

Hobo Syndrome: A Cross-Organizational Mobility in Banking, Health and Development Sector

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Abstract

Background: This study examines the past quits and intentions to search for alternative jobs as predictor of Hobo Syndrome in Banking, Health and Development Sector.

Methods: The sample consisted of 228 employees working in banking ($n=76$), health ($n=76$) and development ($n=76$) sector. The inclusion criterion for sample participation was at least 1 year of working experience in health, banking and development sectors. The selected organizations included private banks, hospitals and non-governmental organizations. The age of the employees was ranging between 25 - 50 years. The intention to search for alternative job was measured. Question was anchored on a 5-point likert scale strongly disagree=1 and strongly agree=5. High scores indicate a strong urge to look for alternative job. Job Hopping Measure consisting of three items was used to gauge Hobo Syndrome. The responses were collected on scale format of 7-point Likert scale where strongly disagree= 1 to strongly agree= 7. For the analysis number of past quits was measured by the total number of times an individual had voluntarily exited a job as reported by the respondent. And frequency of past quits was also measured by likert format where never =1 and often= 4. Frequency of past quits was then used as a predictor of hobo syndrome. Reliability test was computed. Frequencies, custom tabulation and Regression analysis were used for analyses of the results.

Results: The sector-wise past job quits are comparatively high in the bracket of 1-3 past job quits and here, job quitting seems high in health sector as compared to other sectors. The results also reveal that random job hopping is more prevalent than Strategic job hopping. Prevalence of frequent past job quits is higher in the early years of work experience as compared to employees with 7-10 years of experience. Cronbach Alpha for Intention to

search for alternative job and Hobo Syndrome exhibits a good internal consistency. Intention to search for alternative job positively predicts Hobo Syndrome ($F = 189.59, p < .01$). Intention to search for alternative job has a positive impact on Hobo Syndrome ($\beta = .83, p < .01$). The values of R^2 of .48 indicates a 48% variance in the Hobo Syndrome by the predictor which is frequency of past quits ($F = 46.69, p < .01$). Thus, frequency of past quits has a positive impact on Hobo Syndrome ($\beta = .36, p < .01$).

Conclusion: The employees who search for new alternatives for job and display frequent job quits are more prone to demonstrate hoboness in their career. Historical analysis and biographical data to select workers should be employed to hire a consistent employee and to reduce cost of hiring frequently.

Key Words: Banking, Health, Hobo Syndrome, Development and organizational

Introduction

Hobo Syndrome is growing in Pakistan, most likely due to the recent changes in the economy and social living. This revolution has influenced the working sector and employees now look for higher salary and benefits. A hobo is a person who momentarily works in at one job position after another more readily than settling and continuing the work at one job position. Hobo Syndrome is a sporadic tingle to move from a job in one place to an alternative job in some other place. A hobo is a person who momentarily works in at one job position after another more readily than settling and continuing the work at one job position. This job movement is shoots out from inherent forces and impulsivity and is not an outcome of structured rational thinking.¹ Hobo syndrome is characterized by a natural wanderlust that directs quite a few people to switch their jobs repeatedly.² This takes place due to excitement or urge of experimenting innovative thing, or social influences or turnover culture in organizations which means that

people switch their jobs just because others are doing the same.³ It is considered to be a cross-organizational mobility.

Not much research has been conducted on the phenomenon of Hobo Syndrome due to which there is little attention paid to the details regarding the determinants and related factors of hobo syndrome. The present study focused on some variables to find their relationship with hobo syndrome to explore turnover related attributes in hobos with their job. For the present research hobo syndrome and Job Hopping will be used interchangeably for a better understanding.

Job hopping is perceived to play its role in speeding up career advancement. It helps the employees in reaching to interesting work and dream job by carrying out diverse roles and learning new skills. The job-hopping also pays off substantially requisites of employment status, salary, and job satisfaction. A study reported that job mobility generates an increase in the monthly wages.⁴ The study explores that if past job mobility can relate to same behaviour in future. Ghiselli's hypothesized that "The best predictor of future behaviour is past behavior".¹ The literature reveals the tendency for employee past absences to be predictive of future absence, and past unemployment predictive of future occurrences of unemployment.^{5,6}

A study involving event history analysis, revealed that number of past voluntary quits and turnover behaviours significantly predict future turnover behaviour. Their findings can be considered as a significant evidence for "hobo syndrome".⁷ The hobos having their underlying psychological mechanisms of cognition and emotions related to the job switch show job movement and it may be speculated that their past job analysis can show a continuity of job hopping as such cognitions and emotions are consistently held by them. Many times the hobos frequently rationalize their decisions to quit through some acceptable reasons which may be dissatisfaction with pay, family issues, work challenges, career growth and success, etc. Whatever the reason be, eventually it simmers up to his wanderlust or tendency to switch the job.⁸ Hobos switch their jobs because they basically take pleasure in quitting for exploring the new arenas.

Ghiselli's hypothesis is a principal assumption underlying the use of historical analysis and biographical data to select workers.⁹ Curriculum vitae is predictive of employee behaviors such as job hopping of hobos.¹⁰ A number of people may display a prototype of hobo syndrome for the reason that they sense out a presence of greater opportunities for them in the labour market. Therefore in well-educated or

highly skilled stratas, individuals may show more job mobility due to more job alternatives or intentions to find new alternative.⁷

It is a characteristic of hobos that they intend to look for the alternatives. If the alternatives are found, the individual will then assess those alternatives against one another and the current job. The employee then moves towards the decision of quitting.¹¹ In case of Job Hoppers they shift from one job to another irrespective of better alternatives or other apparently rational motives. Rather it is their impulsive characteristic that makes them look for other alternative jobs.³

Subjects and Methods

The sample consisted of 228 employees working in banking ($n=76$), health ($n=76$) and development ($n=76$) sector. The inclusion criterion for sample participation was at least 1 year of working experience in health, banking and development sectors. The selected organizations included private banks, hospitals and Non-governmental organizations. The age of the employees was ranging between 25 - 50 years. Purposive sampling was used. The sample was collected from Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The demographic data sheet consisting of variables like age, occupation, gender, educational status, years of experience in the current organization and number of past quits. The intention to search for alternative job was measured by a question, do you intend to look for a job with an alternative employer in next 2-3 months? This question was anchored on a 5-point likert scale strongly disagree=1 and strongly agree=5. High scores indicate a strong urge to look for alternative job.

Job Hopping Measure consisting of three items was used to gauge Hobo Syndrome. The responses were collected on scale format of 7-point Likert scale where strongly disagree= 1 to strongly agree= 7. ¹²For the analysis number of past quits was measured by the total number of times an individual had voluntarily exited a job as reported by the respondent. And frequency of past quits was also measured by likert format where never =1 and often= 4 frequency of past quits was then used as a predictor of hobo syndrome. Reliability test was computed. Frequencies, custom tabulation and Regression analysis were used for analyses of the results.

Results

Majority were married (Table 1). The sector-wise past job quits are comparatively high in the bracket of 1-3 past job quits and here, job quitting seems high in

health sector as compared to other sectors, whereas for 4-6 and 7-10 past quits a higher prevalence is observed in development sector. The results also reveal that Random Job Hopping is more prevalent than Strategic job hopping (Table 2). Prevalence of frequent past job quits is higher in the early years of work experience as compared to employees with 7-10 years of experience. This indicates a higher tendency of job hopping in employees with early career (Table 3). Cronbach Alpha for Intention to search for alternative job and Hobo Syndrome which exhibits that the items have a good internal consistency (Table 4). Intention to search for alternative job positively predicts Hobo Syndrome. The values of R^2 of .76 indicates a 76% variance in the Hobo Syndrome by the predictor which is Intention to search for alternative job ($F = 189.59, p < .01$).

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variable		Banking (n=76)	Development (n=76)	Health (n=76)	Total Sample (n=228)
Age	Average Age	27	34	32	34
Gender	Male	38	41	30	109
	Female	38	35	46	119
Marital Status	Single	25	33	37	95
	Married	51	43	39	133
Educational status	Matric	4	2	17	23
	Intermediate	20	5	23	48
	Masters	46	51	26	123
	M Phil	6	18	10	34
Years of Experience	1-3	31	22	34	87
	4-6	19	30	24	73
	7-10plus	26	24	18	68

Table 2: Prevalence of past job quits and Job Hopping type

Variable		Banking (n=76)	Development (n=76)	Health (n=76)	Total Sample (n=228)
Number of Past Quits	1-3	32	23	41	96
	4-6	24	27	25	76
	7-10plus	20	26	10	56
Reasons for Job switch	Random Job Hopping-Quick Financial Gain	51	40	36	127
	Strategic Job Hopping-Enhances and builds skills	27	36	38	101

Thus, Intention to search for alternative job has a positive impact on Hobo Syndrome ($\beta = .83, p < .01$) (Table 5). Frequency of past quits positively predicts

Hobo Syndrome. The values of R^2 of .48 indicates a 48% variance in the Hobo Syndrome by the predictor which is frequency of past quits ($F = 46.69, p < .01$). Thus, frequency of past quits has a positive impact on Hobo Syndrome ($\beta = .36, p < .01$) (Table 6).

Table 3: Experience-Past Quits Custom Tabulation (n=228)

	Variable Years of Work Experience			
		1-3	4-6	7-10
Number of Past Quits	1-3	28	32	35
	4-6	36	21	19
	7-10plus	27	16	13

Table 4: Reliability Analysis of Intention to search for alternative job and Hobo Syndrome (n=228)

Scale	No. of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Intention to search for alternative job		.69
Hobo Syndrome	3	.82

Table 5: Linear Regression Analysis indicating Intention to search for alternative job as the predictor of Hobo Syndrome (n=228)

Model	b	SE	β	t	p
Constant	13.971	10.314		1.35	.000
Intentions to search for alternative Job	3.016	.219	.83	13.76	.181
$R^2 = .76$					

Table 6: Linear Regression Analysis indicating frequency of past quits as the predictor of Hobo Syndrome (n=228)

Model	b	SE	β	t	p
Constant	12.32	3.31		3.85	.000
Frequency of past quits	.389	.073	.36	5.25	.000
$R^2 = .48$					

Discussion

Changing jobs recurrently or moving from one job to another is termed as Hobo syndrome or job-hopping. It is infact a practice of switching jobs frequently, particularly as a means of quick financial gain, career advancement or just a wander lust. In Pakistan Hobo syndrome is growing most likely due to the revolution in the current status of economy and social living.

Likewise opportunities and a high demand of labor is also observed in the market of Banking, Health & development sector which allows for job hopping. Due to high demand and competition in the banking industry, it has encouraged a turnover trend and decrease loyalty of the employees towards the organization. These attitudes have strongly affected the productivity, profitability and quality of services of the organization.

Results of present study reflected that the sector-wise past job quits are comparatively high in the bracket of 1-3 past job quits and here, job quitting seems high in health sector as compared to other sectors, whereas for 4-6 and 7-10 past quits a higher prevalence is observed in development sector. The prevalence of frequent past job quits is higher in the early years of work experience as compared to employees with 7-10 years of experience. This indicates a higher tendency of job hopping in employees with early career. The findings are consistent with other researches.¹³

The findings indicate that frequency of past quits positively predicts Hobo syndrome. The researches on bio-data and its determinants provide some assistance for this assumption. It is common to inquire about past job history when collecting biographical information. This may show a tendency towards hobo syndrome, as the past quits are predictive of the future quits.^{12,14} Additionally, a significant correlation between biographical information and turnover has been reported in the literature.^{15,16}

While these studies did not focus on the hobo syndrome, they do suggest that using past turnover history as a predictor in human resource selection decisions may reduce turnover. The findings may be helpful for the organizations as, those applicants who have changed jobs more frequently in the past will probably leave the job for which they are being interviewed than those who have experienced fewer job quits in the past. This may help the organization saving the cost and resources. As one way of controlling the tendencies of the hobo syndrome could be not selecting those individuals who have demonstrated a consistent pattern of job hopping in the past.

Personality traits such as openness to experience and perceived job opportunities are positively related to hobo syndrome and may be used as a dispositional explanation of the hobo syndrome.¹⁷ Those who are enthusiastic and productive in changing the work situation tend to move frequently in the job as they look for more and more alternatives available to switch the job and enhance their salary and skills.^{18,19} A

study found weak support for the positive relationship between perceived alternative employment opportunities and turn over intention.¹² Therefore, intentions to search for alternative jobs could be speculated to play a role in hobo syndrome. The present research indicated a significant correlation between intentions to search for alternative job and Hobo Syndrome which is in line with the previous researches. It is evident that the employees who search for new alternatives for job are more prone to demonstrate hobo syndrome in their career through quitting their jobs more frequently than others employees. The findings are consistent with other researches.²⁰⁻²²

There are two types of job hopping. First one is random job hopping which involves job movement every time a new job is offered for the sake of financial gain (job hopping). The other one is strategic job hopping which is taking a new job because it enhances and helps build your career. The most influencing factors for job hopping are high salary, enhanced positions and superior benefits.²³ The results of present study also reveal that random job hopping is more prevalent than Strategic job hopping.

Conclusion

1. Frequent past quits are indicators of future quits and hobo syndrome. Therefore, historical analysis and biographical data to select workers should be employed to hire a consistent employee.

2. It is required that managers, hiring personnel and owners of business organization should take proactive measures to enhance the work conditions, quality of work, training and career development opportunities for the employees in order to maintain and retain the employees .

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