

UNWEAVING HOBO SYNDROME IN BANKING, HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Background: Hobo syndrome is a dispositional wanderlust that leads some individuals to repeatedly switch jobs. The aim of the study was to explore the construct of Hobo syndrome and to compare it in the three industry sectors; banking, development and health.

Material & Methods: In this cross-sectional study the sample size was 228. The measures used for the study included demographic data sheet, perceived alternative employment opportunities, intention to search for alternative job, job hopping measure, number of past quits and openness to experience scale. Correlation, one-way ANOVA and Post Hoc were adopted to test the hypotheses.

Results: In total, 228 persons were studied; 76 each from Banking, Development and Health sector. The results show that there exists a significant positive relationship of Hobo syndrome with perceived alternative employment opportunities and a significant relationship between openness to experience and Hobo syndrome (0.01). Employees of Banking sector displayed high mean score on Hobo syndrome as compared to those of Development and Health sector. Comparing the mean differences on Hobo syndrome among employees of different management level; the non-management employees showed a high mean score on Hobo syndrome as compared to the middle management and senior management employees ($p=0.05$).

Conclusion: Hobo syndrome is a phenomenon experienced by the employees in Pakistan. Non-management employees have higher tendency of Hobo syndrome as compared to middle and senior management, while respondents of Banking sector have higher Hobo syndrome as compared to those of Development and Health sector.

KEY WORDS: Hobo syndrome; Job hopping; Perceived alternative employment opportunities; Openness to experience.

This article may be cited as: Saleem T, Saleem S, Jalil A. Unweaving Hobo syndrome in Banking, Health and Development sector. *Gomal J Med Sci* 2014; 12: 227-32.

INTRODUCTION

The term of "Hobo syndrome" was first coined by Ghiselli in 1974 which he defined as an episodic itch to shift from a job in one place to an alternative job in some other place. He stated that this itchy feet stems from instinctive forces and does not appear through structured logical thought process.¹ Hobo syndrome is defined as a dispositional wanderlust that leads some individuals to repeatedly switch jobs.^{2,3}

The concept of Hobo syndrome has also been linked to another term used in the literature,

Job-Hopping which can be defined in two parts. First part deals with the intent of the people to switch jobs because they have craving to experiment new things. Second part is connected to the social influences or turnover culture in organizations which means that people switch their jobs just because others are doing the same. It may originate from either characteristic of impulsivity or social influences such as turnover culture.⁴ For the present study the terms of Hobo syndrome and Job-hopping will be used interchangeably.

Minor research endeavors have been made so far to describe the construct of Hobo syndrome. The present study will attempt to describe and understand hobo syndrome and its connectivity with other variables. Some researchers have brought into play the term Hobo syndrome as an incidence to hop or switch a job.^{5,6} Though it seems to appear in the literature but still there is minute precision about what exactly comprises the hobo syndrome, how it

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becomes evident in behaviors of the employees, or is it entirely a different or a sub-population of employees that can be labelled as “Hobos” having a unique prototype connected with turnover-related attributes, and what relation does it have with the current job experience.

Perceived employment alternatives are predominantly important in the context of the present study as this can turn out to be a potential explanation for the job hopping. Job-hopping behavior occurs due to extrinsic factors, like characteristics of organization, financial securities, interpersonal conflicts, and alternative employment opportunities.⁷

Perceived alternative employment opportunities refer to an individual's perception of the availability of alternative jobs in the organization's environment, and it is the function of labor market conditions.⁸ Alternative employment opportunities may exist when employees feel other employers can better address their needs as employees.⁹ Perceived employment alternatives is positively related to job turnover behaviors.¹⁰⁻¹² Some individuals may exhibit a pattern of job hopping because they perceive that they have a greater number of labor market alternatives. Those who are highly educated, or in favorable labor markets, may quit their jobs more often because more alternatives are available.¹³

Openness to experience is a vital personality dimension that concerns an individual's preference for variety and novelty.¹⁴ Openness to experience has shown to be predictive of turnover.^{15,16} Individuals who are open to new experiences would have high levels of intellectual and experiential curiosity, seeking opportunities to learn and experience different things in life.¹⁷

The present study was conducted to depict and understand Hobo syndrome and its association with other variables in order to fill in the gaps in the literature on the subject. This research is significant in term of finding the differences between the three industries. It will be helpful for the targeted as well as other industries to drive and regenerate their current hiring and retention programs and help to save their costs for these operations. This may also help in order to improve the relationship between the organization and employees, and ultimately foster loyalty.

The aim of this study was to explore the construct of Hobo syndrome and to compare it in the three industry sectors; banking, development and health.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The hypotheses tested were; perceived alternative employment opportunities is positively related to Hobo syndrome, Openness to experience is positively related to Hobo syndrome, there is a difference in Hobo syndrome in the employees of banking, development and health sector, and there is a significant difference on Hobo syndrome in non-managerial, middle managerial and senior managerial employees.

Purposive sampling was employed for the research. The sample consisted of 228 employees working in banking (n=76), health (n=76) and development (n=76) sector. The organizations were selected from Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The selected organizations included banks, hospitals and Non-governmental organizations. The age range for the sample was 25-50 years.

The instruments used for data collection were Demographic Data Sheet, Perceived Alternative employment opportunities, job hopping measure and openness to experience scale. The socio-demographic data sheet was developed for the present study. It consisted of variables like organization, occupation, age, pay, gender, education, number of years working in the current organization, position/management level, job title. Perceived alternative employment opportunities was measured by a six items scale developed by Khatri, Fern, Budhwar in 2001. All items are positively scored except item 4 that is reverse-coded. The response for the items was recorded on a 5-point likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Job Hopping Measure by Khatri, Budhwar & Fern in 1999¹⁸, was used to measure Hobo syndrome in the respondents. It consists of three items with the scale format of 7-point Likert scale. The response categories range from strongly disagree= 1 to strongly agree= 7. Openness to Experience Scale developed by Woo, Chernyshenko, Longley, Zhang, Chiu & Stark in 2013¹⁴ consisting of 54 items was used. It is developed on a 4-point, Likert-type response format where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree.

The questionnaires were delivered to the 228 employees working in banking, health and development sector organizations. The participation was entirely voluntarily and consent for the participation was taken by the employees prior to the administration of the questionnaires. The participants were informed regarding the purpose of the research. They were described about the response categories of each questionnaire so that they may carefully indicate the responses by marking the answer. They were asked to first fill in the demographic information regarding occupation, number of years working in the current organization, position/management level, grade, job title, age, pay, gender, marital status and education etc. Then the employees were asked to proceed to other instruments measuring constructs related with research. The participants were assured of complete confidentiality. One-way ANOVA was executed to verify if all the selected variables under study will be of equal importance in various types of industrial sectors or there will be some differences.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows sector wise frequencies of demographic characteristics.

Table 1: Frequencies for demographic characteristics sector-wise (n=228)

Variable		Banking (n=76)	Development (n=76)	Health (n=76)	Total Sample (N=228)
Age Gender	Average age	27	34	32	34
	Male	38	41	30	109
	Female	38	35	46	119
Marital status	Single	25	33	37	95
	Married	51	43	39	133
Education	Matric	4	2	17	23
	Intermediate	20	5	23	48
	Masters	46	51	26	123
	Mphil	6	18	10	34
Position/ management level Pay	Non-management	24	17	40	81
	Middle Management	36	41	21	98
	Senior Management	16	18	15	49
	15000-25000	11	0	26	37
	26000-35000	12	17	14	43
	36000-45000	18	21	9	48
	46000-55000	13	14	12	39
	66000-75000	15	11	4	30
	76000-100000 plus	7	13	11	31
Number of years working	1-3	31	22	34	87
	4-6	19	30	24	73
	7-10 plus	26	24	18	68

Table 2 shows Cronbach Alpha for Perceived Alternative employment opportunities, Job Hop-ping and Openness to Experience which shows that the items have a good internal consistency.

Table 2: Reliability analysis of intention to search for alternative job, perceived alternative employment opportunities, Hobo syndrome and openness to experience (n=228)

Scale	No. of tems	Cronbach Alpha
Perceived alternative em- ployment opportunities	6	0.91
Hobo Syndrome	3	0.82
Openness to Experience	54	0.86

Table 3 indicates that there is a significant relationship between the variables. The sample data supports the hypothesis. The results show that there exists a significant positive relationship of hobo syndrome with perceived alternative employment

opportunities. The results also indicate a highly significant relationship between openness to experience and Hobo syndrome (0.01).

Table 3: Pearson's Product Moment Correlations for Number of past quits, Intention to search for alternative job, Perceived Alternative employment opportunities, Hobo syndrome and Openness to experience (n=228)

	Hobo Syndrome	
	r	Sig.
Perceived Alternative em- ployment opportunities	0.374*	.019
Openness to Experience	0.290**	.000

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level,

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 4 shows mean differences on Hobo Syndrome among employees of different employ-ment sectors. The results indicate that employees of banking sector displayed high mean score on

Table 4: Mean, Standard deviation and ANOVA for Hobo syndrome in the employees of banking, development and health sector

Employment Sectors									
	Banking Sector (n=76)		Development Sector (n=76)				Heath Sector (n=76)		
Scale	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F	p	Post hoc
Hobo Syndrome	96.22	43.8	81.28	28.6	64.91	13.4	4.45	.043	1>2>3

df= (226)

Hobo syndrome as compared to the employees of development and health sector. Tukey's post hoc multiple comparison test was used to follow up the significant F value to determine specifically which groups were different. Results of this procedure revealed a significant difference at the level of 0.05 between employees of banking and health sector. Therefore, employees in the Banking sector scored significantly higher on Hobo syndrome revealing higher tendencies of hobo syndrome in Bank employees than employees in development and health sector.

Table 5 indicates the mean differences on Hobo Syndrome among employees of different management level. The results indicate that non-management employees showed a high mean score on Hobo syndrome as compared to the middle management and senior management employees. Turkey's post hoc multiple comparison test was used to follow up the significant F value to determine specifically which groups were different. Results of this procedure revealed a significant difference at the level of 0.05 between employees working at different management levels. Therefore, non-management employees scored significantly higher on Hobo syndrome revealing higher tendencies of hobo syndrome in non-management employees than middle and senior management.

DISCUSSION

Hobo syndrome, Job-hopping, job quits, resignation or turnover had engrossed to be striking issues for a critical observation and to be studied systematically by most of the researchers as well as organizations especially in the corporate world. In the past people used to struggle to get employed as

soon as they were freshly done with their education, and once employed they used to work there till their retirement. At that time, people never ever thought of switching their jobs because job stability was important.

But with the advancement in career philosophies and ever changing life style things have changed pretty much. Today people are more concerned about their career advancement, meeting new challenges and work as well as pay satisfaction. People are assumed to switch their jobs, else they would stagnate. It is perceived to be a rule of thumb for success that no one bonds to a single organization for a long time. Even if someone sticks to his job for long it is believed by others that he is not capable enough to get recruited anywhere.

These issues supplied the main purpose of present research in order to examine the relationship between selected antecedents and Hobo syndrome in Banking, Health and Developmental Sector employees. In Pakistan Job hopping is increasing probably because of the changes in economy and social life in which is influencing the employees to look for better pay and high income. Similarly there is high labor demand and huge opportunities that exist in the market of Banking, Health & development sector that permit the job switch and increases the exhibition of hobo syndrome. 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. Due to that, it becomes the major issue for organizations to hire the right and efficient employee.

Table 5: Mean, Standard deviation and ANOVA for Hobos in non-management, middle management and senior management (n=228)

Employment Sectors									
	Non-management (n=81)		Middle management (n=98)				Senior management (n=49)		
Scale	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F	p	Post hoc
Hobo Syndrome	96.22	43.8	81.28	28.6	64.91	13.4	4.45	.043	1>2>3

df= (226)

The three industry sectors are among the fastest growing industries in Pakistan. Beside the local organization, there exist relatively a number of foreign organization that provide good salary packages and benefits. The findings of the present study reveal that the employees in banking sector show more hobo-ness as compared to the development and health sector. The reason might be more opportunities in the banking sector.

A significant positive correlation was found between perceived alternative employment opportunities. The results are consistent with the findings of other related researches. A study found weak support for the positive relationship between perceived alternative employment opportunities and turnover intention.⁴ Whereas researches indicate that perceived employment opportunities is an integral part of informal theories on employee turnover¹⁹ and therefore could be speculated to play a role in hobo syndrome.

Personality traits such as openness to experience are positively related to hobo syndrome and may be used as a dispositional explanation of the hobo syndrome.²⁰ The present study revealed that openness to experience and hobo syndromes are positively related. The findings were consistent with other researches. The individuals with high levels of openness to experience were likely to exhibit hobo syndrome.^{17,21} Those who have more enthusiasm and productivity in the changing of work situation tend to move more frequently in job.²²

It seems that the employees who are open to new experiences and opportunities in life are more expected to exhibit hobo-ness in their career through quitting their jobs more frequently than others employees and also preserving affirmative notions about it.

It signifies that majority of the variables under study have different importance among the various industrial sectors. Hobo syndrome appears to be more effective in banking and development sector. The sample from the Banking (36) and development sector (41) had middle managerial staff. The health sector, on the other hand, had more non-managerial staff (40). The proportion of senior managerial employees in all three sectors was almost the same. Whereas, non-managerial and middle managerial employees, experience hobo syndrome more as compared to senior managerial level. Research indicated that non-managerial employees showed greater intention to leave than managerial employees.⁴ The differences may be due to the changes in the job category. In present research non-managerial employees showed more symptoms of Hobo symptoms.

However, more research is needed to understand more fully how individuals' dispositional characteristics interact with one another in influencing

manifestations of hobo syndrome. Further research should explore the relationship of Hobo syndrome with impulsivity, conscientiousness and other personality variables.

The findings revealed that Hobo syndrome is a phenomenon experienced by the employees in Pakistan. Non-management employees have higher tendency of Hobo syndrome as compared to the middle and senior management, while respondents of Banking sector have higher Hobo syndrome as compared to the employees of Development and Health sector.

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<p style="text-align: center;">CONFLICT OF INTEREST Authors declare no conflict of interest. GRANT SUPPORT AND FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE None declared.</p>
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