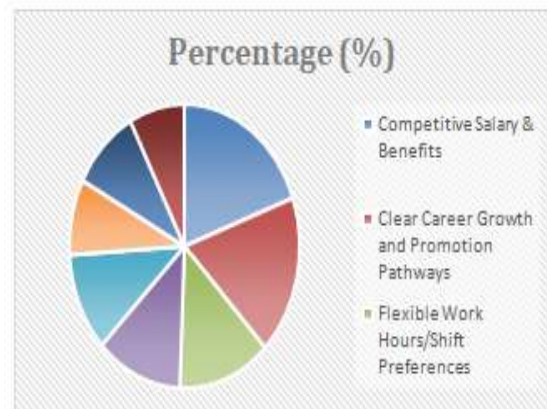
INTERPRETATION:

- Top concern areas like salary, growth opportunities, and workload must be addressed as they significantly affect retention.
- The company should prioritize personalized retention strategies such as career planning, work-life balance initiatives, and improved managerial support.
- Regular feedback mechanisms and employee development programs can proactively reduce attrition.

Table No. 11

What retention strategies do you think would help reduce attrition in ITES?

S.No	Response	No. of Respts	Percen (%)
1	Competitive Salary & Benefits	45	36.00
2	Clear Career Growth and Promotion Pathways	42	33.60
3	Flexible Work Hours/Shift Preferences	30	24.00
4	Work-Life Balance Support (leaves, wellness)	28	22.40
5	Regular Recognition and Rewards	26	20.80
6	Skill Development & Training Opportunities	20	16.00
7	Strong Managerial Support and Mentorship	22	17.60
8	Open Communication & Feedback Culture	18	14.40
Total		125	

**INTERPRETATION:**

- Salary and career growth remain top priorities; ITES firms should offer structured increments and internal mobility programs.
- Introducing flexible work policies, mental health support, and recognition frameworks can improve overall employee satisfaction.
- Training and transparent leadership communication help in boosting employee confidence and reducing intent to leave.
- A higher recommendation rate can improve employer branding and reduce hiring costs through referrals.

XI. OBSERVATIONS

- Most employees provided average to good ratings (3–4) for key workplace factors.

- Salary and benefits received moderate satisfaction, indicating expectations are not fully met.
- Work–life balance and shift timings showed mixed responses, suggesting inconsistency across roles.
- Employees expressed reasonable satisfaction with growth and promotion opportunities, but improvements are needed.
- A significant number of respondents selected the neutral option (rating 3) across most aspects, indicating uncertainty or moderate satisfaction.
- Lower ratings for salary and benefits suggest compensation is a key factor influencing employee exits.
- Variations in responses for work–life balance indicate that experiences differ across departments.
- Shift timing dissatisfaction appears to be linked with workload and performance pressure.
- Employees value career growth, but unclear promotion timelines reduce satisfaction levels.
- Training programs are present but are perceived as needing better relevance and depth.
- High workload ratings indicate that job stress contributes to voluntary turnover.
- Strong scores for team collaboration reflect a positive internal work culture.
- Employees feel more engaged when managers provide guidance and support.
- Moderate ratings for work tools and software suggest technological improvements are required.
- Employees who rated managerial support high also showed better overall job satisfaction.
- Exit interview feedback reveals that non-monetary factors play a crucial role in retention.

- Consistency in leadership behavior positively influences employee morale.
- Lack of flexibility in work schedules contributes to dissatisfaction among some employees.
- Overall findings indicate that exit interviews are effective in identifying hidden organizational issues.

XII.

SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

- Review and revise salary and benefits structures to remain competitive in the market.
- Introduce flexible work schedules to improve work–life balance.
- Optimize shift planning to reduce employee fatigue and dissatisfaction.
- Create clear career progression paths and transparent promotion policies.
- Strengthen training and skill development programs aligned with job roles.
- Implement workload management strategies to reduce stress and burnout.
- Encourage team-building activities to further enhance collaboration.
- Upgrade work tools and software to improve efficiency and job satisfaction.
- Continue to promote open communication between managers and employees.
- Regularly analyze exit interview feedback and convert insights into actionable HR policies.
- Introduce regular stay interviews to address employee concerns before they decide to leave.
- Establish a transparent reward and recognition system to motivate high performers.
- Provide job role clarity to reduce confusion and performance-related stress.
- Encourage employee wellness programs to manage workload pressure and burnout.

- Implement mentorship programs to support career growth and professional guidance.
- Use exit interview analytics dashboards to track recurring attrition patterns.
- Ensure fair and consistent performance appraisal systems across departments.
- Improve internal communication channels to strengthen employee trust.
- Conduct managerial training programs to enhance leadership and people management skills.
- Periodically benchmark HR policies with industry best practices to remain competitive.

XIII. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that exit interviews, when effectively structured and strategically analyzed, can significantly improve employee retention in IT firms like Cognizant. Key findings suggest that lack of career progression, salary dissatisfaction, stress, and inadequate recognition are major attrition drivers. Furthermore, gaps in communication, onboarding, wellness programs, and skill development also contribute to turnover. Despite exit interviews being conducted, their underutilization as a strategic tool hinders the organization's ability to reduce preventable attrition. When feedback is not acted upon, it loses its potential as a retention mechanism. Therefore, exit interviews should evolve from being a procedural formality into a powerful instrument for organizational learning and change. For Cognizant and similar IT organizations, investing in a comprehensive and transparent exit interview process—combined with actionable insights—can bridge the gap between employee experience and HR strategies. With tailored retention programs, improved internal communication, and a proactive leadership approach, organizations can transform attrition challenges into opportunities for growth, engagement, and long-term success. To reduce attrition and enhance employee retention, Cognizant must treat exit interviews as

a strategic asset, not a procedural formality. The company should: Systematically analyze exit interview data to uncover trends and root causes of turnover.

Act on feedback by linking insights directly to improvements in leadership, culture, policies, and career development programs. Implement clear career growth frameworks, mentoring programs, and internal mobility opportunities. Strengthen wellness support, onboarding, and recognition systems to improve employee experience from day one. Foster a transparent and responsive communication culture, encouraging employees to voice concerns early—before they decide to exit. By closing the feedback loop and aligning its HR strategies with real employee insights, Cognizant can transform attrition challenges into opportunities for lasting talent retention and organizational growth.

REFERENCES

1. Robin Waite (2024) - "Exit Interviews as Feedback for Organizational Improvement" Highlights the role of exit interviews in understanding workplace culture, leadership, and organizational policies.
2. PuzzleHR (2024) - "Exit Survey Reveals Burnout as a Major Factor in Employee Departures." Reveals that burnout accounted for 21% of employee departures, emphasizing the importance of addressing workload management.
3. Nosratabadi, S., et al. (2022) - "Artificial Intelligence Models and Employee Lifecycle Management: A Systematic Literature Review" Examines the role of AI in the employee lifecycle,

- including retention and offboarding.
4. Steil, A. V., et al. (2022) - "Literature Review on Human Resource Churning—Theoretical Framework, Costs and Proposed Solutions". Discusses the theoretical aspects of turnover and suggests solutions to mitigate it.
5. Work Institute (2022) - "Why Exit Interviews Are Essential for Employee Retention". Emphasizes the role of exit interviews in uncovering the reasons behind turnover.
6. Dhanpat, N., et al. (2019) - "Exploring Employee Retention and Intention to Leave within a Call Centre". Provides empirical data on employee retention and intentions to leave in a call center context.
7. Singh, S. (2019) - "A Study on Exit Interview: Management Tool to Retain Employees". Explores how exit interviews provide feedback to help organizations improve retention.
8. Gallup (2018) - "The Real Value of Getting an Exit Interview Right". Highlights the importance of conducting well-structured exit interviews to understand turnover causes.
9. Smith, P., & Reiner, J. (2018) - "Impact of Exit Interviews on Retention in High-Tech Firms". Explores how exit interviews help high-tech firms reduce turnover by informing retention strategies.
10. SpringerLink (2017) - "Conducting Exit Interviews". Provides insights into best practices for conducting exit interviews to gather valuable feedback.
11. Vandana Sharma (2016) - "Exploring Employee Retention in IT Industry in India: Study Based on Multi Response Analysis". Examines retention strategies in the IT industry and highlights the gap between company efforts and employee perceptions.
12. DinithiPadmasiri (2016) - "Impact of Counselling on Employee Retention at the Exit Interviews". Focuses on the impact of counseling during exit interviews on retention, especially in a leading apparel company.
13. Faheem Ahmed et al. (2015) - "Soft Skills and Software Development: A Reflection from the Software Industry". Discusses the role of soft skills in software development and their influence on employee retention.
14. S. Bansal (2014) - "Employee Retention Practices in IT Sector". Investigate employee retention practices in the IT sector and explore strategies for enhancing retention rates.
15. D.G. Allen & L.R. Shanock (2013) - "Perceived Organizational Support and Embeddedness as Key Mechanisms Connecting

- Socialization Tactics to Commitment and Turnover among New Employees". Explores how organizational support and embeddedness influence employee turnover, especially for new hires.
16. R. Shanmugam et al. (2012) - "An Analytical Study on Factors Affecting Employee Retention in IT Industry in India". Identifies and analyzes the factors affecting employee retention in the Indian IT industry.
17. A.H. Ghapanchi & A. Aurum (2011) - "Antecedents to IT Personnel's Intentions to Leave: A Systematic Literature Review". Reviews factors contributing to turnover intentions among IT personnel.
18. Sengupta, D. (2010) - "Exit Interviews Arrive, at Last". Discusses how companies like MindTree use exit interviews to implement policy changes, such as flexible work options.
19. Allen, M. W., Armstrong, D. J., Reid, M. F., & Riemenschneider, C. K. (2009) - "IT Employee Retention: Employee Expectations and Workplace Environments". Examines how work exhaustion, cross-training, and knowledgeable managers affect turnover intentions in IT firms.
20. Levin, G. (2007) - "Are Exit Interviews a Way Out of Turnover Hell?". Highlights the underutilization of exit interview data and the importance of analyzing it to inform retention strategies.