



# Parochialism in Western Management Theory: Understanding the Employee Turnover Phenomenon in the Omani Public Sector

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A Thesis submitted to the Management School, The University of Sheffield, for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## **Dedication**

To my late father, may his soul rest in peace, who ingrained a love of education and spirit of challenge in me.

To my mother who prayed day and night for me to reach this point in life.

To my wife and children who help me through the hard times.

## **Acknowledgments**

All praises and thanks go to Allah the most gracious and merciful:

*“Read in the name of your God who created; created man from a clinging substance; read and your God is the most generous; He taught by the pen; Taught men that which he knew not”* [Quran, 96: 1-5]

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is concerned with tracing the employee turnover phenomenon in the Omani public sector. One of the most important aims was to provide a causal relationship that would explain the failure of the Omani public sector to retain its employees. Hence, the research initially followed a positivist approach in the first phase of empirical analysis. Accordingly, the researcher used descriptive analysis of data gathered by the quantitative method, questionnaire. The results affirmed findings of the Western theories about the causes of the employee turnover. However, the results revealed as well that the problem does not revolve around the causes of employee turnover but around how Omanis construct the meaning of employee turnover. These results encouraged me to trace the applicability of Western theories in the Omani context. Accordingly, the research question was reshaped to trace the convergence, divergence or crossvergence between Omani and Western contexts and the analysis came to rely more on an interpretive approach. Thus, in the second phase of the empirical analysis I used the universal analytical framework of ‘Scott’s 3 institutional pillars’ to analyze the qualitative data, re-analyzing using template and matrix analyses. Scott’s (1995) three institutional pillars comprise the regulative, normative, and cognitive pillars. Using these heuristic pillars to interpret my qualitative data suggested that the Omani and Western contexts are divergent in cognitive and regulative perspectives and suggestively convergent in normative perspective. Thus, I concluded the Omani and Western contexts are suggestively crossvergent which explains Omani behavior regarding employee turnover. Consequently, I concluded that Western theories are not completely applicable in the Omani context. Actually, this is what I called parochialism in management theory, where western theories are considered to be transferrable to other context, and has implications in management practice. Throughout this thesis I argue for existing of parochialism in western management theory, with focus on employee turnover theories, and their applicability into the Omani context.

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## Thesis Overview

The objective of this overview is to show how my thinking about the research topic, addressing the employee turnover in the Omani public sector, was radically changed and evolved. I think showing this is very important in order to lead the reader's mind about the development of ideas and arguments throughout this research.

When I started this research I believed there was a brain drain in the Omani public sector. At that time I hoped that I could, by using the action research, find some kind of negotiated solutions to the problem for managers. My thinking about the action research concept was based on the tenet that is meant to be about bringing simultaneous change and learning to the project situation (Wilson, 1984). The change occurs through improving a problematic situation to a better situation. The learning is acquired from the process of incurring the change. This form of research can be considered as a powerful and liberating form of professional learning where all stakeholders of a situation can inspect and appraise their work (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006).

In brief, the action research cycle is as follows: Action is taken, and then reflections on the action yield insights or appreciation, these appreciations are taken to improve the action again and the process continues (Flood, 2001; Checkland & Poulter, 2006). It is powerful according to McNiff and Whitehead (2006) because stakeholders themselves are investigating and appraising their tasks using their stream of educational and social values. What distinguishes this kind of research is that while the primary task is seeking change, development or improvement of the situation, the whole work is conducted by a practitioner and involved parties not by a professional researcher (Kember, 2000). So, I thought that addressing the problem through collaborations from involved stakeholders of the study problem would be more efficient, and faster.

However, in order to be able to suggest any change into the Omani public sector, using action research, about how to improve and reduce the existing problematic situation of the 'increase in the employee turnover rates', I needed first to locate, along with my collaborative stakeholders, the causes of the employee turnover in the Omani public sector? To find out the reasons that are causing the employee turnover situation in the Omani public sector to deteriorate I conducted two types of studies; questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Before unfolding these

studies or their results and consequent direction of the research I should draw the reader's attention to the fact that up to this stage I believed that employee turnover meant the same thing as it did in the west. My belief was unintentional and I think it was informed by certain reasons. For example, I attended a college of commerce and economics in my home country Oman where almost all of the subjects taught to students are Western. I think I was, like my school colleagues in that college, infused with western and American best ways of doing things and practices. Moreover, I think, overall, the Omani context is affected somehow by the post-colonial effects, where western practices, brought from the West, are taken for granted as being applicable to colonies.

I conducted intensive explorations into the employee turnover key terms, causes, models, and consequences in the Western context. I came up with what I would call the western common assumptions about the employee turnover phenomenon. I identified three main common assumptions that have sub-common assumptions within them. They are: (i) employee turnover is generally an undesirable and unwanted phenomenon, (ii) psychological factors like job satisfaction and organizational commitment affect employee turnover behaviour, and (iii) economic factors such as wages, job alternatives, and inducements also affect employee turnover. My methodological aims, when I was adopting the action research and believed in the workability of western HR practices in the Omani public sector context, revolved around investigating these three major common assumptions in order to locate the problems, suggest, along with respondents, intervention to the situation, apply it, evaluate it, and then deduce lessons from the whole experience.

Therefore, I designed a questionnaire to investigate these attributes. There are several reasons for using the questionnaire. First of all, it has been widely used in similar studies according to Al-A'Raj (1989). A list of statements was designed and included in the questionnaire to uncover 'how respondents view the employee turnover in Oman?' Moreover, the questionnaire statements were designed to investigate psychological and economic factors which were found to be vital in increasing the employee turnover in the western literature review. Furthermore, I triangulated the questionnaire findings by conducting twenty semi-structured interviews. Respondents came from the public sector. To capture a wider view about the problematic sector senior managers, line managers, and grass-roots employees were involved in the process. The

study respondents were drawn from different governmental bodies, governmental companies and Public Authorities, and included directors of human resources departments, recruiting officers, directors of financial departments, academics, consultants in human resources departments, and researchers in human resources departments. The potential respondents were characterized as highly experienced officers in the human resources field, well educated, drawn from both genders, and working directly or indirectly with employees.

I triangulated the findings of the questionnaire with semi structured interviews. In the semi-structured interviews I asked questions such as: How would you describe employee turnover in the public sector? Do you think this phenomenon varies in degree and nature? Can you elaborate more about its nature in your organization? Moreover, some questions related to the communication process in the public sector and how it affected employee turnover. In addition, there were some questions about the legal aspects of employment relations in the public sector and how they worked in favour of or against the employee turnover phenomenon. Furthermore, I explored the financial aspect and its role in increasing or decreasing the rates of employee turnover in the public sector. Additionally, respondents who went through the employee turnover experience were asked about their experiences. How and why did they decide to quit their organizations? How did they feel about management in the public sector's response to their departure? How did they think the phenomenon could be addressed by public sector managers? The following passages show how my thinking about the research topic evolved after analyzing data gained from the questionnaire and the semi structured interviews.

In the west, it is hypothesized that employee turnover is seen as a problem that can be solved using the managerial techniques recommended in the literature. This suggestion was supported by Fulmer, Gerhart, & Scott (2003); Kacmar, Andrews, Van Rooy, Steilberg, & Cerrone (2006); Holtom et al. (2008); and Hom, Roberson, & Ellis, (2008) who argued that managers are required to do their best to create strategies and policies to reduce the unwanted staff turnover. I thought the case would be the same in the Omani context where people would also consider the employee turnover phenomenon as a problem. So, I hypothesized that employee turnover in Omani public sector would be seen, as it seen in the west, as an unwanted and undesirable phenomenon. However, neither the results rendered from the questionnaire nor semi structured interviews results affirmed this in the Omani context. In fact, the majority of respondents

considered it as a healthy phenomenon. Hence, the first common assumption about the undesirability of employee turnover phenomenon was knocked down. Before jumping to any conclusions I would show respondents' views about the other two general common assumptions in order to capture a general idea about the workability of these western common assumptions, implying their HR practices, in the Omani context.

The second major hypothesis in the empirical work I conducted in the Omani public sector revolved around the idea that psychological factors such as job satisfaction, job commitment, job security have a negative relationship on employee turnover. Well, the questionnaire included statements that concentrated directly on these issues by asking about them or indirectly by asking about antecedents of these factors. For example, respondents were asked about: remuneration, communication, role clarity, satisfaction with existing performance appraisal and supervisory relations, which, in light of the literature review, can be considered as antecedents of job satisfaction (see Campbell, 1982). Moreover, there were direct statements about the organizational commitment and job security. The third major hypothesis was concentrated on the economic factors. Therefore, there were statements in the questionnaire and questions in the interview about the economic and labour market factors. For example, I hypothesized that people would leave the public sector if it offered a poor rewards system, and there were competitive job opportunities in other sectors of the labour market.

The results of investigating the psychological and economic factors have two contradictory implications that urged me to rethink my research questions and methodology. The first implication relates to lack of satisfaction about the HR managerial practices, whether they involve psychological or economic factors, and their efficiency in the public sector. Partially, this confirms the second and third hypothesis above. However, the reflections of respondents in the semi structured interviews revealed unexpected views and behaviours about employee turnover that, I think, questioned the relationships between employee turnover and factors causing it, which is the second implication. For example, respondents viewed employee turnover as a healthy phenomenon and they did not consider it as a problem as long as employees left to take up other posts within the country. Moreover, there were some issues which are considered serious in western theories but seem to be overlooked in the Omani context. For example, the costs of employee turnover were not found to be important problems that needed to be addressed.



In addition, some rhetorical problems surfaced from the feedback. For instance, managers argued that they conducted certain HR practices laid down in Civil Service law, such as performance appraisal, and they promoted on the basis of merit and tenure standards. However, feedback of grass roots employees did not support the existence of such practices in the public sector. In addition, some regulations like Omanization, WTO regulations and foreign investment laws had influenced the employee turnover in the Omani labour market. Moreover, it surfaced that respondents provided reasoning for some of their behaviour based on abstract guidelines from Islamic and cultural values. For example, managers cannot disobey divine orders which allow Muslims to shift to whatever situation they see as better for their quality of life.

Consequently, my thinking was really in limbo for a while. That was because my initial inquiry was to find an intervention to address employee turnover in the Omani context. My initial framework of finding the causes of employee turnover in Oman was based on the western common assumptions, economic and psychological factors. The arsenal of theories in psychological and economic fields that explain the causes of employee turnover includes: equity theory (Adams, 1965); matching theory (Mace, McCurdy, & Quigley, 1990); search theory (Stigler, 1961); met expectation theory (Porter and Steers, 1973), social exchange theory; see Thibaut & Kelley (1959); Homans (1961); human capital theory (Becker G. , 1964) and organizational equilibrium theory (Barnard, 1938; Simon, 1947). The findings suggested that this phenomenon is not solvable as unexpected feedback from respondents surfaced. They suggested that either the Omani managers do not know anything about employee turnover, which I do not accept, or their construction of employee turnover is not as it is constructed in the western context.

Thus, I think that more investigation is required about when people and Omani public organizations recognize employee turnover as a problem and how they construct the meaning of employee turnover. In order to do that investigation I used an interpretivism approach. According to William (2000) and Bryman (2008) this approach has strategies that can be used in interpreting the human behaviour. Moreover, it helps in creating or building on theories from the collected data. In addition it is ontologically based on the relativism where multiple realities and knowledge are expected and cannot be separated from researcher. All in all, I think that the employee turnover problem is not abnormal to Oman. My belief is that if such action research

were to be conducted in the UK a similar set of issues would emerge. I think there is a double problem in the literature. One of the problems is central to my thesis and relates to the universality of these theories. The second problem is the assumption that these techniques work.

I think the problem lies in the extent to which any one of these management techniques actually play out in organizations as is implied in the literature. Are the relationships between, for example, communication and employee turnover as straightforward as people would have believed? I think the answer is 'no' because in every context there is a host of cultural factors that affect organizations at a local level. Hartmann (2008) argued that the way we think defines our culture and if any society abandons its culture it would have problems.

The research questions;

**Are the existing employee turnover concepts universal? Alternatively, is it necessary to adopt a different perspective for consideration of such concepts in the context of Arab Gulf states? Is the way in which employee turnover is understood in the West relevant to Arab Gulf states?**

## *Chapter 1: Comments and Critique on the Employee Turnover Literature Review*

*“Today we are culturally conditioned. We see the world in the way we have learned to see it. Only to a limited extent can we, in our thinking, step out of the boundaries imposed by our cultural conditioning” Hofstede (1980)*

### **1.1. Introduction**

When I began this research I thought that employee turnover was a solvable problem. I did believe as well that the common assumptions about the employee turnover generated in Western context would represent a good tool for understanding this problem in an Omani context. However, these tools did not help me to understand the findings and results from the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews I conducted in an Omani context. Hence, I concluded in the previous section that either Omani managers do not know anything about the employee turnover, which I do not believe, or there might be a better tool for understanding how Omanis construct the meaning of employee turnover. This implies there might be a divergence between Omani and Western contexts that informs the impossibilities of applying western theories into Omani context. I concluded as well that no more research is needed but a tool that would help in understanding my findings.

Each concept has its own history and fields of use. There is a huge gap between what we think we know about each one of these concepts and what they really mean (see Foucault’s work titled: *Power/Knowledge*, 1980). In this work I imply that the applicability or universality of all concepts must be questioned before attempting to apply them in contexts different from those in which they were created. However, this gap allows a great opportunity for researchers to accommodate their understanding of each concept according to the relevant culture, religion, ideology...etc. Hence, one can deduce the wide range of differences in how different cultures interpret or see the same concepts. That does not mean that in all cases there will be complete transferability of the concepts or consequent universality of their application.

The above introduction urges the research to examine initially how the issue under investigation is understood in North America and Western Europe (referred to hereafter as the West). The scope of the research revolves around the employee turnover phenomenon, which relates to human resources. In order to understand this issue properly, snapshots will be reflected of the

development of this particular concept since the 1950s. There is no doubt that this post World War II period has unleashed a plethora of knowledge in all areas, especially in relation to management and the arms race. As mentioned above in the thesis overview, there is a plethora of western literatures that attempted to present explanations for the employee turnover phenomenon by presenting models, measurement, and causes of this phenomenon. The purposes of those attempts were to find out remedial actions that could lower or get rid of the employee turnover phenomenon, see Fulmer, Gerhart, & Scott (2003); Kacmar, Andrews, Van Rooy, Steilberg, & Cerrone (2006); Holtom et al. (2008); and Hom, Roberson, & Ellis, (2008). Furthermore, it is suggested that none of studies or scholars in the Western context suggest that employee turnover is a completely good thing or healthy phenomenon to happen.

This chapter will seek to problematize and critique, in some detail, the models/theories of employee turnover. To accomplish this, examination will be made of the extent to which the employee turnover theories and their associated concepts have their roots in specific historical and cultural conditions. A similar analysis of research based on the Middle East will be included at the end of this chapter.

The aim is to argue that turnover has to be understood in its specific historical and cultural context as the causes and consequences cited in the Western literature may not be applicable to the Middle East context. It is also the intention, at the end of the literature review, to arrive at a simple and concise set of arguments that illustrate why existing Western theories might not be helpful to an examination of turnover in the Middle East, given that they are based on Western ontological assumptions about people that are highly questionable.

What concerns the present study more is the field of management in general and HRM specifically. For that reason, there will be brief reflection on the management environment during the historical periods discussed in this section. This is very important since contextual elements exert a strong influence on all kinds of behaviours. Then, there will be an attempt to present analysis of the turnover phenomenon in the society on which this research focuses, the Sultanate of Oman, and comparisons with the Western view will be presented in the subsequent section.

## **1.2. Management in the Post World War II Period**

There are two arguments to be reflected here in this section and its subsections. First of all, I think the evolution of management paradigms participated in forming the understanding of employee turnover phenomenon in the West. Moreover, I think they are driven by the economic and cultural factors in the West and that have an effect on enriching the understanding of employee turnover. The following sub-sections reveal more about this argument.

The management paradigms evolved from concentration on mass production to focusing on profit maximization and efficiency, as discussion of the traditional and new management paradigms reflects later in this chapter. The traditional management paradigm required more control over human capital as is shown in the employment relationship and neglected the psychological needs of humans and the external environment. This in turn evolved from a situation based on the employer having all the rights to one where employees were able to have some rights as well. However, the new management paradigm avoided the drawbacks of the traditional management paradigm. All of the management paradigms, economic and cultural factors played major roles in how the West institutionalized employee turnover. Second, depending on the first argument, I assume that almost all of the western literature about employee turnover came to light after WWII, when the human factor was considered in alignment with productivity.

### **1.2.1. Management Paradigms**

Different schools of thought have developed in relation to management as a discipline over the last two centuries. In brief, they comprise (i) the classical school, which includes scientific management, administrative management, and bureaucratic management, (ii) the neo-classical school, which includes human relations theory and behavioural theory, and (iii) the modern management school, that includes systems theory, contingency theory, organizational humanism, and management science.

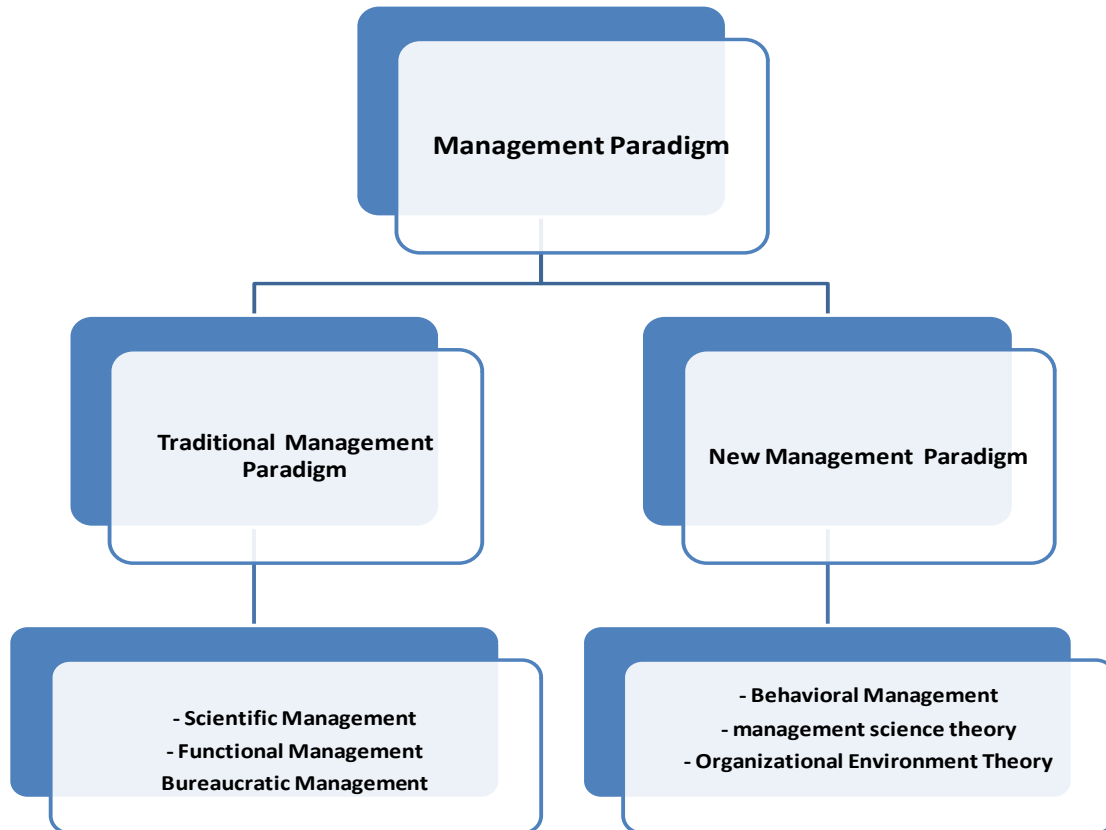


Figure 1. Management Paradigms. Compiled by researcher from Jamali (2005)

However, for reasons of simplicity and lack of time available to me, I would focus on the typology of two main management paradigms as defined by Jamali (2005). These are the traditional management paradigm and new management paradigm as shown above in figure 1. I argue in this section that people in the West started to institutionalize the employee turnover as management paradigm evolved from traditional management paradigm to the new management paradigm. In the new management paradigm as I present in this section witnessed more consideration on the indirect costs caused by the negligence of employees' behaviour. Employee turnover behaviour, which is the scope of this research, is one of the behaviors caused by unsatisfying psychological, and economic factors, see Appendix 1. In my view, the early and new classical theories, which, according to Jamali (2005), belong to the traditional management paradigm, concentrated on two main debates. They are maximizing production and reducing waste by exerting better control over employees to achieve production maximization. They emphasized, as Khalil (2000) contended, the application of mechanistic methods that were considered the best ways of running organizations to achieve the highest levels of productivity.

For example, this traditional management paradigm, according to Jamali (2005), emphasized: (i) standardization, time and motion, careful scientific observation in the scientific management theory led and developed by Taylor; (ii) universal functions (planning, organizing, directing, and controlling) that shape good management process, centralization, command and control, regulations, hierarchal authority, reducing costs in administration, as stated by Fayol and Weber; see Jamali (2005). One of the major criticisms of these management theories relates to their negligence of individual behaviour.

Jamali (2005) asserted as well that traditional management theory falls short in coping with the political, economic, social-cultural, and technological (PEST) developments due to its mechanistic and un-innovative approaches. Moreover, according to Khalil (2000) and Jamali (2005), such thinking became obsolete. They postulated that the traditional management paradigm focused on cutting direct costs of production as the main mission of management. In addition, within the traditional management paradigm managers were considered to be decision makers, neglecting employees and considering them as machines that just responded to instructions. Last but not least, technological development was not considered important and long-lasting products were the aim of production.

The new management paradigm responded quite well to the (PEST), see Jamali (2005). The new management paradigm consists of behavioural management theory, the open-systems theory, the contingency theory, and the organizational environment theory. The behavioural management theory concentrated on investigating worker's motivations and interactions within an organization. The management science theory can be considered as an extension to the scientific management theory, according to Smit et al. (2007), since it focuses on raising organizational efficiency by measuring worker-task mix by using the quantitative approach. The main divisions of this theory are: operation management, quantitative management, and total quality management.

The organizational environment theory has two main theories. They are; open system theory and contingency theory. The open system theory is concerned with studying how the external environment can influence organizations. Open – System theorists considered organizations are open systems that interact and can be affected by the external context where they operate; see Smit et al (2007). Furthermore, open system theorists acknowledged the importance the synergy,

which is the cooperation and coordination of actions between individuals and their divisions. The contingency theory argues, according to Smit et al. (2007), that the traits of the external environment inform how organizations develop their structures and operate. Hence, they suggest the nonexistence of best ways for organizing. Smit et al. (2007) contended that organizations respond contingently to external environmental changes such as economic stability, developments in technology, and entrance of competitors.

In general, Khalil (2000) and Jamali (2005) asserted that theories in this paradigm argued the focus should be on means of reducing indirect costs that negatively affect the production maximization. For example, the behavioural theorists triggered the importance of understanding individuals who are assets, and resources of the organization. Understanding them and complying with their needs to retain them within organizations and keep them satisfied consequently increases productivity and decreases employee turnover. Such strategies have a great effect on lowering employee turnover.

The new management paradigm, according to Jamali (2005) and Khalil (2000), has evaded some problems that dogged the traditional paradigm. For example, it focuses on continuous development of technology as this, hand in hand with job satisfaction of employees, maximizes productivity and profits. Additionally, operations in the new paradigm, unlike the traditional paradigm, are undertaken with agility and flexibility while maintaining continual improvement. Moreover, managers play roles of coaching and facilitating not only decision making and staff are considered to be untradeable assets that have knowledge. All of these strategies, as I will show later in description of the cultural and economic evolution, participate in creating a good organizational culture which has an effect on employee turnover (Sheridan, 1992).

In the next section I move a little narrower to investigate briefly the evolution of the human resources management. I believe this is important since human resources management represents a linking ring between management and the employee turnover phenomenon.

### **1.3. Evolution of HRM since the 1950s**

It has been indicated above that management theories and practices in the Western context developed in accordance with the historical and cultural context. I argue here that as HRM is an element of management it has also developed in accordance with historical and cultural contexts.



The HRM function in the time before WWII was so simple and straightforward. It was influenced by the prevailing management paradigm at that time: scientific management, according to Thite & Kavanagh (2009). Thite and Kavanagh (2009) asserted that the main function of personnel management was to keep records on employees. This information was used to calculate personnel efficiency and to motivate them accordingly. Employment relations at that time were loose and weak because there was no legislation to organize these relations. Consequently, many practices which are considered nowadays to be worker abuse, such as bad working conditions and child labour, were widespread (Thite and Kavanagh, 2009).

It is my view that employers' and employees' thinking moved forward after WWII. I think this might be attributed to the philosophy of the management paradigm, behavioural management, which prevailed at this time. Thite and Kavanagh (2009) argued that employers, after WWII, realized that their organizations' profitability could be maximized by motivating employees to maximize their productivity. I think employers started to focus on human capital and recognize its importance starting from this period. Human capital theory, which can be used for explaining employee turnover, was developed by Becker (1964). The human capital theory asserted the importance of human resources and the importance of investing in employees through education and training. Some scholars asserted that high training and educational courses and qualifications given to employees have a positive relationship with employee turnover; see Henneberger & Sousa-Poza (2007). Personnel departments, consequently, focused on satisfying employees and developing them to maximize profitability.

The employees' thinking also evolved as they began to realize how important they were to an organization. They formed labour unions and bargained with their employers for their rights. The formation of labour unions marked the development of legislation on employment relations. In respect to the behavioural paradigm some theories were generated that could be used as framework for explaining employees' intention to leave in this period. For example, the social exchange theory argues that employee turnover behaviour can be seen as a product of the exchange process. The exchange process suggests that a turnover behaviour decision is taken when the reciprocity given to an employee is not equal to efforts and qualifications of the employee; see Homans (1961). Moreover, Stigler (1961) proposed the search theory that was used later on by Mobley (1979) for anticipating the employee turnover phenomenon. This theory

suggested that employees set a reservation price as a benchmark for accepting or rejecting a post. The reservation price is the lowest salary an employee would consider when choosing a job in the absence of labour market information; see also Morrell, Loan-Clarke, & Wilkinson (2001). In fact, the role of the personnel department expanded in the period from the end of WWII until 1963, according to Thite and Kavanagh (2009). It changed from just keeping records to concentrating on complying with employment relations and government relations, enhancing training, and recruitment functions. This, I think, supports the argument I posed earlier that HR evolved as the management paradigm evolved.

Thite and Kavanagh (2009) argued that human resources management in the period from 1963-1980, which was called the social issues era, witnessed a large amount of legislation to regulate employment relations. These legislations were meant to protect the employees from being wrongly utilized. Senior managers understood that failing to comply with legislation that protects employees will result in unwanted punitive procedures. In this period the term Human Resource Management was born, according to Thite and Kavanagh (2009). Moreover, the trade unions became stronger with the emergence of labour protecting legislation and the flourishing economy. Under the increased protection of labour legislation, labour unions' bargaining over employees' needs and rights, and a thriving economy the role of the personnel department, as contended by Thite and Kavanagh (2009), shifted from a caretaker function, whereby the focus was on keeping records of employees and maintenance, to a protector function, which placed more emphasis on developing employees.

The role of human resources management had developed in the period from 1980 to the early 1990s according to Thite and Kavanagh (2009). It began to concentrate on the issue of cost-effectiveness. I think this evolution can be seen as a consequence of increasing competition to western economies from the Far East, understanding of the importance of having the competitive advantage of well educated, trained workers, the need to give good reasons for programmes and services provided by HR divisions as employers realized that personnel can account for up to 80% of budgets, and the necessity of complying with job market legislation. These are important elements in achieving higher profits. I think this tendency of the cost-effectiveness era is consistent with management science theory presented in the new management paradigm. In this

era employers concentrated on the organization's efficiency by applying managerial techniques found in, for example, total quality management and operation management.

In general, I think the development of the human resources field was consistent with the prevailing historical and cultural context. The historical context from my point of view involved more than one school of management. For example, the 1980s period witnessed overlaps between behavioural management theory, management science theory, and organizational environment theory.

This task was the first stage in an attempt to provide some logic on how the employee turnover issue developed as I argued earlier it is a product of historical and cultural context. I reviewed above the overarching bases of employee turnover that are management paradigms and HRM. I think there is an impossibility of universalizing output from any school of thought because of the differences in ontology, cultures and ideologies. Western management theory has been through intensive experiences of industrialization, economic ups and downs, and cultural evolutions. Moreover, it was infused with capitalist ideology, which, according to Jackson and Carter (1990), has given rise to new priorities in management practices. For example, it prioritized free market forces values over ethical values. This move was explained by Jackson and Carter (1990) to reflect the consistency between the modernist approach and capitalist philosophy. The following sections would give more insights about the new emerging argument 'the non-universality of Western theories into different contexts' while reflecting on the historical evolutions of employee turnover in the west, and the Western culture. I think that before reflecting on historical roots of employee turnover I should show the roots of employee turnover in public sectors of western contexts. I think it is important to reflect on this because there might be some unique features that distinguish the investigation of employee turnover in the public sector from that in the private sector. This is important also for this work since it concentrates primarily on the Omani public sector.

Selden and Moynihan (2000); and Meier & Alisa (2008) contended there is a paucity of employee turnover studies into the public sector. Selden and Moynihan (2000) argued that the public sector was most impacted by employee turnover in terms of percentage of quitters in the USA. The rate of quitters from the public sector was about 8% compared to 6% of quitters from the private sector. Consequently, officials in the USA in 1997 found themselves in a feverish

race with competitors, e.g. non-profit organizations, and private sector, to retain and employ the most highly skilled employees. Bluedorn (1982) argued that the USA Air Force statistics showed that a sum of 800,000 US Dollars were spent on training each one of those pilots who left the Air Force. Huffman, Adler, Castro, & Dolan (2005), and Rated Officer Retention Analysis (2006) reported that Governmental Organizations including the military organizations were not immune from employee turnover. They argued that 62% of enlisted employees and 40% of officers, 79% of pilots in the Air Force left their posts once they finished their active duty service commitment.

I think that there were no real attempts by theorists in the public sector to generate theories of employee turnover that are unique to the public sector. Rather, they uncritically adopted the existing theories and/or calculations of employee turnover generated in the private sector. Consequently, they assumed homogeneity of employee turnover theories in heterogeneous contexts. This conclusion is supported also by Morrell et al. (2002). Morrell et al. (2002) contended there is no accepted general framework or model that can be applied to comprehend employee turnover in all contexts. Furthermore, Hulin, Roznowski, & Hachiya (1985) and Price and Mueller (1986) argued that the cognitive process regarding employee turnover in different populations differs and this has an impact on the quitting behaviour. Having mentioned the importance of the cognitive process I think this research could contribute to the turnover theories by adding a cultural school to the economic and psychological schools used for explaining employee turnover processes. I think it is important to review the historical roots of employee turnover in the western literature review as this reflection would show consistency of employee turnover evolution with evolutions of management paradigm and HR field. The following sections illustrate the historical roots of employee turnover.

## **1.4. Historical Roots of Employee Turnover**

### **1.4.1. Historical Roots of Employee Turnover before and since the 1950s**

The earliest documented discussion of employee turnover can be found in Goddard (1927) in a paper that introduced a methodology for the measurement of employee turnover by separation rate. Benson (1929) wrote about the phenomenon with a particular focus on female labour.

Needless to say, these new methods devised by Goddard (1927) and Benson (1929) had several flaws. Among these was a failure to differentiate between voluntary and involuntary turnover. In fact, the notion of voluntary or involuntary turnover only appeared tens of years after these early

publications. In 1947, Kerr examined twenty four correlates of employee turnover. He proposed the term “unavoidable turnover” to draw attention to turnover forced by pregnancy, death and military service, which needed to be excluded from the total rate of turnover.

This was a turning point in the measurement of employee turnover. Goddard (1927) and Benson (1929) belonged to the classical school of organization theory influenced by Taylorism. In this approach the organization is seen as a machine which should be assembled and systemized to achieve certain goals. The loss of employees, which are parts of the big machine, are understood simply as losses whose cause is irrelevant

This mindset can be understood in the context of the recession in the mass production industries characteristic of the period following WWI. For instance, the UK could not recover easily from the problems in its shipbuilding, coal mining and textiles industries after the war. Moreover, by the 1930s the UK had about two million unemployed people and the level of unemployment remained less than 1.5 million until the outbreak of the Second World War; see (Alexander, 2000). This certainly could also explain the lack of incentive to research employee turnover. The plentiful supply of labour in relation to demand coupled with concerns over operational costs and efforts to downsize suggest that turnover would not have been understood as a problem. Adam Smith’s invisible hand of supply-demand was not easily able to achieve equilibrium between 1920 and 1939 in the UK. Thus, the unemployed along with the employed engaged frequently in strikes and marches in the quest for better living and working conditions. On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, the USA experienced its own economic and cultural problems that inhibited the development of the concept of employee turnover from academic and pragmatic aspects. The great depression gave rise to the biggest economic crash in US history in 1929. After the 1929 crash the unemployment rate stood at about 25% of the total labour force in USA; see Wheelock (2010).

That crash and comparable events contributed to changing the prevailing managerial approach. The prevailing paradigm was the Taylorist approach, which concentrated on controlling labour by three means: rational methods, technology, and management techniques. This paradigm prevailed because it had seemed attractive in the golden age of industrialization and mass production in the 1960s. However, critics of this paradigm indicated that mass production had been proven to promote highly individualistic values that led ultimately to dehumanization and

alienation. Thus, there were high rates of absenteeism, sickness, sabotage, low morals, wastage, and apathy. On the cultural side, certain factors encouraged the shift away from Taylorism. For example, in the USA, racism and ethnic barriers were to some extent overcome, with the civil rights movement achieving freedom, power and a decrease in apathy among black citizens. In addition, the numbers of female workers increased. Furthermore, many international treaties and laws to protect humanity and labour rights were instituted. Consequently, in the light of these economic and cultural developments the Taylorism theory was no longer relevant, and was superseded by a new paradigm, that of organizational behaviour.

Accordingly, some academics, as indicated by Hollway (1991), started to seek a better understanding of employees' feelings. They presumed that the more the management comes to know what employees think and feel, the more problems and disputes can be resolved or avoided. Hollway (1991) reintroduced the methods used by the Kimberly-Clark Corporation to survey employees' attitudes in mills in Wisconsin in what was one of the first studies in the West to employ psychologists. Cartwright (1948) and Hollway (1991) contended that these kinds of surveys were used to evaluate the levels of public morale during WWII. Indeed, that formed the seed and a breakthrough for focusing on observation of behaviour informed by attitude of the individual in different life situations, depending on the research interest. At the same time there was an increase in efforts to bring to the surface human relations as a significant field of study. Moreover, this period witnessed an alliance of applied psychologists with academia which contributed noticeably to the development of knowledge and practice (see Hollway (1991)). Nonetheless, the UK lagged behind somewhat in this field until the second half of the 1960s, according to Kay and Warr (1970).

It can be argued that the Kimberly-Clark Corporation's landmark survey of attitudes was a kind of first nail in the scientific school of thought coffin and a green light to abandon the classical management of Taylor. Starting from the 1950s, organizations such as the Ford Foundation became interested in tracking and developing social relations among employees. During this period the study of employee turnover gained popularity, with great emphasis on motivation, organization commitment, and job satisfaction. For instance, Brayfield et al. (1955) insisted that various steps in human relations should be traced in order to reveal staff motivation, which inform their behaviour and play a major role in developing and modifying the social

relationships in plants and in the community. Such attempts explain the growing popularity of the organizational behavioural school in the 1950s. To consolidate this body of research, in 1958 March and Simon came up with the organization equilibrium theory. This theory suggests that the organization consists of a number of employees who have interrelated social behaviours. The organization encourages employees by giving them motivations and incentives for their efforts in the organization. Employees would leave if they thought that inducements given by the organization were less than the contributions they were making to the organization. The organization's ability to sustain and survive depends on its ability to give good incentives in accordance with contribution made by employees.

However, a reference theory called the theory of social exchange that could explain the intention to leave an organization was revealed in 1959. I think this theory extends the essence of the organization equilibrium theory. This is because one of its principles, according to Thibaut & Kelley (1959), states that staff do a reciprocity and subjective reward-cost analysis of their performance in comparison with what they materially or non-materially gain from the organization. Moreover, they compare that with what their counterparts are getting in competing organizations. If they find their efforts outweigh the rewards they are getting then most probably they will leave the organization.

Mahoney (2005) contended that the theory of organization equilibrium was generated for the study of motivation in organizations. March and Simon (1958) asserted that as long as an organization was successful in planning the wages and inducements for employees of different levels in an accepted way, job satisfaction would rise and low labour turnover would be expected. They used the administrative decision theory, which, according to Steel and Lounsbury (2009), was the dominating paradigm at that time, in developing their model of employee turnover. They presumed that the decision to quit is basically due to two main factors: the perceived desirability of movement and the perceived ease of movement. I think March and Simon (1958) also used the principles of behavioural management theory since it shared dominance of management theories with the administrative theory from the 1950s through to the 1980s, see figure 2 below. Their theory touched a human factor in the form of job satisfaction. In a case where the employee is dissatisfied then his or her decision to quit an organization is most likely.

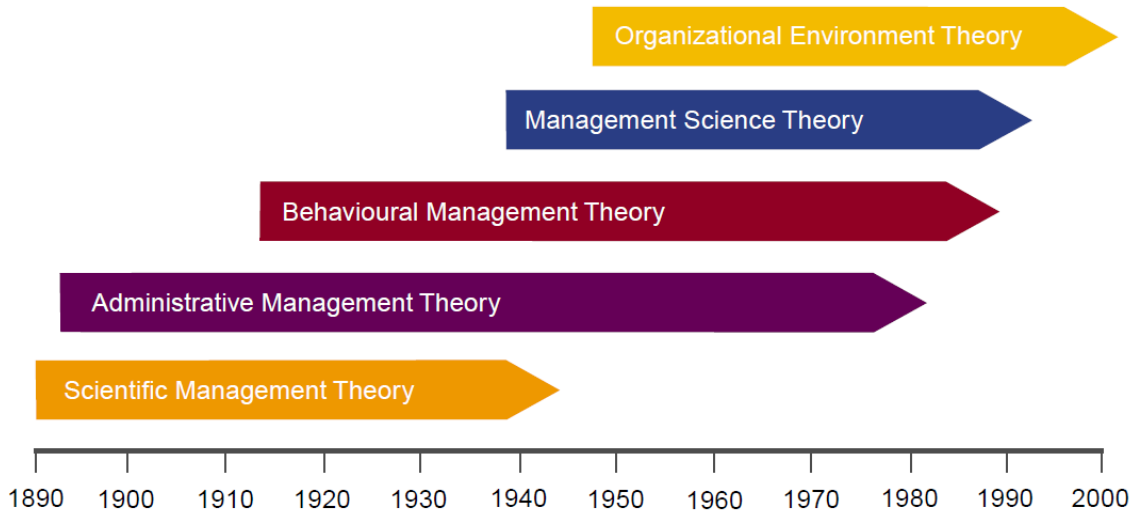


Figure 2. The evolution of management Theory/ Source: Smit et al (2007)

#### 1.4.2. Employee Turnover since the 1960s

Little was written about employee turnover in the 1960s according to Tas et al. (1989). The March and Simon model of employee turnover prevailed for about 21 years. It was introduced in academia in 1958 and was echoed and adapted by Mobley et al. (1977). In fact, it is worth examining how employee turnover was manipulated during the 1960s and the early 1970s. Rosse (1991) emphasized that almost all of the research generated up to the middle of the 1960s emerged in a bivariate manner, concentrating on the relationship between labour turnover and job satisfaction. Among other studies which tracked motivation and its effect upon turnover in the 1960s were the motivation-employee turnover (ET) studies conducted by McGregor (1960) and Herzberg (1968).

They both concluded that pay cannot be considered the sole criterion in staff decisions to leave or to stay in an organization. Indeed, such theories represent extensions of motivation and psychology theories which were pioneered earlier by scholars such as Maslow. They, nevertheless, helped to construct the frameworks which have enhanced our understanding about interrelated issues such as employee turnover. McGregor (1960) and Herzberg's (1968) theories appeared to be dominated by new management paradigm thinking wherein three specific management theories overlapped, namely behavioural management theory, management science theory and organizational environmental theory.



However, in 1964 Becker came up with the theory of human capital. Becker (1964) argued that not all workers are equal in abilities and skills, and consequently in salaries or wages, because of their educational and experiential backgrounds. Moreover, he argued that employees' quality can be raised by considering them as important capital of an organization and investing in increasing this capital through either education or training. Henneberger & Sousa-Poza (2007) argued this theory has an impact on employee turnover. For example, they argued that in cases of increasing specific training to employees, employee turnover would decrease. That is because of the difficulty in finding alternatives that required similar specific experience/knowledge and would be able to offer a better salary. I think the creation of human capital theory and its concentration on payment goes along with the dominant new management paradigm that concentrates on factors external to organizations in addition to internal factors that participate in shaping behaviour and which we may refer to specifically as the organization environment theory.

One of these external factors was the economic situation prevailing in the West at that time. Scholars such as Crafts (2004) called the period spanning from 1950 to 1970 the golden age of economic growth. Kalleberg (2009) called the period between 1940 and 1970 the growth and prosperity period. In this period, as Kalleberg (2009) points out, economic compensation increased and job security was assured for labour. Moreover, employer power was restricted, employees obtained bargaining rights and working conditions and employment practices were controlled by the government. Consequently, there was a boom in economic growth and productivity (see also Crafts, 2004; Crafts and Toniolo, 2008). The GDP/capita also increased.

According to Tas et al. (1989), the decrease in employee turnover studies in the 1960s can be attributed to shortages in the labour supply during that period due to falling birthrates accompanied by an increase in the number of new service related jobs requiring employees. In their opinion, this caused focus to shift to the other facet of the coin and much effort began to be channeled into employee retention. They asserted also that some significant advances in employee turnover have been accomplished since that period.

#### **1.4.3. Employee Turnover since the 1970s**

I think that the 1970s is one of the most prolific periods in terms of investigation of the employee turnover phenomenon. Examples include the Expectation-Met model, the Porter and Steers model (1973) and Mobley Model pertaining to job satisfaction (1977). These models were

products of the dominant management paradigm and economic situation. I think that the western economies experienced a negative impact. The sources of these effects were Middle East political problems and emergence of competing economies as I will reflect in the following paragraphs.

First of all, in economic dimensions, if we consider the western context as an open system, there are external factors that affected this system and led to the slowdown in economic growth in the post 1970s era. As Freeman (2007) and Kalleberg (2008) argue, global restructuring was occurring and giant economies began to emerge such as India, China, and the ex-Soviet bloc countries. The revival of these and similar economies opened a raft of new horizons for employers. They had the opportunity to manipulate their capital and increase their profits. For example, they had access to markets where labour, plant, and raw material were very cheap compared to what was available in their own countries. Furthermore, the development of technology made communications and transportations of labour and goods very easy.

In addition, occupations themselves fundamentally changed due to the emergence of the service industry. For example, the notion of the “consumer-worker” became stronger compared to the previous era of the ‘manufacturing economy’. There was an attendant increase in white collar occupations and a decrease in the blue collar occupations. Last but not least, this period witnessed an enhancement of privatization of some services such as childcare, cleaning ... etc, see Kalleberg (2008).

Second, in the political dimension, the first years of the 1970s witnessed some global incidents which had a negative effect on certain aspects of the US and other Western economies. Examples of the problems which led to economic recession are: the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East, high oil prices, high interest rates, negative economic growth, high inflation, and high unemployment.

The first of these is considered the main problem because it triggered the oil embargo toward the USA and Western European countries. This in turn had repercussions for many economic sectors, such as transportation and other industries relying on fuel. This resulted in the proliferation of layoffs and unemployment during the 1970s and 1980s, according to Davis et al. (2006). Up to this time the new world economy had been dependent on liberating markets and

restricting government intervention to the minimum. Employee turnover peaked in the UK industrial sector in 1974, according to Bradley and Wabe (1988). They contended that employee turnover among the two genders was impacted by the decline in the accession rate during periods of low growth in aggregate demand.

I think the open-system theory can be applied here if we consider the western economy as a system that is affected by external factors of political stability and natural resource trading problems. Accordingly, these external problems have created problems with regard to unemployment rates in the West which are proven to have a negative relationship with the employee turnover phenomenon.

#### **1.4.4. Employee Turnover since the 1980s**

I think this period demonstrated as well a strong comeback for management science theory, which dominated in the 1980s, as depicted in figure 1 above, and was infused by Taylorist scientific management. Based on this theory managers tend to use quantitative methods and mathematical approaches to solve managerial problems. I think the revival of management science came to the management paradigm fore because of the economic slowdown. In the 1980s, another long lasting recession occurred despite the recommendations of the Chicago school to politicians. Bradley and Wabe (1988) asserted that the rate of employee turnover in the UK in the first eight years of the 1980s was dominated by the escalation in unemployment in the manufacturing sector. In their view the rapid general deterioration of the labour market in the early 1980s caused the employee turnover rate to fall because of the reduction in accession rates in manufacturing industry during the second half of 1981, and in 1982 and 1983. They found the quitting rates among the new male employees to be higher than those among the core male employees, who considered they had jobs for life.

Various attempts were made in the 1970s to categorize factors affecting employee turnover. Similar efforts carried on into the 1980s and accordingly new models emerged. These new models tended to rely in their formulation on the dominant new management paradigm at the time. For instance, the models of Muchinsky and Morrow, (1980) and Price and Mueller (1986) were based respectively on labour economics and sociological methods. Deviation emerged in Muchinsky and Morrow's model through its departure from the psychology conceptual tradition used in tracking the phenomenon to include labour economic factors as determinants of

employee turnover. Almost all the other models, as mentioned earlier, were influenced by the Simon and March (1958) model, which depended on psychology.

However, some scholars were still focusing on psychological aspects in relation to employee turnover during that period. For instance, studies were conducted by Parden (1981), Sherman (1986), Badawy (1988) and Garden (1989) that accentuated the importance of factors related to motivation, and selection and recruitment. They believed that consideration and understanding of these factors could result in substantial financial savings. Other scholars in the 1980s examined the individual's ego, which they contended could, in relation to the job and task characteristics, determine an employee's intentions; see Ongori, (2007).

It seems that Muchinsky and Morrow's approach had an immediate impact as a number of papers published in the 1980s proceeded to overlook the psychological aspects relating to intentions or reasons for leaving an entity. Instead, they concentrated on depicting the consequences of the phenomenon to the macro and micro economy. For example, Staw (1980), in his journal article titled "The Consequences of Turnover", claimed that although employee turnover can have positive consequences, most consequences are negative.

#### **1.4.5. Employee Turnover since the 1990s**

There has been a flow of studies and papers about employee turnover since the 1990s. Iverson (1999) indicated that thousands of studies on staff turnover have been published. Despite the plethora of studies, scholars, according to Iverson (1999), have failed to apply appropriate methodologies in researching the phenomenon, using biased analysis tools and/or concentrating on finding the consequences or costs of the phenomenon.

Even with such an excess of employee turnover literature, Morrell, Loan-Clarke, and Wilkinson (2001) asserted that research from the 1990s and earlier, based on the existing two schools of thoughts, had as yet been unable to predict employee turnover. They categorized the two schools as:(i) the labour market economy school, and (ii) the psychological school.

In the 1990s, understanding of the employee turnover phenomenon shifted from focusing on the effects of economic shocks to the role of the labour market institutions in explaining the unemployment. This shift occurred despite the models used for explaining unemployment in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1994 the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

released a report accusing labour market institutions of being incorrectly adopted and claimed that this was the basis for the high unemployment rate. There was a call for labour market institutions to focus on labour insurance by insisting on institutional and economic reforms, including increases in the investments in active labour market policy programs; well designed training programmes; and reductions in wage taxation.

I think this economic call to understand employee turnover is linked to the organization management theory and organizational development theory. The organizational development (OD) can be understood, according to French & Bell (1978), as a well designed change and/or intervention process provided by catalyst, theory, or change agent that seeks to achieve an increase in the practicality and efficiency of an organization. That change process can be achieved by using behavioural science techniques, theory or research as Burke (1982) contended. In order to undertake OD effectively there should be collaborations between the change agent, from the macro-level, and organizational management so that organizational culture can be redirected for better results. I argued that employee turnover is a product of historical and cultural context. I reflected above the historical roots of employee turnover. I present in the following section some insights about the cultural context in the west as I think it has an impact on how employee turnover is understood in the West.

### **1.5. Western Culture**

I think it does not matter whether employee turnover, the scope of this study, is called an economic behaviour or social behaviour. In both cases they involve a behaviour that needs an explanation. I think culture is one of the most controversial fields that can be used in interpreting the behaviour. However, Fukuyama (2001) pointed out that there are some economists who do not support the importance of culture in explaining behaviour. These economists see that, regardless of place and time, a human being is a rational utility-maximizing individual. I think this conclusion of those economists implies their belief in universality since they believe what is valid in their contexts is transferable to different contexts. I will investigate this matter more in the coming chapters. My argument is that western culture participated in interpreting how employee turnover is understood in western contexts. This argument is based on the sociologists' view that economic life is infused with cultural norms, see Fukuyama (2001).

The Western cultures have been intent on ignoring, marginalizing, and refusing to acknowledge how alternative ideologies, such as communism, might influence understanding of what management involves and what it means, as Western cultures, in general, adopt a capitalist approach. Reisman (1998) introduced capitalism as an economic institution driven by the business activities in a market economy that has a philosophy of man's right to life. Hence, this implies freedom of choice of using and controlling one's capital and premises to achieve individual and or organizational interests. The mindset of a western individual relying on that conception is to make money and spend it to live. Fiss (1992) asserts that 'market' is capitalism's social institution. In this social institution the individuals exert their autonomous freedom of choice to achieve their interests, trade commodities and services, and compete for a bigger market share of consumers. Government in capitalism has only supportive, regulatory and facilitating roles to the business activities. To consolidate capitalism, in the post war year of 1947, the American Foreign Secretary, George Marshall, proposed the well known Marshall Plan. One of the main objectives of this plan was to defeat communism and prevent its diffusion in Western Europe, Turkey, and Greece (Hogan, 1987). This feverish conflict of capitalism vs. communism even permeated academia.

For instance, Talcott Parsons, one of the most prominent sociologists of the 1950s and a longstanding opponent of communism, was put under surveillance by the FBI due to allegations of involvement in communist activities at Harvard University (*see Keen (1993)*). The allegations were taken so seriously that the investigation spread into seven European countries, although he was acquitted of all charges in 1955.

The conflict between communism and the anti-communist movement is reflected in political upheavals of the time, such as the division of Germany into East (communist) and West (capitalist), the birth of South (capitalist) Korea and North (communist) Korea, and international efforts on each side of the divide to gain the upper hand. McKeown (1981) argued that Communists wanted to increase their presence in the GCC by supporting rebels in the south of Oman with weapons and logistics. They were defeated because of the strong British support and protection to Oman.

Although the cold war, which represented the two ideological camps' thirst for power and control, came to an end, that did not guarantee an intellectual truce between the two camps. It is

worthy of note that communism and capitalism are not the only ideologies competing for global domination. For example, there is the Islamic approach, which is relevant to the discussion in this thesis regarding the society under investigation, the Sultanate of Oman. I argue that Islamic culture impact the Omanis' behaviour regardless of their positions.

## **1.6. Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter I tried to explain my argument that employee turnover is understood in the western context on historical and cultural bases. I did that by reflecting the consistency in the evolution of the two underpinning umbrellas of employee turnover, management paradigms and human resources management. Then, I reflected how the employee turnover phenomenon itself has been seen in western contexts post WWII. It is generally accepted in the circles of academia that labour turnover has been a multidisciplinary field of study. For example, Merwe and Miller (1971) contended that the concept had been treated from the perspectives of economics and statistics, business management, sociology, and psychology. What is notable is that employee turnover has been dealt with as a body of knowledge, which has been researched or introduced through the traditional and new management paradigms. I think that employee turnover concepts and theories have been understood or demonstrated in the Western context by using the dominant management paradigms. This can be seen in light of consistency between the evolution of management paradigms and employee turnover concepts. I think that the new management paradigm, which includes the behavioural theory, management science theory, and organization environment theory, provided a basis for understanding employee turnover post WWII. The advent of these theories along with economic evolution and capitalism prevailing as a culture directing organizations and individual behaviour in the West all combined to coin the understanding of employee turnover in the West.

However, I believe there are some shortcomings or factors in the ways employee turnover is seen in the Western context. These factors make it difficult sometimes to explain the consistency with the HRM evolution. For example, the evolution of management paradigm theories witnessed overlap between administrative management theory, behavioural management theory, management science theory, and organizational environment theory from 1950-1980, see figure 1. I think this represents a grey area for clear-cut explanations of employee turnover and the best way to overcome this problem is to look at them in two ways: (i) as which theory prevails, e.g.

the administrative theory that represents the traditional management paradigm prevailed until 1961, and (ii) as integral theories that work collectively to serve the objectives of management.

Second, the employee turnover theories in public sectors of western contexts are not solid enough. This is because they are heavily dependent on the theories generated to explain employee turnover behaviour in the private sector. This suggests that even in the western context there are some scholars who believe in the universality of management practices generated in the private sector to different sectors. In short they believe in homogeneity of management practices in heterogeneous sectors within western contexts.

Third, the literature on employee turnover is completely dominated by the context of North American and Western European organizations in which it is set. We must therefore question the universality of the ideas that have been formulated within the scope of the concept and indeed, to some extent, the concept itself. Foucault (1980) argued that each society has its own truth regime which informs its behaviour. Each regime is characterized by accepted rules and values, conveyed through a discourse which reflects the social and political power and control aspects of a given society. The truth regimes of Western European and American cultures are very different to those of Arab cultures.

Gassie (1968) postulated that there is a danger in attempting to generalize research findings conducted in one context to another context, irrespective of the research method used, unless they have a certain number of aspects in common regarding, for example, social, political, cultural elements that are representative of the two cultures. Triandis (1983) supported that conclusion and claimed that many aspects of organizational theories in one culture may be inappropriate to other cultures. Thus, the research questions of this work have evolved as follows.

**Are the existing employee turnover concepts universal? Alternatively, is it necessary to adopt a different perspective for consideration of such concepts in the context of Arab Gulf states? Is the way in which employee turnover is understood in the West relevant to Arab Gulf states?**

I think that reflecting on how people in the Arab peninsula have understood employee turnover is very important to the following chapters. This is because doing so will help in answering the



research question based on the available empirical evidence. Moreover, I think I should reflect on how the underpinning field of employee turnover, that is Human Resources Management, evolved in the Arabian Gulf. Prior to that, I will explore the universality of the western theories, as it is one of the main important issues in this research, more in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 2: Universalism of Western Theories!!**

### **2.1. Introduction**

In the previous chapter I argued that employee turnover in the Western context is understood based on the historical and cultural contexts. Moreover, I argued there that there is a problem with the universalism of employee turnover in different sectors in Western contexts.

In chapter one, the concept of employee turnover was examined by first tracing the evolutions of management paradigm, HRM field, and the employee turnover concept in Northern America and Western Europe during the last century, focusing on the period from the 1950s to the present day. It was concluded that models and theories generated about employee turnover were products of the specific historical period. I argue with more details in this chapter that there was a great deal of parochialism with respect to human resource management practices around the globe. Specifically, the literature about employee turnover was found to be completely westernized and based upon North American and Western European principles.

This chapter is devoted to further exploration of the universality of theories generated in Western contexts. The results of this exploration along with results of the field work help in reshaping the research questions.

### **2.2. Universality of Western Theories applied to Different Contexts**

This section is structured to investigate literature about the universality of Westernized management theories. It starts by reflecting the views of supporters of the argument that Western theories can be applied everywhere and every time regardless of the cultural or contextual differences. Then, the exploration expands to reflect the arguments of the opponents to the idea of the universality of Western theories. This is followed by reflection of the views of scholars who have suggested an integrative alternative to the Universalists and their opponents. This section ends by presenting the reshaping of the research questions.

I will first discuss what I mean by Western Management Theory. In this research “western management theory” is a term used to indicate any management theory that has been generated in the Western context. I believe that for the purposes of this research I need to clarify what I mean by western management theory. I will start by defining the management theories then I will explain the logic of inserting the word ‘western’ as a further description of management theories

in this research. Basically, management theories refer to sets of ideas, thoughts, principles or rules that have been developed to help in getting people to do their work effectively. Apparently, these sets of ideas and rules and practices have their origins in the industrialized world, namely in Western Europe and Northern America. Boyacigiller and Alder (1991) pointed out that the majority of the models of the overarching field of employee turnover, which is Human Resources, were produced in either the USA or UK.

Therefore, when I started this research I explored these kinds of ideas, tools that would help me in addressing the issue of employee turnover in the Omani public sector. I did not realize at the start of this research that contextual and cultural factors might affect how employee turnover is understood in the Omani context. I naively supposed that existing western theories in the employee turnover field could be transferred successfully to the Omani context. Thus, I used them to help answer my initial research question about finding causes of employee turnover in the Omani public sector.

To be more specific, my research revolves around the employee turnover phenomenon, regardless of how it is constructed in different contexts or the causal relationships of this phenomenon. Such an investigation is inevitably highly interconnected with relevant theories as studied in the West. For example, Western scholars examined employee turnover and produced theories related to its relationship to job satisfaction; for example, see Porter and Steers (1973); Mobley (1977); Caresten & Spector (1987); and Wright and Bonnedt (2007), organizational commitment; see Eagly and Chaiken (1973), wages; see Bartel and Borjas (1981), job performance; see Jakofesky (1984), Marsh and Mannari (1977) and Sheridan & Vredenburg (1978), role clarity; see Ivancevich and Donnelly (1974).

Moreover, the majority of psychological theories that I found in the existing literature that attempted to explain the employee turnover phenomenon were generated in western contexts. Examples include equity theory (Adams, 1965); matching theory (Mace, McCurdy, & Quigley, 1990); search theory (Stigler, 1961); met expectation theory (Porter and Steers, 1973), social exchange theory; see Thibaut & Kelley (1959); Homans (1961); human capital theory (Becker G., 1964) and organizational equilibrium theory (Barnard, 1938; Simon, 1947).

Furthermore, I think there might be a particular cognitive understanding about the term ‘Western’ in an Omani or GCC context. My thinking is based on the colonialist and post-colonialist viewpoints. Consequently, I think that the word ‘West’ in the GCC context or to any citizen in the GCC means directly either the USA or UK; that is, it has Anglo-Saxon connotations. I think this might stem from the fact that GCC countries were protectorates of the UK for a long time, ending in the late 1960s. After gaining independence from the UK, the GCC territories remained involved with the UK, USA or both through economic, educational, political, security and defense treaties. Chiriyankandath (2008) argued that colonized territories are inevitably influenced by the colonizing powers. In addition, Guillen (1994) postulated that colonized territories that have weak and backward economies tend to imitate and adopt the principles and ways of doing things from colonizing powers. Hence, the prevailing educational curricula, media means, economic systems, and even some political arrangements in GCC countries, including Oman, are mostly inherited from the UK, and USA.

### **2.2.1. Universalists’ Views**

Al-Yahya, Lubatkin, & Vengroff (2009) present a thorough review of the concept of the universality of Western theories. Moreover, they argue that Mintzberg’s (1973) assertion of the universality of Western theories was a turning point in comparative management. Mintzberg (1973) argued that organization theories generated in the West can be replicated universally regardless of cultural differences. Mintzberg (1973) claimed that the nature of the context does not affect the situation of organizations. Moreover, he argued that roles and behaviour of managers are similar regardless of the culture or the level of economic development. Al-Yahya et al. (2007) documented many scholars who supported Mintzberg’s claims, such as Hickson (1974); Lubatkin, Ndiaye, & Vengroff (1997); and Salk & Brannen (2000).

Kerrigan & Luke (1987) and Lubatkin, Ndiaye, and Vengroff (1997) reported that some of the world’s well known organizations have relied on the universality of Western managerial theories in conducting their global operations. For instance, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and the United Nations (UN) have endorsed and funded workshops and programmes in the least developed countries. These organizations believed in the validity and applicability of Western managerial models in third world countries. Al-Yahya et al. (2007)

suggested there were also some theorists who argued that although culture was important, it had a limited effect on management.

This subgroup of Universalists is known as convergence theorists. These theorists formulated the convergence hypothesis. This hypothesis suggests that the cultural impact on management fades and eventually disappears as a society becomes increasingly industrialized. Clausen (1968), Lauter (1969) and Hyden (1983) were among the theorists who strongly supported the convergence hypothesis. This theory also implies that economic and technological factors would have greater impact on management development. Moreover, the values driven by the economic ideology increase as industrialization increases, leading to evolution in the hosting context towards individualistic-capitalistic values (Ralston, Holt, Terpstra, & Kai-Cheng, (1997); Al Yahya et al., 2009). However, there are many opponents to the claims of Mintzberg, Universalists, and/or the convergence theorists. The next subsection reflects views opposing the universalism of Western theories.

### **2.2.2. Views Opposing Universalism**

Gonzalez & McMillan (1961) claimed the American philosophy of management has two main characteristics. These are: (i) being unique in its approach to management development, and (ii) this uniqueness is so specialized and rooted in a particular cultural context that it cannot be applied in economies that have a culture that differs from that of the USA. Hence, Gonzales and McMillan (1961) challenged the notion of transferability of theories generated in the USA to different contexts and cultures. Following are some views of opponents to Universality of western theories.

#### **2.2.2.1. Jaeger and Kanungo' views (1990)**

Jaeger & Kanungo (1990) contended that the neglect of socio-cultural differences and the uncritical application of Western theories to developing countries have two negative consequences. First, ineffectiveness and inefficiency are generated within organizations when Western theories are abstractly and blindly applied to a developing country. Jaeger and Kanungo (1990) argued that Western organizations operate in a highly industrialized and complex environment. Operation in such an environment, according to Kanungo & Jaeger (1990), requires comprehensive experience and understanding of the internal and external environments within which the organization interacts. The external environment is represented in the socio-

cultural environment, and economic growth differs between Western and third world countries. Accordingly, organizations in developing countries would suffer from inefficiency if they uncritically applied managerial prescriptions used by Western organizations.

The second negative consequence lies in the disaffection engendered in societies which are forced to adopt Western procedures. People are opposed to this cultural imperialism, according to Jaeger (1990), as it promotes many values and beliefs that deeply go against the local values and culture. Kanungo and Jaeger (1990) introduced a framework that can be used in comparing and/or tracing the differences in three dimensions of organization in developed and developing countries. The three dimensions they identified were related to: (i) economic and political environment, (ii) socio-cultural environment, and (iii) the internal work culture.

The first dimension involves the predictability of future events and how difficult it is to obtain resources from the environment. Kanungo and Jaeger (1990) argued these two issues are very important in informing organizational and individual behaviour. They concluded that Western countries have a relatively predictable environment and there are few difficulties in gaining access to resources. Despite the complexity of Western organizations, they have the benefit of good infrastructure, highly trained employees, well established judiciary and executive apparatus, good reward systems, new technologies, political non-interference, and good facilities, all of which enhance their ability to thrive, change and make decisions (Kanungo and Jaeger, 1990).

On the other hand, the third world countries are in a state of transition from agrarian to industrialized economies. Moreover, they lack the well developed norms and well regulated system needed to implement reforms and fight corruption. In addition, their legal and political systems lack stability. Hence, organizations in the developing countries are affected by the problems of an economic and politically unpredictable environment and difficulties in acquiring resources (Kanungo and Jaeger, 1990).

Accordingly, the organizations and individuals in developing countries tend to use dysfunctional coping strategies to respond to their unpredictable economic and political situation (Kanungo and Jaeger, 1990). These strategies are contrary to those adopted in a more predictable economy. For example, in response to unpredictability, organizations in developing countries tend to neglect

vital processes such as entrepreneurship and risk taking, time management, individual-system trust, and long-term planning (Kanungo and Jaeger, 1990).

The second dimension in Kanungo and Jaeger's (1990) framework rests on the tenets of Hofstede's (1980) dimensions of culture: power, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. feminism. Conceptually, and aside from any criticisms of Hofstede's framework, he is among the opponents of universalism in relation to Western theories. Kanungo and Jaeger (1990), along with Triandis (1982), acknowledged there are limitations in Hofstede's framework. However, they all asserted that Hofstede's framework represents a landmark in the field of cross-cultural research. It is important to mention here that Hofstede (2002) has defended his framework against criticism from scholars such as McSweeney (2002). The following table (1) presents Kanungo and Jaeger's (1990) conclusions on the differences between developed and developing countries in terms of the socio-cultural dimension.

<b>N</b>	<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Developed Countries</b>	<b>Third World countries</b>
<b>1</b>	Power: society's degree of acceptance of the fact that power is unequally distributed in institutions and organizations. Hofstede (1980)	Low: Superior-subordinate relationship is collegial and participative	High: Superior-subordinate relationship is authoritarian and paternalistic
<b>2</b>	Individualism: how loose or tight is the knit social framework of society. Hofstede (1980)	High: programmatic norms, involvement with organization is calculative.	Low: involvement with organization is based on moralism and on religious and traditional norms.
<b>3</b>	Masculine: the distinction between role divisions between sexes where the focus on work goals is attributed to assertiveness compared to personal goals which are attributed to nurturance. Hofstede (1980)	High: programmatic norms, assertiveness, acquisition of money and properties.	Low: moralism based on religion and traditional norms.
<b>4</b>	Uncertainty Avoidance: the tendency of members of organization to avoid future uncertainty because of the threat feeling they may encounter by this uncertainty and ambiguity. Hofstede (1980)	Low: people are risk takers and accept change	High: people are not risk takers and show high resistance to change

N	Dimension	Developed Countries	Third World countries
5	Abstractive-Associative: a cognitive style showing how information is processed by people. Morrison and Conway (2006)	High abstractive – low associative thinking	Low abstractive – high associative thinking

**Table 1. Second Dimension of the Kanungo and Jaeger (1990) Framework, Showing the social-cultural differences**

The third dimension in the Kanungo and Jaeger (1990) framework focuses on the internal work culture. It is a twofold dimension which encompasses: (i) descriptive assumptions on human nature and (ii) an organization's prescriptions on principles guiding its behaviour. The first set of assumptions includes time perspective, causality and control of outcomes, flexibility, time units for action and creative potential. Kanungo and Jaeger (1990) suggested that Western contexts and third world countries lack similarities in behaviour in all of the assumptions relating to human nature. For example, in Western contexts, actions are based on long-term units of time, whereas developing countries base their action on short-term units of time. In addition, the developed countries are future oriented in terms of time, whereas the developing countries are past and present oriented.

Kanungo and Jaeger (1990), also found a lack of any similarities in organizations' prescriptions on guiding principles for behaviour. The prescriptions include orientation of people, environment, task and success. For instance, the behaviour toward task orientation in the West is proactive. In contrast, the third world countries adopt passive and/or reactive behaviour toward tasks. In addition, pragmatism is the guiding principle behind the pursuit of success in the context of developed countries, whereas moralism is the guiding principle in the developing countries (Kanungo & Jaeger, 1990). Based on the reflections given by Kanungo and Jaeger (1990) it can suggestively be argued that the contexts of developing and developed nations are not identical and they are different. Accordingly, it is not arguable that Western theories are transferable to developing countries. More evidence about this argument is presented in the following section.

#### **2.2.2.2. Boyacigiller & Adler's views (1991)**

Aligning with Kanungo and Jaeger (1990), Boyacigiller & Adler (1991) argued against the universalism and parochialism of "Made-in-America" theories. Boyacigiller and Alder (1991) examined the management academy on the basis of its contextual, quantitative, and qualitative



dimensions. The contextual study focused on how changes in the external environment affected the management field post WWII and how USA generated theories became the role models for other nations. The quantitative study focused on reviewing the body of international studies published in USA publications or by USA scholars. The qualitative study concentrated on tracing the universality of cultural assumptions underlined in a selection of USA management theories.

Boyacigiller & Adler (1991) concluded that convergence theorists have neglected the importance of socio-cultural contexts as a major factor in knowledge production. Instead, it has been heavily assumed by Universalists that the American ways of conducting, developing, and examining the foundations of management knowledge were the best. Moreover, Boyacigiller & Adler (1991) indicated that after the allied victory in World War II the basic tenets of management knowledge were heavily codified to reflect American imperialism. Additionally, in post-war times the USA accounted for 75% of the global economic output. Consequently, its schools (especially the management style, approaches, and theories), businesses and international economic relationships were unintentionally or intentionally adopted as role models for some countries (Boyacigiller & Adler, 1991).

Despite the post-war period dominance of North American management ideas, scholars such as Ouchi (1984) suspected that the American ways of doing things were not the best. However, these ways prevailed because of the lack of any foreign competing theories at that time, and, in addition, no one could deny the success of internal or domestic, US economic and management development. Boyacigiller & Adler (1991) nevertheless questioned whether American economic dominance should be translated into epistemological dominance. Furthermore, they put forward a number of issues which indicated that management knowledge at that time lacked international scope.

- (1) The majority of published organizational science research studies concentrated just on the US context.
- (2) Most of the relevant theories were American but were represented as being applicable universally. For example, Boyacigiller & Alder (1991) stated that job satisfaction theory was generated in a US context and was assumed to be universal, with very little effort made to test its applicability in other world contexts.

- (3) The Academy was dominated by Americans and that was reflected in the nature of the publications of this organization.
- (4) Scholars were encouraged to publish in leading US publications and other, non-US publications were regarded as suspect. This prevented knowledge circulation and limited exposure of such studies to criticism. Furthermore, it prevented knowledge from being transferred from the domestic to the international context.
- (5) The Academy of management overlooked and ignored the importance of international research. In so doing, it undermined the validity of international research and findings. Moreover, it was assumed that theories generated domestically were applicable internationally regardless of the context.

Boyacigiller & Adler (1991) presented further evidence of parochialism in the field of management knowledge. For example, it was found that most of the contributions to knowledge were provided by 30 American scholars; only five contributions were attributed to European scholars. In addition, fewer than 20% of potential scholars had the ability to handle international studies. Moreover, American scholars were skeptics about the quality of international studies and rarely considered them to be good enough unless they had been ratified through, for example, being published in leading American journals. Davis (1992) added that the development of principles applicable to third world countries is extremely problematic. Among the challenges that inhibit understanding of this complex area is the difficulty faced by theorists of unlearning and disassociating themselves from predetermined conceptions and the prevailing discourses, judgments and ideas about the third world.

#### **2.2.2.3. Additional anti-universalism views**

Brohman (1995) asserted that the neglect showed by Western theorists toward the contextual aspects of theory development has the negative consequence of distorting and simplifying the experiential development of different societies around the globe. Those theorists, according to Brohman, have been trying to generate and develop universal theories based on Western concepts. This quest is at odds with the need to evolve a better understanding about different cultures in which alternative paths to development exist. Brohman (1995) suggested that the formalistic development orthodoxy has so far failed to deliver theories that are universal and can be applied to the resolution of problems regardless of time or place.

Brohman (1995) also asserted that the contexts wherein development of theory is applied are themselves evolving and changing over time and within societies. Accordingly, problems and opportunities in relation to development are thrown up by these changes. Hence, a theory developed in one society at a certain time may not be applicable to another society. Moreover, he contended that theory is methodologically connected to the subjects used for analysis and generating knowledge. The subjects are not similar in all contexts. Thus, the theory generated on the basis of distinctive subjects in one context is not expected to be replicable in different contexts (Brohman, 1995).

In terms of human resources management theories, Ozbligin (2004) stated that almost all the human resources models, designed to be definitive exemplars, have been developed in Northern America and Western Europe. For example, the Michigan, Harvard, New York, and MIT models were developed in North America. The Warwick and Aix Models were developed in the UK and France respectively. He argued that despite the plethora of such theories and models they have been proven inadequate in addressing the international human resources issues. This claim was initially raised by Clarke et al. (1999). They undertook a 20-year (1977-1997) examination of articles published in leading social science, human resource management, and related management/organizational behaviour journals. They contended that the main reasons for these shortcomings arose from the over reliance on a small number of studies conducted in Anglo-Saxon countries (which can be considered as a kind of constrained diversity), the failure to define the effect of culture, and ethnocentric bias, along with a failure to consider the similarities and differences among research communities. Therefore, Clarke et al. (1999), and Ozbligin (2004), suspected the universality of the human resources researches and results published in the international managerial journals in Northern America and Western Europe when in fact those researches and results reflected the culture of the place in which they were developed.

Clarke et al. (1999) and Ozbligin (2004) identified another factor that contributed to the limited and narrow development in the management field, and particularly in the theories of the international human resources management, in the form of the linguistic dimension. They contended that most of the literature in this area has been written in English, with a few texts published in Western languages such as French, Dutch, and Spanish. It was very clear that texts

written in other languages were treated with caution and suspicion. This in turn raises the issues of monoculturalism, ethnocentrism, and bias against other scholars from different cultures.

### **2.2.3. Views of Crossvergent Theorists**

Some scholars have attempted to introduce an integrative alternative that steers a middle way between a divergent or convergent approach to management in different contexts. They came up with the Crossvergent management relationship (Al Yahya et al., 2007). Ralston, Holt, Terpstra, and Kai-Cheng (1997) were among these scholars. They concluded there might be a crossvergence between different contexts with regard to individual work values. Scholars such as Robertson et al. (2002) urged that some countries, like Oman and Kuwait, are open to absorption of international cultures while others, like the kingdom of Saudi Arabia remain conservative and resist change. Bond & King (1985) insisted that the Middle East countries would readily adopt the Western philosophy of management as they surge for development. The Crossvergent theory implies that some Western theories might be applicable in an Omani context. There have been some data that reinforced similar Western common assumptions made about employee turnover. This was evident from the data gathered from the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews. However, that data did not manage to explain the Omanis' behaviour regarding employee turnover as data concurrently revealed differences between the Omani and Western contexts. Therefore, I will investigate this crossvergence issue again in my second analysis of the data. My Argument aligns with that of scholars of the Crossvergence theory. I think there is a crossvergence between the Omani and Western contexts. This argument is developed further throughout the following chapters.

### **2.2.4. Conclusion**

So far, I have concluded in chapter one that the nature of the concept employee turnover is understood in the West as a product of historical, cultural, and economic contexts. The literature produced in the western context about employee turnover, e.g. models, measurement, and consequences, is intellectually and timely consistent with dominant management paradigms also produced in the West. That conclusion urged me to question the universality of western constructs for understanding a concept like employee turnover in an Omani context since Oman is not part of the western context.

The sections above have reflected the views of the Universalists, as well as views that question the universality of the Western European and American theories, and the crossvergent views. I have been led to reshape the research questions on the basis of which this study will investigate the *divergence, convergence, or crossvergence* between Gulf Arab State contexts, concentrating on Oman, with the Western contexts represented by the USA and UK.

I thought that more discoveries about the Universality, Non-Universality, or convergence of western theories in other contexts were needed. In the case of universality of Western theories then it is to be expected they are applicable in an Omani context. If they are not applicable in an Omani context we would need some new universal and/or Middle Eastern theories to explain employee turnover behaviour in Oman. The other possible explanation was the existence of crossvergence between the Omani and western contexts.

Indeed, findings indicated that there is a parochialism about international management (see for example, Boyacigiller and Alder (1991); Clarke et al. (1999) March (2004); and Ozbligin (2004)). Researchers refuted as well the idea of universality of theories Made-in-the-USA and from Western Europe.

On the other hand, scholars such as Robertson et al. (2002) have contended the potential for applicability of theories developed in the USA and Western Europe to developing countries. Interestingly, some scholars who have conducted studies in the Middle East area have concluded that developing countries such as the Sultanate of Oman and Kuwait can easily absorb Western culture. In the light of these premises it is suggested here that there is an urgent need to find out which theories are relevant to the Omani context, and which are not.

I have embarked on an argument of crossvergence between Omani and western context. To support this argument I will present an exploration about the social and economic history of Oman and its surrounding environment. I think that Omani values and practices about management are related to colonial power, wars, social conflicts and economics but are not evolved in similar way to those in a Western context.

## Chapter 3: HRM and Employee Turnover in GCC

### 3.1. Introduction

I presented in chapter one how employee turnover is understood in the western context. The argument was that employee turnover is understood in western contexts based on the cultural and historical context. However, that literature review revealed some shortcomings in employee turnover knowledge in the western context. Among these shortcomings were the paucity of employee turnover studies in the public sector, the uncritical adoption of employee turnover theories generated in the private sector, and taking for granted the assumption of the universality of western theories to different contexts. Hence, I devoted chapter two to this issue, discussing the available empirical evidence about the universalism issue. At the end of chapter two I cast doubts on the universality of the employee turnover theories in the Omani context. Thus, I needed to prove or disprove those doubts.

I think in order to achieve my objective I needed to gain more insight about how employee turnover is understood in an Omani context. But there is a problem. Very few employee turnover studies have been undertaken in an Omani context. The only located study was conducted by Swailes & Al Fahdi (2011). They interviewed 26 current and ex-employees to examine the obstacles confronting the HRM in Oman including voluntary employee turnover in the Omani public sector. Moreover, they interpreted the findings using the Islamic values of work. I think that study suffered from certain omissions. For example, Swailes & Al Fahdi (2011) narrowed the interpretation in their study to only one side, namely the Islamic context. Well, I admit that Islam is the prevailing context in Oman but we cannot neglect the effect of western cultural imperialism in Omani organizations, inherited as a legacy of colonialism. Furthermore, I think there might be some other dimensions that can affect how Omanis comprehend the employee turnover phenomenon, for example, the influence of external economic and political factors, the evolution of society's thinking in response to advances in technology and a changing environment. I think the way they described their interviewees is not consistent.

I think, also, there is a difference in the kind of theories produced by Swailes & Al Fahdi (2011) and the theories being developed by my research. Price (1975) and Abdul Razak (1991) documented two kinds of turnover theories. One kind is theory of turnover that is produced partially from investigation of a bigger issue. Swailes & Al Fahdi's (2011) work about turnover

in the Omani context was produced as part of more general concern which was about the obstacles of HRD in the government sector. The second kind of turnover theory, according to Price (1975), is that produced from research that exclusively focuses on the turnover topic. My research is concerned primarily with employee turnover in the Omani public sector.

Due to the paucity of studies about employee turnover in the Omani context I decided to reflect on how employee turnover has been examined in similar contexts to Oman, e.g. Saudi Arabia (KSA), the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain. Although I do not assume the homogeneity and transferability of knowledge produced in these contexts, I think it is crucial to study these contexts for two major reasons. First, these neighbouring regions have so much in common with the Omani context. For example, they are all developing countries with economies that are highly dependent on oil and gas production, are Islamic countries that share similar history, speak one basic language, 'Arabic', are over reliant on manpower from East Asian developing countries, and share almost identical customs and traditions. Second, exploration of employee turnover in these contexts might reveal further support for the argument of non-universality of western theories.

I think there is a crucial question here since results of my empirical research suggest that the Western common assumptions did not help in understanding how employee turnover is understood in Oman. It is about whether the dominant managerial paradigms created in the West can or cannot be applied to different cultural contexts such as that of Oman.

However, to depict one of the differences between the West and Middle East, one of the causes of the great depression was the dangerous fall in the stock market indices in the USA. Ironically, the Middle East markets, and especially those in the Arabian Gulf, had no clue at that time about the significance of the stock market, mainly because most of the nations involved were concentrating on gaining independence. For example, Kuwait gained independence from Britain in 1968, followed by Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates in 1971. However, Oman and Saudi Arabia followed different paths. Oman gained independence from Portugal in 1649. It experienced a golden age of controlling all the Indian Ocean sea routes, which lasted for at least two centuries after independence. Nevertheless, it became involved in disputes within its royal families which led to fragmentation of the empire into the existing Sultanate and an area which fell under the control of rebels from Zanzibar. Inside the surviving state of Oman a civil war was

pursued between the Sultan and the Imamate, which was resolved in favour of the Sultan's Army in 1954. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was recognized internationally as a country in 1932 (see Patrick (2009)). My point here is that the concepts of contemporary economics and management are not as deeply or historically established in Oman and Middle East countries as they are in the western context. Moreover, even nowadays the Omani economy is not purely reliant on capitalism but has rather adopted a mixed economy. Hence, the GCC and West are not two identical contexts and the applicability of Western theories is questionable as will be examined in detail at this chapter. Nevertheless, I think that many Western management practices may have been transferred to the Middle East countries as a result of cultural imperialism as most of the Middle East countries used to be territories of the Capitalist camp. In order to get a better understanding about such issues, I think it is very important to reflect on factors that are shaping the human resources management functions in the GCC as HRM is the overarching field of employee turnover.

### **3.2. Factors Shaping HRM in GCC**

In chapter one I argued that HRM is the overarching field of employee turnover. I also showed the consistency of understanding employee turnover in the western context with the evolution of HRM. I think that all the causes of employee turnover documented in the western context represent challenges to HRM that could not be resolved. Despite the nature of the context, I think failing to cope with or minimize challenges to HRM leads ultimately to problems such as employee turnover. However, as I demonstrated in my argument in chapter one in relation to employee turnover, I believe that despite the universality of the technical terms of HRM functions, the way they are understood or undertaken is an issue conditioned to the historical and cultural context. In this section I am going to present the factors that shape human resources management in the GCC, their challenges, and how they are convergent, divergent or crossvergent with western HRM. My expectation is there might be similar challenges to human resources in GCC countries to those faced in western contexts. Yet, the similarity might be attributed to the assumption of the universalism of western theories which is uncritically used by scholars or GCC governments as a centre of reference.

Mellahi & Wood (2001) argued that human resources in KSA is shaped as a response to the wider socio-economic situation by five main factors: economy, national culture, national HRD



strategy, labour market structure, and the political environment. These factors are more or less interconnected. A similar framework was used by a range of researchers who conducted HRM studies about GCC countries, according to Budhwar and Mellahi (2006). Budhwar & Sparrow (1998) maintain that it is suitable for analysis of HRM in developing countries where HRM is considered to be in its infancy. The following subsections present snapshots about the socio-cultural factors and the challenges they confront in the GCC. This will provide some empirical findings for answering the research question.

### **3.2.1. Political and Cultural Factors**

Mellahi and Wood (2001) claim that the political system and cultural factors present additional challenges to human resources management in the GCC countries. This section on political and cultural factors, which I think are closely connected, concentrates on reflecting the formation of the political systems and range of cultural beliefs and norms in the GCC. Mellahi and Wood (2001), for example, described the political system in KSA as theocratic, Islamic, based on a tribal system. Mellahi & Budhwar (2010) argued that religious norms and beliefs have direct and/or indirect impact on employees' behaviour in the workplace, hence, on the HRM. Mellahi and Budhwar (2010) contended that managers' behaviours in Muslim contexts are impacted by either the verbatim word for Allah in the Quran, Sunnah. Mellahi and Budhwar (2010) postulated that the association of HRM and Islam is found even in places where Muslims are in the minority.

Mellahi (2006) contended that religious cultural norms embed all life's aspects for Saudis. I think the Saudi tendency of being theocratic is because of its position in the Islamic world. It houses the Ka'aba, the place which all Muslims all over the world must face while praying and where Muslims go to perform pilgrimage. Also, it is where the prophet Muhammad was born, raised, received prophecies, delivered Allah's messages to Muslims, received the Quran through divine revelations, died, and was buried. Under such a system the political authority is totally confined to the king, and Sharia law derived from the Quran forms the constitution. In the 59 verses in the An-Nisa chapter in the holy Quran Allah asked believers to obey him, his prophet and those who are in charge of administrating the public interests such as kings, sultans, mayors ... etc. Mellahi and Wood (2001) argued that employees in KSA are not allowed to form trade unions or go on strikes. I think that Mellahi and Wood's (2001) conclusion is inconsistent in the matter

pertaining to their assumption that Muslims should obey their rulers blindly, at all times, and under any circumstances. Prophet Mohammed announced in the Sunnah that Muslims should not obey any instructions from anybody that clash with Allah's orders.

The political system in Kuwait is also tribal and Islamic according to Ali and Al-Kazemi (2006). The monopoly of political control and oil revenues is confined to the Emir, the ruler, as contended by Ali and Al-Kazemi (2006). The Emir gains his authority basically from two main sources: (i) Islamic values that as shown above order believers to obey those in charge of Muslims affairs and (ii) the tribal alliances made and maintained by the Emir with existing tribes and families. Ali (2004) defined transparency, morally responsible conduct, effort, and competition as the main pillars forming the Islamic work ethic. Ali (2004) suggested that proper understanding and operating with these pillars is linked to successful facilitation of HRM functions. That is because managers and/or employees who embrace properly these pillars are supposed to perform their duties adequately as they have mutual good intentions and trust, see Ali (2004). Thus, performing with this mentality assures a healthy work environment and effective organizations as postulated by Ali and Al-Kazemi (2006).

However, that Islamic work ethic should not apply only in theory but should be applied in reality as it is not enough merely to believe. Ali and Al-Kazemi (2006) argued that despite Kuwaitis' adherence to Islamic values and beliefs they do not really work with these beliefs. For example, human resources functions such as recruitment and promotion are influenced by the social and tribal factors despite the Islamic and governmental prohibitions of such conduct. Mellahi and Budhwar (2006), and Ali and Al-Kazemi (2006) pinpointed the spread of nepotism, *Wasta*, in recruitment in the Middle East. Ali and Al-Kazemi (2006) argued that such conduct is common in Kuwait and thus the Kuwaiti working environment is not an example of a productive and hard working environment. Ali and Al-Kazemi (2006) attributed this to the culture citizens acquire through being spoiled by government policies that encourage people to be dependent and clannish. Thus, I think this draws to our attention the existence of a rhetorical problem. This rhetorical problem can be seen from the gap between the Kuwaiti government's formal embracing of Islamic values and norms whilst in reality it overlooks the social forces and traditional factors that affect the HRM functions. Ali and Al-Kazemi (2006) concluded that in Kuwait, despite the ambitious Kuwaiti programmes of development and high investment in the

public sector, the emphasis of HRM is limited to processing administrative functions such as sick leave, maternity leave, annual leave and payroll. Furthermore, it is neglecting issues such as employees' development, performance appraisal and motivation.

The political system in UAE, according to Suliman (2006), arises from the federation of its seven sheikhdoms: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Al Sharjah, Ajman, Al Fujairah, Um Al-Qaiwain, and Ras Al Khaimah. Each one of these sheikhdoms has its own local government with financial and political autonomy, see Suliman (2006). The rulers of these emirates/sheikhdoms are members of the supreme federal council that is considered as the highest policy making authority in the state. The federal authorities are responsible for almost all aspects of the emirates' internal and external public interests, see Suliman (2006). There is also a federal parliament, namely the federal national council, that was founded in 1972. Its role is to advise the supreme council and the cabinet, according to Suliman (2006). There is as well the supreme federal council consisting of five judges appointed by the supreme council. Suliman (2006) argued this federal judiciary is totally independent constitution from any political pressures. Despite the sophisticated construction of the political system in UAE there are some characteristics in common with other GCC countries. For example, domination and control through politics is limited and operates on a tribal basis. The federal parliament is appointed by rulers not elected by the citizens. Hence, government control and domination prevails.

As is the case in the KSA and Kuwait, UAE is a Muslim country and its culture is basically based on Islamic values, traditions, and customs, see Suliman (2006). Suliman (2006) argued, also, that citizens' behaviour is impacted as well by the morals, customs, and traditions inherited from Arabic culture. For example, family commands all affairs of its individuals, who are supposed to show respect and loyalty to family. Hence, decisions regarding issues in UAE such as marriage, according to Suliman (2006), are not taken by the persons involved but decided by the family. Suliman (2006) contended that despite the ethical system promoted by managers in UAE being based on Islamic culture, there are some ethical challenges. For example, Suliman (2006) mentioned conflicts of interest, discriminations in hiring, employee theft, misuse of proprietary information, and quality control issues as challenges to HRM in UAE.

The political scene in Qatar cannot be distinguished as a special case from KSA, Kuwait and UAE. It is based on a tribal system whereby power, control and authority are confined to the

royal family, although Qatar has a system that was constitutionally approved in 2003 whereby the legislative, executive and judiciary powers are separated, according to Abdalla (2006). Moreover, Abdalla (2006) argued that the constitution assures people of freedom of speech and of religion. However, Islam is the prevailing and official religion of Qatar according to article no.1 of the Qatari constitution. Abdalla (2006) pointed out that political challenges surrounding the Arabian Gulf area, such as Palestinian-Israeli conflicts and the Iraqi situation, are threatening the national political stability. Thus, Abdalla (2006) argued that instability is affecting the flow of investments, capital, and competencies. Furthermore, it has a limiting effect on the size of the domestic markets as operational costs increase and governments tend to focus more on security than the economy.

From the cultural aspect, Qataris' behaviour is influenced by Islamic values, Bedouin values, the government's strategy of modernization since 1990s, and fast social and political developments, according to Abdalla (2006). Hence, people are embracing Islamic values such as obedience to their bosses, honesty, trust in others, and working with the Shura principles of consultation. In addition, they hold the Bedouini values of loyalty to the tribal customs and traditions.

However, Abdalla (2006) asserted that due to economic, social and political changes new values are replacing those mentioned above. For example, individualistic values, nuclear families, individual tendencies of investing in business, and individuals' seeking of social status and power are modern values in the Qatari context. Abdalla (2006) argued that in Qatar individuals might hold both the old and new modern values. That posed some challenges according to Abdalla (2006). For instance, the old values of paternalistic management styles, loyalty to family, and weak planning and accountability are not helping modern managers' values of seeking punctuality, planning strategically, looking for work efficiency. One of the cultural drawbacks to HR in Qatar is the treatment of people according to their ranks, status and titles. Last but not least, Abdalla (2006) argued that tribal relationships are one of the major problems in HR in Qatar. For instance, the processes of hiring and promoting are influenced and interfered with by social tribal forces.

To sum up, this section reflected on the political and cultural systems in the GCC countries. I think the political and cultural systems are especially closely connected in the GCC. The findings suggested that political systems in the GCC countries are based on tribal systems. For instance,

the Al Saud family rules KSA, the Al Said family rules Oman, the Al Nahian family rules UAE, Al Sabah rules Kuwait, and the Al Thany family rules Qatar. Furthermore, Islam influences the behaviours of the masses in GCC countries. For example, people should obey their rulers. Moreover, despite the virtues exemplified by the Islamic guidelines, the working context in GCC countries is not productive and not an example of a hard working environment. Additionally, some of the GCC contexts witnessed changes in their cultural values due to the economic changes and the inflow of foreign values along with foreign labour. Besides, there are external political challenges surrounding the GCC area, such as the Iran situation, Iraqi situation, Palestinian-Israel conflicts, that cause problems for HRM.

GCC countries also exhibit other values that hinder the effectiveness of HRM, according to Abdalla (2006). For example, ideas and opinions are not separable from people so senior managers are not open to criticism. Abdalla (2006) asserted that such criticism avoidance, represented in practices such as keeping performance appraisal confidential, hinders development. Moreover, communication is indirect and very diplomatic in Arab culture in order to avoid raising any direct criticism which could be considered as a direct insult. Last but not least, the managers are criticized for being soft, forgiving, and merciful to their employees and neglecting accountability. The following section discusses GCC economies and their impacts on HRM.

### **3.2.2. GCC Economies**

Almost all of the GCC economies are based on the free market and depend on extracting and exporting oil and gas, see Mellahi and Wood (2001); Suliman (2006); Ali & Al Kazemi (2006); Abdalla (2006); and Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006). The status of any country's economy is related human resources functions. For instance, it is expected that job creation would fall in countries that are suffering economic downturns or slow economic growth that does not match with population growth, according to Mellahi and Budhwar (2001). Mellahi and Wood (2001) contended that KSA, for instance, suffers from disparity between economic growth and its population growth. The slow growth of an economy that is heavily dependent on oil production is affecting its labour market. With the few ups and more frequent downturns in the economy the KSA could not create jobs. The rate of unemployment among the youth segment aged 20-29 years is more than 20%, see Mellahi and Budhwar (2001). Failing to create jobs could lead to

destablization of the political structure and the economy, similar to that which occurred in Bahrain in the 1990s, with the government failing to create jobs for the young, according to Mellahi and Wood (2001).

In order to sustain good economic growth and avoid negative consequences of depending on one economic source, GCC countries took certain steps. For example, Mellahi (2006) argued that the KSA tended to strengthen its global trade relations and reform its national policies regarding national and international investments. Ali and Al-Kazemi (2006) argued that due to the sudden increases in oil revenues, the Kuwaiti government redeveloped its strategies and invested too much in the private sector. Dubai, according to Suliman (2006), invested heavily in tourism as it is expected to run out of oil by 2016. Abdalla (2006) contended that the Qatari government is promoting particular programmes and incentives to investors in order to reduce the dependency on oil and gas by diversifying its economy. For example, the Qatari government encouraged small and medium non oil investment by giving loans, lands to investors and income tax reductions.

In conclusion, economies in GCC countries depend mainly on oil and gas production. The economy has a direct impact on HRM. For example, any political or economic crisis that lowers oil and gas revenues affects governments' abilities to carry on HR functions such as creating jobs for the unemployed and graduates. In response to that danger, most of the GCC countries adopted different strategies in diversifying their economic resources. Moreover, Ali and Al-Kazemi (2006) argued that a flourishing economy with consequences including the entry of multi national companies to the market impact on HRM. This impact, according to Ali and Al-Kazemi (2006), is seen in the shift of the view of personnel in terms merely of functions of book keeping and job advertising to very important HRM functions. The following section is going to reflect strategies and attempts made by GCC members to develop their human resources with the aim of replacing expatriate labour with a reliable local workforce.

### **3.2.3. Strategies of HRD in GCC**

KSA government strategy is extremely focused on controlling the economy and social practices, according to Mellahi and Wood (2001). Moreover, the KSA government invested too much in the public sector to the extent that monthly compensation of public employees is estimated to be three or four times that of their counterparts in the private sector. The government strategy and

its frantic tendency of developing only the public sector created many economic, social and managerial problems. For example, KSA nationals abandoned the private sector, government corporations monopolized the oil, communication and industrial market, there was underdevelopment of the private sector, and bureaucracy prevailed in the public sector, see Mellahi and Wood (2001). The most important negative consequence from my point of view, which was supported by Shaban et al. (1995) and Mellahi and Wood (2001), is the perception of new entrants to the labour market that getting a public job is a citizen's right.

Mellahi (2006) postulated the Saudi government has paid great attention to maintaining a highly skilled national workforce. Consequently, according to Mellahi (2006), the Saudi government concentrated on upgrading and developing the educational and vocational training system in the country. Mellahi (2006) argued that the Saudi strategy of developing its HR aimed to: increase the national labour skills, cultivate the importance of vocationally based job skills among Saudis, and encourage Saudi labour to work in the private sector. Despite all of the investment made by GCC governments in upgrading their human resources, they fall short on some points. For instance, Mellahi (2006) argued that the Saudi government spent millions of dollars on developing skills; however, it did not plan how to utilize and transfer the resulting skills into work. Mellahi (2006) identified the contributory factors to the government's inability to utilize these new skills as: association of skills based jobs, that are low paid and low status, with expatriate labour, and the mismatch between offered vocational training courses and labour market needs. The KSA government proposed an initiative to solve the second problem by splitting provision of the training programmes. Hence, training institutions provide 25% of a training course and the remaining 75%, is provided as on-job-training by the prospective employer.

In Kuwait, according to Ali and Al Kazemi (2006), the government in response to the increase oil revenues in 1973 invested too much in both the public and private sectors. The Kuwaiti government's strategy represents a unique welfare state philosophy. Under this philosophy the government provides free health, education, social and housing services to citizens. Moreover, it is responsible for creating, developing and distributing wealth among citizens. Ali and Al-Kazemi (2006) indicated that the Kuwaiti government showed its obligation of developing its human resources. For instance, the Kuwaiti government concentrated on developing labour laws and

policies related to development and improvement of employment relations and conditions. Moreover, Kuwait launched a programme of restructuring its manpower in 2001, see Ali and Al-Kazemi (2006), as well as launching institutions to monitor the application of the labour laws and training given to employees.

However, Ali and Al Kazemi (2006) asserted that such a philosophy, which is different from the original meaning of welfare state in the Western context, led to certain consequences. Among these consequences was the birth of a consumer nation with weak ethics, an increasing number of workers in the public sector, citizens' antipathy towards working for the private sector, where such privileges are not provided. In Kuwait, Ali and Al-Kazemi (2006) argued that the problem lies not with the amount spent by government on training programmes. The consultants and HR specialists have benefited from the plentiful funds spent by government on developing human resources. The problem lies in the nationals' attitude towards the training and vocational programmes, see Ali and Al-Kazemi. In spite of all the Kuwaiti programmes concentrating on education and training, the resulting national skills base is inadequate. According to Ali and Al-Kazemi (2006), there is an attitudinal mindset among Kuwaiti workers whereby training is viewed negatively as they are lavishly rewarded monthly and the government is totally dependent on expatriates.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), I believe, present a similar case to those presented earlier for KSA and Kuwait. The UAE government also invested in developing its public sector (Suliman, 2006). The public sector in UAE is more regulated with regard to HR than the private sector. Public sector employees achieve much better salaries compared with their counterparts in the private sector, according to Suliman (2006). In fact, there is recent evidence represented in the decree issued in November 2011 by His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed, the president of UAE, committing to further develop the human capital, to assure a better life for citizens and to enable them to cope with the increasing living costs. The salaries of local federal government employees, according to that decree, were to be raised by 100%. Moreover, citizens were given extra fringe benefits. I think this an indication of implementation of a welfare state strategy.

The moral here is that public sector employees are getting, e.g. salary and fringe benefits, several times greater than their counterparts are achieving in the private sector. Furthermore, public sector employees work for fewer hours weekly than private sector employees. Suliman (2006)



asserted that the UAE government tried to create the awareness among employees of benefits of working in the private sector and the importance of the private sector to the economy. However, the weak HR regulations in the private sector are not encouraging employees. The private sector offers low salaries, and the records showed many cases of private organizations postponing or failing to pay salaries, according to Suliman (2006).

The scene is repeated in Qatar. Abdalla (2006) argued that Qatar invests the equivalent of 4-6% of its gross domestic production (GDP) in order to develop its HRM. In fact, that ratio is huge, especially when we consider that Qatar is a leading world gas and oil producer and had a small population of less than one million in 2004, according to Abdalla (2006). Abdalla (2006) argued as well that developing HRM in Qatar became one of its main strategies; however, it has not developed as anticipated. In general, the governmental strategy or philosophy can be considered as that of welfare state. According to Abdalla (2006), the government provides a raft of free social services to its nationals. For example, the government makes promises of employing all natives at high salaries, subsidizes all basic products and services to consumers, imposes no tax on income, offers free preventive and curative medical services, offers free basic and higher education, and free water and electricity. His Highness Sheikh Hamad ben Khalifah issued high orders to increase the salaries of native employees in 2011. Nevertheless, Abdalla (2006) contended that the traditional work culture and the type of education and training in Qatar is poor in quality.

To sum up, It has been mentioned above that GCC governments invested too much in their public sectors. One of their major investments was in developing human resources. Consequently, the native employees tend to work in the public sector. The public sector is more regulated than its counterpart private sector, offers higher monthly salaries and fringe benefits. Moreover, the locals' mentality institutionalized the idea that getting a job in the public sector is one of their un-negotiable rights, the work ethics became weak, their views of training is negative. Such negative consequences among locals were due to the total reliance on expatriates. Next, I will reflect the labour market structure in the GCC.

The GCC countries are facing challenges in HRD. These challenges, according to Achoui (2009), are represented in the incompatibility between the economic sector's needs and the outputs of the educational system, ultimate reliance on expatriate labour, lack of participation of

women in the labour market, and high dependence on revenues from oil and gas. I will reflect the structure of the GCC labour market and their regulations in the following section.

### **3.2.4. Labour Market Structure**

Labour market structure among the GCC countries has similar characteristics. For example, there is a disparity between the local and foreign labour. The number of foreign workers exceeds that of locals, see Mellai and Wood (2001); Mellahi (2006); Ali and Al-Kazemi (2006); Suliman (2006); and Abdalla (2006). The labour market context in the GCC countries, thus, has some points that challenge the HRM functions. For example, inflow of new cultures other than the nation culture can lead to a threat to the national identity, according to Abdalla (2006), security issues, outflow of finance as foreign workerstransfer funds from host countries to home countries and changes in the demographics of the GCC countries.

Mellahi and Wood (2001) and Mellahi (2006) argued that In KSA the structure of the labour market is favourable to foreign workers, who are considered very cheap, not bound by social pressures in choosing jobs, and much easier to control. On the other hand, the local worker is bound by certain cultural and economic pressures that force him/her to choose particular jobs. For example, locals are very concerned with the nature of work, employment sector, and the social interactions in the job that definetheir social stature and family, according to Mellahi and Wood (2001). Moreover, locals have additional economic pressure in KSA, where the cost of living is very high compared to other developing countries. Hence, locals look for salaries are six times those offered to foreign workers from far eastern developing countries.

For the same reasons mentioned above foreign workers in Kuwait, UAE, and Qatar are more plentiful than local workers, see Ali and Al-Kazemi (2006); Suliman (2006); and Abdalla (2006). In Kuwait, foreign workers in 2003 represented 83% of manpower in the private sector and 26% of manpower in the public sector, according to Ali and Al-Kazemi (2006). Because of the social pressures of seeking prestige, high salaries, and job security, Kuwaitis prefer to work for the government. The mentality of Kuwaitis has changed, as has that of their counterparts in KSA, to think that is their right to be employed in the public sector. Rees, Mamman, & Bin Braik (2007) postulated that 88% of labour in the UAE is made up of foreign workers. Abdalla (2006) argued that 82% of the labour in Qatar consists of foreign workers comprising Westerners, Egyptians,

Jordanians and Indo-Pakistanis. Those non-national workers have brought into the Qatari context their bureaucratic cultures and traditions of processing jobs, according to Abdalla (2006).

In sum, it is obvious from the empirical evidence shown above in this section that the labour market structure in GCC countries is highly dependent on foreign labour. Moreover, most of the local labour prefers to work for the public sector because it meets employees' expectations of high salaries, good positions, less work, and no manual work. This preference can be considered as a cognitive perception among GCC nationals. Perceptionally, they take it for granted that they are entitled to such treatment from their governments. I think these two facts: depending on foreign labour and GCC nationals' misconceptions and attitudes about work, participate in shaping the understanding of HRM in GCC and how it is, or is not, different from HRM in the Western contexts. For example, the Western contexts are not highly dependent on foreign manpower, and westerners' views of jobs are totally different. Unlike GCC nationals, they do not depend on the government to give them employment in the public sector but they work also in the private sector.

### **3.2.5. Labour Regulations in GCC**

Labour regulations in GCC countries are generally well established, but not necessary well applied, in the public sectors. Regulation of the workforce market in Kuwait, for example, started in the 1960s. However, the emphasis of labour regulation in Kuwait was concentrated on the public sector at that time, according to Ali and Al-Kazemi (2006). Because of the booming oil prices in the 1970s and the great dependence on international labour, the Kuwaiti government issued several laws, conducted by newly founded organizations such as the civil service ministry, to regulate the labour market in both the public and private sectors, see Ali and Al-Kazemi (2006).

One of the regulations in the public sector, which later was applied to the private sector, is the nationalization of jobs: 'Gulfization'. In order to reduce the dependency on non-GCC nationals, the GCC council introduced the Gulfization plan, according to Al-Lamki (2000). In this plan, which is called sometimes an affirmative action or interventionist approach, each government of the GCC countries is required to nationalize jobs in its labour market. The term gulfization as a general mission was simplified by adding the suffix (-ization) to each GCC name. For example, Saudization to KSA, Kuwaitization to Kuwait, Emiratization to UAE, Qatarization to Qatar, and

Omanization to Oman. To enforce these schemes, GCC countries impose a quota system on non-governmental organizations whereby they are supposed to employ a certain percentage of local workers.

For instance, The Kuwaitization law states that the minimum percentage of Kuwaitis in non-governmental organizations should be 1% in agriculture and construction, 38% in the communication sector, and 39% in banking sector. The GCC countries' border agencies along with manpower institutions monitor non-governmental compliance with the nationalization ratios. Rees et al. (2007) argued that GCC governments have issued some punishing sanctions for organizations that are not complying with the localization laws. For example, non-complying organizations would have to pay taxes when breaching the localization law. Moreover, government institutions concerned with managing labour markets might freeze all transactions with organizations that fail to comply with the Gulfization scheme. Qatarization as a process, according to Gonzales, Karoly, Constant, & Salem (2008), started in the early 1970s in the public sector. Winckler (2000) stated that the Qatari Sheikh issued a decree in 1997 to Qatarize the private sector to reach at least 20% of total labour in the private sector. Gonzales et al. (2008) stated that in 2000 Qatar devised a plan to Qatarize 50% of jobs in the oil and power industries.

Nevertheless, Mellahi and Wood (2001) argued that such labour regulations are not always effective. For example, Saudization, regulation for replacing foreigners with Saudi labour, has not met its objectives due to: low pay, the alternative of foreign workers from developing countries, social status pressure and high cost of living. According to Mashood et al. (2009) Emiratization has also not fully met its targets. Though it made some progress in the banking sector. Mashood et al. (2009) argued that some non-governmental organizations regarded localization as a new government technique for collecting taxes.

In UAE there are some drawbacks to the labour law, according to Suliman (2006). For example, employees have no constitutional rights for opposing any policy made by the authorities. This is because there are no trade unions nor any recognition of freedom of association supported by the labour law. Employees could not therefore strike in support of the creation of a policy of minimum wage. Suliman (2006) contended that one of the main reasons that people seek governmental jobs in UAE is the weak regulations and policies of HRM regarding selection, training and development, salaries, and promotions in the private sector. Abdalla (2006) argued

that trade unions and professional associations were not allowed in Qatar until as recently as 2004, when labour force committees were allowed by the government. Abdalla (2006) contended that despite having labour regulations that are consistent with international law, the government overlooks some violations of these laws.

In addition, the Qatarization process did not hit its targets. For instance, Gonzales et al. (2008) argued that Qatar failed to Qatarize the targeted 50% of oil and power industry jobs, achieving only 28%. Al-Subaiey (2008) won a prize for best essay from the Brookings Center, Doha for her essay titled 'Qatarization Policy – implementation and challenges'. Al-Subaiey (2008) argued that among the challenges is the way Qatarization is understood. Al-Subaiey (2008) asserted that lack of understanding of the morals behind Qatarization led some to think about it in terms of quantity not quality.

To sum up, the regulation of labour relations in the GCC countries seems to be more obvious in the public sectors. The labour regulations in the private sector are relatively weak. This, as it has been indicated earlier in this chapter, is one of the reasons that led nationals to choose to work for government rather than working for the private sector. Unlike their counterparts in the western countries, the employees in the GCC are prevented from going on strike by the non-existence of trade unions. GCC members such as the UAE have no clear policy regarding the minimum wage for employees in the private sector. Moreover, the GCC introduced the nationalization of jobs. Countries like KSA and UAE failed to achieve the targets set for nationalizing jobs. Mashood et al. (2009) proposed that one of the problems in achieving the nationalization of jobs is weak human resources development programmes.

### **3.2.6. Conclusion**

To sum up, this section reflected the factors that are shaping the HRM functions in the GCC. These factors are: economy, national culture, national HRD strategy, labour market structure, and and the political environment. All of the GCC countries are highly dependent on the revenues from oil and gas. This a dangerous strategy because of the instability of the surrounding political environment. For example, Iran warned GCC countries against repairing shortages of oil if the UN were to impose economic sanctions on their oil exports. Iran has warned that it will block the Hormuz Strait through which 90% of the Arabian Gulf's oil is exported across the

world, see Talmadge (2008). This consequently will deprive the GCC of revenues and their abilities to create or maintain jobs for employees.

The human resource management practices in the GCC countries are falling short in many aspects. For example, HR in GCC countries is mainly centralized and controlled by government. Most of the governmental investments and developments in human resources practices and functions are in the public sector. The public sectors in GCC countries are giving better salaries than the private sectors. Public sectors in GCC countries, in addition, provide better training and development programmes. These factors institutionalized a spoiled generation in GCC from my point of view. To be explicit, the GCC citizens expect always to achieve high salaries for minimum effort, they do not want to work in positions where manual skills are needed because of their social status, and they are highly dependent on foreign labour from third world countries. Moreover, they have a negative attitude toward training.

Furthermore, HR functions in the GCC are always distorted by familial and clannish relationships. Hence, it is commonplace to see intervention from high status members of society in the hiring, promoting or even firing of employees. Women do not participate in the workforce in GCC countries for cultural reasons. Moreover, the managers are soft and do not apply accountability policies to employees. Their practices and behaviour are affected by social pressures and Islamic rules. In addition, the labour regulations are not mature enough since most of the government's efforts are devoted to investing in and developing the public sectors. The nationalization of jobs did not work effectively in the GCC because of low payments given to employees, bad working conditions, and lack of skills among nationals.

In short, I think these empirical findings suggest that there are many differences between the functioning of human resources in the GCC countries and human resources in the Western countries. Nevertheless, western cultural features such as individualism, and materialism were identified by scholars including Suliman (2006) and Abdalla (2006) as replacing traditional cultures in GCC countries such as UAE and Qatar. Hence, there might be a kind of cross-vergency of human resources between these countries and western states. Moreover, the findings showed that GCC nationals in the GCC countries of KSA, UAE, Kuwait, and Qatar, tend to work for the public sector; hence, I believe, the transfer of employees from public to private sector is extremely limited. Having said that, I will turn now to examine from the available literature how

scholars in GCC countries have conducted employee turnover studies in public sectors of their countries. And whether, if they uncritically applied western theories, they assumed the universalism of western theories or not.

### **3.3. Employee Turnover Studies in GCC**

When I started looking for literature about employee turnover in GCCs' public sectors I expected to encounter a similar lack to that I experienced in Oman. I do believe now that I was right. Published documents about employee turnover in general are extremely scarce in the GCC and almost none exist on employee turnover in the public sector. In fact, this matches with the conclusion of the last section. I anticipated there that since GCC nationals tend to work for the public sector the transfer of employees to the private sector would be limited. Almost all the existing published works about employee turnover in GCC countries concentrated on the private sector. I think it is important to mention at this point that all of the GCC countries, especially the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Qatar, are reliant on expatriates to further growth and developments in their countries, see Goodwin & Preiss (2010). Hence, it is difficult to say how GCC nationals understand employee turnover when relevant studies do not exist. I argue also that studies conducted in the GCC countries about employee turnover have more or less adopted the theories of employee turnover produced in the western context. In the following paragraphs I will demonstrate the studies conducted in GCC countries about employee turnover.

#### **3.3.1. Employee Turnover in GCC countries**

Ben-Bakr, Al-Shammari, Jefri, & Prasad (1994) conducted a predictive study of employee turnover in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The analyzed questionnaires had been distributed to 442 employees. Among these respondents 77% were employees who worked in public or semi-public organizations. Ben-Bakr et al. (1994) investigated the predictive strength of attitudinal variables like job satisfaction and commitment with regard to employee turnover. They concluded that job satisfaction and commitment play strong roles in predicting employee turnover in KSA organizations. I think that one very important drawback with Ben-Bakr et al. (1994) is that they used uncritically the western theories of job satisfaction and commitment as bases for translating their findings, which were generated in a totally different context. I think they took western theories for granted as transferable to a Saudi context. This, in fact, happened in almost all of the studies conducted in GCC countries.

I think there is no harm in using western theories but they must be subjected to critical analysis to examine their applicability in a different culture and see how they can be developed to increase their applicability to a different culture. I mean that terms like job satisfaction and commitment are elastic and one should understand how behaviours of satisfaction and commitment are understood in different cultures. For example, I mentioned above in section 3.2 that cultural and religious matters are main factors that shape the HR in GCC. For instance, for a Muslim, job satisfaction is not achieved unless he thinks he has satisfied all implicit means ordered by Allah in conducting the work and all explicit cultural means. The implicit means could be sincerity in doing the job, being honest with oneself, one's manager and Allah ... etc., whilst the explicit means are social constructs such as the social status of high positions and high salary. Following are two more examples of studies about employee turnover in the Saudi context. I believe similar criticisms apply of assuming the transferability of western theories into different contexts.

One particular study was conducted in the KSA into the employee turnover phenomenon that investigated the causes and reasons for employees of the health sector leaving their posts (see Bin Saeed, 1995). Bin Saeed (1995) used a self-administrated questionnaire to investigate the causes of employee turnover in the Saudi health sector in three different hospitals from two dimensions: the socio-demographic dimension and the work related dimension. He managed to identify several reasons that increased the probability of employees leaving health organizations. For example, in the socio-demographic dimension he found that the impact of living with a spouse, educational attainment, monthly salary, and Saudi cultural environment are the main reasons for employee turnover. Furthermore, he found that poor administration, job dissatisfaction, poor benefit fringes, work overload, lack of respect, low salary, lack of professional growth, and personal and family reasons are the main work related reasons causing employee turnover.

Another study, conducted as a PhD project at the University of Nottingham in the UK in 2009 by Lamya Gazzaz, focused on nurses' perception of nursing as an occupational choice in KSA. One of the conclusions of this study was about the issue of turnover. Gazzaz (2009) found that nurses' frustration and disappointment with the existing system of management were the main reasons for employee turnover among nurses in KSA. Moreover, Gazzaz (2009) found that



nurses in government hospitals realized there was a mismatch between the effort they were expending and compensation they were getting in return, which acted against their retention. Moreover, respondents' of Gazzaz's study (2009) revealed their dissatisfaction with educational and training programmes intended to further their professional knowledge and practice. In addition, Gazzaz (2009) reported that Saudi nurses are leaving because of their lack of appreciation and recognition.

In Kuwait, Al-Refaei & Omran (1992) conducted a study to assess the organizational and psychological determinants of employee turnover in the Kuwaiti public sector. They collected 190 questionnaires from respondents from the public and private sectors. They used quantitative methods to find out the determinants of employee turnover in Kuwait. They found motivation, job characteristics, leadership style, and job related tension had a strong relation to the employees' tendency to leave their organizations. Furthermore, they found that the tendency of leaving organization was higher among educated, single, male managers than other subgroups because of their high level of expectation.

There is no doubt that the study by Al-Refaei and Omran (1992) contributed to the existing literature about employee turnover in the GCC countries. However, it fell short on some points from my viewpoint. For example, Al-Refaei and Omran (1992) did not consider the cultural differences in interpreting meanings and understanding behaviour of Kuwaiti individuals. The assumption that came to my mind when I read their paper was their supposition of the universalism of western theories about employee turnover in relation to Kuwaiti culture. Moreover, the study included participants from the public and private sectors. I mentioned in section 7.3 that the amount of investment by the Kuwaiti government in developing HR in the public sector was greater than that in private sector. Hence, I do not think that in any way we can assume homogeneity between the Kuwaiti public and private sectors.

This situation, of a lack of employee turnover studies based on the public sector, repeats itself for the remaining GCC countries. Furthermore, similar comments are applicable to these studies. For example, Goodwin & Preiss (2010) conducted a study into the private sector in UAE to test how perceived inequity and employment relationships could lead to employee turnover. Goodwin & Preiss (2010) found that the intervention of social forces into HR functions such as promotion and evaluation increased the feeling of being treated inequally among employees. That

phenomenon, which was termed 'Wasta', in the view of Goodwin and Preiss led to employee turnover.

### **3.4. Conclusion**

There are two main conclusions for this chapter. First, the factors shaping human resources in the GCC countries are neither identical to those shaping human resources in Western countries nor completely different from them. To explain, the empirical findings showed that the mindset of the GCC national is subjected to religious and cultural factors. For instance, a Muslim man investigates the religious implications of any behaviour and complies with divine orders before pursuing it. In the Western and secular contexts this is not happening since people either suspect/deny the existence of god or act more or less in a pragmatic way. Moreover, there are areas where some of the western cultures infused into the GCC countries during colonial times. For example, some scholars located the spread of certain Western cultural traits, such as concentrating more on individualism and materialism, in GCC countries. Second, studies conducted in the GCC countries about employee turnover were conducted, as it appears to me, with an underlying assumption that Western theories are applicable and transferable into GCC countries. In spite of the scarcity of employee turnover studies in GCC countries, those that existed did not consider the differences between the GCC and Western contexts.

In light of these two main conclusions I think some empirical findings can be laid down here. First of all, there might be a crossvergence between the GCC countries and Western contexts in the attempts at planning human resources functions. This crossvergence can be seen from the collective similarities and differences between the GCC and Western contexts. The similarities are more obvious in planning, organizing, spread of individualism and materialism in GCC countries. These similarities were infused into GCC countries in colonial and protectorate times. For instance, the GCC countries invested much attention, effort, and money in developing their human resources. Individual behaviour in GCC, especially in Qatar and UAE as shown above, tends to be more in the Western style, concentrating on individual interests and investments.

Nevertheless, the applications of the human resources functions represent the differences between the GCC and Western countries. These differences in conducting human resources are reflected by GCC national behaviour that is supposedly informed by religious and cultural factors. The following chapter is devoted to reflecting the Omani political and economic

situation. Furthermore, it reflects how the Omani context is similar to the GCC context and, hence, supports the argument I posed earlier that Oman and the West are convergent contexts.

## Chapter 4: Omani Political Economy and HRM

### 4.1. Introduction:

I concluded the previous chapter, which was about HR and employee turnover studies in GCC countries, with two main points: that human resources management in GCC countries is neither identical nor completely different from in Western contexts, and most of employee turnover studies conducted in GCC countries uncritically assumed the universality of western theories into GCC countries. Moreover, I argued, based on the empirical findings in chapter three, that there is crossvergence between GCC and Western contexts. In this chapter I argue that the issues of employee turnover and human resources management in Oman are convergent with those in the GCC countries and hence crossvergent with Western contexts.

This chapter will offer a brief history of political economy in the Arab peninsula with focus on the Omani context, which will add clarity to the upcoming comparisons of Western and Arab cultural and economic contexts. The dimensions involved are: (i) the gradual development of the organizational culture in the Arabian peninsula, (ii) how certain cultural dimensions such as power, gender, predictability, and self are reflected in Arabian identity and how that affects decisions to stay with or leave an organization, and (iii) how this knowledge might help in forming ideas about what is relevant or irrelevant in American and Western European theories on employee turnover in terms of the research society.

Then, I will point the spotlight on discoveries of certain facts about human resources functions in Oman. These discoveries include the factors shaping human resources in Oman and the challenges of HR management in Oman. I think this will help in forming some expectations about the answer to the research question. To reiterate, the research question focuses on investigating convergence, divergence, and/or crossvergence between the Omani and Western contexts. This investigation is crucial in order to find out whether Western theories about employee turnover are transferable or not to Omani contexts.

### 4.2. A Brief History of Political Economy in the Arab Peninsula

In this study the development of political economy in the Arab Gulf countries is presented in relation to three turning points. These historical turnings, it will be argued, have had a major influence on the meaning of and attitudes toward work in the Omani context. The Sultanate of

Oman needs to be considered as a unique case because of its rich history in economy and politics. The three turning points are: (i) the impact of the spread of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula period on views on the essence of work, (ii) the colonial periods, and (iii) the discovery of vast commercial oil reserves in the Arabian Peninsula.

#### **4.2.1. The spread of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula and its impact on views on the essence of work**

Lewis (1993) divided Arab culture into three categories: (i) nomads (Bedouins), who raise camels, sheep, horses, and goats and travel constantly, seeking pasture and water, (ii) urbanites, who are more settled in one place, and involved in agriculture, basic barter trade and some trading with Indian and Persian merchants, and (iii) fishermen, who live on the coastal routes and work in fishing and shipping. In fact, there is historical evidence of a thriving frankincense trade out of Samahram Port in the south of Oman. This trade was documented in murals made by the Sumerians, Babylonians and Assyrians in the country of Iraq and in ancient Egypt (Miles, 1919; Al-Alyyan, 2002). These countries used frankincense in performing religious rituals. According to the murals, this activity goes as far back as BC 5000. It is indicated in these murals that frankincense reached the above mentioned destinations by various trade routes, penetrating the Empty Quarter Desert to Iraq and Egypt. Al-Ani (1999) provides evidence that Oman traded with East African countries in the early days of Islam and even before then in gold, copper, minerals, ivory, spices, perfumes, wood, and fabrics.

The brutality of the environment accompanied by the lack of any cause or faith: although this varied from one tribe to another, contributed greatly to the development of a survival mentality. Consequently, in times of drought, especially, there would be frequent raids and skirmishes.

This paves the way for explanation of how power relations were developed on a tribal basis. Despite the three different categories of people, the formation of power among them was the same. Most of the peninsula clans lived in tribes, except in the south, where the Sheba kingdom was located. They were all monarchies and so decision making was centralized. The tribal leader (Sheikh), according to Lewis (1993) and Goldschmidt & Davidson (2006), was either elected by a council of adult men from within the tribe because of his bravery, generosity or wisdom or inherited the position from his ancestors. Ultimate decisions were taken in a very direct, autocratic manner, as was expected of a strong leader who was called Sheikh. Tribal members had to follow his orders and they accepted the inequality of power within this small social

sphere. In fact, members were able to initiate raids independently, but only on the condition that they did not attack any of the tribe's allies.

One can say that terms such as thinking strategically were not common among tribes or their members. They merely thought about getting through the day, and protecting their families from raids. Piracy was also prevalent in the Indian Ocean and Arab Sea. People dealt with these things without having any opinions as to whether it was a good or bad thing to do. The Arab merchants inhabiting Al Hejaz, which is one of the largest territories in the Arabian Peninsula, used to go on two important business trips during the year: (i) the winter journey, to the kingdom of Sheba (Yemen today), partly to enjoy warm weather in winter time, and (ii) the summer journey to The Levant (Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine today), partly because of the pleasant summer weather in that place. Many traders were affected by religious influences existing in those areas and the cultural and social aspects of the lives of some Arab tribes. This effect was evident in Makah and Madina, which amazingly became the most iconic religious cities for Muslims after the appearance of Islam.

To sum up, the political economy at the time before Islam was represented in agriculture and trades (urbanites), fishing, the spice trade and shipping (people living on coastal routes) according to Miles (1919), and rearing goats, sheep, and camels (people living in the desert areas), and raiding. Power relations could be characterized as typical of "sovereign power" (Foucault, 1980), where the population is governed by a figurehead who dictates the rules and laws governing conduct. Some tribes did have women at the top of power hierarchy, such as Belqis, the queen of the Sheba Kingdom, who was married to the Prophet Solomon.

The presentation above is very important in explaining how the appearance of Islam in 610 AD would change the attitudes of people toward work. Islam has introduced, and reintroduced, many concepts that govern and guide a Muslim's life. It is a way of life. For example, it regards work as a holy function, with Allah rewarding those who work for themselves and their families and their country. Moreover, in Islam it is strictly forbidden to participate in raids or piracy. Trading, fishing and animal husbandry were blessed as very valid, valuable, and beneficial works and people were encouraged to work in these professions. Furthermore, Islam has approved the idea of obeying the ruler, king, Imam or Sultan, although with the stipulation that obedience to any creature, such as a ruler or king, must not involve disobedience to the creator (Allah). For more

information about these issues the reader is recommended to refer to Ibn Kathir (1414AH); Al Bukhari (1407AH); and Ibn Muslim (1407AH). However, Islam urged the ruler not to be autocratic, but to seek consultation (Shura) from people to form his decision. In the economic dimension, Islam has imposed several relevant regulatory and underpinning provisions. For example, it explains what the business patterns should look like, the implications of involvement in them, forbids the imposition of interest on loans, requires payments of Zakat and other charitable donations, forbids the coveting of gold, silver, and money and encourages investment, wills and inheritance.

Arab culture has a distinct collectivist element. As an example, we find in poems of Amr Ibn Kulthum, who is a poet from the pre-Islamic period, threatening anyone who violates his tribe. Noah (1987) insisted that Islamic values encouraged balance between individualism and collectivism. Thus, Arab culture encourages collectivist thinking but at the same time does not limit the free will of individuals, although the individual is proscribed from violating or negatively affecting the Sharia. Muslim scholars, such as Noah (1987), postulated that before Islam and even now, in both the Western and Eastern views, one of these two aspects is expected to prevail. He urged that one should focus on the two aspects of human nature. They are interrelated and conflicting. They are contradictory essences which constitute the uniqueness of the human being, embodied, for example, as love and hate, fear and hope, and physical and incorporeal. Islam called for balancing and accommodation of both tendencies in a mutually supportive, non-competitive form.

The Omanis, like all Muslims, obeyed these principles. In the immediate post Islam period one could find a mixture of characteristics of individualism and collectivism in the Omani society. For example, the relationship between the employer and employee is perceived in two ways. First, it is perceived in moral or normative terms, as in a friendly or family relationship. Second, it should be bounded by a contract which is supposedly to the advantage of both parties, with no harm to anyone. It is alleged that clear definition of the employment relationship can contribute a great deal to commitment to the job.

Al Qimni (1995) postulated there is a contradictory narrative about women of pre-Islamic periods, with some arguing and some refuting that those women had high status. For example, he argued there is a mistaken perception about the status of women in the Arab Gulf states before

Islam. He refuted the idea that women were highly oppressed. Moreover, he reflected several examples of how women could express their freedom in that primitive context. For example, a woman had the right to engage in commercial activities, she could propose marriage to a man, some of the women acted as consultants, especially in times of war, she could divorce her husband, and her dignity was parallel to husband's honour. The reason why the Arabs waged wars on the Persian kingdom was because their king, the Shah, offended the Arabs when he asked them to hand over their women as captives.

On the other hand, Al Qimni (1995) argued that other historians provided evidence of oppression of women during that time. For example, the son would inherit his father's wives and he had total authority over disposing of them or marrying them (not his mother of course). Moreover, some Arab clans considered women as having been created solely for pleasing men and for breeding new generations. Even more shockingly, some Arabs used to bury their newborn daughters.

In fact, Islam condemns all inhuman thinking and practices towards women. Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) declared that women are the sisters of men (Al Bukhari, 1407AH; and Ibn Muslim, 1407). Thus, a woman is completely free to conduct her life and do whatever she wants as long as no Sharia laws are violated by these practices. She can work, choose to accept or reject the potential husband, has a right to divorce...etc (Ibn Kathir, 1414AH). Islam sees the two sexes as complementary to each other and that should govern practice in all aspects of life, including of course the economic dimension, as Nasr (2003) argued. Hence, one can see how the women could have influenced the economic situation in those times. Despite their freedom to work and exert their free will within the Islamic injunctions the majority of women in the Arabian Peninsula preferred to stay at home, raising their children and investing their money domestically, for example, by renting out their inherited estates.

#### **4.4.2. The Colonial Periods**

Although the Islamic perspective of power prevailed for a long time in the Arab Gulf states, there were some periods when people behaved as in the pre-Islamic period. This was clear during periods under colonialism or in circumstances of civil and sectarian wars. The Portuguese invaded Oman in 1507 and were driven out by the Omanis by 1650 (see Peterson, 1978). They concentrated on occupying the coastal cities and, logically, the sea ports. This caused major



confusion in the trade channels and in relationships in the interior regions. Previously, some of the coastal cities had been invaded by Persian forces. In addition, the United Kingdom emerged as a major player and the British government and troops were a presence in the Arabian Gulf for a long time, until the sixth decade of the last century. Of course there were other players who affected the balance of political and economic power in the Arabian Gulf, the Arab Sea, and the Indian Ocean, such as the French, the Dutch fleet, and the forces of the Ottoman Empire (Al-Alyyan, 2009).

Al-Alyyan (2009) postulated that the Omani maritime fleets were thriving until the Portuguese invasion. He along with other researchers argued that one of the major reasons for the Portuguese invasion was to remove the Omani navy from control over the east spices trade and one can deduce from this that maritime trade was indeed flourishing at that time. Furthermore, the Omani personality had matured sufficiently to know that everyday business did not conflict with Islamic law, but, rather, acted as a complementary function.

Power relations continued as depicted during the post-Islamic period. They were further consolidated when holy Jihad was announced against the Portuguese to liberate the country. Employees in all kinds of professions left their jobs to become fighters for freedom. The history of Oman does not give any indications of what these warriors did after freedom was won. It is accepted by this research, in the absence of any evidence of shifts to other professions, that they pursued the same jobs as before the war. Moreover, sources have shown that some of these people settled in new territories that came under Omani Empire control, but carried on working in their former professions (Peterson, 2004). The research suggests that the organizations as cultures started to become partially detached from religious concepts and form a business organization culture. The experience gained by Omanis from (i) frequent subjection to unstable internal and external political situations, (ii) being part of the international efforts to rule the waterways in the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Gulf for control of the spice trade, and (iii) the overseas adventures in India and East Africa helped a great deal in maturing the organizational thinking in the Omani personality.

Consequently, forts and castles were built, sea ports were restored, shipbuilding factories were reopened, the army was rearmed with weapons...etc. All of these were achieved through organized planning. Unfortunately, the country plunged into economic recession due to the

following factors. (i) World War I had the effect of restricting trade across the international waterways, (ii) there was an increase in piracy in the Arab Sea, sources have recorded that Sultan Said bin Sultan was killed by pirates while sailing to Zanzibar in 1856 (see Said-Ruete (1931)), (iii) the development of some industries, especially shipbuilding, lagged behind that of competitors who equipped their ships with steam engines and consequently they lost market share, (iv) different political problems emerged as some clerics tried to reinstate the Imamate system, which led to civil war, and (v) the appearance of rebel movements in the north and south, which were fed intellectually and militarily by countries that embraced communism at that time.

As with regard to the cultural and social dimensions, it is argued that Oman societies went through periods of fluctuation. That was because of colonialism. The Portuguese destroyed mosques, which were the places of teaching and education. Moreover, they practiced genocide, rendering the education system ineffective and resulting in widespread illiteracy (Al-Alyyan, 2009). Consequently, the people, in reaction to the uncertainty and fear of their conquerors, turned to collectivist behaviour. This led the disadvantages of collectivism to float to the surface. Noah (1987) specified several disadvantages of embracing one approach. For example, a culture of reclusion, isolation and depending on others would prevail. This cultivates within a person weakness, laziness, and incapability to withstand the problems of everyday life because of a dependence on what the society requires under the collectivist approach. Additionally, this paves the way for dictators to emerge because the members of such a group or society practice blind obedience, which does not distinguish between right and wrong and thereby allows for the emergence of domination and oppression. During the time of Jihad there were few indications of the existence of socio-economic activities.

Portuguese colonial rule over Oman lasted for a long time: from 1507-1650. The research suggests that due to the men being commandeered for war purposes women had to take on a major role in economic activities. This was represented in very simple economic activities such as those mentioned in the previous paragraph. Once the war was over the men took over the economic initiative once again and the women returned to family matters. This cultural trend encouraged the cultivation of some ideas about women's work. Before the economic turning point of the discovery and export of oil, which subsequently became the main economic resource for the Sultanate of Oman, there was little representation of women in the labour economy. That

led scholars such as Abdy (2005) to describe the Arab Gulf States as fortresses of patriarchy and male prejudice. Oman was no exception up to that time, although major changes occurred after that, which will be dealt with in the following discussion of the post oil discovery and exporting period.

#### **4.4.3. The discovery of vast commercial oil reserves in the Arabian Peninsula**

The events described in the previous section led to so many changes in Omani society. The unstable political situation led to emigration of young people to other states in the Arabian Peninsula and to East Africa, looking for better job opportunities. This situation was changed by the occurrence of a number of events. First, the Imamate leader, who was the Sultan's counterpart in the theocratic interior of the Sultanate, died in 1954 and his successor was not strong enough to carry on fighting (Eickelman, 1985). This death was like the first nail in the theocracy coffin. The tribal disputes proliferated and support for the Imamate declined. Here again are some signs of emergence of a new monarchy that embraced the new world's administrative and economic systems. The second event which contributed to change was the discovery of oil in Oman in commercial quantities in 1964 and the beginning of export activity in 1967. The revenue has subsequently been used in development of the country (Eickelman, 1985). The discovery of oil instigated an influx of international companies, with their experiences and organizational culture, into the Sultanate. For instance, Peterson (1976) argued that a raft of western countries besides the UK, including the USA, France, Sweden, Germany, and Switzerland, won contracts from the Omani government to participate in developing the Omani economy. For example, the Omani government gave concessions on oil exploration to Western organizations such as Royal Dutch Shell, Partex, and Total Elf. Other Western organizations that entered the energy industry in Oman included Schlumberger and Occidental Petroleum Company. Consequently, this helped to form Omani thinking about organizational culture as the Western organizations that came to operate in the Omani context used Western management styles. At the same time they were employing nationals. I think that many theories or approaches can fit here to explain the development of organizational culture in Oman. For example, post colonial theory and liberal imperialism can provide the basis for explaining the transformation of some western management styles into the Omani context. Based on post colonial theory we can assume that Omani context was affected by influence of the colonial powers, according to Chiriyankandath (2008). Chiriyankandath (2008) argued that colonialism changes and reshapes

the political, economic and cultural views of the people of colonized territories. I think that the influence of western imperialism over Omani country remained even after the British left Oman as many senior Omani government officers were British. For example, Katzman (2011) and Valeri (2005) argued that British military officers were seconded to command Omani forces. Some other sources showed that the previous Sultan, Said bin Taimur, had a group of British economic, political and military advisors, see McKeown (1981). Also, in the early 1970s the current Sultan had many advisors in the military, intelligence, economic, financial, and police areas, according to Townsend (1977). The effect of these Western officers and advisors in the Omani context was represented in their transforming of Western management styles while forming establishments.

The third factor promoting change was the accession of Sultan Qaboos to the throne in 1970. He is a well educated and enthusiastic man who graduated from the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, England (Bahgat, 1999). He lived in the West for several years and even served in the British army for a while. When he came to the throne he promised his people a new and better life. He started by unifying all the country's regions. The rebels in the south were defeated and some of them had been absorbed into the new administration by 1975. This could have added another dimension to the way of thinking about the formation of the organizational culture in the Omani national culture if the rebels had won. It is worth mentioning that those rebels were ideologically supported by the USSR and South Yemen; see Sultan-Qaboos (1972) and Peterson (1984). It has been mentioned above in chapter two that the West and East became involved in the Cold War and raced to deploy their capitalist and communist ideologies respectively in their territories or coalitions. The Eastern camp tried to penetrate and infuse Oman with communism through Oman's neighbour South Yemen. The communist camp provided logistics, military training, and weapons to rebellions in South Oman so that they could defeat the Sultan, see McKeown (1981). The Omani government was supported by the British government, which adopts capitalism. Despite the defeat of the communists in the Omani context, I think that the influence of capitalist culture remained as the Omani government gave many contracts and concessions on oil exploration to Britain and other Western countries.

Furthermore, the new Sultan called for all Omani talents outside the country to return to serve the nation's interest. In fact, Peterson (1978) argued that the Swahili people, who were born of

Omani people, raised in Africa and/or had one African parent benefited the most out of this move because they were well educated and spoke English fluently. In fact, that was one of the major requirements for any job candidate, especially in the oil, mining and gas industries.

There was a lack of Omani workers in both the public and private sectors, before the existing Sultan came to the throne in 1970, due to the widespread illiteracy and unstable political situation, and the prevailing public policy that isolated Oman from the external world, according to Aycaan et al. (2007). The government tried to compensate for the lack in numbers by contracting affordable expatriates; see Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006) and Aycaan et al. (2007). For example, many contracts were given to teachers, engineers, MD doctors, and consultants in all sectors from Egypt, Jordan, Sudan, Tunisia, Sri Lanka, India, the UK, the Philippines, and the USA. To improve quality the government secured scholarships for Omani students and intensive specialized courses for employees. Most of the scholarships, especially in the natural sciences, were in the United Kingdom, United States of America, and Australia. Additionally, the Sultan Qaboos University was opened in 1986, in accordance with the royal decree no.9 for the year 1986, and the Public Administration Institute in 1977.

The Omani government launched a strategic human resources plan of Omanization in the early 1980s, according to Valeri (2005). Omanization (ta'mîn) refers to a policy by which nationals are recruited to replace the expatriates, see Al-Lamki (2002), Valeri (2005) and Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006). Al-Lamki (2002), Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006), and Valeri (2005) argued that the Omani government relied on expatriates in its early stages due to the lack in skilled and educated labour. Valeri (2005) contends that Omanization policy started with replacement of British and other expatriates who held high ranks in the army and Royal Police with Omanis. Valeri (2005) and Al-Lamki (2002) viewed the adoption by the Omani government of Omanization policy before the mid 1990s as a response to the social and economic changes happening in Oman. For instance, more than 50% of the population was under the age of fifteen and they would need to find work, there was a need to increase the number of educated Omanis able to replace expatriates, and to decrease the economic costs of financial transfers made by expatriates.

Due to the importance of achieving these goals the Omani government responded by taking several steps, see Al-Lamki (2002). First of all, according to Al-Lamki (2002) and Valeri (2005),

in 1995 it held a conference on Oman 2020 – Vision for Oman’s economy. The Omanization of the public and private sectors were pivotal objectives and recommendations of this conference. For instance, the objectives resulting from this conference were to raise Omanization levels from 68% in the public sector and 7% in the private sector to 95% in the public sector and 75% in the private sector by 2020. Second, the Omani government formed a committee to follow up these objectives in 1997 (Al-Lamki, 2002). Third, the Omani government allowed private sectors to invest in higher education. Consequently, at least six higher educational colleges had been opened by the year 2002. Moreover, the government gave endowments in 2007 to these private colleges of O.R17m (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011). In addition, Al-Lamki (2002) argued, the government encouraged the private sector to employ Omanis. For instance, the government issued excellence awards for private organizations that achieved high rates of Omanization. Moreover, in order to provide job security, the government issued the law of national insurance (Al-Lamki, 2002). I think that the Omanization policy in Oman has had some side effects that can be depicted in employee turnover. How has that happened and how has it affected employee turnover? These questions will be addressed in the analysis and discussion I intend to do in order to answer the new research questions addressed in chapters 8 and 9.

#### **4.5. HR in Oman and its Challenges**

In this section I will give a brief account of human resources management and its challenges in the Omani context. In fact, Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006) argued that HRM in Oman is a new phenomenon. In addition, they argued that many organizations in Oman do not have HRM departments but they fulfil personnel functions. Since Oman is a third world country and located in the Middle East, I will apply the framework used to determine the factors shaping human resources in GCC countries, see Budhwar and Mellahi (2006). These factors are: economy, national culture, national HRD strategy, labour market structure, and the political environment. This brief investigation of HR in Oman is undertaken here for two reasons. First, it is brief because much information about the political, social and economic factors has been mentioned above while investigating the evolution of the political economy in Oman. I think it worth discussing them again in a similar framework to that used when I reflected about factors shaping HR in GCC countries. Doing this would allow a better view of convergence, divergence or cross-convergence between the Omani and other GCC contexts. Second, the empirical findings will be compared to the conclusions about HR in GCC drawn in chapter 3. This will be done to prove or

refute the argument I put forward there about the crossvergence between the GCC countries, including Oman, and Western Countries.

On political and cultural issues, Oman is a Muslim Sultanate and based on a tribal system. It is ruled by descendent of the royal family 'Al Said'. It has been mentioned above that Oman used to be a theocratic country. Despite the official departure from being purely theocratic to a conservative system that is open to global changes, Omani individuals' behaviour is still informed by religion, tribe and family, see Al Hamadi & Budhwar (2006). Based on the religious orders, Shariah laws and Sunnah, according to Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006), individuals must be in total compliance with divine orders that even regulate individuals' aspects of life. Among these orders is the loyalty to those in charge of Muslims' affairs. The status of any individual in the Omani society is hardly ever determined by his or her merit. Rather it is determined by his or her clannish associations; see Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006). Families are still traditional and extend beyond the nuclear family to include sons' wives and the grandchildren. Mellahi and Wood (2001) and Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006) argued that the Omani individual's behaviour, just as that of his counterparts in GCC countries, is very collectivist and clannish due to these strong family links. Consequently, this can impact HRM. For instance, Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006) argued that this can be seen from Omani managers' behaviour with employees. If an employee comes from the same clan or extended family the manager behaves in a paternalistic and directive manner. If an employee comes from a different clan or group, the manager would apply the institution's managerial standards in dealing with that employee. An important note to be mentioned here is that the Omani context, just as GCC countries, is subjected to social interference in HR functions.

Internally, the sultanate is politically stable despite the Arabic Spring Events that hit the Middle East countries from the end of 2010 causing the demise of three long lasting presidents in Tunisia, Libya, and Yemen. Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006) asserted that the Omani government has encouraged the formation of associations for management, engineering, and other professions, which could be seeds for the formation of trade unions in the future, to meet the requirements of the IMF and WB. The external political situation is still unstable, with American and Western efforts to impose sanctions on Iran, which in turn reserves its right to protect its interests by, for example, threatening to block the Hurmuz Strait as mentioned in

chapter three. This would have a direct impact on the Omani context unlike the unstable situation in Iraq and Palestine, which are geographically distant and have only an indirect impact on the Omani context.

Economically, the sultanate of Oman is dependent mainly on the revenues from oil and gas, according to Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006). In fact, the government has embarked on a strategic plan shown in the Oman Economic Vision 2020 to diversify its resources. Unfortunately, the economic situation of Oman is not as strong as that of other GCC countries due to its comparatively low oil reserves. Consequently, Oman seems to suffer from an economic revenue shortage as it agreed to receive \$10b from the GCC to reform and develop its economic structure in response to the labour uprising and unemployed people's unrest in 2011. Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006) indicated that the Omani government has embarked on developmental programmes to diversify its economy through investing more in education and developing its human resources. Though, according to Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006), it is early to expect to see the results of these programmes.

The Omani government, in response to the need to develop its human resources, has invested too much in this area. The investments were presented in the impressive record of training and education embraced by the Omani government; see Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006). Oman has several ministries, committees, councils that strive in an integrated manner to develop human resources. For example, the ministries of the civil service, national economy, education, higher education, manpower are concerned with HRD processes in Oman; see Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006). According to Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006), the frantic tendency of Omani government to develop its human resources, through education and training, stem from several roots. First of all, Oman wants to reduce its dependency on oil by 9% by 2020. Second, Oman wants to address the acute imbalance in its labour structure which is dominated by foreigners. Third, Oman believes that a skilled Omani workforce is needed to work in the industrial sector to increase its contribution to GDP to 29% by 2020.

The Omani labour structure, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, is highly dependent on expatriates, especially in the private sector. Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006) documented that in 1997 there were only 34,004 Omani employees working in the private sector compared to 493,847 foreign workers. Moreover, Omanis in the public sector represented 70% of employees



compared to 32% of expatriates. In compliance with the Gulfization plan, see Al-Lamki (1998), the Omani government, although it had started to localize jobs earlier, in the 1980s, reintroduced the Omanization plan. Despite the fact that Omanization has hit its targets in the public sector, and banking sectors, according to Al-Lamki (1998), it failed to do so in the private sector due to its low pay and challenging working conditions, see Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006).

In GCC countries, as shown in the last chapter, employees tend to work for the public sector. This was the case in Oman until recently as the public sector was seen as the main source for employment. Employees, as their counterparts in GCC countries, used to think that the public sector provided better compensation and training. I think such thought in GCC countries is not generalizable and/or transferable to the Omani context. That is because there are many organizations, especially in the oil, gas, communication industries and operating outside the civil service's compensation schemes, which pay more and assure better employee development than the public sector.

Moreover, the labour laws in Oman were created by group of international consultants who concentrated on the interests of foreign labour, according to Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006). Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006) contended that management policies in Oman are designed also to serve the interests of the social elites. I think, in addition, that the increasing costs of living in Oman and the availability of jobs for employees outside their groups, clans, and familial bases, prove Mellahi and Wood's (2001) argument of prevalence of individualistic thinking among those employees working outside their clans' bases. Hence, thinking in terms of one's self interest is a priority. On this particular point I think there is a convergent relationship between individuals' thinking, in the Omani context for employees not working in familial bases, and western individuals who pursue individualistic interests. I think also that due to fact that Oman is not as rich as other GCC countries the level of cognition about the importance of accepting work in manual and skill based positions has increased, especially in return for good compensation. Consequently, employee turnover in Oman impacted on the public sector as employees shifted to work for highly compensating, well known organizations engaged in oil, gas, communications ... etc, organizations in the private sector and/or in organizations not subjected to the civil services compensation system.

## 4.6. Conclusion

This section has reflected some clarifications about the political economy of the Sultanate of Oman on the basis of three turning points in its history: the pre/post-Islam period, the colonialism periods, and the discovery of vast commercial oil reserves in the Arabian Peninsula.

The exploration of the Omani political economy showed that the major influences on Omanis' work values and practices in terms of management are related to religion, colonial power, wars, social conflicts and economics. The managerial values and practices in Oman developed in response to the tribal effect (in the pre-Islamic period) whereby the clan leader was solely responsible for deciding, commanding and managing all aspects of the tribe. That value were reshaped and refined by the appearance of Islam. Islam called for Shura, consultancy, reinstalling women rights, and provided the many constitutional regulations and codes of conduct documented in the Quran with regard to administration, as contended by Al Mizjaji (2000). Al Mizjaji (2000) asserted that management practice in Islamic view is not confined to mundane life but it is driven as well by the potential consequences at doomsday. Hence, a Muslim manager is keen to make decisions that do not violate Islamic jurisprudence. I think this might be manifested in managers' behaviour in the Omani context with regard to employee turnover. I think as well that Islamic values represent a very important factor implanted into Omani cognitive thinking and behaviour.

However, despite the inclusion of Islamic management of so many managerial practices I think they were not streamed into a clear discipline that could be taught as a curriculum. Moreover, colonialism has played a role in diminishing this as illiteracy, poverty, and a tendency of people to fight their conquerors. The colonial power as well, and in alignment with achieving their objectives, influenced the political, economic, and societal thinking in the colony as Chiriyankandath (2008) asserted. This was present in Oman in colonialist and post colonialist periods, when many British Officers participated in the Omani government and different Western companies participated in developing Oman. Thus, I think the empirical in this chapter, once again, support the argument I posed earlier about the crossvergence between Omani and Western context. However, I believe this must be supported by research methodology which is going to be reflected in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

### 5.1. Introduction

I argued in the previous chapters that an assumption exists about the universality of Western theories in different contexts. I myself was among those who thought that the Western theories of employee turnover were applicable in the Omani context. However, these theories did not help me to understand the findings of my questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. That conclusion implied that I need to rethink the research questions. Hence, the research questions were revisited to find out more about the behaviour of Omanis with regard to employee turnover. Furthermore, they were reshaped to track the universality and applicability of Western generated theories about employee turnover in Oman. In addition, I intend, in his attempt to answer the research questions, to identify the similarities and differences between the examined groups of respondents.

Thus, I first examined the nature of the employee turnover in the West in chapter one. I concluded that employee turnover in the West is a product of the historical, cultural and economic context. Then, I questioned in chapter two their universality and applicability in the Omani context. Moreover, I explored, in chapters three and four, literature about the HR in GCC and Omani political-economic history in an attempt to gain some insights and clarity to the upcoming comparisons between Western and Omani contexts. Based on the argument of the convergence theorists, presented in chapter two, theories are applicable in identical contexts. But my argument is that the Omani and Western contexts are crossvergent. I decided that I needed to do more analysis to understand how behaviour is constructed in Omani context, and compare this with the West to prove my argument.

In order to achieve my aim I needed a transferable theory that could explain how social behaviour is constructed. I think that the institutional theory lens, as I indicated in the chapter 7, is the best tool for undertaking the new inquiry because the notion of institutional theory is about revealing the group of common habits of thoughts that led to particular forms of behaviour being accepted in a society. I adopted the Scott framework of the three institutional pillars because it provides a simple and straightforward structure that can easily be demonstrated. Before theorizing the data using Scott's framework I needed to organize them in a simple and easy

manipulated form. Consequently, I used template analysis. More insights about the template analysis are illustrated in the following section while laying out the methodological position of this research.

## **5.2. Methodology:**

I first need to reflect a little on what methodology is and how important it is, as scholars such as Guba (1990) have argued that researchers ought to identify and explain their methodological positions. This includes reflecting on the ontology, epistemology and the method(s) adopted or embraced to inform and carry out the inquiry. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe, (1991) contended that the quality and clarity of the management research are in jeopardy if researcher fails to determine the philosophical issues around his/her topic. Hussey and Hussey (1997) argued that methodology can be defined as the overall approach undertaken in the research process. Moreover, Krippendorff (1980) postulated that the importance of the methodology stems from its role:

*“to enable researchers to plan and examine critically the logic, the composition, and the protocols of research methods; to evaluate the performance of individual techniques; and to estimate the likelihood of particular research design to contribute to knowledge. Furthermore, it provides a language for talking about the process of the research, not about subject matter”*  
Krippendorff (1980)

Having established this, I now intend to lay out the evolution of my methodological position. To ensure a more comprehensive understanding about the methodology, the following section will reflect on my ontological, epistemological and methodological bases for this research.

## **5.3. Evolution of My Methodological Position in this Research**

I think it is important to explain the research types, the paradigms of social and behavioral science research and their philosophical assumptions, ontology, epistemology and methodology, as these participate in informing the research process. Simultaneously with this presentation I will lay down my methodological position, see figure 2 below. I intend to reflect on the positivist and Interpretivism approaches since the initial inquiry of this research was based on positivism and changed direction in line with initial research findings and the consequent evolution in my thinking towards an Interpretivism paradigm.

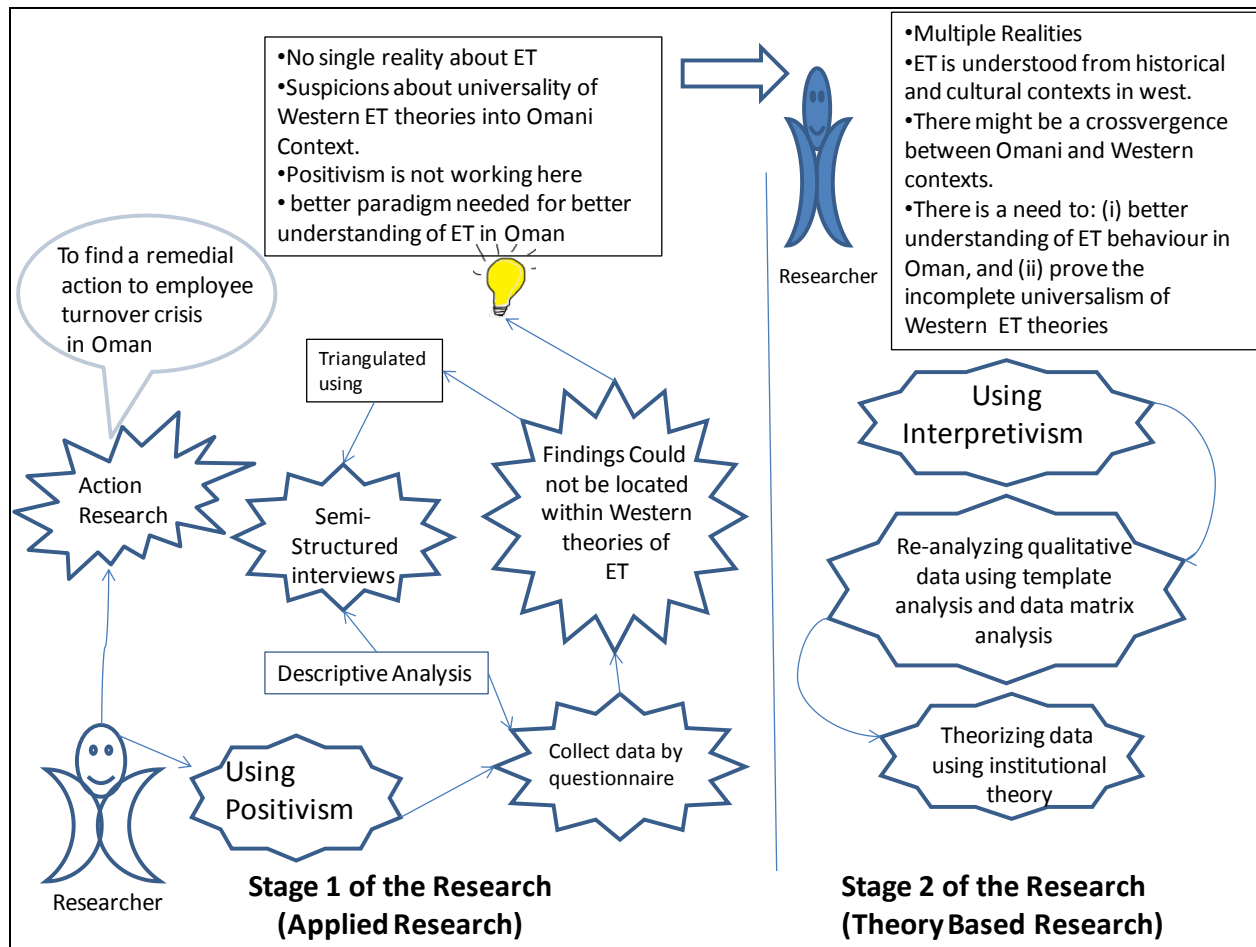


Figure 3. Evolution of My Methodological Position in This Research

### 5.3.1. Positivism Paradigm

The positivism paradigm emerged in the enlightenment era, according to Johnson and Duberley (2000). The reality in the positivism paradigm rests on naïve realism. This implies an objectivist view in that an external world exists independently of us and before we enter into it; see Cassell (2001). Tashakkori and Teddle (1998) and Cassell (2001) argue that epistemologically there is an objective separation between the knower and the known in the positivism paradigm. Moreover, Johnson and Duberley (2000) postulate that relying on the preceding fact; a researcher using the positivism paradigm can study the known without being able to influence it or being influenced by it. The Positivist approach, according to Tashakkori and Teddle (1998), is applied in investigative research by using the hypothetico-deductive approach. The following is a presentation of the central tenets of positivism as introduced by Johnson and Duberley (2000),

who divided positivism into three main categories: (i) aim of the research, (ii) research approach, and (iii) relationship of researcher with the researched.

First of all, Johnson and Duberley (2000) asserted that the major aim of adopting the positivist paradigm in management research is to find out the causal and fundamental laws that explain consistency in the behavior of human beings in a society. The importance of establishing laws or causal relations is to enable management to become more efficient in their interface with the environment (stakeholders), and to have proper scientific indices in terms of the control and prediction functions in organizations. Secondly, the observer 'researcher' and researched are independent of each other and neither can influence the other.

Third, also according to Johnson and Duberley (2000), the research approach to be applied while adopting the positivist paradigm is based on the tenet of the unity of method in natural and social sciences. They persisted in arguing that the rational search for knowledge in positivism is confined to the natural science methods. Tashakkori and Teddle (1998) argued that quantitative methods are the best suited to research that embraces positivist approaches. The reliability of the research findings is determined by the possibility of it being repeated by another researcher and similar conclusions being reached, which allows the generalizability of findings of the initial research.

In brief, my ontological position when this work was initiated was based on certain kinds of truths. There was a truth that this phenomenon called employee turnover was affecting the Omani public sector. I thought that this phenomenon was a concept that could be scientifically measured and understood and applied everywhere, taking for granted the universality of Western common assumptions about employee turnover in an Omani context. I went on to collect data using methods that were appropriate according to that positivistic paradigm.

#### **Questionnaire Method**

Under this approach, I chose to use the questionnaire tool. Bryman (2008) defines it as a set of questions which are usually closed and completed by respondents themselves. Moreover, Bryman (2008) states that questionnaires tend to have an easy to follow design, fewer open questions, and shorter structure. These features ensure that: respondents follow the questions through without the risk of omissions; responding to questions is easy and there is no need for

extensive thinking and writing; 'respondent fatigue', which drains the respondent's patience and stamina when completing long structured questionnaires, is reduced.

There are several advantages, as well as disadvantages, of the self administered questionnaire. Bryman (2008) argues the advantages are: (i) it is quicker to administer, (ii) cheaper to administer, (iii) no interviewer variability, (vi) convenience for respondents and (v) absence of interviewer effects. Questionnaires can be sent or distributed to a very large number of respondents at one time. For example a researcher can send hundreds of questionnaires by post in one batch or by one click if s/he has email addresses. Follow up with respondents can be dealt with at the same time using the same technique.

Questionnaires are cheaper than other methods, especially if the sample under study is in one geographical area. Furthermore, questionnaires do not suffer from interviewer variability in terms of how questions are asked or ordered. Additionally, the respondent can choose how long to spend on completing the questionnaire. Finally, respondents are not exposed to interviewer effects or bias, whereas in interviews, respondents may be pushed/led into giving certain answers. Respondents might also distort their feedback if they are influenced by social desirability factors. This means that such respondents do not respond on the basis of the existing facts regarding the research in hand. Instead, they respond with ideal and wished for facts that are in accordance with their social desires.

On the other hand there are some disadvantages with questionnaires. For example, it is difficult to probe the answers given to the few, if any, open questions that the questionnaire might contain. Moreover, researchers can never know who actually answered the questions and cannot control the involvement of non-respondents in answering the questionnaire. Likewise, the response rate might be very poor and this calls for the questionnaire to be supplemented with incentives such as 'spare some time to answer this questionnaire and win £20'. Last but not least, the quantitative data, e.g. numbers and percentages, might not answer the research questions and accordingly this requires the questionnaire to be complemented by another data collection method such as an interview.

In fact, not much has been written about employee turnover either in the Middle East in general or in the Sultanate of Oman in particular. Thus, I had to be especially careful to reflect a

complete picture about the issue under investigation. That is why the respondents of this work were drawn from different governmental bodies. Furthermore, these respondents were characterized by either having good access to information needed for this research or they had been through the employee turnover process, which means they had lived through the experience.

The study respondents were drawn from different governmental bodies, governmental companies and Public Authorities, and included directors of human resources departments, recruiting officers, directors of financial departments, academics, consultants in human resources departments, and researchers in human resources departments. The potential respondents were characterized as highly experienced officers in the human resources field, well educated, drawn from both genders, and working directly or indirectly with employees.

Although in general, the above-mentioned characteristics were used for sampling, in fact, several other criteria were also used. For example, some respondents were chosen based on the social networks. Others were identified from the official governmental websites. For instance, the MPs were chosen because of their access to information, since they represented the human resources committee in the state council.

The questionnaire focused on the three vital dimensions of: (i) case preface where information about how respondents perceive the employee turnover in order to give me far better understanding about the employee turnover in Oman, (ii) psychology/attitudinal factors, (iii) economic/ cultural factors (see Appendix 1). I developed the statements to examine the above vital dimensions. The questionnaire consisted of objective questions (open-ended), moving on to an open space for respondents to insert any remarks regarding the issue. I used the Likert scale with responses, which is easy to operate and analyze.

The questionnaire was piloted with five respondents. This was to test its readability and to settle on an optimum layout by assessing its quality and efficiency. Respondents gave some valuable comments about the questionnaire. For example, (i) some technical terms or jargon used in the first version were amended to assure a better understanding among potential respondents, (ii) the wording of some questions was improved, and (iii) some items that involved more than one variable were divided into separate statements to ensure that each statement was measuring only



one variable (this would help me to avoid some analytical dilemmas while testing the variables). The final and amended version of the questionnaire was then sent to fifty respondents using the email service and a third person to hand a hard copy to respondents, because it was geographically difficult for me to distribute the hard copy personally to respondents. Twenty-five responses were obtained, representing a 50% response rate.

In this section I will summarize the results of the survey and their link to the change in research direction. The logic in giving this summary of results is straightforward. I will do this by showing the synopsis of each of the three parts: case preface, psychological factors, and economic/cultural factors, shown in the survey.

#### **Synopsis of Results of Case Preface from the Survey**

Results from the case preface had a major impact in diverting the direction of the research from trying to establish the cause of employee turnover in Oman with a view to developing remedial action towards trying to understand how the concept of employee turnover is constructed and understood in the Omani context. First of all, 31.6% of respondents think that employee turnover is abnormally high in the Omani context. Someone who is not familiar with the cultural circumstances and expectations of individuals in GCC and the Omani context as described in chapters three and four, might feel that the ratio is not particularly worrying. However, it is essential to understand that individuals in GCC think that working in the public sector, for high salaries, and not having to work in a technical job are their constitutional rights. Consequently, GCC citizens do not leave their governmental posts to work for the private sector. Furthermore, more than 52% of respondents expressed concern about the consequences of the employee turnover phenomenon represented in financial costs whereas 28% of respondents did not.

Moreover, more than 61.5% affirmed that it is not easy to find substitutes for those who quit their jobs. In addition, more than 52% argued that HRD did not attempt to persuade employees to stay in their posts. Besides, 60% of respondents argued that quitting public posts is very easy. Shockingly, more than 75% of the respondents believed that quitters are high performers.

I think the above results are inconsistent and are not in line with what I expected or I came across in western literature. They are saying employee turnover is high and has high financial costs for the public sector. In response to those results it could be expected that strong remedial action to

address employee turnover would have been undertaken. However, some other responses made me stop to think about that again. For example, despite the high financial costs and the difficulty of finding replacements for the quitters, employees quit the public sector very easily; HRD departments do not attempt to persuade employees to stay.

#### **Synopsis of Results from Psychological and Economic/Cultural factors**

The following table gives a clear representation of questionnaire feedback with regard to employee turnover in the Omani public sector from psychological, economic and cultural perspectives. Many of the findings reflect that western kinds of techniques can be used in finding causes and solutions in fighting the employee turnover phenomenon. For example, the feedback showed that the remuneration system in Omani context is vague in the view of 36.8% of respondents, whilst 36.1% of respondents said otherwise.

In addition, the promotion system is not defined, according to 43% of respondents. This was an unexpected finding as there is a special section in the Omani law of civil services devoted to promotion. Another surprising finding was that the respondents, as I showed earlier, are highly experienced and educated and drawn from different civil service units. Hence, I would have expected them to have perfect knowledge about Omani civil service law. Such feedback made me think that either they know nothing about the civil service law or the way the HR functions are constructed is different and needs some further exploration. I think this conclusion is replicable for the rest of the HR functions tested in the Omani public sector as shown in the following table.

<b>N</b>	<b>Employee turnover</b>	<b>Questionnaire</b>
1	remuneration	Vague (36.8%) vs. 36.1%
2	Promotion	Not defined 43% Defined 38%
3	communication	All positive communication below average 45.9%
4	Motivation	Given according to 43% Not given according to 37.5% 50% only given for outstanding performance
5	Organizational healthiness	54.2% healthy environment 16.7 not healthy environment
6	Organizational commitment	Managers do not enhance it 50% Employees are not committed 45%

N	Employee turnover	Questionnaire
7	Recruiting strategies	56% job specifications 50% job descriptions
8	Legal aspects of recruitment	80% sign contracts 70% contracts subjected to CS Act 60.8% contracts include staff rights
9	Fair treatment	52% promotion system 78% pension scheme is provided
10	Supervisors	56.5% supervisors have knowledge 70.8% supervisors have experience
11	Performance appraisal	54.2% it is conducted annually 63.1% employee sees the report

Table 2. Results from Psychological and Economic/Cultural factors.

The arrival at such conclusions, which were consolidated by feedback from the semi-structured interviews, participated in reshaping the ways I had initially adopted for undertaking this research. For example, at the start of this research I felt that I might be able to work alongside those participants in exploring and developing a potential intervention that would help in fighting employee turnover in the Omani public sector. But the findings of the questionnaire revealed that the problem is far too complicated and it is not only a question of finding the causes of employee turnover. It is about how initially HR functions and associated phenomena are constructed and understood in the Omani context.

In addition, HR in the Omani public sector turns out to be beset by many problems. The table above summarizes these problems. For example, there are problems in remuneration, communication, promotion, motivation, organization commitment, Omanization policy, management styles, performance appraisal; appendix 4 explains the survey structure and its findings. In spite of the existence of rules and laws regulating some of these areas in the Omani public sector, they are not effectively performing the functions that it is suggested they were originally designed in the western context to perform. Hence, my focus shifted towards exploration of the extent to which western management theory, with focus on employee turnover theories, is applicable in the Omani context.

The findings of the questionnaire illustrate that the problem of turnover in Oman does not lie in the relationship between organizational and personal variables because all of the literature, findings, and discussions reviewed, on the basis of the positivist view, suggest this has been comprehensively examined – the problem is around its meaning – when and how does an organization decide it is a problem and when is it seen as more positive? For example Omanis see the employee turnover as a healthy phenomenon; they do not consider financial costs to be a major concern. Thus, the difficulties, shown above, arose while trying to locate initial findings within the dominant theoretical frameworks available.

In order to give more credibility to findings of my quantitative method, I decided to cross-validate the findings that I got from the questionnaire by using semi-structured interview method. That means triangulation approach. Moran-Ellis et al. (2006) claimed that triangulating data helps researcher to judge and to make sure that measurements used in the early method was accurate. The assumption, according to Moran-Ellis et al. (2006) that if different methods used to investigate a phenomenon and they generate similar results then measurements used are accurate. If findings of the second method come to be similar then this would grant research data with confidence according to Jick (1979). Olsen (2004) contended that triangulation does not only cross-validate the data but also enriches deeply and widely the researcher understanding about the phenomenon.

#### **Semi Structured Interviews Method**

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken in this phase. Smith (1995) argues that the semi-structured interview is useful for obtaining a detailed overview of the beliefs or perceptions of the respondent about the research topic or theme being investigated. In addition, Smith (1995) contends that this method has the advantage of flexibility for both interviewer and interviewee over the standardized or structured interview and the questionnaire. Semi-structured interviews involve the preparation of an interview guide that has either a list of topics or a set of questions that are to be covered during the interview session. They have several advantages. One of the most important is the opportunity to build rapport with the respondent (Smith, 1995; Conway and Peneno, 1999). Developing rapport enables me to facilitate/control/shift the direction of the conversation and thereby to generate appropriate and relevant responses from respondents. Smith (1995) also argues that for the sake of rapport it is unnecessary to ask questions in a specific

order. Rather, the investigator can go back and forth in probing or clarifying matters, and the respondent's interests and concerns can be better explored.

Unlike questionnaires, interviews enable me to obtain feedback from respondents and clarify questions the respondent is unclear about. These processes, which are aimed at clarifying the meaning of the interview questions, ensure higher validity of data. In addition, the interview can easily be taped by voice recorder or video recorder with the interviewee's consent.

On the other hand, semi-structured interviews have some disadvantages, for instance, the amassing of too much interview data could cause difficulties at the analysis stage. Furthermore, the interviewer could unconsciously send messages to the interviewee which might influence their answers. Additionally, the interview could be time consuming, especially with people who are difficult to stop once they start talking.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty respondents. Only three out of these twenty respondents were people who had completed the questionnaire. The respondents were drawn from different government and academic institutions, Majlis Al-Shura (the consultative council), and Majlis Al-Dawla (the state council), public companies, and included respondents who had lived through the experience, and people who were intending to leave their existing public sector institution (see the following table). The interviewees were chosen either on the basis of their position, experience, or the organization they worked for.

I conducted these interviews in Oman in a period spanning from the 4th of May 2009 to the 24th of May of the same year. The interviews were conducted with several informants from different categories in the system of human resources in Oman, including members of parliament (MPs), academics, HR managers in governmental bodies, employees who had been involved in the process of employee turnover, employees who were thinking of leaving their existing jobs, and policy makers.

Institutions	Number of interviewees	Total
Ministry of Civil Services	Undersecretary for administrative development	2
	HOD from the Legal Directorate	
Ministry of Health	Undersecretary for administrative and financial affairs	1

Institutions	Number of interviewees	Total
Majlis Al-Shura	Human resources manager	1
Majlis Al-Dawla	Head of HR committee in the Majlis A member of HR committee	2
Ministry of Manpower	Human resources Manager	1
Sultan Qaboos University	One Academic from Sultan Qaboos University.	1
Oman Refinery Company	Chief executive officer (used to be a senior manager in the government)	1
Omani Central Bank	A specialist in HRM	1
Telecommunications Regulatory Authority	Five respondents from different departments who had shifted from public institutions.	5
Mzoon Electric Company	One employee	1
Financial Services Companies	Three who had shifted from government to private companies that provided financial services	3
Ministry of Education	Computer trainer who used to be a teacher	1
Total		20

**Table 3. Details of interviewees compiled by the researcher (2009)**

I personally coordinated the interviews. I got in touch with the interviewees utilizing social networks to telephone some of them, making appointments with the secretaries of others, and exchanging emails with others. The interviews were held in respondents' offices. Furthermore, I had been advised, in some interviews, by the interviewees to approach certain other potential candidates for interview because of their ease of access to information needed for the research. I told the informants in the very beginning of each interview about the research, its goals, and its significance. Furthermore, they were assured of the anonymity of their identities and confidentiality of the data they would give. I assured them that I was the only person who would use the data. Moreover, I reassured them that their identities would not be disclosed as doing that would breach the ethical code of conduct of Sheffield University. I then gave them the opportunity to carry on with the interview or to withdraw. If they agreed to proceed, which happened in the majority of cases, I asked interviewees for consent to record the interview. There were a few cases where interviewees refused to have the interview recorded, but most agreed. I presented to the respondents the supporting letters I got from the Omani Embassy in London and from my supervisor asking them to participate in the research; see appendices 2 and 3.

The interview was divided into four explicit general sections. In the semi-structured interview I started with a general introduction to an interviewee about the research objectives, followed by questions. These questions derived from two streams: the main fields covered by the questionnaire and the direction of the conversation, and respondents' thinking about the phenomenon being investigated. Up to this point I used the positivistic approach, with the causes of employee turnover as the targets. The triangulation approach relies on a positivist idea that in order to get a valid picture about the situation one should use different means for obtaining data. Hence, the questions of the semi-structured interview were formulated similarly, but went into more depth than the questionnaire questions.

Thus, the semi-structured interviews asked questions such as: How would you describe employee turnover in the public sector? (General) Do you think this phenomenon varies in degree and nature? Can you elaborate more about its nature in your organization? Moreover, some questions related to the communication process in the public sector and how it affected employee turnover. In addition, there were some questions about the legal aspects of employment relations in the public sector and how they worked in favour of or against the employee turnover phenomenon. Furthermore, I explored the financial aspect and its role in increasing or decreasing the rates of employee turnover in the public sector. Additionally, respondents who went through the employee turnover experience were asked about their experiences. How and why did they decide to quit their organizations? How did they feel about management in the public sector's response to their departure? How did they think the phenomenon could be addressed by public sector managers?

The descriptive analysis of the semi-structured interviews confirmed findings came under the quantitative method 'questionnaire'. Respondents see employee turnover as a healthy phenomenon, they are not concerned with its financial costs, employee turnover is not counted when employees leave an organization but still work inside the country, no real attempts made to solve the employee turnover problem, ... etc. Then, as my understanding evolved through the data analysis I realized that actually there are no truths. Participants did not have the same understanding of turnover as is discussed in the Western literature. In fact, this led me to identify a great need for a different way to re-analyze and interpret the data collected qualitatively, which leads to the other debate about lack of validity in a real world situation. This consequently led the

research to question the “reality” of the turnover concept – and ultimately to question its universality. This mapped out a new direction for the research: not to do more research but to find ways of analyzing and interpreting the data obtained that would allow better understanding of what influenced the respondents’ thinking about turnover. This latter concern led to the consideration of the interpretivism paradigm and institutional theory respectively as overall paradigm and an underpinning theory for analyzing data that will be thoroughly discussed in the chapter 7. The following section illustrates more insights about Interpretivism paradigm.

### **5.3.2. Interpretivism Paradigm**

As I mentioned in the preceding section, my thinking about the right paradigm that would enable me to answer the new research questions about the universality of Western theories changed from positivistic paradigm to the interpretivistic paradigm. Findings of both quantitative method ‘questionnaire’ and qualitative method ‘semi-structured interviews’ could not be located fully into the Western common assumptions of employee turnover. This provides the assurance that the existence of a single reality about employee turnover is not valid, it is always multiple ones. As a result of this new understanding, the universality of western theories that I unintentionally considered as a center of reference in a different context like Oman was questioned. Therefore, I considered the interpretivism as an alternative to the positivist paradigm as it provides a more comprehensive answer to my research interest, this is going to be highlighted next

Bryman (2008) postulated that this paradigm is a potential alternative to the positivist orthodoxy. Williams (2000) defined it as “those strategies in sociology which interpret the meanings and actions of actors according to their own subjective frame of reference.” The Interpretivism paradigm does not share the positivism tenet of considering sociology as an objective science. Moreover, it diverges from the positivism paradigm by using natural science methods to study the social world, according to Bryman (2008). It places more emphasis on humanistic approaches to studying social behavior.

Furthermore, according to Williams (2000), this approach to social studies is inductive rather than hypothetico-deductive. Thus, the aim is to develop a theory out of data collected qualitatively by the semi-structured interviews in my research. It is ontologically based on relativism. In sociology, that implies that in society there are multiple realities, and knowledge cannot be separated from the subjective views of the person or researcher. Hence, this represents



a subjective point of view about knowledge. In addition, because of the unpredictability of human behavior and actions, the variables in social studies cannot be controlled. This paradigm, unlike positivism, claims that collecting, detailing, and sensitizing rich and in-depth qualitative data assures validity of the research. Table 3 below summarizes the differences between Positivism and Interpretivism.

<b>Positivism</b>	<b>Paradigm</b>	<b>Interpretivism</b>
Reality is independent of human perception.	<b>Ontology</b>	Multiple realities and multiple truths/reality are socially constructed and constantly changing.
investigator and investigated are independent entities	<b>Epistemology</b>	Researcher and object are interactively linked/findings are mutually created within the context of the situation which shapes the inquiry
Quantitative	<b>Method</b>	Qualitative
to measure and analyze causal relationships between variables within a value-free framework	<b>Goal</b>	Stress is on process and meaning
randomization, blinding, highly structured protocols, and written or orally administered questionnaires with a limited range of predetermined responses	<b>Techniques</b>	In depth and focus group interviews and participant observation
Larger than qualitative sample/representative	<b>Sample Size</b>	Small/purposeful/respondents with important information/not meant to be representative/

Table 4. Differences between Paradigms used in this research, retrieved from Sale et al. (2002)

However, as has been mentioned above in the discussion of interpretivism, the qualitative method is the best method for collecting data within the interpretive paradigm. I do not have to design a new qualitative method as I have conducted earlier the semi-structured interviews. I think what I need is to find better analyzing and interpreting ways to make sense out of the qualitative data. Moreover, detailing and sensitizing rich and in-depth data are the best ways to reach a good understanding about the phenomenon under scope and consequently answering the research questions. For this matter I used an inductive process based on the content analysis with focus on template analysis form. The goal of content analysis at this specific stage is to provide an understanding and knowledge of the problematic situation which is how employee turnover is understood in Oman. The content analysis is defined by Berleson (1952) as a description tool of the manifest content of communication with focus on systemicity, quantitative matters, and objectives. Rosengren, (1981) consolidated this fact when he postulated that a range of analytic

tools like; systematic, strict textual analyses to intuitive, interpretive, and impressionistic analyses are illustrated by content analysis. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) introduced the qualitative content analysis as an approach embracing a systematic practice of coding, and identifying themes or patterns to bring about some subjective understanding of a content text. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) argued that the qualitative content analysis has three identified approaches. They are; (i) convention content analysis, (ii) directed content analysis, and (iii) summative content analysis. In the first one, usually a researcher has to develop the coding categories directly from the manuscript data. The second approach states that a researcher is guided for the coding categories by mainly the literatures, theories, and any research findings related to the problematic situation. The last approach is embracing frequency and contrasting of keywords or content in the first phase, and following that with explanation of the underlying context to define the coding of categories. One can deduce that the major differences among the approaches are coding schemes, origins of codes, and threats to trustworthiness (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). I adopted the second approach named directed content analysis. I will turn now to explain more about the template analysis that I used as one technique of content analysis to inductively reasoning my data by intensive examination and comparison to come up with the themes and categories. Moreover, I will reflect on the Data Matrix analysis that I used for grouping and detailing the findings so that they can be easily interpreted using the institutional theory which is the theoretical framework.

#### **5.4. Template Analysis**

Template analysis is a content analysis process whereby the data are organized into themes, according to Crabtree & Miller (1999). Crabtree & Miller (1999) postulated that usage of template analysis eases the evaluation and management of large amounts of text by reducing it to straightforward themes. Moreover, it easily enables me to make comparisons between views of respondents of different groups. It is very important to draw the reader's attention once more to the fact that interviewees were divided into three categories: senior management, line management, and employees. This categorization I think is the most suitable for my analysis because it would allow data to be organized in such a way that they could be compared to show any similarities or dissimilarities in the perspectives of respondents from the three categories. Moreover, this categorization, I believe, would allow narrower and more focused comparisons with counterparts in the western context. I think that the three categories can be considered as the

initial template because the objective is to reduce the large amounts of data into manageable data. After subjecting each of these broad themes to the process of coding, which will be illustrated in the following paragraph, I identified more specific themes within these broad themes, see figure 3.

It is very important to identify codes that can be extracted from the interviews conducted. It is worth at this point explaining the form such codes can take. Lofland et al. (2006) suggested several terms that can be coded: meanings, acts, activities, relationships, settings, and participation. According to King (2004), there are several ways of constructing themes of template analysis. For example, King (2004) and Waring & Wainwright (2008) argued that a researcher might (i) have some codes defined in advance depending on his theoretical position, (ii) conduct an exploration of the data first to help developing codes, and (iii) using a mixture of these first two ways. In my application of template analysis I had some themes derived in advance from the common assumptions of employee turnover from the literature review. For instance, themes like financial factor, management style, communication, and commitment were defined in advance from the common assumptions. Moreover, I developed some themes after the exploration of qualitative data, for example, Omanization policy, investment loss, working within Oman, and beliefs about the employee turnover.

In the initial stage of analysis, I examined thoroughly what each respondent said about turnover in the interviews. I then compared all the answers with each other, and asked - are these answers similar? I concluded that there were many similarities in the feedback of respondents from the same category. I went several times over each interview and coded the themes each respondent raised about employee turnover and what he/she thought about it. These themes were compared between respondents from each category and certain similarities prevailed. There were some minor differences in opinions about some of the themes. For example, in discussions on the nature of the issue some interviewees did not see the phenomenon as a problem, whilst others did. There were also some themes that were neglected because only one or two respondents talked about them, for example, "I wanted really to work in the private sector because I wanted to preserve and improve my English language skills". The following section reflects on the Data Matrices as it was used as well in condensing viewpoints of respondents.

## 5.5. Data Matrices

The data matrix offers some condensed and summarized viewpoints of respondents according to King, Melvin, & Ashby (2008). Moreover, King, Melvin, & Ashby (2008) asserted this approach is very helpful in abstracting the key views, perceptions, experiences of groups involved in the research. Consequently I would be able to interpret, find any relationships between the group's feedback and/or make comparisons between them. I think it is useful to use this approach since I have identified three categories that produced large amounts of data. This approach would help me to reduce that data to a manageable amount. Moreover, I needed to compare the groups responses to see how they constructed their perceptions and views about employee turnover. Finally, having condensed and summarized data would ease my mission in comparing any group's data with their counterparts in the Western context. The application of this type of analysis involves processing interpretations of the existing qualitative data (Nadin & Cassell, 2004).

Miles and Huberman (1994) identified two types of matrices: the explanatory matrix and the descriptive matrix. There is no clear cut difference between the two, as Nadin and Cassell (2004) argued. However, the explanatory matrix aims to give explanations related to research questions, clarifying why certain things happen as they do. The descriptive matrix aims to reduce complicated data to their basic components so they can be easy readable and understandable. They have the common objective of making the process of analyzing data visible (see Nadin and Cassell (2004)).

There are several advantages to using matrices for analyses, according to Nadin and Cassell (2004). For example, they can be used in diverse ways because of their flexibility. Thus, they can be used in a range of different functions in a project to gain a general data overview. Moreover, they can be applied at different levels of analysis such as: bringing together similar data from different research methods and doing a cross-site analysis by putting data together from different cases.

It is recommended to use direct quotations since this research is using interviews. Furthermore, it is very important to explain the decisions about how themes in the analysis matrices are constructed from the qualitative data, which themes are merged with each other, reduced or even become redundant. In this piece of work several decisions were taken when structuring the

matrix analysis. For example, the three categories of workers: senior management, middle management, and employees, reflected the remuneration factor through the three different terms: financial problems, financial factor, and incentives. The financial factor is more general and thus was chosen to be the theme code for all categories.

## **5.6. Conclusion**

To sum up, this chapter outlined the ontological and epistemological justifications used throughout the evolution of my methodological position in this research. I started the research with ontological and epistemological assumptions that were based on the positivism paradigm. I thought at that time that employee turnover is something that is independent from researcher's view or understanding and can be objectified and measured. Hence, when I started this research I was struggling to find a causal relation of employee turnover in Omani public sector. I designed a questionnaire as it was the most common method used in west in conducting employee turnover studies. I triangulated the findings of that questionnaire by semi-structured interviews.

Unfortunately, I could not locate all of the findings into the Western common assumptions about employee turnover. Moreover, it appeared that respondents did not hold completely similar understanding about employee turnover as it was understood in the West. This suggested that there are multiple realities about the employee turnover. Thus, I suspected the ontological and epistemological assumptions I used. I turned then to use an alternative paradigm 'interpretivism'. This paradigm is based on the ontological assumption that there are multiple realities and researcher is not separable from researched topic. The Interpretivism paradigm uses the qualitative methods. Therefore, I did not need to design a new qualitative method since I used semi-structured interviews earlier. But, I needed a new way to re-analyze, and make sense out of gathered qualitative data. In order to achieve this I decided to use the template analysis and data matrix analysis for re-analyzing data. The findings of these two types of analyses are presented in the following chapter 6. Moreover, I needed a theoretical framework that would help me in sensitizing and interpreting the data shown in template analysis and data matrix analysis. I chose the institutional theory as the underpinning theory. More insights about the institutional theory is presented in chapter 7.

## Chapter 6: Empirical Findings of Template and Data Matrix Analyses

### 6.1. Introduction

I reflected in the previous chapter 5 the evolution of my methodological position in this research. I mentioned that I started this research with positivism paradigm. However, I turned to use the Interpretivism paradigm as an alternative since the findings of my initial positivistic methods could not be located into the western theories about employee turnover. I also argued there that in the Interpretivism paradigm I will be using the template analysis and data matrix analysis to analyze data I collected qualitatively by the semi-structured interviews. I will present the findings of both template analysis and data matrix analysis from my semi-structured interviews in this chapter. In order to assure the validity and dependability of the coding process I did the following. First of all, I recorded 90% the semi-structured interviews and used my short handing skills for the rest 10%. Second, I cross-checked the respondents views with them. Third, the coding process took a long time of examination and comparisons and check-coding. Finally, I used the verbatim accounts of interviews in template analysis tables.

The second part of this chapter 6.2 and its subsections are devoted to show template analysis findings. Since I am using the template analysis I coded themes into broad themes and specific themes; see figure 3. I did this so that I can easily interpret them in a way that would enable me to answer the research questions. Broad themes are the three categories of respondents; senior managers, middle managers, and grass root employees. Specific themes comprise the similar themes repeated by each category respondents that I extracted from the interviews. The third part of this chapter 6.3 and its subsections are devoted to present findings of the data matrix analysis.

## 6.2. Template Analysis Findings

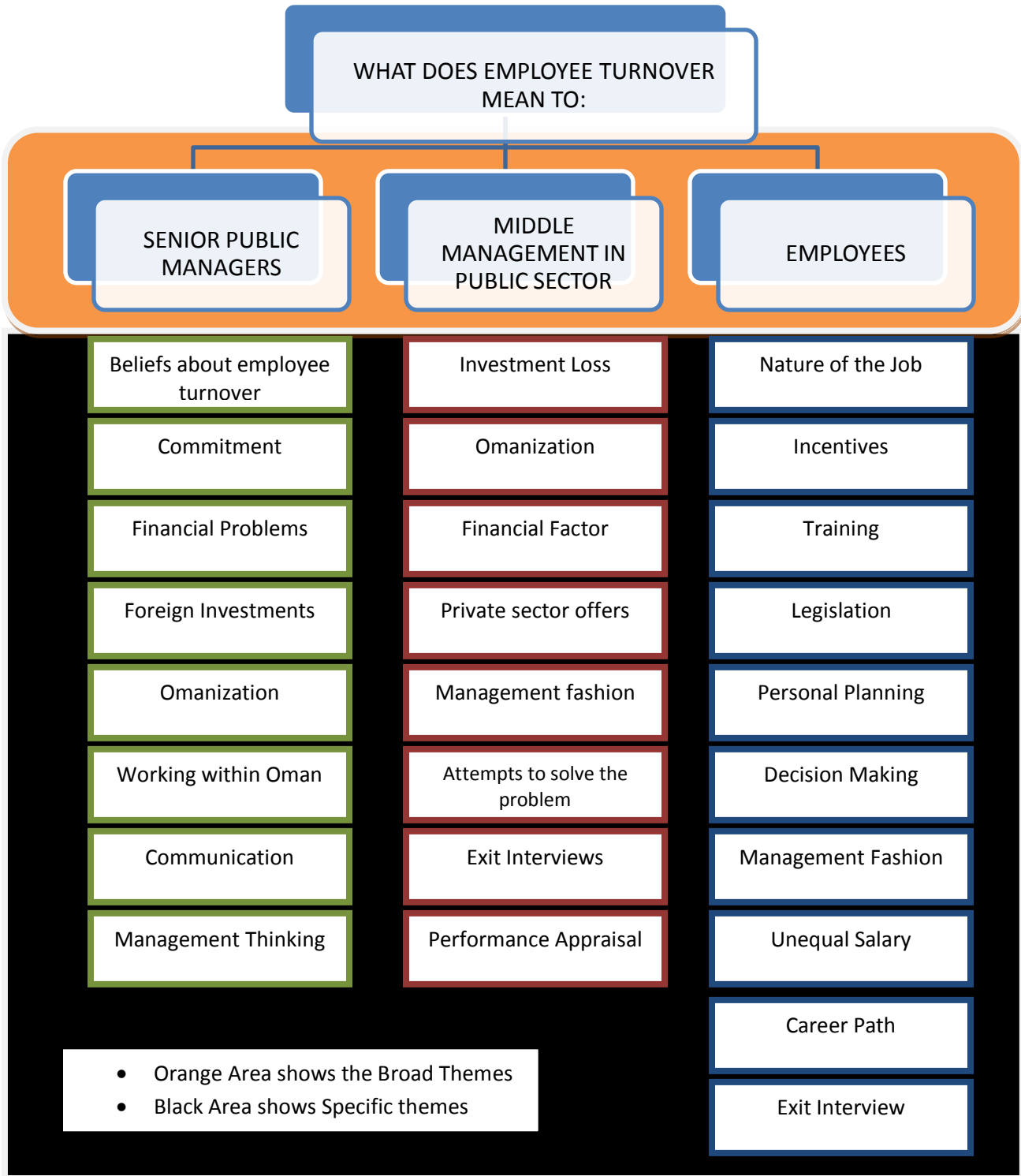


Figure 4. Themes Derived from Data

### 6.2.1. Themes and Comments Reported by Senior Management

Code	Description
1. Beliefs about employee turnover/pros and cons	<b>The senior managers described employee turnover using several different adjectives. For example, some said it is a healthy phenomenon. Some others described it as being a positive thing while others said it is a negative phenomenon. Consequently, they reasoned their answers by providing pros and cons.</b>
2. Commitment	<b>Discussion about whether employees in the public sector are committed (+ or - ) to their job</b>
3. Financial problem/limited resources	<b>Respondents have differing views on whether the financial factor can be manipulated to control the ET and some of them confirmed the scarcity of resources in Oman.</b>
4. Foreign Investments	<b>The foreign investment law has attracted many investments into Oman. These investing companies have experience and extraordinary ways of attracting employees from government bodies.</b>
5. Omanization	<b>The private sector is subject to this law that aims to nationalize jobs in private sector. Respondents gave differing views on whether this factor is worsening the ET phenomenon.</b>
6. Working Within Oman	<b>Some of the respondents asserted that if employees leave but still carry on working within the geographical borders of the Sultanate then we cannot classify this as ET.</b>
7. Communication	<b>Centralization of decision making + delays in communication</b>
8. Management Thinking	<b>Discussion about the status quo of management thinking in the public sector</b>

Table 5. Themes and Comments Reported by Senior Management



### 6.2.2. Tables of Themes and Comments reported by Senior Managers

N	Senior Management	What does employee turnover mean to you?
1	Interviewee 1	<p>“This phenomenon has been growing steadily in the last few years in the Omani labour market. We have seen that and reflected that in our publications and statistics, which you can check out on the ministry’s official website. It has some advantages and disadvantages and it can be healthy sometimes, no doubt. Although the figures with regard to this matter are not that scary, they show there are some problems that we should confront in order to retain our employees in the public sectors. Otherwise, we will incur a great loss operationally and financially by losing them to the private sector”</p>
2	Interviewee 2	<p>“I do believe that organizations should be aware of the need to retain their employees in the face of the danger of rivals using their financial advantage and absorbing competencies ... I mean ... for example, suppose that I am working in the directorate of projects in the Sultan Qaboos University ... I had done my best to appoint the best staff from the labour market.. and I invested so much time in doing that, I also made myself – as an entity – liable to train these employees through short or long scholarships inside or outside the country.. Did you get me? ... and when they came back to work they did excellently. I should try to keep them away from rivals who are fishing for readymade staff and willing to give far better and more attractive offers” a “healthy phenomenon for injecting public organizations with new blood”</p>
3	Interviewee 3	<p>“The employee turnover phenomenon from public to private sector is a healthy phenomenon that has some basis. For example, people might shift because of the higher salary given in the private sector. They might shift because the opportunities and privileges given to an employee are far better than the ones offered in the public sector. I don’t think this is a waste as long as the employee is going to work within the country. Actually, I could consider this as a positive and not negative phenomenon because the government is saturated in many disciplines with employees. They leave the public sector with experience which is injected then into the private sector. Furthermore, they create vacancies for new blood to replace them. Additionally, the government has been promoting and investing more in the private sector and thus good employees are needed to bring success to these investments. One last thing is that</p>

		when an Omani manager is shifting to the private sector he will, from our observations, be encouraged to employ Omani people in that organization, unlike the foreign managers who insist on employing foreigners” “Usually those who leave are experienced employees. Hence, they get better positions in the private sector. Consequently, they will participate in employing Omanis in their new organizations”
4	Interviewee 4	“My viewpoint is that it is a healthy phenomenon if it happens without going beyond a certain percentage in all sectors and industries. It is accepted and required by the organizations to ensure the influx of new blood and innovation and exchange and rotation of experiences and knowledge in the organization if, as I mentioned earlier, it does not exceed a generally accepted percentage of from 5% to 8%”
5	Interviewee 5	“ I think it is a never ending phenomenon that many countries, not just Oman, are suffering from. The only difference between these is the extent of its effect on organizations or sectors. This phenomenon may be desirable sometimes” “ What I think is it is not about losing the employees, there should be something more in depth examination, people must look at its direct impact on the organization’s processes. The real turnover from my point of view is divided into two categories. The first is external turnover and it happens when a highly skilled Omani employee goes away from Oman to work. It is a brain drain after all. The second category is internal turnover, what I would call job rotation, where s/he leaves the public sector to work for the private or third sector within the geographical borders of the country. My point of view is that if you are looking for pure efficiency in the performance of work then almost always the governmental organizations could be run by 10%-20% of the existing workers. But none of them can do that because there are several other dimensions contributing to this overstaffing, such as social, economic factors...etc”

Table 6. Senior Managers' comments in clarifying the term 'employee turnover'

S.M.Respondents	Excerpts on commitment
1	Not Reported
2	“We are suffering somehow on account of expatriates who are not loyal to their work. I do believe that we should concentrate on commitment and should trust the sons of this land. That is because the Omani is not looking at work as something to be done from 8-4 but beyond that”
3	“we are cultivating loyalty to Oman in Omanis from early stages in school and I don’t think we need to start from scratch in enhancing that when they start work”
4	Not Reported
5	“If the worker is not convinced inside him/herself that s/he has the proper abilities to work at this post, then the commitment and loyalty to the place will not be high. In contrast, the worker who has ability and confidence knows that he is an asset and can achieve something

	for the organization ... If the organization makes the employee fully aware of his duties, accountability and role in developing day to day operations, the yield of staff creativity, loyalty, and commitment will be greater”
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Table 7. Senior Managers' data about the 'Commitment' theme.

S.M.Respondents	Excerpts on the financial factor
1	“I think financial issues are the most important problem that we are facing in this respect. You know... dear brother... the government depends mainly on the oil and gas for its funds, plus we are a developing country which means we have a lot of projects for developing the infrastructure of the country, into which most of the resources are directed. For example, the government has many projects for developing health, education, paved roads, telecommunications, and electricity services” “As I stated earlier and I repeat, we, frankly, as a government cannot compete with the private sector in the reward terms given to employees. Although the government has increased the public sector employees’ salaries in the range of 15% to 25% of the basic salary in the last two years, I think that is not enough to compete financially. Once again, government has limited resources and too many infrastructure developmental projects”
2	“Every year we get 60,000 graduates from the high schools; this is one of our council study’s findings. It is striking that each student costs the government 11,000 Omani Rials each year from grade one to 12 <sup>th</sup> grade. You can imagine now the financial loss if they are not employed. Furthermore, there are other losses, such as social loss, because they can become thieves, murderers, become involved in drug dealing, or liquor addicts”
3	“we cannot stop employees from taking the decision to shift to the private sector where he can get a better salary. That is because we cannot restrict the freedom of choice ... In general, the financial factor is the main reason for employee turnover. If a worker gets an offer of a salary that is triple or quadruple that in his existing job he definitely will shift”
4	“I shall exploit this opportunity and tell you that we conducted exit interviews with employees who were leaving us. We amazingly found that the financial reason ranked fourth or fifth in the reasons causing employee turnover. We have found that the following reasons: direct supervisor relationship, work environment, training and career development, are more important than financial reasons in making the decision to leave the organization. Some time back the human resources manager approached me and said, “We find ourselves lagging behind with regard to financial allocations, compared to what is in the market and this causes a high rate of employee turnover”. My response usually is “Oh folks, let us study the issue and see the results that come up, which are normally actually contrary to what we think”
5	“I have a personal point of view regarding this issue. I will tell you about it because I am encouraged by your research. I think we spoke about different things, but let us agree on one thing. Allah almighty has created us with different abilities, thinking, power, and therefore, we are not equal in abilities and productiveness. I think also our participation in our societies and organization is based on that. I believe that unless we accept this in the public sector and specifically in the civil services, the matter will stay as it is” “As I told you earlier, here in this university everyone with a PhD is getting the same salary. And this is not effective because the nature of work of each person differs. A solution that is applied in some of the western countries is to define the rare specialties and give rarity allowances”

Table 8. Senior Managers' data about the 'Financial Factor' theme.

S.M.Respondents	Excerpts on foreign investors
1	“the organizations in the private sectors, especially the international ones, are benefiting from the good environment for running their businesses, with attractive regulatory incentives for foreign investment. According to this law they can own up to 100% of their business in the Sultanate. Moreover, they are exempted from paying taxes for a period of time of 10 years. So, they do not really have any extraordinary or challenging costs that

	would deter them from investing the Sultanate ... Instead of investing in new employees they attract those highly skilled employees by giving salaries that are triple or quadruple in some cases their salaries from the government”
2	“foreign investments attracted high capabilities by offering higher rewards to them”
3	“we should get benefits from them, as they are getting benefits from the government, by having Omani employees working with them to gain financial and other experience”
4	“I tell you, quite frankly I think that the impact of external factors on the individual is very low and what I believe is: the staff member in the public sector or quasi-government or in the private sector has very little concern over such matters. In my opinion, the employee focuses primarily on (i) his career route, (ii) the financial rewards, (iii) the work environment, and (iv) the functional relationship with his supervisor and managers plus the relationship with his peers. These are the things that are paramount in the person’s decision making. As for the policies of the government, I think they have a very indirect impact on an employee’s decisions”
5	Not Reported

Table 9. Senior Managers' data about the 'Foreign Investments' theme.

S.M.Respondents	Excerpts on Omanization
1	“There is the Omanization law, which was issued to assure that Omanis are getting benefit from such organizations. According to this law every international or local organization in the private sector has to have a certain percentage of Omanis employees. From what we have we can see how they use this to their advantage. Because we have seen a lot of highly skilled Omani employees shifting from their posts in the public sector to the private sector. Instead of investing in new employees they attract those highly skilled employees by giving salaries that are triple or quadruple in some cases their salaries from the government”
2	“Let me put it this way. In the SQU there are employees from 50 different nationalities. This might have been acceptable in 1986 when the university was opened and not enough Omani competencies were available. I think the time has come now to Omanize jobs in this university, especially in the regular disciplines and not in rare specialties. We do not want to live locked in isolation, but why do we not find an alternative to the expatriate. This is one form of vital human resources issues that the Ministry of National Economy should consider through the provision of appropriate financial degrees. The bottom line is in providing a competitive budget that can attract the national workers here” “I think that the Omanization has begun to bear fruit. I also believe that, as one of the products of Omanization we now have a solid base of workers. Now you will find Omanis are able to work in the areas of interdisciplinary work. I am with the Omanization law and the government then remembered that it should not shut out the world. So, the government is hiring international experts from time to time to assist on programmes”
3	“I think we have reached a saturation stage in many of the work disciplines in the public sector. Thus, I think we should encourage the Omanization policy ... we have reached 100% in administrative posts in the public sector and we need to see the Omanization of the private sector”
4	“I tell you quite frankly, I think that the impact of these issues on the individual is very low and what I believe is: the staff member in the public sector or quasi-government or in the private sector has very little concern for such matters. In my opinion, the employee focuses primarily on (i) his career route, (ii) the financial allocations, (iii) the work environment, and (iv) the functional relationship with his supervisor and managers plus the relationship with his peers. These are the things that are paramount in a person’s decision making. As for the policies of the government, I think they have a very indirect impact on an employee decision”
5	“I think that Omanization policy needs a massive review. I think we should review this from different angles. We should review the managerial philosophy of this policy in Oman, review it as a tool that helps in maintaining the Omani labour market for the present and for the future. We should go back to the objectives and compare them with existing results. I came to know that the ministry of manpower cancelled the Omanization policy in a range

	of jobs last year. I think as well that a review must be undertaken with regard to the Omanization percentages imposed on private sector organizations. The observations are suggesting there are many negative sides of this specific issue. Dear brother...frankly speaking...we do not have up to now measurements of management practices in the public sector”
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Table 10. Senior Managers' data about the 'Omanization' theme.

S.M.Respondents	Excerpts on working within Oman
1	“Moreover, we think as a major member of the Civil Services Council that the Omanis who change jobs within the geographical borders of Oman are not a loss in terms of our investment in them. The problem is when they get attracted abroad”
2	“we are affected, as I told you earlier, if the employee shifts to work outside the country”
3	“I think there is no waste if the employees shift to work in the Omani private sector or to start their own businesses”
4	Not Reported
5	“The real turnover from my point of view is divided into two categories. The first is external turnover and it happens when a highly skilled Omani employee leaves Oman to work. It is a brain drain after all. The second category is internal turnover, which I would call job rotation if an employee leaves the public sector to work for the private or third sector within the geographical borders of the country”

Table 11. Senior Managers' data about the 'Working within Oman' theme.

S.M.Respondents	Excerpts on communication
1	“each governmental body has its own directorate of human resources and has its own culture with regard to its business but there are some general tenets of communication that are applied in those bodies. We are making sure that is happening and we are studying some new ways of communication that should ease the job ... Regarding the communication with the governmental bodies and especially the members of the Civil Services Council there are still problems with bureaucracy and this is something that is expected in the public sector. I think we need better communication so that we can ensure better quality of discussion of issues and plans”
2	“there is no effective communication in this regard, I assure you. I think the main thing that should be informing the development of our educational programs is the labour market requirements. Government bodies such as the ministry of higher education, ministry of civil services, and ministry of manpower must challenge the existing situation and undertake a study that will lay down the real requirements of the labour market. Based on that, they should come up with creative educational programs to serve the labour market. Unfortunately, we still have classic educational programs that do not satisfy the labour market needs”
3	“I think there is good communication planning between the bodies in Oman that regulate the human resources in the sultanate”
4	“From my experience I can say that communication has nothing to do with employee turnover. I think that it is employee interests that inform decisions to quit, not communication”
5	“I think the communication between them is good and will become more effective as they grow mature, they need time. At the same time I think there should be a certain body that looks after employing or training the graduates from high schools. We yearly have in excess of 40,000 graduates who do not have jobs to go to and if this is not solved soon we might run into severe social and economic problems”

Table 12. Senior Managers' data about the 'Communication' theme.

S.M.Respondents	Excerpts on Management Style
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1	Not reported
2	“I encourage movement because most of people who shift are highly experienced and we need leading capabilities in the private sectors who can participate in making opportunities for Omanis who replace them in the public sector and Omanis who apply for jobs in the private sector”
3	Not reported
4	“I tell you frankly that the managers or leaders of the public institutions must have the necessary capabilities and skills to lead their organizations ... We really need innovation in leadership styles in the public sector. The new generation of leaders should be equipped with enthusiasm, initiative, new approaches to administration, knowledge...etc. Second, there must be removal of the gap between the public and the private sector. We need to learn from the private sector how to develop policies”
5	“I don't think saturation of the labour market is the case, but the issue is the maturation of management thinking. Once we have this I think many of the administration problems in the Sultanate will disappear” “I think, yes it (interviewee's organization) was affected because when they (employees who had quit) left they left gaps that can be physically filled instantly, but a long time is needed to achieve efficiency in management thinking”

Table 13. Senior Managers' data about the 'Management Style' theme.

### 6.2.3. Themes and Comments Reported by the Line Managers

Theme	Description
1. Investment Loss	Discussion about investment the public sector made in employees and how that is seen by managers
2. Omanization	The private sector is subject to this law that aims to nationalize jobs in the private sector. Respondents gave differing views on whether this factor is worsening the ET phenomenon.
3. Financial Factor	Reflection about the financial factor as the major reason for leaving the public sector in favour of other sectors.
4. Private Sector offers	Discussion about the incentives offered by the private sector to attract employees
5. Management style	Discussion of the system and whether it is centralized or decentralized, Routine, not challenging, pressure, no innovation, does not satisfy an employee's expectations, and some management features.
6. Attempts to solve the problem or to retain employees	Action taken by public organizations in order to reduce employee turnover
7. Exit Interview	Did the entity conduct any exit interviews with quitters? What were the results of these interviews?
8. Performance appraisal	Discussion about how people were appraised in the public sector and the impact of that on the performance of the employee and his decision to stay or to leave.

Table 14. Themes and comments reported by Line Managers

#### 6.2.4. Tables of Themes and Comments reported by Line Managers

N	line Management	What does the term employee turnover mean to you?
1	Interviewee 1	“Although it is a healthy phenomenon, the organizations confronting it face so many difficulties. The difficulties arise from the loss of investment made by the firms in developing skills to fit the job. I assure you that we start from a scratch with a college graduate in developing the administrative, cognitive and behavioural skills related to the job”
2	Interviewee 2	“Employee turnover as a phenomenon used to be clearer in the private sector than in the public sector. From my experience of evaluating the exit interviews we conducted in our organization I can tell that people left because of financial factors”
3	Interviewee 3	“I think it is a healthy phenomenon whereby we as a public sector are supplying the private sector with capabilities. I think also all existing reasons that increase the phenomenon are interconnected and lead to one major reason that is largely based on the financial factor. The private sector bodies are offering better financial packages for employees. Furthermore, the public sector has limited budgets and this leads to delays in awarding promotion and incentives to employees. I think most of those who shifted are also getting benefits from the public sector because they are retired and are enjoying retirement pensions and at the same time they have a salary from their current posts in the private sector. Moreover, in the public sector we cannot measure the performance of the employees and hence cannot motivate them. The situation is completely the opposite in the private sector and employees would feel this is better because there is appreciation and motivation of his performance”
4	Interviewee 4	“It is a positive and healthy phenomenon. Ambition is a valid thing for all. I believe this problem started before the world economic recession. What happened is that the private sector is giving better financial compensations plus more incentives to the employees than the public sector”
5	Interviewee 5	“For me, ‘turnover’ has been very apparent in Oman. This is due to the transformation of the economy from heavily dependence on the public sector to being more private sector orientated. This transformation has facilitated the establishment of new forces in the economy that are required to achieve rapid results and prove themselves as strong organizations capable of making profits within a very short period of time. These organizations can be seen in different sectors: telecoms, oil, gas, petrochemicals, transport, tourism, trade, banking, insurance...etc. If workers are happy with their working environment, they may be satisfied with the lower level of payment they



N	line Management	What does the term employee turnover mean to you?
		<p>receive and close their eyes to the new offers. The issue of turnover is very complex as it relates to different and complex factors (psychological, financial, and administrative). But, the question which should be asked is whether turnover is a bad phenomenon in terms of the society. The answer is elusive and depends on which of the stakeholders you are talking about. Obviously, it is good for the employees who receive higher wages. This problem is witnessed in the air and naval forces as well as many other government institutions. But, for the whole society, as some people would argue, it is a positive thing, as long as the employees still work in Oman. By leaving their government work and working in a new, competitive environment, Omani nationals can acquire new skills. This is good for the whole community”</p>

Table 15. Line Managers' clarification of the term 'employee turnover'.

L.M.Respondents	Theme: Loss of Investment
1	<p>“No doubt the organization has made so much investment in those employees that it needs to see the return on that investment” “the investment was in different forms, for example, internal and external training courses, scholarships, and in-desk training”</p>
2	<p>“Of course the public sector is losing so much because of these resignations. The public sector is spending so much on training people. For example, our organization is sending 30 employees annually to study for masters or PhD scholarships in UK. These cost a fortune. The return is not good because of those who leave. However, we cannot stop the ambitious employees”</p>
3	<p>“ill-advised investments will always be vulnerable to high risk and loss. However, freedom of choice is a right supported by laws in Oman and employees are not restricted to working just for one entity even though that entity might have invested huge amounts of money in them. Moreover, they will be working in Oman”</p>
4	<p>“Our losses happen when employees leave because that means that our processes are affected. We lose time and money and our work is disrupted until we hire new replacements for those who have left. The process of finding substitutes is not easy and training them is highly expensive”</p>
5	<p>“But for government firms it may cause a serious problem. This is because employees who have been well-educated and well-trained at the expense of the government institutions leave their work without having been properly utilized by the employers who invested in them. The government institutions then have to employ new people and invest in training again; hence, creating a financial</p>

	burden”
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Table 16. Line Managers' data about the 'Loss of Investments' theme.

L.M.Respondents	Theme: Omanization
1	“Instant Omanization in my opinion is impossible. For example, in pure banking we cannot replace foreign specialists with Omanis unless the Omanis undergo an intensive development process that enables them to take charge. This takes time. Sometimes those under training would find better offers and would shift. That means we return to the first quadrant where we need to find new Omanis and invest in them, hoping they stay with us”
2	“In the appointment interview we are telling the potential employees that we are appointing them to replace the foreigners and sort of cultivating the sense of commitment to the state” “it is a good example for developing human resources in the sultanate”
3	“One ex-minister was manipulating the Omanization figures in the media so he could convince the political powers he was working hard to accomplish the targets. I think we should review this policy and focus on the quality of employees, not just the quantities employed by the private sector
4	“I think that Omanization as a policy has contributed to an increase in employee turnover since public sector organizations are required to employ Omanis. They are always profit oriented and would seek to employ readymade employees plus they can afford to pay more than public sector organizations can pay”
5	“In order to achieve their economic and financial objectives, and because they are required – by law – to employ a high percentage of Omani nationals (as part of the overall Omanization policy), they have sought to offer employees in different government institutions attractive packages. Hence, these employees, being attracted by the new offers, find themselves in the position of departing from their government jobs and seeking employment in one of the new forces in the private sectors”

Table 17. Line Managers' data about the 'Omanization' theme.

L.M.Respondents	Theme: Financial Factor
1	“From my point of view most of the people who left had good qualifications, were high performers, and were not getting the appropriate compensation”
2	“the salary offered in the public sector is less than that in the private sector”

<b>L.M.Respondents</b>	<b>Theme: Financial Factor</b>
<b>3</b>	“the limited budget of the public sector restricted their ability to offer competitive financial rewards to employees” “people choose to work for the place that pays more. We are not questioning employees’ loyalty but the increase in prices is encouraging people to seek the best deal”
<b>4</b>	“the salaries in the public sector are not attractive at all”
<b>5</b>	“However, although the highly appealing offers (of high payments and better working conditions) may be seen as the main incentives for Omanis to quit their government jobs, the non-encouraging environment characterized by complex routines and low levels of payment are also important factors. In other words, the very attractive packages of the new forces may not by themselves be enough to persuade some people to quit their work in the government, unless they are accompanied by other causes of dissatisfaction”

Table 18. line Managers data about the 'Financial Factor' theme.

<b>L.M.Respondents</b>	<b>Theme: Private Sector Offers</b>
<b>1</b>	“I personally have come across cases where some of those who shift were made fabulous offers. The offers did not consist of just double or triple salary but also an offer of payment of all an employee’s liabilities to the original organization or banks. Their only concern is to poach a readymade competency”
<b>2</b>	“Besides the high salaries, private sectors offer other benefits like: payment of private school fees for children, payment of private medical expenses, first class air travel... etc”
<b>3</b>	“private sector is offering salaries that exceed several times the salaries given by the public sector”
<b>4</b>	“The companies are offering tempting salaries that exceed the offers of the public sector”
<b>5</b>	“They have sought to offer employees in different government institutions attractive packages.”

Table 19. Line Managers' data about the 'Private Sector Offers' theme.

<b>L.M.Respondents</b>	<b>Theme: Management Style</b>
<b>1</b>	“Many employees left also because of failings in some basic managerial procedures. For example, many employees left their jobs because they did not see anything with regard to career path and development. Some left also because of the routine and bureaucracy in the public sector”

L.M.Respondents	Theme: Management Style
2	<p>“I think management style in the public sector lacks proper human resources needs analysis. I think the training has also not improved to the extent needed”  “we really need a separate organization that will draw up the human resources plans for the sultanate” “the top management has declined several proposals we made” “for executive matters of HR in Oman this ministry of manpower is the central location. As for policy, responsibility lies with the ministry of civil services and its regulations” “we have also some managers who run their organizations in a military- like manner”</p>
3	<p>“some managers are so generous in performance appraisal, others are not” “the employee might be supervised by a mean manager who is less educated and this creates a kind of mutual underestimation” “Nowadays I think there is no such thing as organizational commitment, but there is a commitment to salary”</p>
4	<p>“The problem lies in the lack of confidence between the president and subordinates, an Omani official does not depend on or trust the Omani employee, but depends on foreign expertise” “the main reason for employee turnover is the lack of job description as this causes ambiguity for employees who are ambitious”</p>
5	<p>“this is the most important issue because managers are the ones who are connected all the time with employees. I think their behaviours inform and construct employees’ reactions. If the manager is supportive, considerate and understanding this engenders good attitudes in employees. Otherwise, employees will be flocking out of the institution, as I have witnessed myself”</p>

Table 20. Line Managers' data about the 'Management Style' theme.

L.M.Respondents	Theme: Attempts to solve the problem or to retain employees
1	<p>“We try to convince them with promotions, incentives. The problem we confronted is that the organizations that were tempting them had made irresistible offers that we could not beat” “we try to involve more than one person in the performance of certain duties in an attempt to lessen the impact if one of them decides to leave the organization, and we stagger holidays and try not to rely too much on any one person”</p>
2	<p>“We have raised salaries in an attempt to control turnover. That was not easy and it required a ministerial decree. According to that decree, the ministry of manpower was allowed to offer people better financial packages than those offered by counterpart organizations in the public sector. Despite that, many left the organization. We promoted as well the good features of working for government,</p>

	such as stability, leave, overseas scholarships and flexibility in management in the public sector”
3	“we have proposed a new system for performance appraisal whereby each issue is measured according to its importance, but it has not been applied up to now. Even if it is approved the problem is how we are to give incentives bearing in mind that we have a limited financial budget”
4	“we should deal with the financial compensation matter here. We should raise the salaries and introduce incentives for employees. In fact, we have applied the pension scheme of the royal courts as an incentive for our employees. We also approved a range of courses for employees to enhance their practical skills”
5	“Government institutions should do whatever they can to lock in their employees (perhaps by signing long-term contracts) and improve their salaries. Better working environments and better salaries are what they need to achieve. These are challenging objectives”

Table 21. Line Managers' data about the 'Attempts to Solve ET problem' theme.

L.M.Respondents	Theme: Exit Interview
1	“We have an appointed committee to interview those wishing to leave the organization. Their work is to find out the reasons for that decision in the hope of finding some solutions to these problems. All in all, this committee cannot stand in the way of the ambitions of those people” “In fact, there are very few cases where the committee managed to convince employees not to leave the organization”
2	“Unfortunately, it is considered a secondary issue whether the employee who is leaving chooses to attend this interview or not. When I reviewed the interviews conducted I came to conclude that salary was the main reason for turnover”
3	Not Reported
4	“First, most of the leavers have spent more than 15 years in service and they want the benefit of a pension. In general, not too many interviews were conducted and most of the people who left had been offered better opportunities”
5	“This depends on the guys who are conducting the exit interview. From my experience, I saw two types. First, are those who want to get rid of employees because they envy them, don't like them, or fear they will take the higher ranks in institutions. Second, are the ones who are looking to enrich the institutions with new blood that will replace the old employees, who tend to be dead wood”

Table 22. Line Managers' data about the 'Exit interviews' theme.

L.M.Respondents	Theme: Performance Appraisal
1	Not Reported
2	“Unfortunately, performance appraisal – if it exists – is based on emotional factors, not educational and scientific factors. Thus, you’ll find all staff in some departments are getting 95/100 annually. This is not fair because it equalizes the high and low performers” “there was no performance appraisal in our organization for the foreigners”
3	“In the public unit I cannot measure the performance of an employee quantitatively to assess how I can reward him. In contrast, the private sector can do that because they are for profit organizations” “My concern is what an employee will get after the performance appraisal” “there is a problem with evaluators. I always say if we want to train we should train evaluators first how to evaluate”
4	“we are using an old form for evaluating employees. The problem is with evaluators. I think they need to be evaluated before they take on the responsibility of evaluating others. Moreover, employees on this old system are not shown their reports. Thus, they do not know their strengths and weaknesses. I disagree with this and we are actually awaiting for the Ministry of Civil Services to release a new method of performance appraisal”
5	“A Performance appraisal need reviewing since it is outdated and it lacks some logic with regard to the rating of different issues. For example, you will find grooming and productivity are measured out of 5. This I think is not right”

Table 23. Line Managers' data about the 'Performance Appraisal' theme.

### 6.2.5. Themes and Comments Reported by Employees.

Code	Description
1. Nature of the Job	Routine, not challenging, pressure, no innovation, does not satisfy an employee's expectations
2. Incentives (promotions, salary, motivation)	Discussion about how incentives are not encouraging employees to stay in the public sector because they are so limited. The issue is totally different in the private sector
3. Training courses	Discussion about training as an important aspect in developing career practice and knowledge and how available it is in the public sector.
4. Legislation of Civil Services	Lack of legislation to regulate employee movement between sectors + the delay in activating the civil services law
5. Personal Planning/ Transitional Stage	Some of the employees have their own plans that they strive to accomplish, especially when they work for organizations in the public sector that do not have a career path.
6. Decision Making	How decision making is affecting the processes in the organizations and how that frustrates employees and makes them take the decision of leaving + centralization of decision making + delays in communication
7. Old-style Management	Leadership crises, line management with no powers of motivation, making changes, and decision making
8. Unequal Salaries in Government Bodies	Discusses the issue of people doing the same job in different public organizations but receiving different compensation
9. Career Path	No career path given to employees when employed + fear of asking for employee rights
10. Exit Interview	Discusses the exit interviews through the experiences of those who have left organizations

Table 24. Themes and comments reported by grass-roots employees.

### 6.2.6. Tables of Themes and Comments reported by Employees

Employees	What does the term employee turnover mean to you?
<b>Interviewee 1</b>	“I believe it’s the challenges that the organization goes through to maintain its workforce”
<b>Interviewee 2</b>	<p>“An employee leaving the public sector, heading to the private sector or another institution is considered as a natural healthy phenomenon. Mobility between the institutions allows an employee to gain experience and skills through the integration of various different groups of people who have different philosophies and organizational and administrative views. Moreover, that enriches those that happen to deal with them and has an impact on daily interactions in the work environment. The phenomenon of departure from one institution to another is a natural phenomenon, but affects institutions in both the long term and short term and causes loss of resources and skills. Furthermore, these organizations lose money spent on training employees who have left. Employees’ departure may be attributed to many reasons, including lack of financial satisfaction, or lack of psychological comfort in the working environment and this has the greatest influence on the decision to move from one institution to another”</p>
<b>Interviewee 3</b>	<p>The first thing you need is that the work you are doing should align with your personal objectives and self-development. There was a big gap in my previous work, so I was looking for a work environment where I could develop new skills, and it needed to be more varied. Also, there were no suitable training courses, and the only available ones concentrated mainly on English and computers.</p> <p>The second major thing is the pay and benefits, compared to other organizations, whether public or private. They were not achieving my minimum expectations, and in this regard it is easy to tell the difference in comparisons with employees working in other organizations who have the same experience and qualifications,</p> <p>to summarize, the main factors are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Pay</li> <li>2) Development,</li> <li>3) Working environment</li> </ol> <p>“It think it could be a healthy phenomenon to some extent”</p>
<b>Interviewee 4</b>	<p>Employee turnover means change or movement from one environment to a new environment which in fact provides/offers benefits in the desired areas of:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financial rewards</li> <li>- Position</li> <li>- Working hours</li> <li>- Working environment</li> <li>- Other inducements</li> </ul> <p>which couldn’t in their opinion be achieved in the current environment.</p>
<b>Interviewee 5</b>	“employee turnover to me means a better salary and different experience”
<b>Interviewee 6</b>	I strongly believe it is healthy and that the financial factor is the major reason for people leaving the public sector services. What is happening is that the financial compensation in the public sector is no longer enough for an average staff to start a new life, including marriage, constructing a house, helping family, buying a car. So, an employee who still works for the public sector has to find some other ways of earning money which would enable him/her to



	fulfil his duties, ambitions, and dreams.
<b>Interviewee 7</b>	Employee Turnover simply means changing my career from a job offering low satisfaction to another job with higher expectations of satisfaction. My measurements of satisfaction in a job can include financial benefits, work environment, empowerment, plans for career developments and training, participation in the decision making and challenges offered. The turnover will always depend on the employee's plan for his/her future and progress/learning they would like to achieve in their career. If the employee believes there is another opportunity that could offer better growth and satisfaction, he/she will certainly I pursue it. My understanding of this meaning led me to continuously search for the best. I shifted from the public sector to the private sector because I had beliefs and expectations that the private sector would offer me a more challenging environment in which to develop my skills as well as better financial benefits. So, yeah I think it is healthy phenomenon.
<b>Interviewee 8</b>	Turnover employee is a healthy phenomenon that has become noticeable in Oman, especially from 2002 onward. Most people prefer to work in the private sector and most of these tend to shift from the public sector to the private sector. Personally I have shifted to the private sector. I got the chance and I took it immediately. Now I have a good position which I built up in few years (which would have taken me more than 15 years to achieve in the Public sector). In the private sector your career improvement is faster than in the public sector. The more you work the more you will get. And nothing is impossible to achieve. Just accept the challenge and you will get what you hope for. If you are patient and you like challenges, you should join the private sector. But make sure that you choose a suitable position and the right company. Besides the financial benefit, you can develop yourself quickly in the private sector. Also your language will improve. More than that, your thought processes will be opened up. You will think out of the box. And after achieving all that you can gain the self-confidence to operate your own business successfully.
<b>Interviewee 9</b>	To cut a long story short, turnover means plus or minus. When talking about employee turnover I think about how long an employee tends to stay in his/her workplace or industry. High turnover may negatively affect the productivity of the organization. If an organization is having high employee turnover then we can say that this company is having problems because of the departure of skilled employees.
<b>Interviewee 10</b>	I would like to shift to the private sector as I see that the demands of the private organizations will fill my days with new learning and broaden my understanding of how to add creativeness to my work. I'm very interested in supporting an organization in moving forward, with all the experience I have. I would also like to put my certificate in the right place, a place where it is noticed and is valued and given a chance to grow. I would very much like to attend new courses or even get a chance to complete my PhD. In the few years since my graduation I feel I have been kept in neutral mode, with a hope that tomorrow things will change, I think it's time to move forward and instead of being a spectator in a marathon be the runner who is competing for success.

Table 25. Employees' clarifications about the term 'employee turnover'.

Employees	Excerpts on the Nature of the Job
1	“ the only factor that affected my decision to shift was the nature of the job...in the existing post I have already worked on several projects that are more than boring routine and they serve a national cause which is my preference”
2	“the most important thing in retaining employees is assuring them a good working environment and a good salary”
3	“My job in the public sector was very routine, I assure you. You do the same job every day. The accumulated experience consequently is so limited”
4	“The nature of the job with my ex-employer was fun, everything was there. For example, there was no routine, no boring tasks, and a nice job environment” “I moved to the current place because it is new organization and I wanted to be among pioneers, contributing even to setting up a new firm in a brilliant environment that guarantees good working conditions”
5	“The environment was excellent in my former post until our organization merged with another organization. That merger caused some problems” “before the merger the working environment, along with its processes, was pleasant and active, I can say, but things turned upside down after the merger”
6	“I left because of two main reasons: financial returns and the nature of the job” “What annoyed me was the unbearable work load. In fact, now I am working less hours, with no pressures, and better pay”
7	“At the outset the job was fun and challenging, but after you have spent like two years in a government body the work becomes routine. I mean the objectives and challenges that are put before an ambitious employee are so few” “any ambitious employee who lives in such environment will definitely think to move out once he senses it is a non-dynamic environment”
8	“what makes the private sector different is the opportunity for an employee to apply what he/she studied and achieve some creativity by building on that knowledge and trying out things from different angles that achieve the business targets, of course, within the law and ethical frames” “routine, less accountability, carelessness in developing the work, and paperwork were the main characteristics in the public sector”
9	“I was appointed to the financial control department, with the title of auditor. In the beginning I did not know what financial control was or really understand the work entrusted to me. Everything was vague and I could not identify the work easily. There was no appropriate guidance in the work environment to allow me to do my job professionally. This encouraged me to look for a place where things were more clear”
10	“A Government job is just a routine system where there is not much in the way of challenges or new technical learning and it is just a matter of management, with very few engineering activities”

Table 26. Employees' data about the 'Nature of the job' theme.

Interviewee	Excerpts on Incentives
1	“I think my ex-employers could have retained me if they had given me a better offer by increasing my salary. At that time I met the CEO and the impression I got from him was like: you are a good employee, we are proud of you, but you are too young to get a higher salary. In fact, my current employer offered me double my previous salary”
2	“ there is a weak system of incentives in the public sector and this did not match my expectations so I moved out from the public organization” “ I think giving rewarding salaries and promotions are a major thing in retaining employees”
3	“In the incentive dimension, when you talk about the promotions and benefits in the public sector they did not encourage me to improve my productivity, although in the very beginning I did work hard. Moreover, the overtime payments were not encouraging” “the ministry of civil services rejected some demands of our ex-managers to promote us, blaming the large number of employees in the public sector and limited budget” “Ironically, there were some employees working for ministries who were also subject to the laws of the Civil Services but who were getting far more than us at that time”
4	“ the ex-employer started to exert a kind of pressure over employees. It reduced the privileges granted to the employee, for example, the organization’s budget shrank, and even the annual bonus was reduced, and worse, some of the staff did not even get that reduced bonus” “If I find another place with a better financial scheme and a good work environment, I will shift”
5	In my former post things changed after a merger with another organization and that affected negatively the incentive system in the organization. Cuts were applied in promotions, bonuses,
6	“I left because of two main reasons: financial returns and the nature of the job. Now I am getting far more than in my former post – about 200% more” “In the former post my promotion chances did not satisfy my ambitions. I totally believe that my move has shortened by 15 years my financial and professional life. My post now is equal to a general manager”
7	“Financial compensation is another major reason that encourages people to leave the public sector. If we calculate the average salary of employees in the same jobs in the public and private sectors the difference is high in favour of the private sector” “I think the rewards system in the public sector is inefficient. It is regulated by certain rules that prevent them from giving competitive incentives for employees, this causes a kind of frustration for employees: that whatever they do or achieve there will be no incentives” “employees in the private sector tolerate, to a large extent, workloads, pressure, long hours of working because they are

Interviewee	Excerpts on Incentives
	financially satisfied”
8	“One of the major reasons for my decision to leave the public sector was the monthly salary. The private sector offered a far better salary” “in the private sector you get as much as give. In the public sector even if you work continually you won’t get any reward. The reward would be same even if you didn’t work” “in the public sector you may get promotions in duties but without any increase in your salary”
9	“I have served the ministry for more than three years. During that period of time I have not received any incentives, although I have presented many ideas and proposals that have enhanced the quality of our jobs”
10	“Promotions are happening once every four years in our government sector, regardless of the performance of the employee. It is just a periodic promotion and the salaries are not competitive or even at a level to compete with private sector. These all lead to a lack of motivation among government staffs.”

Table 27. Employees' data about the 'Incentives' theme.

Interviewee	Excerpts on Training Courses
1	“I did not attend any training course while I was working for my ex-employer”
2	“ lack of training courses was one of the reasons that encouraged me to move out from the public sector”
3	“ there was no training in my former post, it was so rare, at the same time the number of employees was large
4	“ the ex-employer exerted pressure by cutting down on the courses and training given to the employees”
5	“in my last job I attended few courses really”
6	“Training was amazing. It is better than the training I am getting in the current post. Each employee got at least two short courses abroad and normally one of these was conducted in the USA. I worked with them for five years and I have got loads of technical certificates at home that have enhanced my experience and my CV”
7	“There are two comments to be highlighted about the positive and negative aspects of the training I got during my time with my ex-employer. I attended several

Interviewee	Excerpts on Training Courses
	training courses and conferences. I believe the amount spent on training the employee was high compared to a lot of other institutions. However, the results gained from the employees after the training courses were not really satisfactory. The main reasons behind that – as I believe – are that there were no long-term plans for enhancing the skills of each employee. In other words, the training given was random rather than being a part of a long-term plan”
8	“I get an overseas training course in my new post” “the company without any demands from me was developing my skills through training courses”
9	“to be honest I have only been enrolled in one training course during the three year period. It was very good course that added much to my knowledge” “I was supposed to go to India for an overseas course along with some colleagues but, without any reason being given, that was cancelled”
10	“training was a neglected field in my former post. The very few, superficial training courses we attended did not add anything important to our knowledge”

Table 28. Employees' data about the 'Training' theme.

Interviewee	Excerpts on Legislation by the Civil Services
1	“I think my ex-employers’ major mistake was they did not protect themselves when they agreed with my existing employer to proceed at the outset with a secondment contract. To clarify, they did not put any binding conditions on that contract that prevented me from moving permanently to that organization”
2	“Unfortunately, neither the laws of the civil services that I know of, nor the people who are supposed to apply them, work on behalf of the employee. These laws do not serve to increase the financial or job satisfaction of the employees. Additionally, they neglect employees’ efforts and give no incentives. At the same time, counterparts in the private sector are enjoying high salaries and incentives”
3	“ my former organization was subject to the laws of the civil services, whereas the existing organization is not and it is independent, administratively and financially”  “if there was any kind of development in the laws of civil services the processes in public sector would be better, the Royal Decree on the Law of Civil Service has given the green light to set regulations for the civil service which could benefit all public sector employees by determining many things, including the job classification system, bonuses and promotions, and job titles. Now, four years after that decree, the law is still inactive”

Interviewee	Excerpts on Legislation by the Civil Services
4	“ I had no problems with the legislation regulating the job”
5	“According to the world trade organization treatment which we are part of now, you can't, as an employer, impose any conditions that prevent employees from moving to another organization. You are either expected to give him/her a better offer or let him/her go”
6	“the strange thing, at least to me, is that you might be eligible for promotion according the laws laid down by the legislature but yet you are denied that promotion because of other procedures like waiting for a decision from the president of the institution”
7	“most of the regulations of the ex-employer were so government oriented and not profit driven, which would have better served our organization” “the government mentality I believe is cautious to the extent it kills the risk taking spirit and the benefits from applying bold, market like regulations”
8	“My work was subject only to the national law of accountancy issued by royal decree and not to international laws and innovations and opportunities gained by applying them. Thus no kind of accumulated experience was expected and I said at the outset the reasons for leaving the public sector were either materialistic or down to the desire to strengthen my knowledge and experience with regard to my job” “no such national laws have been developed in the last twenty years and there is no attempt in sight to develop them”
9	“I think there are some good laws issued by the legislature. I think the problem is with those applying or supposed to be applying these laws. There are some people who care about their own interests and focus on the exploitation of these laws to satisfy their own desires”
10	“I think the laws of the civil services are not efficient. For example, these laws give all employees with a B.Sc. the same salary, regardless of the nature of the job. Consequently, engineers, administrative graduates, and technicians are getting the same remuneration”

Table 29. Employees' data about the 'Legislations of the Civil Services' theme.

Interviewee	Excerpts on Personal Planning
1	“I have my own personal plans which I want to fulfill. I have two more years to accomplish my target. If not, I will definitely be looking for another post. I don't want to reach 33 years old and still be in my current post” “I am at the self-realization of esteem level”

Interviewee	Excerpts on Personal Planning
2	“I had so many ideas for projects that would serve the public sector but they were always rejected by the managers. This encouraged me to look for a better place, that would appreciate my ideas and consider them for application”
3	“I am not fully satisfied with my existing job and I am going to give myself one year to think about this and see if things change. Otherwise, I will start looking for another place”
4	“I have set up several targets to be accomplished during my career. If I cannot accomplish them with one organization I will definitely shift to another where I can reach my target and this was one of my major reasons for shifting from my ex-employer” “if I find a better place that serves or satisfies my personal plans I will shift directly, I can tell you” “ I believe that in my former post I had reached a point where no further development in my career was in sight, then I started looking for another post that would serve my planning”
5	“I am planning even to leave my current post because I consider this post as a transitional stage where I am preparing myself to start my own business. I have this personal plan and I am working on it”
6	“My personal plan was to get promotions within a certain period, or at least get some privileges that would help me achieve my targets, but unfortunately nothing of these were accomplished; besides, nepotism is rife in the organization which indicated, at least to me, that something is wrong and an alternative employer quickly needed to be found”
7	“I have a personal plan. Moreover, I was always comparing myself with other colleagues who worked in the private sector. The comparison was on two aspects: career development and financial benefits. Planning for my personal career development depends heavily on how others are progressing and this affected my decision to leave the organization”
8	“My personal planning informed my decision to leave the public sector. For example, I have a plan for developing myself with regard to finance, education, knowledge, and practically. This could not be achieved in the public sector” “My decision is based on a vision I have drawn up for myself for development ”
9	“In fact, I have had many personal plans, which do not conflict with business interests, but, from my point of view, help in maximizing performance. Unfortunately I could not achieve any of those while working in the government sector. For example, I had difficulties in achieving the simplest plans, including marriage, travel, and others. That led me to look for a work environment with more benefits”

Interviewee	Excerpts on Personal Planning
10	“I certainly have my own personal plans. The most important plan to me was to become a good Engineer and get promotions that would enable me to be in a leading position in my sector. Unfortunately, I realized that this would take ages and ages in the government sector, but not in the private sector”

Table 30. Employees' data about the 'Personal Planning' theme.

Interviewee	Excerpts on Decision Making
1	Not Reported
2	“ I moved to an organization that is administratively and financially independent from a governmental organization that was centralized to the extent it could not take decisions without referring to the ministry of civil services and this prolonged the processes and complicated the day to day jobs” “that consequently affected other organizational processes like delegation and managerial communication”
3	“ in the decision making dimension, you might not be able to see the general manager if you want to discuss issues, even if you try to make an appointment it won't be that easy” “I think the employee should be involved in decision making as this will make them feel appreciated and committed to the organization”
4	“The only people who can make decisions in the public sectors are the minister, undersecretary, and, rarely, the general manager”
5	“The decision making process worsened when the merger happened, resulting in a very big organization. Before that merger you could, along with the head of department, make decisions that would improve your work and increase productivity” “after the merger, to make a decision you had to provide a proposal that would go through the HOD, Manager, GM, Board of Directors, and the president of the organization for the green light”
6	“to be honest when I want to make a decision I go directly to the president because I, unlike others, have access to him. I think that the administrative hierarchy in the organization is a sterile system for decision making”
7	“ decision making on proposals presented by employees was postponed and exposed to unjustified, extreme procrastination from my point of view”
8	“Despite being nice to employees, a number of managers in my former post had no powers to make decisions. They always had to go back to their seniors before taking any decision. I personally felt demoralized because we were the ones who did the work and who could really give professional decisions that would improve our procedures and generate good productivity” “we were isolated from decision making processes, because decision making is confined to senior managers,



Interviewee	Excerpts on Decision Making
	regardless of their understanding of the context of the decision”
9	“The process of decision making in the government sector, and especially in the Internal Audit directorate, is so centralized. There are no powers granted to me as an internal auditor. On the other hand, managers of the Director-General of the audit have some powers because they like to know every nook and cranny in the area of work. That is contrary to the ethics and labor laws, and negatively affects the progress of work”
10	“Unfortunately, all of the decisions must come from the top of the administrative hierarchy. The proposals that we give must go through very long procedures, starting with one’s immediate supervisor and ending with the minister himself”

Table 31. Employees’ data about the ‘Decision Making’ theme.

Interviewee	Excerpts on Management Style
1	“they do not compete to retain us although they know about our productivity” “sometimes I feel that I am depending on a manager who has no power or the mentality to enable him to manage a team that have different capabilities and needs” “I think it is a leadership crisis”
2	“I think one of the problems is the management. It is so traditional and I think it demonstrates a good example of bureaucracy”
3	“There were some managers in my former post who resisted firmly development of the work. I remember when a new system for the treasury was introduced, it was rejected by them and they preferred working with the old system, you can say that resistance to change is high” “I still remember the saying: employees leave managers not organizations”  “ sometimes I suspect that the existing laws of the civil services and the existing environment have forced them to behave in such a manner”
4	“I think we are haunted in the public sector by the classic management style whereby resistance to change is high, and the possibility of lobbies or pressure groups emerging to manage the organization exists”
5	“One of the consequences of the merger was that we got a range of very old fashioned mindsets on management coming from the other organization. They resisted the systems that prevailed in my organization before the merger, like an employee could make a decision, the promotion system was dynamic, employees could get faster promotions, bonuses were given many times throughout the year”

Interviewee	Excerpts on Management Style
6	“the management was very good, I think. The only comments over their roles revolved around lack of power in decision making” ““Compliments and Courtesies are the basis of management practices. For example, you will be shocked to know that all employees get ‘excellent’ in their annual performance appraisal””
7	“I think it is a management mistake to let employees fall into a routine by not setting any new challenging objectives and this leads employees to feel as well that there is no development in their experience or knowledge about their jobs” “In my opinion the major reason for turnover is management that sets superficial objectives that discourage employees from staying” “prior to my leaving the organization, it made a quantum leap by asking employees to set their own challenging objectives that went along with the general mission and vision of the organization, although there were some pitfalls and clashes in this due to inexperience in this respect” “sometimes we have problems because the board of directors are appointed with no background about the technical work of an organizations and this causes bureaucratic problems” “it is not easy to meet a manager, or to propose your ideas to him/her, plus some managers look and talk down to employees” “there should be at least a few organizational policies to regulate relationships between employees and managers”
8	“to be honest I felt that my ex-managers were good to me. The problem arose because our reports are designed to be approved by another governmental body’s managers, who were inconsiderate, uncaring about our organization and this caused postponement and disruption in our work processes” “although, there were some managers who resisted any new proposals from employees because they wanted to safeguard their positions. They looked at those employees, with their initiatives and knowledge, as direct threats to their positions so they exerted a kind of suppression of employees to protect themselves”
9	“Administration in general can be described as: classic, refuses to change, considers its new staff members as major threats to managers’ positions, inhibits staff by rejecting their proposals and discourages initiative among them, and prefers the old approach in dealing with the implementation of functions”
10	“Most of the old managers are trying to secure their positions for the longest possible period. Moreover, they are always looking for promotion for themselves, even through their relationships with politicians. They are working just for themselves without looking after their staff”

Table 32. Employees' data about the 'Management Style' theme.

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Excerpts on Career Path</b>
<b>1</b>	“I did not see any career plan when I signed up to work for the ex-employer. In fact, this concerned me when I came to sign up for my current employer because there was again no sign of a career plan in the contract”
<b>2</b>	“I did not see any and that is because it did not exist in the ex-employer’s organization”
<b>3</b>	“I am really concerned with this issue. I would definitely shift from this organization if they don’t provide me with a satisfying career path. Where I am heading I do not know, and this is not good” “I think if I could put the clock back, I would demand so many things to be documented in my career path”
<b>4</b>	“I did not see any career path when I joined the ex-employer”
<b>5</b>	“there was nothing mentioned with regard to the career path in the contract when I signed for the ex-employer or for my current employer” “to be honest I was told verbally about the career path, and it was a silly mistake on my part not to ask for something written down”
<b>6</b>	“There was nothing about the job route when I signed for the ex-employer”
<b>7</b>	“I believe there should be a career plan for developing an employee. I mean an employee should at least know where he is going to be at, five years after signing the contract”
<b>8</b>	“I have got a career plan here in this company; the company has put together a plan that will qualify me to be someone in the company in the future”
<b>9</b>	“I did not see any career path planning for me when I signed for the ex-employer and this left so many unanswered questions in my head about my personal plans. That ultimately sparked the idea of looking for an alternative to satisfy my ambitions ”
<b>10</b>	“There is no clear career path in our governmental body. Our manager always evades our questions about the career path. Instead of answering the question he argues that we must work very hard and our country is in need of our support”

Table 33. Employees' data about the 'Career Path' theme.

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Excerpts on Unequal Salaries</b>
<b>1</b>	“I think this is normal and healthy, to encourage competition, and sometimes it is very justifiable because different government organizations have different scales of projects”

2	“The inequalities in remuneration among people doing same job represent an injustice. This can be called discrimination, which negatively affects staff and makes them feel unequal among citizens”
3	“we can't say the government budget is limited, I think. Because you will find employees who graduated in the same batch and major, working for different governmental bodies but their salaries vary. You will find one is getting 490 Omani riyals, while his former classmate is getting 800 Omani riyals”
4	”I think if the government has a limited budget, then the consequences should be the same for all public sector bodies. I mean there should be equality for all employees in terms of financial compensation in government employment. Especially for those doing the same job. However, I think disparity in pay might stem from the fact that working hours in some governmental bodies like public authorities are greater than working hours in ministries”
5	“this is very frustrating for the public servant because there is a big difference between him and his counterparts in the private sector and other non-governmental bodies that are not subjected to the scales of the civil service grades”
6	“I think there are differences in salaries among employees doing the same job in the public sector. I think the difference is in the nature of the objectives and the nature of the employers. I think that is because some governmental bodies are operating in a market-like way and thus profits and productivity are major targets. On the other hand, some governmental organizations are operating in a traditional way which is based on routine”
7	“The lack of equality in salaries between the public sector and private sector has influenced my decision to leave the public sector. There were a lot of opportunities in the private sector which offered huge differences in salaries”
8	
9	“Frankly, there is a marked disparity in salaries among staff working in the government sector, despite the fact they are doing the same job. From my point of view I would say that this disparity affects the performance of the work, which makes the lowest paid employees in the same job think of moving, either to a similar department in a governmental institution that pays higher salaries or to private sector companies where they can receive far higher salaries”
10	“I think, as technicians, we have been treated unfairly. Our counterparts in other governmental bodies are getting a special professional technical allowance. We are getting nothing”

Table 34. Employees' data about the 'Unequal Salary' theme.

Interviewee	Excerpts on the Exit Interview
1	“I think I can describe the exit interview conducted by managers in the ex-post as stupid. They called me because they had mistakenly paid me extra salary and wanted to find a way to recoup this salary. I took the opportunity to ask them to deduct that salary from the balance of accumulated annual leave I had built up. In the end, after deducting the salary from the annual leave, results showed that they should return me some money. To this day, they have not given me any of that”
2	“no exit interview was conducted with me. I believe these kinds of administrative practices do not exist in the public sector”
3	“There was no real exit interview I believe. It was like an unofficial interview with my boss. He did not even try to convince me to stay. Instead he said ‘Go for the Best’. I think government officials cannot do anything for those who want to leave. Last year the minister of manpower himself interviewed one of our colleagues and told him literally ‘I can’t do anything for you’
4	“I was called for an exit interview. It was all about calculating my financial liability to the organization and the organization’s liability to me”
5	“no exit interview was conducted in my case”
6	“I had a discussion actually with the panel I mentioned earlier in this interview that conducted the exit interview with me. I frankly told them if they could not compete in terms of salaries, they could focus on other motivations for consideration by employees. For example, the employers can give free-interest loans to employees, health insurance whether in or outside the country, free membership of some of the high-end clubs, and scholarships abroad. To be honest they did start giving most of these, but after I had left the organization. I think giving prestige to an employee would ensure to some extent his loyalty to this organization”
7	“Management of my ex-employer interviewed me informally after I had made my decision to leave the organization. They also tried to convince me to stay, but my decision was final. After one year, they sent a questionnaire asking about my reasons for leaving the organization”
8	“My manager told me that he would not be a stumbling block to my ambitions. But he made an effort to retain me within the organization by offering me promotion to manager. I apologized to him politely because I could not decline that competitor’s offer. My reasons were that I couldn’t get anything better than that in this organization and I wouldn’t be able to meet the targets I had set for myself in this organization”
9	“I was interviewed by one of the officials in the former organization. The interview was short and confined to three main questions. They were: what are the reasons

	for my resignation? Who is my new employer? And what is the new offer presented to me by the new employer? That interview was not documented”
<b>10</b>	“I was interviewed by my manager, who kept promising me a bright future in this job. He promised me promotion as the prevailing rules of the civil services are going to change soon”

Table 35. Employees' data about the 'Exit interview' theme.

### 6.3. Deriving Meaning from the Matrix

The presentation of the matrix analysis in this piece of work is very straightforward. The following table will help in explaining this. The matrix is composed of columns that show the similar themes most often repeated by the respondents. Specifically, the columns show abstracts drawn from respondents' comments about the beliefs about employee turnover, financial factor, management thinking, Omanization, communication, and exit interviews. The rows show the categories of the respondents and my critical reflection.

Category	No. of interviewees	Similarities between all categories	Similarities between two categories	Differences from all categories
Senior management	5	Beliefs about employee turnover Financial Factor Management Thinking	Senior and middle management (Omanization)	Commitment Foreign Investment Working within Oman
Middle management	5		Senior Management and Employees (Communication)	Investment loss Attempts to solve Performance Appraisal
Employees	10		Middle management and employees (Exit interviewees)	Working Environment/ Training/ Legislations/ Decision Making/ Unequal Salary/Career Path

Table 36. Shows matrix analysis for this research.

The differences in themes of each category from the others would be interpreted from the template analysis viewpoint. The following table shows the themes mentioned in the third and fourth columns of the above table. After that the matrix table is presented.

### 6.3.1. The Matrix Findings

Category	Beliefs about employee turnover	Financial factor	Management thinking	Omanization	Communication	Exit interview
<b>Top Management</b>	“Steady growth, has advantages, healthy, figures not scary, positive, government saturated with employees, good to have Omani managers in private sector, new blood, desirable sometimes, problem when people go out of Oman”	“Main problem, government has limited budget due to scarcity of resources, many infrastructure projects, cannot compete with private sector, cannot restrict freedom of choice, (not always the reason), different abilities, not equal tender, nature of the work, rarity of allowances”	I encourage shifting because they will participate in employing Omanis in private sector, employee focus on career path, financial factor, work environment, individual-supervisor relation, we do not have saturation in management thinking and this affects organization when people leave”	“Firms are benefiting from this policy, I trust our young people, regular disciplines have to be Omanized, not isolate ourselves from world, solid base of national staff, public sector is saturated and policy should be seen in private sector, has nothing to do with employee decision, needs a massive review of its philosophy, tools, and objectives, many negative sides must be avoided, we do not have measurements of management practices in public sector”	General tenets with regard to communication in all governmental bodies, bureaucracy among civil service council members, something expected in public sector, better communication is recommended, no effective communication, well planned communication, has nothing to do with the issue, no harm from having different bodies running the HR up to now as no concrete study saying there is problem”	Not reported



Category	Beliefs about employee turnover	Financial factor	Management thinking	Omanization	Communication	Exit interview
<b>Middle Management</b>	“healthy phenomenon, causes so many difficulties, investment loss, not that tense, financial factor is the main problem, public sector is supplying private sector with competencies, public sector has limited budget, delay in promotions, some use the early retirement scheme, no rigorous measurement for performance in public sector, ambition is valid for all, better financial pay in private sector, transformation of economy from public to private sector, complex issue”	“No proper compensation, less than the private sector, restricted budget in public sector for salaries, people work for who is paying more, people loyalty is not questioned but increased prices force them to find better compensation. Unattractive salaries in public sector, low level of payment is important factor”	“No career path and development, routine and bureaucracy in public sector, lack of proper HR need analysis planning, quality of training, call for separate body to draw HR plans for the state, top management is not listening, military - like management, performance appraisal is not properly conducted, no manager-subordinate confidence, trust expats more, managers’ behavior, whether supportive or inconsiderate, informs employees’ reactions”	“Omanization takes time, those being trained could find opportunities and shift, we appoint Omanis to replace expats and this is cultivated in their perceptions to increase commitment, Omanization is good for developing national HR, this policy must be reviewed, focus must be on quality of this policy not quantity, it contributes to increasing the ET”	Not reported	“There is an appointed committee to find out the reasons for that decision and the possibility of finding some solutions, it cannot stand against employees’ will, few situations where committee convinced employee to stay, it is a secondary thing and depends on employee’s choice whether or not to attend the interview, the few conducted indicated that financial problem was the main reason for leaving, not many interviews conducted, depends on who is conducting these interviews, some want to get rid of employees, some do not”

Category	Beliefs about employee turnover	Financial factor	Management thinking	Omanization	Communication	Exit interview
<b>Grass Roots Employees</b>	“Challenge to firms, natural phenomenon, gain experience and skills, Character refinement, affects firm in long and short terms, financial loss, lack of financial satisfaction, job satisfaction, working environment, personal objectives, no training, not achieving minimum expectation, low status compared to counterparts in other firms, benefits, better salary, compensation not enough to start family and cope with social life requirements, empowerment, being involved, shortened my financial development by 15 years, put my qualifications in right place and made sense of time spent at school”	Employer could retain me if better offer was given, weak incentive system, does not match my expectation, rewarding salaries and promotions retain staff, promotions and benefits don’t encourage high productivity, employer reduced some privileges and annual bonus, cuts applied to promotion and bonuses, my move shortened by 15 years my financial expectations, rewards system is not efficient and causes frustration, in private sector you get as much as you give, promotions happen every 4 years not because of performance”	“they don’t compete to retain us, they are powerless, leadership crisis, so classic and bureaucratic management, resist work development, they are haunted by resistance to change, very old fashioned mindsets, Compliments and Courtesies are the basis of management practices, set superficial objectives, not easy to meet them, looking down at employees, safeguarding their positions, consider new staff as major threat to them, inhibit staff, and prefer the old approach, they look for promotions for themselves”	Not reported	“So centralized, affected delegation and managerial communication, not easy to meet the GM nor to make appointment with him/her, employee not involved and this affects OC, I, unlike others, had access to manager (indication of nepotism), administrative hierarchy is sterling system for decision making, proposals always postponed or exposed to unjustified procrastination, managers are nice to employees but powerless, proposals go through very lengthy procedures”	“It was not a real exit interview but it was about the most recent financial issues between me and the firm, no exit interview, this practice does not exist in public sector, unofficial session with my boss, no convincing attempts, go for the best, I advised them to focus on other incentives, informal interview, after one year after leaving the post I got questionnaire asking about reasons for my decision, my boss tried to retain me, short interview focusing on reasons, new employer and the new offer, promises of promotion subject to civil law”

Category	Beliefs about employee turnover	Financial factor	Management thinking	Omanization	Communication	Exit interview
<b>Researcher's critical reflection/ Comments</b>	There is agreement about phenomenon as being positive, at least for the first 2 categories with modest confirmation from employees	Compensation scheme of public sector is under fire by all categories. Allegations of better pay given by the public sector	Top management supports the phenomenon. Accusations of management of not being effective and being too traditional and uncaring about the issue or being powerless.  Managerial thinking perception is not mature	Controversial viewpoints among top and middle management about the efficiency of this policy and its consequences in the Omani labor Market	Inter-organizational communication is bureaucratic, considerable drain on time.  Intra-organization communication needs to be reviewed, reinforced, institutionalized, and applied.	This is not institutionalized in practical terms in the organizations, Employee showed anger about the way it was conducted.

Table 37. The Data Matrix Analysis Findings

**6.4. Conclusion:**

This chapter outlined the findings of the template analysis and data matrix analysis. As I mentioned in methodology chapter '5' that I need to do two main steps in order to be able to answer the research question. They are; (i) reanalyze data I gathered using the semi-structured interviews using the template analysis and data matrix analysis, which I did in this chapter, and (ii) interpret and theorize my data, which I am presenting in the following three theorizing chapters. I think that to facilitate a better understanding of employee turnover in Oman, the use of institutional theory would be useful. This theory enables an examination of specific cultural, economic and social conditions that influence understanding of a given phenomenon, such as employee turnover. Following to this chapter, I will demonstrate the rationale of choosing Scott's (1995) three institutional pillars as the underpinning framework for analyzing data to answer the new research questions.

## Chapter Seven: Theorization (1): Theoretical Framework

### 7.1. Introduction

In my pursuit of proving my argument that Oman has a crossvergent context with the Western context, I reflected some facts about the Omani political economy and factors shaping human resources management in Oman in chapter 4. The empirical findings from the literature support my argument. However, I think I need to prove in this research and from the analysis of my own data the validity of this argument. The research questions I pose in this research are;

**Can the commonly accepted employee turnover concepts be universally applied? Or, in the light of their application to the Arab Gulf States, will another way of thinking about them emerge? Is the way employee turnover is understood in the West relevant to the Arab Gulf States?**

In order to answer these research questions, the research needs a universal framework that can validate potential answers. I need a theory that could explain how behaviour is constructed in a context. Therefore, I chose the institutional theory as the underpinning theory. It shows that meanings and or behaviour are institutionalized if a collection of ordinary habits or views about behaviour is accepted by society members. Moreover, I chose the Scott (1995) institutional pillars framework for analyzing and sensitizing data. The following sections turn the spotlight on the rationale for choosing the institutional theory and Scott's (1995) three institutional pillars to answer the new research questions.

### 7.2. Institutional Theory

The purposes of this research have evolved from finding the causes of employee turnover to examining how Omanis behave and how universal western theories about employee turnover are in different cultures. Hence, I am going to focus on explaining Omani behaviour and this needs a theory and good heuristic tools. The institutional theory is adopted for undertaking this task. However, I will present first a short justification for the use of institution theory as opposed to alternative non-positivistic frameworks.

This section will provide brief justification for the use of the institutional theory for undertaking my research. I believe that some concerns might surface about a contradiction in the research in

terms of my criticizing the western theories and ending up using institution theory, which is generated in the west, as an underpinning theory. I therefore devote the following sections to explaining my argument that from my viewpoint there is no such contradiction. Russell (2006) argued that text analysis should not be bound by one method. Russell (2006) discussed major traditions of text analysis such as discourse analysis, grounded theory, narrative and performance analysis, schema analysis, content analysis, and hermeneutics. Lacity and Janson (1994); Johnson and Duberely (2000) categorized the textual analysis approaches into positivistic, linguistic, and interpretative. I think that most of the potential alternative non-positivistic frameworks for my research are drawn from linguistic and structural type theory approaches. I will reflect briefly on these two non-positivistic approaches to text analysis in the following sections. However, I will present first some justification of why positivism was not chosen.

I discarded the positivistic approach for two main reasons argued by Lacity and Janson (1994) and reported by Johnson and Duberely (2000) that I find applicable in my research. First of all, I am not convinced with its presumption that there is a complete isomorphism between text materials drawn from the Omani context with those documented in the West. Consequently, the applicability of western theories to the Omani context is problematic in my research. Moreover, I think that I cannot explain the meaning of employee turnover in the Omani context without interaction with the research subjects.

I turn now to the two non-positivistic alternative approaches. First of all, the language based frameworks such as discourse analysis, Symbolic Interactionism, Narrative analysis, Foucauldian Approaches, and Metaphor Analysis argue that text and talk have much influence in constructing meaning. In this approach, text is considered to be emergent and the object of the analysis.

I would take narrative analysis as an example to clarify why the linguistic approach was not my choice for analyzing my data. Smith (2000) defined it as verbal communication focused on revealing accounts of experiences, of people, or of oneself, which is undertaken orally, by writing, or by filming. Harvey (1995) argued that the word 'account' is used to represent all material related to the informant's story-like construction. According to Harvey (1995) these materials could be emotions, descriptions, justifications of behaviour, interpretations, expectations...etc. Smith (2000) argues that this type of analysis, which is usually used for

qualitative data in social science, has a long history and provides a gateway into the respondents' experiences.

However, there are some problems that deterred me from using the linguistic approach in my research. I am not looking basically in my research to explore the respondents' experiences; I am looking instead at how employee turnover is constructed and understood by Omanis in the Omani context. Second, the role of researcher in the linguistic approach is as 'etic' or outsider (see Lacity and Janson, 1994). I believed that I should use an emic approach in my research. Hence, I needed a human instrument, which is me in this case, to be an insider researcher who could understand and learn about human existence (see Lave and Kvale, 1995). I did not believe that my research questions would be answered by merely conducting objective observations without any interaction with the research subjects.

The second alternative, the structuration type theories such as Giddens' Structuration Theory, Actor Network Theory, and Bourdieu's Theory of Practice, strives to establish the connection between agency and structure. Giddens (1984) attempted to answer the question: who is shaping the reality – people or society? There is a particular set of rules, norms, and practices that regulate how organization members interact with each other, according to the structuration theories. Moreover, they suggest that through these interactions organization members generate, develop, and construct the rules that regulate their interactions. One of the major concerns of the structural theorists is how rules are enacted out of the interactions going on in an organization (see Giddens, 1984).

There were several points that deterred me from using this analytical approach besides the fact it is a western theory. Seymour-Smith (1986) and Sturrock (2003) reported most of these criticisms. For example, the structuralistic theory is accused of being of a historical and rigid nature. Furthermore, the researcher's role in structural theories is that of an outsider. I take this view because structuralism is highly impacted by the linguistic approach. Being an outsider in my research is not suitable for me as I am fully immersed in the Omani context and behave as an insider researcher which, according to Alder and Alder (1987), entitles me to a degree of legitimacy and stigma. Also, the structuralism theories are materialistic and neglect the effects of the surrounding environment and cultural factors (see Rubel and Rosman, 1996). I think this is a very pertinent issue in my research since the Omani context, as I showed in chapters 3 and 4, is

highly impacted by the religious, political, and economic factors prevalent in the Arab world which cannot be ignored if I want to reach a better understanding about the phenomenon of employee turnover in the Omani context.

I look to institutional theory not as a particular theory but as a general theory that can be treated as a framework. The existing employee turnover theories that have been examined in the earlier chapters in my research are very particular. Hence, they assume that things like commitment, for example, exist with the same meaning for all time and everywhere regardless of the cultural differences. The institutional theory does not particularize things, and is not concept specific but it is a conceptual framework. It is not a theory of saying people behave like X, Y and Z and what that behaviour means. Rather, it is an overarching frame that says: given that we have a set of behaviours in different places, how do we understand those behaviours in a cultural sense. Unlike the traditional theories, the emphasis of institutional theory is on how the decision making and formal structures are manipulated by the cultural influences. Moreover, the neo-institutional theory is underpinned by social constructionist philosophy. Accordingly, it is unlike the particularizing theories in that it accepts that knowledge is culturally and historically specific. Due to these features of the institutional theory I felt it was particularly appropriate for answering the research questions that evolved from the identification of causes of employee turnover in Oman, in trying to understand how a concept such as employee turnover is constructed and understood in the Omani context in comparison with western contexts.

I think, consequently, that institutional theory is the appropriate theory for answering my research question. Meyer & Rowan (2006) asserted that there is a universal language in institutional theory. This language can be used to express and conceptualize the research problems which are common to many fields (Meyer and Rowan, 2006). Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) contend that institutional theory emphasizes how organizational behaviour is enabled and constrained by formal structures and their effects on the interface between the organization and its surrounding context. Moreover, this theory relies on institutional conditions to explain similarities among organizations. Furthermore, they emphasize that this theory also focuses on acquiring a better understanding of “actors” and their impact on institutions. Their roles include, for example, creating new institutions by utilizing their resources and taking a strategic view of their interests, or maintaining and disrupting institutions, according to Eisenstadt (1980) and



DiMaggio (1988). They, along with other scholars like Hoffman (1999), Garud, Jain, & Kumaraswamy (2002), argue that some actors act as institutional entrepreneurs, influencing the context of newly created institutions by embedding leadership, technical, or/and change in strategies.

In order to define the institutional theory one should first digest the meaning of the word “institution” from which the term “institutional theory”, under discussion in this chapter, is derived. Scott (1995) mentioned that Veblen (1919) introduced the institution as a group of common habits of thoughts that are generally accepted by people.

Up to this point the major factors in shaping such common habits are humans (stakeholders), human interactions, constraints and goals. The constraints, as suggested by North (1990), can be categorized into two paths; formal and informal. The formal constraints include rules, constitutions, property rights and laws. The informal constraints include customs, traditions, codes of conduct, taboos and sanctions. These social conventions play a major role in explaining the purposive structure of goals and behaviour adopted by individuals and organizations; see Knight (1992).

According to North (2003), the social organizations like western societies exist because people live in a highly complicated and friction-laden world where there is a great need to reduce uncertainties. This can be achieved by having structured constraints that promote the desired behaviour. He described institutions as incentive systems because they incentivize individuals and organizations to behave in a manner that lowers uncertainty, encourages better interaction of actors within contexts, and strategic planning for a better structure for social, economic, and political activities.

There has been an ongoing debate about how institutions are created. Scholars such as North, who embraced institutional economy, asserted that institutions are created by human agency. North (1990) defined an institution as a set of constraints which are manmade and contribute to guiding and outlining human interaction. He also argued that in order for these manmade constraints to be established there must be a structure. On the other hand, scholars who were considered to be neo-institutionalists placed more emphasis on the role of cognition in the creation of institutions and institutional actions, as argued by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006).

Having discussed the notion of the ‘institution’ I turn now to explain why I think the term institution applies to my research theme ‘employee turnover’. In order to explain more how the notion of the institution is relevant to my research question I will try to locate the Western institutionalization of employee turnover in some of the formal structures that constrain and enable organizational behaviour. Westerners in general have a set of assumptions about employee turnover that are commonly accepted by them. They consider it as an unwanted and undesirable phenomenon, see chapter 1 section 1.1. Their assumptions about employee turnover are established as a product of the consistent evolution of historical, cultural and economic factors with the management paradigms in the western context as shown in chapter 1.

I think the mosaic of management paradigms, culture and economy can be considered as the constraints that determine how Western individuals or organizations behave toward, establish, or institutionalize the concept of employee turnover. For example, there are assumptions in the West that employees shift to employers who pay more. Similarly, organizations want to retain high performers to avoid costs of employee turnover. In fact such theories go along with the culture in Western contexts of adopting capitalism. Capitalism is about the freedom of achieving individual or organizational interests, see chapter 1. The precedent economic and cultural drives are consistent with the new management paradigm in the Western context. For example, the new management paradigm seeks to maximize the profits by understanding the staff needs along with surrounding environment. I think a similar analysis can be applied to locate how Omanis behave in organizations.

However, I think a more specific and structured framework from within the institutional theory field would provide a better tool for understanding the differences between Omani and Western contexts. I think that Scott’s Three Institutional Pillars would be the appropriate framework for explaining how Omani and Western contexts are convergent, divergent, or crossvergent. What I am looking for is an explanation of social behaviour in an Omani context as it is suggestively understood in the Western context. More about Scott’s Framework is reflected in the following sections.

### **7.3. Scott’s Three Institutional Pillars**

I have demonstrated the inefficiency of uncritically applying Western theories to third world countries. The research questions were reshaped to investigate the comparability of Omani and

Western contexts. To undertake this mission to answer the research questions, the investigation must be underpinned by a universal framework that considers contextual factors and actors' behaviour. The suggested framework for this task is Scott's structural pillars. This section provides a brief description of these three structural pillars.

Scott's theoretical framework (1995) comprises three pillars: cognitive, normative, and regulative. Scott (1995, 2001) contended that these pillars play an important role in providing social behaviour with stability and meaning. As they work interdependently to strengthen and reinforce the social framework, each form of social behaviour can be analyzed in terms of these three pillars. In the following subsections Scott's pillars will be explored further. These vital components and processes of institutions involve different actors. Moreover, they can operate on various levels ranging from a world system to a sub-unit of an organization (Scott, 1995).

### **7.3.1. The Regulative Pillar**

Scott (1995) sees this pillar as representing the most predictable and moderate elements of an institution. It views the actors as sensibly tracking their natural interests. Efficiency and cost-benefit logic are crucial to their expedient actions and behaviour. They obey rules and show compliance to the prevailing regulatory system to avoid penalties or punishments and assure the furthering of self interest. There are many scholars, according to Scott (1995), who maintain that institutions rest on the regulative pillar. They argue that social behaviour is constrained and organized by regulations (Scott, 1995). Moreover, this pillar is characterized by clear regulations that require clear conformity. Furthermore, regulations are explicitly valid and applied to all actors. Regulations are expressed clearly for all actors. They are monitored to assure the compliance of all actors. In addition, sanctions are consequently incurred by those not conforming to these regulations. This pillar, thus, controls the actors' potential behaviour and assures the meaning, order, and stability of their behaviour (Scott, 1995). The central elements in this pillar are expedience, force and fear. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and Scott (1995) contended that coercion was the primary controlling mechanism in this pillar.

Individuals and organizations have different interests. They will behave instrumentally and expediently in order to further their interests. Without explicit regulations and referees clashes might occur between actors in pursuit of their interests. The existence of such laws and referees assures stability and preserves the rights of the individual in pursuing self interest (Scott, 1995).

However, there are potential drawbacks relating to this pillar. For example, according to Scott (1995), the monitoring of behaviour is not an easy or cheap process. Furthermore, there is a problem of neutrality of enforcement, according to North (1991).

The argument here is that individual and/or organizational behavior can be informed by the regulative pillar. Hence, actors as individuals and organizations behave to achieve their interests in way that conform to the prevailing regulations. Some governments issue regulations and policies such as mandated benefits, unemployment insurance benefit systems, minimum wages, and employment protection legislation that force organizations to behave in a way that will protect workers' rights, according to Borei (1999) and Boeri et al. (2008).

However, if these regulations are not carefully designed they could result in some negative consequences in the labour market. Boeri et al. (2008) argued that despite the tendency of protecting employment such regulations could have adverse consequences. For example, in cases where employers raise pay to conform to the regulations of minimum wages, they will reduce the other non-monetary compensations like retirement benefits, paid vacation days, and healthcare plans. The lack of compensation of employees, as identified in the human capital theory, could lead to: (i) a decrease in employees' satisfaction, and (ii) encourage him/her to find a job that match his/her expectations and qualifications, and (iii) leave the work.

There are more examples from the western context about how the public policy or regulation could affect the labour market. For example, public organizations' conformity to the policies of the early 1970s of lowering spending and cutting down public services and benefits increased the unemployment rates in the European countries, according to Blanchard (2006). Organizations' compliance can be considered as a behaviour informed by the regulative pillar, despite the consequences of this compliance.

In Oman the government has issued different regulations and policies that could have effects on employee turnover. For example, the government is trying to achieve the Omanization policy targets set in 1995, see chapter four. Also, the Omani government issued the foreign investment law to attract international investors. Chapter eight will reflect more about how respondents think these regulations have affected employee turnover in Oman.

### 7.3.2. The Normative Pillar

Scott (1995) argued that early sociologists such as Durkheim, Parsons and Selznick were proponents of this version of institutions. For example, Parsons asserted that stability of the social order and behaviour is influenced by the norms: values internalized and imposed by the salient actors (Scott, 1995). The sociologists' focus is on how the choices are constructed by normative frameworks. The socially mediated values inform behaviour. Accordingly, actors' compliance in undertaking certain behaviours is informed by a socially binding obligation. Therefore, actors are doing something because it is either socially prescriptive or proscriptive. This implies that an actor adopts a particular behaviour because it is expected socially from him/her to do it, not because it is a rational action.

That expectation actually leads into roles that are normatively constructed in accordance with society's values and norms. Accordingly, the enforcement of conduct is activated once an actor is assigned to a particular role. The logic of behaviour under the normative structural pillar is appropriateness. This appropriateness is directed by shared values and norms and not by self interest. This differentiates precisely the normative structural pillar from the regulative structural pillar. In the first case an actor's behaviour is motivated by the socially binding expectations of salient actors in accordance with their roles. In the latter, an actor's behaviour is informed by calculations of self interest, and consequent cost-benefit analysis, rewards and punishments.

In fact, the common assumptions reflected in the western literature review such as wages, management styles, working conditions, organizational commitment ...etc can be considered salient examples of how a normative pillar works; see appendix 1. This because the social behaviour of leaving organizations has been extensively reflected from Western contexts. The individual's behaviour is informed by the social expectations about what is socially prescriptive or proscriptive. For instance, employees were found to have expectations about remuneration. If their expectations are not met then it is most likely they will leave their organization. Moreover, employees have expectations about their managers and supervisors to be more supportive, motivate them and involve them in decision making. The lack of these characteristics in managers leads to an increase in staff turnover. I will try to provide an explanation of how behaviour in the Omani context regarding employee turnover is influenced by the normative pillars. Chapter nine is dedicated to this end.

### 7.3.3. Cognitive Pillar

Scott (1995, 2001) contends that this is the newest version of the structural institutional pillars. Constitutive rules are the main elements in this structural pillar. They represent frameworks by which meaning is delivered. Behaviour under this pillar is interpreted and analyzed on the basis of two main factors: objective and subjective conditions. The objective conditions are represented in stimuli imposed on individuals by the external world. The subjective conditions are represented by internal understanding and internalization by individuals of the objective conditions. This also implies the importance of interactions between objective and subjective conditions in conveying meaning.

Scott (1995) argued that many scholars considered this pillar to be the most important. Their argument, as presented by Scott (1995), is that the meaning of social behaviour derives from the rules that construct the reality. Furthermore, the social behaviour of an individual can be seen as an internal representation of the surrounding environment, as D'Andrade (1984) suggested. Hence, in order to analyze the meaning of any behaviour one should examine the internalized conditions in the respondents' cognition of the surrounding environment. Scott (1995) contended that the construction of meaning is not rigid. It is receptive to development or change, within the wider cultural system, as individuals negotiate the social reality and interact in life. Scott (1995) acknowledged that sociologists consider that in human institutions the cultural rules and symbolic systems are external to the individual actor. Consequently, they see human institutions as an accumulation of meanings that reshape continuously according to the environment.

One of the most important elements in the cognitive pillar is the constitutive rules. They are rules rooted in the cultural system of the actors. Scott (1995) asserted these rules could result in the social development of actors. Searle (1969) described them as X counts as Y in C context. Searle (1969) explained this with the following example. In an auction house, in C context, when a man lifted his finger, Y, would make a bid, X. The importance of these constitutive rules tends to be overlooked because they are basic and fundamental to social structure and social life. Hence, they are always implicit and taken for granted. According to Scott (1995) and Terry (2005) the cognitive pillar concentrates more on the social identities. For that reason, these rules help the individual to infer and make sense out of the surrounding environment. Accordingly, an individual in an organization would be asking him/herself "what action can be taken and by what

actor?” The constitutive processes, as D’Andrade (1984) showed, can be applied to ideas, events, objects, and actors. For example, the constitutive rules for a factory can be represented as follows.

Constitutive rules define the factory in an industry as consisting of things such as machines, raw materials, plant ... etc. There are constitutive rules that construct ideas such as winning the highest market share, dominating the industry. There are constitutive rules that construct events such as factory day-to-day operations and shutdowns. There are constitutive rules that construct actors and roles in the factory context, such as different levels of employees. Scott (1995) and Terry (2005) argued that defining these constitutive processes helps in explaining the social behaviour.

I think that the capitalism ideology in the western context can be taken for granted as the constitutional rule that informs people’s behaviour culturally. One of the most important principles in capitalism is individuals’ autonomous rights to pursue their interests. Consequently, I think people in the western context, based on the capitalism principles, would shift from organizations that did not achieve their interests. For example, a capitalist always looks to make money and spends it to live. He will not be able to accrue wealth if the organization he works for does not pay well. Consequently, he will leave for another employer who pays more. The organizations’ objectives also, based on the capitalism culture, were concentrated on maximizing profits, minimizing costs, and increasing efficiency. Consequently, in Western contexts the organizations knew how costly employee turnover was and reacted by trying to reduce it. I will try to investigate how similar or dissimilar issues are cognitively constructed in the Omani context in chapter seven.

#### **7.4. Conclusion**

The literature review, which I brought from the western context and which I believed at the outset to be universal in chapter two, revealed that the term employee turnover has been studied extensively in the Western contexts. Despite the fact that some scholars mentioned that employee turnover has some advantageous consequences, the majority of scholars indicated a range of common assumptions that employee turnover phenomenon is regarded overall in the West as unwanted or undesirable phenomenon and it is inconceivable that it could be viewed in any other way. Consequently, they developed responsive techniques that could contribute to lowering the

rates of employee turnover. For example, several models, measurements, and theories were developed in order to address the employee turnover phenomenon. Chapter two discusses these developments.

Based on the common assumptions I designed my research methodologies using questionnaire and semi-structured interviews in order to answer my research question. Unfortunately the common assumptions regarding employee turnover rendered from Western contexts could not explain the findings, see thesis overview. For that reason, I thought there was a problem about the universality or the applicability of these common assumptions derived from western contexts to Oman since they cannot explain the findings. I explored the evolution of management paradigms, and cultural and economic influences in order to understand the nature of employee turnover and how it is understood in the West. I came to conclude that employee turnover is a product of the historical, economic, and cultural context. Hence, I began to doubt the universality of the Western common assumptions about employee turnover in an Omani context.

Chapter one has shown how the ideology of capitalism has infused management theory in the West. This in turn suggests that the institutionalization of norms and practices related to employee turnover in the West can be traced back to: (i) key moments in industrial development, (ii) the prevailing capitalist interests and concerns of this period. Industrial development and the dominance of capitalism imply that Western contexts developed associated normative and regulatory systems that would assure the order and stability of behaviour among organizations and individuals. Hence, these specificities of capitalist ideology, normative and regulative systems, and developed economies, distinguished the Western contexts from other contexts in different areas, including the institutionalization of employee turnover.

Chapter four also explained that Omani industrial development has followed a very different path, ideas and practices from those institutionalized in the West. The Omani context is anecdotally not comparable with the Western context. Accordingly, the Western theories cannot be transferred to the Omani context. Theoretically, if that is true then it is not possible to interpret the organizational or individual behaviour of Omanis without using a truly universal theory. However, due to its colonial history, as I argued in chapter four, the Omani context



became infused with western cultural values. Hence, I argued there is a crossvergence between the Omani and western contexts.

In chapter two I outlined the literature about the transferability of western theories to other contexts. My research questions evolved into an investigation of whether the Omani and Western contexts are divergent, convergent or crossvergent. I decided as well that answering these questions required no more data collection. Instead, I decided I needed to find new tools that would help me to understand Omani behaviour with regard to employee turnover. The direction of the study evolved from finding causes of employee turnover in Oman, to understanding how Omanis institutionalize the concept employee turnover. To answer the new research questions I needed to reanalyze my qualitative data and to find a common theory and/or framework that could provide transferable tools for explaining how behaviour is constructed in different contexts.

I reanalyzed my semi-structured interviews using the template analysis and data matrix analysis; see chapters 5 and 6. Then, I chose the institutional theory to undertake my new inquiry. I found it the best because the essence of institutional theory is about finding how the set of general habits of thought that are generally accepted by people inform certain behaviours. Based on that, I think there are common habits of thought in the western contexts that participate in forming the western common assumptions about employee turnover. Also, there is a group of common habits of thought in the Omani context that forms Omanis' understanding and behaviour with regard to employee turnover. In addition, if I identify these common habits in both contexts then I will be able to make the comparison between the two contexts and classify them as identical, divergent, or crossvergent. Scott's framework of three institutional pillars provides a more simple and straightforward structure for revealing how behaviour is constructed in a context. Scott (1995) argued that the three pillars: cognitive, regulative and normative, can interdependently explain behaviour. The following two chapters seven and eight present theorization of themes rendered from the qualitative data. Moreover, they provide a support of my argument I posed earlier in the previous chapters about the crossvergence between the Omani and Western contexts. This can briefly summarized like; (i) divergence between Omani and Western contexts in the cognitive

and regulative perspectives as this is reflected in chapter 8, and (ii) convergence between Omani and Western contexts in the normative perspective as this is reflected in chapter 9.

## **Chapter 8: Theorization (2): Divergence between Omani and Western Contexts from Cognitive and Regulative Perspectives**

### **8.1. Introduction**

In chapter one I reflected on how employee turnover is understood in the Western context. I argued there that employee turnover in the Western context is understood in its specific historical and cultural context. I arrived at that conclusion based on the empirical findings that showed the consistency between the contextual factors affecting Western behaviour such as culture, economy, and evolutions of the management paradigms and human resources in the West.

However, I was not 100% convinced that Western theories were applicable to different contexts such as the Omani context, especially as the questionnaires and semi-structured interview findings reflected views and behaviours among Omanis inconsistent with Western views regarding the employee turnover phenomenon. In chapter two I reflected on the scholars' views about the universalism of Western theories across different contexts. There I discussed debates between scholars about convergence, divergence, and crossvergence between Western and third world countries including Oman. My argument there was there is crossvergence between the Western and Omani contexts.

To prove this argument, in chapter three I strived to find empirical evidence from the GCC countries that could support this argument. I did that for two reasons. First, there are very few employee turnover studies on Oman, and the context in GCC countries is almost the same as in Oman. Reflecting on them could lead my thinking about the crossvergence between Oman and Western countries. I then presented a case study about Oman in chapter four to examine the evolution of its political economy. Theoretically, findings of chapters three and four supported my argument of crossvergence between the Omani and Western contexts. Despite, the divergence in culture and regulations between the two contexts, the effects of western imperialism are present in the Omani context, which consequently showed convergence in some aspects.

However, I needed to prove this crossvergence in a more scientific way. Thus, I thought of selecting a universal underpinning theory that could help in analyzing behaviour of Omanis regarding employee turnover. I could then compare that with existing Western literature to assess

the crossvergence between the two contexts. I chose the institutional theory as the underpinning theory to analyze my template analyses data, gathered in chapter six, to answer my research questions, see more details in chapter five.

The main focus of this chapter is to answer the research questions. The research questions are designed to investigate the crossvergence, divergence or convergence between the Omani context and the Western contexts and consequently take the following form:

**“Are the commonly accepted employee turnover concepts universal? Or is there another way of thinking about them when considering them in the context of Arab Gulf states? Is the way employee turnover is understood relevant in the Arab Gulf states?”**

Second, the answering process uses the three pillars of institutional theory as a theoretical frame. This framework was introduced by Scott (1995), see chapter 7. The importance of this framework stems from its pillars, which are helpful in reflecting and interpreting individuals' behaviour. That is because, as Scott (1995) contended, they can identify the ends and contour the means used in accomplishing the interests of people undertaking behaviour. This will undoubtedly help to answer the research question by shedding light on the similarities and contradictions in mindsets, views and behaviours between the Omanis and Westerners about ET concepts. The Western views are drawn from the literature review. The Omani views are drawn from the template and matrix analysis.

Third, the logic used in the analysis is as follows. In order to structure this analysis, I compiled a table that has two axes. The first axis, X, reflects Scott's three institutional pillars: cognitive, normative, and regulative. The second axis, Y, shows the respondent categories of senior managers, middle managers, and shop floor employees. The significance of the latter axis is to show how the different institutional pillars might influence the behaviour or ideas of different categories of respondents about employee turnover. I think this is important since not all people are subjected to similar pressures to adopt a particular behaviour. Moreover, some themes were mentioned in some categories and not mentioned in other categories as is shown below in Table 37. In addition, one of the main ideas of the template analyses is to narrow down and reduce the high quantities of data to a manageable amount of data. Finally, I thought this categorization would allow a better comparison with each category's counterpart in the West, which in turn

would participate in answering the research question. I compiled Table 37 below from the themes drawn by template analysis in chapter six to show the themes in the relevant cells. The analysis falls into three major sections. It starts with analysis of the cognitive pillar, followed by the normative pillar, and finally the regulative pillar in relation to the different respondent categories. In each section the analysis examines all themes involved, starting by stating why a theme was located in certain cell in Table 37. Subsequently, the analysis explores whether the data in each theme supports or challenges the literature. In addition, I explain the differences and similarities in ideas or behaviours between Oman and the West.

	Cognitive	Normative	Regulative
<b>Senior Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Beliefs about employee turnover</li> <li>▪ Working within Oman</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Financial problems</li> <li>▪ Communication</li> <li>▪ Commitment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Omanization</li> <li>▪ Foreign Investment law</li> </ul>
<b>Middle Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Beliefs about employee turnover</li> <li>▪ Investment loss</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Financial factor</li> <li>▪ Private sector offers</li> <li>▪ Attempts to solve ET</li> <li>▪ Exit interviews</li> <li>▪ Performance appraisal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Omanization</li> <li>▪</li> </ul>
<b>Shop Floor Employees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Beliefs about employee turnover</li> <li>▪ personal planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ exit interview</li> <li>▪ career path</li> <li>▪ incentives</li> <li>▪ training</li> <li>▪ decision making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ legislation</li> </ul>

Table 38. Distribution of themes rendered from qualitative data under the three institutional pillars.

## 8.2. Cognitive pillar from Scott's Framework (1995)

This theoretical framework was introduced by Scott (1995). It comprises three pillars: cognitive, normative, and regulative. Scott (1995, 2001) contends that these pillars provide social behaviour with stability and meaning. They work interdependently to strengthen and reinforce the social behaviour. Thus, each type of social behaviour can be approached from the perspective of the three different pillars. In the following sub-sections the research explores these pillars guided by Scott's theory (1995). The data analyzed by the template analysis are going to be theorized using Scott's three institutional pillars both in this chapter and the next chapter (eight).

The aims of this section are to:

- (i) Illustrate the constitutive rules of the cognitive institutional pillar in Oman on the basis of the relevant themes as shown in table 37.

- (ii) Compare the Omani situation with the Western context.
- (iii) Consider the comparison to uncover any similarities or contradictions that inform behaviour.
- (iv) Compare the similarities and/or differences between the three respondent categories.

The logic for pursuing these aims is straightforward. The focus is to show the constitutive rules and the social constructions that inform respondents' behaviours. First, the study introduces some broad principles of the cognitive frame in Oman. These principles and ideas explain how the cognitive pillar is reflected in respondents' data. Second, explanation is given of the different effects of the cognitive pillar across the three categories of respondents and how these relate to the cognitive rules identified. Most of the constitutive rules deduced from the analysis derive from Islam.

### **8.3. Illustration of the constitutive rules and social construction in Oman**

The constitutive rules, according to Schmidt (2007), aid researchers in interpreting or inferring the meaning/s of behaviours. Definition of the constitutive rules of the cognitive pillar for Oman requires reflection on the broad principles of the Omani cognitive frame. The following paragraph presents the rules rooted in the cultural system of Oman.

Most of the constitutive rules in the Omani context are based on Islamic principles. For example, the right to a good life is a constitutive rule established through Islamic jurisprudence. Other constitutive rules require obedience to rulers and those who are in charge in society and balanced behaviour between collectivism and individualism. Importantly, many virtues rooted in Islam entrench and reinforce the above mentioned constitutive rules. Much information about these rules has been mentioned in chapters three and four when I reflected HR in GCC countries and Oman respectively.

In 1978, the Ministry of Education released a document outlining the educational philosophy in Oman (Ministry of Education, 2003). This document defined the characteristics of Omani society. It described Oman as an Arab Muslim country. In addition, it asserted that Arabism and Islam impacted on forming cohesiveness and unity among Omanis in the Omani society. What are the characteristics of Arabism and Islam that encourage such cohesiveness?

Islam has a profound influence on Middle Eastern attitudes and behaviour both within and outside the workplace, despite the widespread assumption in Western literature that organizations are “religion neutral” (Mellahi and Budhwar, 2010). This assumption has been challenged by a recent revival of studies focusing directly on the link between management, spirituality and religion.

Islam is one of the main factors informing Omani behaviour. The fundamental belief system places great emphasis on personal integrity and honesty, and to breach these values is regarded as a very serious matter. What constitutes Muslim behaviour can be drawn from the holy book of Islam, the ‘Quran’. Yousef (1990) points to four tenets that inform and control Muslim behaviour: an individual's relationship with his Creator (Allah), the relationship of the individual to the universe, the relationship of the individual with himself, and the individual's relationship with people around him. The following table shows the derivation of each of these tenets.

<b>N</b>	<b>Tenet: individual's relation to:</b>	<b>Derivation</b>
<b>1</b>	Allah	1. Complete submission to Allah in all life aspects 2. Allah has supreme and indivisible authority
<b>2</b>	Universe	1. Everything in the universe harnessed to humans 2. Human Beings are the successors of God on earth
<b>3</b>	Himself/Herself	Winning the approval of God in the afterlife is the end, not this life
<b>4</b>	People around Him/her	All members of society are brothers and sisters either by virtue of faith/religion and provisions and by virtue of humanity and therefore they can live in peace regardless of their race, colour, tongue or religion

Table 39. Tenets that inform Muslim behavior and their derivation, compiled by researcher from Yousef (1990).

Oman is an Islamic country and therefore citizens are exposed to the tenets listed in Table 38. In addition, the social reality in the Muslim context is based on a commonly based physical reality of ‘Islam’ that is believed to be concrete and proven and is not open to different interpretations. Furthermore, Omanis’ priorities in undertaking any behaviour are to show submission and loyalty to Allah, the country, the sultan, their Islamic and Arab nation, and Mankind (ministry of information, 2003). Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006); Katou et al. (2010) contend that Omani employees give a high priority to religion when conducting any HRM practice. Moreover, Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006); Katou et al (2010) claims that Shariah law, which strictly represents the Islamic Laws, as a national institution ranks as the fourth most important influence

on HRM in Oman after Civil Service Law, Education & Vocational Training, and Oman Labour Laws.

The following subsections conduct deeper analysis of the cognitive pillar in the Omani context. Each subsection deals with a theme drawn from the template analysis. The themes under the cognitive pillar are: beliefs about employee turnover, working within Oman, management thinking, investment loss, working environment, personal planning, unequal salary and management fashion. The theorization follows these steps:

1. Explanation of the categorization of the theme under this pillar
2. Discussion of the constitutive rules that underpin this theme
3. Comparison of the themes across the three categories of respondents
4. Comparison of the theme to Western ideas

Some of the main constitutive rules reflected in the data are: the right to a good life; honesty in handling public money; and ambition to accomplish a better position at work and in society.

### **8.3.1. Beliefs about employee turnover – (respondents’ understanding and descriptions of employee turnover)**

#### **Top Management**

There is a very strong indicator for placing this theme in the cognitive pillar. The senior management category considered this phenomenon (i.e. staff turnover) as healthy, and this was a shared understanding at this level. According to Scott (1995), this shared reality can be considered as an internal representation of the surrounding environment.

This “shared reality” is illustrated in the following extracts from table 5:

*“It has some advantages and disadvantages and it can be healthy sometimes, no doubt. Although the figures with regard to this matter are not that scary” Senior Manager Respondent.*

*“My viewpoint is that it is a healthy phenomenon if it happens without going beyond a certain percentage in all sectors and industries” Senior Manager Respondent*

Furthermore, some senior managers, despite acknowledging the existence of staff turnover, were not worried by the extent of it. This suggests that in the Omani context, senior managers will not



try to solve the problem until it is perceived as a problem. Moreover, senior managers suggested that those quitters, who are subsequently appointed in high positions in the private sector, are actually doing a favour to the public sector. First, they assure the creation of new public sector vacancies for other Omanis who will replace them. Second, they will employ Omanis in the private sector. The following excerpt proves this.

*“The employee turnover phenomenon from public to private sector is a healthy phenomenon that has some basis. Usually those who leave are experienced employees. Hence, they get better positions in the private sector. Consequently, they will participate in employing Omanis in their new organizations”* **Senior Manager Respondent.**

In terms of the “right to a good life”, Islam states that Muslims should strive to make a living and no one can stop a person from doing so. This idea was reflected in the comments of some respondents, who asserted that people cannot be bound by contractual conditions to work for a certain period of years. Some respondents emphasized this point by reciting verse number 15 in Al-Mulk Chapter in the holy Quran, which illustrates this central theme. This right is consolidated by the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (1990). In article 13, the declaration stresses:

“Everyone shall be *free to choose the work that suits him best* and which serves his interests and those of society”

A number of further Islamic virtues direct the behaviour of Muslims in various aspects of life. Shaikh (1988) included forgiveness, niceness, piety, generosity, honesty, and moderation among these virtues. In addition, Shaikh (1988) asserted that when making a decision, a Muslim should exert moral virtue. Many examples of these virtues were reflected in how respondents understood the behaviour of others. For example, “the manager was good” for showing niceness; “my manager told me to go for the best” for showing good intentions and honesty; “they did not try to persuade me” in terms of managers’ indifference in dealing with the issue. Self-regulation is another central theme, illustrated in the following verse:

*“O man! Verily you are labouring, exerting your efforts, toward, the encounter with, your Lord, that is, death, laboriously, and you will encounter it, that is, you will encounter your mentioned good or evil deeds on the Day of Resurrection”* (Qur’an: Surat al-Inshiqaq: 6)

Overall, therefore, the tendency for senior managers to see staff turnover as a healthy phenomenon may reflect certain differences between the Omani context and Western context with respect to their fundamental belief system.

Searle (1995) asserted that mental facts which achieve general agreement and recognition from individuals become social facts. In this sense, we can say the belief of employee turnover as healthy was recognized collectively by respondents. Consequently, it became a social fact that is institutionalized among senior management. Moreover, it can be described as an institutional fact, in as much as the officials who construct this reality about employee turnover represent official governmental institutions. This explains how the idea of employee turnover as a ‘healthy phenomenon’ is located in the cognitive pillar. Discussion now follows of how the category of middle management constructed their understandings of staff turnover.

#### **Middle Management**

Like senior managers, most middle managers described the phenomenon as healthy and/or positive, reflected in the following extracts from table 14.

*“Although it is (employee turnover phenomenon) a healthy phenomenon, the organizations confronting it face so many difficulties” Middle Manager’s Feedback*

*“I think it is a healthy phenomenon whereby we as a public sector are supplying the private sector with capabilities” Middle Manager’s Feedback*

*“It is a positive and healthy phenomenon. Ambition is a valid thing for all. I believe this problem started before the world economic recession. What happened is that the private sector is giving better financial compensations plus more incentives to the employees than the public sector” Middle Manager’s Feedback*

*“it is good for the employees who receive higher wages ... for the whole society, as some people would argue, it is a positive thing, as long as the employees still work in Oman” Middle Manager’s Feedback*

There were some differences in how these managers constructed staff turnover, however. For instance, while they all saw it as generally healthy, some claimed that employee turnover is good no matter where people go, while others saw this “health” more contingently - i.e. dependent on whether quitters were leaving to work outside the country. I think their attitude of imitating the senior managers’ feedback about what they think about the employee turnover phenomenon is expected. In chapter three I dealt with human resources in the GCC countries. I showed that managers in GCC countries like to imitate the senior managers and leaders. They consider senior managers and rulers as their role models. I think they uncritically take for granted

those senior managers' ideas, thoughts, and opinions as the ideal ones to be adopted. However, I think they might be imitating their senior managers for several reasons. For example, (i) they, as I mentioned above, consider senior managers as their role models, (ii) they uncritically assume that imitating senior managers is fulfilling divine orders of obeying seniors and in charge characters, and (iii) maybe they are using a mixture of the above two reasons.

#### **Shop Floor Employees**

Like the other categories, the respondents in this group saw staff turnover as healthy, see table 24. Moreover, when reflecting on their reasons for quitting, such as inadequate financial compensation or discouraging working environment, they all adhered to the idea of the pursuit of a better life, experience, and working environment.

Taken overall, there is a high level of consistency in the data regarding how respondents in all three categories constructed employee turnover, seeing it as a healthy trend. This shared agreement appears to stem from the Islamic constitutive rule, that all people have the right to good lives.

A comparison now follows of the views of these Omani respondents with Western views in order to answer one of the core research questions: are the Omani and Western contexts in convergence, divergence, or crossvergence with regard to HR practices?

It seems that Omanis' understanding about employee turnover is suggestively divergent from Western views. Not only did the Omani respondents see the phenomenon as healthy, but also managers were ambivalent about condemning those who leave their organization. Their reaction can be understood in terms of the cognitive institutional pillar and the value which is placed on the right of individuals to pursue a good life. Western views are extremely different. In general organizational agents do not see turnover as healthy or desirable. Chapter one reviewed employee turnover studies undertaken in the West. Not one study promoted the idea that employee turnover is desirable. On the contrary, these studies focused on the negative consequences or costs of employee turnover. Positive consequences were either downplayed or ignored (see Staw, 1980; Cascio, 1982; Anderson et al., 1994; Wright and Bonnet, 2007; Tracy and Hikin, 2008). Instead, studies concentrated on suggestions of how to improve employee retention, as suggested by Holtom et al. (2008).

Another difference between the two contexts relates to management attitudes and responses to staff turnover. The data from senior managers suggest that because they do not see staff turnover as particularly problematic; they will not attempt to do anything about it until it begins to cause them serious operational problems. The following excerpts illustrate this;

*“if as I mentioned earlier it does not exceed a generally accepted percentage which is from 5% to 8%. If it goes beyond these percentages in the labour market then we should stop, analyze, evaluate, and see what are the reason and problem driven factors that resulted in the loss of flocks of employees?”* **Senior Manager**

*“I do not think the existing premises represent a phenomenon but they are harbingers of employee turnover”* **Senior Manager**

*“ well, I don’t know if it can be considered as problem right now as there are no statistics from the ministry of civil service about this matter”* **Senior Manager**

On the other hand, it appears that managers in Western contexts attempt to put interventions in place to prevent staff turnover and would be unlikely to adopt the “wait and see” approach to problem solving illustrated by the Omani managers interviewed in this study. Parker et al. (2006) assert that defining antecedents of a “problem” and proactive behaviours are important in the Western context.

### **8.3.2. Working within Oman and Investment Loss Themes**

All respondents within this theme share the common belief that it is not good to quit to work outside the country. The respondents see Omani employees as tradable assets but only within Oman itself. They do not see it as a problem if an employee shifts from the public sector to work in the private sector within Oman. See the following excerpts drawn from Table 10.

*“Omanis who shift to work within the geographical borders of Oman are still not a loss on our investment in them. The problem is when they get attracted abroad”* **Senior Management Feedback**

*“We are affected, as I told you earlier, if the employee shifts to work outside the country”* **Senior Management Feedback**

*“I think there is no waste if the employees shift to work in the Omani private sector or to start their own businesses”* **Senior Management Feedback**

One explanation for these views is that, as senior officials in the state, senior managers are obligated to show concern for preserving the state’s investment in developing employees. This obligation to preserve public money, as Shehata (1999) and O’hab (2001) contended, is mentioned in the Islamic orthodoxy. This obligation is explicitly mentioned in the constitutions

of some Islamic countries, such as Oman (Article 11) and KSA (Article 13). These constitutions assert that public money is sacrosanct. In short, there is a fundamental law aimed at preserving public money. Moreover, the respondents wanted to see a return on the investment the government makes in developing and training staff. Thus, even though employees leave the public sector, it is not seen as a loss of investment as long as the employee is working within the state. The data collected from senior management showed that if employees quit to work outside the state, the country: (i) loses its investments in this manpower, (ii) experiences a brain drain, and (iii) suffers economically. Indeed, there is a collective agreement between the respondents about the costs of working outside the country.

Middle management saw investment loss somewhat differently to senior management. They identified a number of problems that arise in an organization when employees choose to quit. For instance, respondents mentioned problems such as the expenses associated with internal and external training courses; scholarships; in-desk training; loss of time and money; work disruption; and the costs of hiring substitutes for staff who leave (see table 15.) These problems align with some of the negative consequences or costs of employee turnover identified by Western scholars (Holtom et al. 2008; Tracy & Hikin, 2008).

Nonetheless, despite middle management's collective agreement about the costs of employee turnover, they did not condemn it. Rather, they drew on the notion of a "right to a better life" to legitimize the idea that quitters represent uncharted national investments, as illustrated by the following extract from table 15:

*"Ill-advised investments will always be vulnerable to high risk and loss. However, freedom of choice is a right supported by laws in Oman and employees are not restricted to work just for one entity, even though that entity invested huge amounts of money in them. Moreover, they will be working in Oman"* **Middle Management Respondent**

The comparison between the senior management and middle management views on investment loss therefore highlights some differences. For senior management, the concern about investment loss is focused on whether quitters move outside the country. They effectively consider movements within the Sultanate as job rotation. Accordingly, the investments in employees stay within the country. On the other hand, middle management employees in the public sector are conscious of the losses incurred by the public sector. Their argument is that negative

consequences are inevitable, regardless of the quitters' destinations. However, the middle managers did not condemn the turnover behaviour based on ideological idea as mentioned above.

On the other hand, the data might reflect the influence of the normative pillar as integrity in managing public interests and money is expected from senior officers. That is, the logic that these managers use to explain why quitting is not an investment loss has normative appeal, as Scott (1995) suggested.

This logic diverges from Western ideas of keeping actors' interests. Many Western researchers have studied employee turnover, its consequences, models, and measurements. However, these studies focused on finding and achieving the mundane win-win strategy for employers and employee. Accordingly, Western scholars saw that employee turnover happens once an employee decided to leave and this decision has many negative costs regardless of destination; see for example Staw (1980); Tracy and Hinkin (2008); and Holtom et al (2008). Hence, light was cast on potential costs of employee turnover to employees and employers. I think this might be attributed to the materialistic culture in the West. In fact, the Western contexts are distinguished by their societal settings of pursuing *individual* interests. This is a consequence of the dominance of individualistic and materialistic goals in Western culture (Scott, 1995).

Actors' interests and how these are pursued are differently informed among Omani individuals from among Westerners. The strategy of Omani managers I think leans more towards all-win. Hence, managers' behaviour reflects their compliance with the divine orders, manmade orders, and employees' win to choose the best for themselves. These behaviours and strategies are informed by the Omani culture which in turn is highly impacted by Islam. To be more accurate about this, I think that the middle managers' behaviour might slightly be impacted by western cultural imperialism. This is because their views on employee turnover are almost similar to how it is seen in the west. Exploration now follows of the 'personal planning' theme.

### **8.3.3. Personal Planning Theme**

This theme seems to relate to the cognitive pillar because it reflects a social identity construction. Shop floor respondents used social resources and existing rules to construct their social identities. Respondents created a social commitment through having common shared aims and objectives: what Scott (1995) refers to as the politics of identity. This process relies on scripts and collective signs to justify past behaviours and to guide current behaviour. Within the

“personal planning” theme, respondents defined goals to be accomplished during their professional life. They made the decision and commitment that if these goals could not be achieved in their current organization they would definitely shift to another. Table 29 gives excerpts from the interviews with grass roots employees to illustrate this theme.

It is evident from these extracts that this constitutive rule is imposed externally (by Islamic, social and cultural beliefs). It promotes the idea that one should make serious endeavours to have a good life, and achieve a good position in society by being ambitious and hard working. Ambition cropped up many times in the interviews conducted with the respondents either directly or indirectly and may be rooted in Muslim cognition, derived from the Quran. The following excerpts from table 29 support this.

*“I had so many ideas for projects that would serve the public sector but they were always rejected by the managers. This encouraged me to look for a better place, that would appreciate my ideas and consider them for application”* **Employee Respondent**

*“I am not fully satisfied with my existing job and I am going to give myself one year to think about this and see if things change. Otherwise, I will start looking for another place”* **Employee Respondent**

*“I have set up several targets to be accomplished during my career. If I cannot accomplish them with one organization I will definitely shift to another where I can reach my target and this was one of my major reasons for shifting from my ex-employer ... if I find a better place that serves or satisfies my personal plans I will shift directly, I can tell you ... I believe that in my former post I had reached a point where no further development in my career was in sight, then I started looking for another post that would serve my planning”* **Employee Respondent**

The constitutive rule in Oman which promotes the importance of ambition and striving for a better social position does not apply only to religious or cultural contexts. It is valid in all contexts where people have willpower and freedom. In the Western contexts ambition is a valid thing. However, the suggested divergence of that from the Oman context lies in the origination of the constitutive rule. In Oman the constitutive rule is derived from the Islamic values and virtues whereas in Western contexts it is derived from the liberal and neoliberal movements.

Ambition is permissible. However, Muslims, who are supposed to be always faithful, in general are required to follow straight and moral means and routes in order to achieve the wanted ends. Islam requires Muslim to have faith in six major pillars. They are mentioned in Sunnah after prophet Mohammad (APBUH). They are faith in Allah and his Angels, Holy Books, Prophets and messengers, Doomsday, the destiny he laid for every individual of all species. Ambition

should not contradict the faith of a Muslim who believes in Doomsday. Contradiction means undertaking wrong means to achieve goals. These tenets are taught to people in Oman in the early stages of their lives, as I personally was taught this in the elementary school. These tenets are reinforced in mosques and at school levels after elementary. Thus, ambition in Muslim contexts like Oman links life objectives with afterlife consequences as rooted in the Islamic faith. Now let us see how that is seen in Western contexts.

The people in Western contexts themselves are diverse and belong to many different groups. Some are religious groups who believe in the existence of Allah, atheistic groups who refute the existence of Allah, secularists who separate life from religion. Under these circumstances it would be difficult to make the comparison. However, Christianity, Judaism and Islam are all divine religions and came from one source. Hence they are all supposed to have the same tenets and that supposes interconnecting achievement of life ambitions with afterlife consequences, doomsday. There are serious punishments on doomsday for those who have undertaken unfair or invalid means to achieve their goals and ambitions in their lifetime.

However, differences stem from the introduction of several philosophies and ideas in the West. For example, the tenet of “ends justify means” was developed in a Western context by Niccolò Machiavelli in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. According to Machiavelli in his landmark book “The Prince”, any character driven by ambition will follow and use any means, regardless of their fairness or validity to achieve the desired ends. I think this shows a departure from the importance of moral means and tendencies to validate the possibility of using immoral means to achieve one’s ends. I think this shows as well a departure from any religious orders which prohibit the use of immoral means. This departure is more directed towards achieving mundane interests of power, wealth, happiness, victory ...etc. The doctrine of liberalism, which concentrates on liberating individuals from cultural, economic and political authority, was introduced in the West, like Machiavellism, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Liberation from cultural authority was accompanied by the birth of freedom of religion in the Western context. In addition, liberalism called for capitalism as it is one of the individual’s rights to earn wealth and spend it.

Another example of divergence is the spread of the secularism whereby religions become separated from government and organizations. These various schools of thoughts and philosophies deviated from divine religions in general, standing for liberation of people from the



divine and religion. Most of the western contexts adopt secularism. Thus, the bases for achieving ambitions in Oman and the Western contexts are divergent in general.

#### **8.4. Conclusion on cognitive analysis**

This part of the institutional analysis dealt with the cognitive pillar and first defined some of the abstract constitutive rules that inform Omanis' behaviour cognitively. The Omani context is conservative and highly influenced by Islamic principles. Furthermore, faithful Omani believers in Allah and doomsday are required to submit to Allah in all of their actions, whether inside or outside the workplace.

In brief, the two main constitutive rules are: (i) the right to a good life, (ii) collective integrity in conserving and protecting national investments/public money. The discussion focused first on how understanding of employee turnover was influenced by the cognitive pillar. There was collective agreement between the three categories of respondents that employee turnover is a healthy phenomenon. Top management showed a reluctance to address this problem, and indeed, did not perceive it as a problem. They argued there was no evidence in the turnover figures to convince them that it was a serious problem. They indicated little intention of trying to intervene to stem employee turnover, which is very different from the proactive stance to turnover frequently demonstrated by Western managers.

The following table 39 illustrates the divergence between the Omani context and Western context. These differences can be attributed to the prevailing features and principles of each culture. For instance, the Omani mindset is constructed and affected by Islamic rules. Freedom is a term restricted to the balancing of individual and collective interests. This idea is not popular in the West, where it would be considered illiberal to use theological laws to restrict individual liberties, as argued by Voll (2007). In the West the idea of the right to a good life does exist. However, in this context, the idea is rooted in liberal democracy. Individuals, according to neoliberal orthodoxy, can pursue their own ends as long they do not breach the codes of democracy.

The following section focuses on theorizing themes under the regulative pillar and the analysis takes a similar form to that of the cognitive pillar. First, there is explanation why a particular

theme is located under the normative pillar. Then, the discussion reflects respondents' views on the theme and these are compared with Western views on that particular theme.

Theme	Constitutive rule/social construction	Omani Views	Western Views	Convergent/divergent
<b>Beliefs about employee turnover</b>	right to a good life	Healthy Phenomenon	Not healthy/ not desirable	divergent
		Reactive to problem solving	Proactive to problem solving	divergent
		Public sector's role to supply private sector with employees	No evidence from in-hand literature	-
<b>Working environment /Investment loss</b>	Collective integrity of conserving and protecting national investments/ public money	Not waste if quitters work within the state (Senior Managers). There is a waste (Line Managers)	Waste happens once employee leaves organization	crossvergent
		Investment loss if employees leave to work out of Oman (Senior Managers). Loss incurred once employees leave (line Managers)	Loss incurred once employee leave his post/no discrimination in literature as to whether employees quit to work within or outside state	crossvergent
		Not competing for employees to work as long as s/he works within the country.	Selection and hiring should protect the interests of the firm and of the employees	divergent
<b>personal planning</b>	Politics of identity (constitutive rules are not always imposed externally on actors) individuals play an active part, using existing rules and social resources to construct a social identity with some consistency across varying situations	Employees are not involved and their ideas are rejected	It is very important to empower employees so they feel they are doing a valuable job and this triggers commitment	divergent
		No further development in sight/ lack of challenging environment	Challenges evoke innovation and creativity/ development is essential to success.	divergent
		No concern for the employees' ambitions and objectives	Very concerned about employee objectives as this affects their commitment and firm's operations.	divergent

Table 40. Summarizes the suggestive dissimilarities between Omani and Western cognition.

## 8.5. The Regulative Pillar

According to Scott (2001), under this pillar behaviour is influenced by established rules and sanctions. Behaviour in this pillar is forced and regularized by institutions (Scott, 1995), an idea that is underpinned by social economics and by the pillar's role in maintaining stability in social behaviour. According to North (1990), this is due to explicit regulative rules. It is also a heuristic analytical device that assumes that different actors in society have different interests. These different actors can be individuals or organizations.

Usually, actors expediently pursue self interest, unless rules exist to govern, control, and coerce (North, 1990; Scott, 1995), and without these rules instability will result in institutional behaviour. North (1990) and Scott (1995; 2001) also assert that actors are monitored and sanctioned in their behaviour by those who enforce the laws and rules. Actors can be rewarded for their compliance with rules. On the other hand, sanctions and punishments can be imposed on actors who do not comply with rules.

Scott (2001) contends that the central elements of the regulative institutional pillar are expedience, force and fear. He also argues that the embodiment of these ingredients in the rules and laws imposed on institutions informs the behaviour of actors. Therefore, a lack of any one of these elements would lead actors to lose faith in the validity of the rules.

The research assumes that some of the themes identified from the data are influenced by the regulative institutional pillar. The analysis of these themes is presented in this section. The focus is on identifying those elements of the regulative pillar that inform behaviour. The analysis first deals with themes reported by either all three or at least two of the categories of respondents. Then, themes reported by only one category of respondent are examined. However, it is important to point out that only three themes reflected the influence of the regulative pillar: (i) Omanization, (ii) Foreign Investment Laws, and (iii) Civil Services Legislation. Omanization is considered first since it occurred in the data from both senior managers and middle managers. Each category is considered in terms of the construction of this theme, and compared with dominant ideas in Western literature. The themes of foreign investment laws and civil service legislation are then examined. The analysis is depicted in the following table 40:

	<b>Regulative Institutional Pillar</b>
<b>Senior Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Omanization</li> <li>▪ Foreign Investment law</li> </ul>
<b>Middle Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Omanization</li> </ul>
<b>Shop Floor Employees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Civil Services' legislations</li> </ul>

Table 41. Themes distributed under the Regulative Pillar.

### 8.5.1. Omanization

#### Senior Managers' Responses

This theme appears to relate to the regulative pillar due to the existence of coercion in Omani regulations about Omanization. All organizations subject to this law are monitored and can be sanctioned for failure to comply with the Omanization rules. The following article no. 114 from the Omani Labour Law issued by royal decree (35/2003) shows the consequences for not applying the Omanization rules.

“Any employer who does not comply with the Omanization percentage applicable to the private sector, as prescribed by the concerned authorities, shall be punished with a fine equivalent to 50% of the average of the total amount of wages of the non-Omani labourers who represent the difference between the Omanization's percentage to be legally complied with and the actual achieved percentage” **Article no. 114 From Omani Labour Law.**

Respondents focused on two issues relating to the Omanization theme: (i) the necessity of achieving the Omanization rates in the public sector and (ii) the negative consequences of the private sector's conformity to the Omanization rule. Regarding the first matter, some of the senior managers were still adhering to the public policy of Omanizing the public sector. Hence, they consciously attempted to comply with the public interest by employing more Omanis in their organizations. They justified their approach on a number of grounds. For example, they claimed that Omanis are more loyal, and committed to their work in government posts than foreign workers. Despite this compliance, they criticized the Omanization policy, seeing it as it negatively affecting employee turnover because certain percentages have to be achieved in the private sector. This reveals a dilemma whereby the senior managers want to Omanize the public sector but the public sector offers a weak, unattractive remuneration schemes. On the other hand, whilst the private sector offers better schemes for employees, the requirement for the private sector firms also to comply with the Omanization rule has created problems for the Omani public sector in terms of recruitment by private firms and attracting with irresistible packages the public sector's readymade and

highly skilled employees, although one respondent argued it has only an indirect impact on employee decisions to quit.

Scott (1995) contends that this situation is predictable. Furthermore, he asserts that the validity of laws passed by constituted government is recognized by individuals, regardless of their judgments about the correctness or propriety of the public policies. In contrast, one senior manager claimed that the Omanization regulations required urgent review. In this study the senior managers in the public sector see a problem in Omanizing both sectors at the same time, but they have to conform to government laws.

In short, some senior managers claimed that the compliance with the Omanization policy in the private sector plus the attractive foreign investment laws increased employee turnover in the public sector. The role of foreign investment laws is discussed below. The following excerpts from Table 9 illustrate senior managers' views about the Omanization effect.

*“According to this law every international or local organization in the private sector has to have a certain percentage of Omani employees. From what we have we can see how they use this to their advantage. Because we have seen a lot of highly skilled Omani employees shifting from their posts in the public sector to the private sector. Instead of investing in new employees they attract those highly skilled employees by giving salaries that are triple or quadruple in some cases their salaries from the government”* **Senior Manager**

*“I think that the Omanization has begun to bear fruit. I also believe that, as one of the products of Omanization we now have a solid base of workers. Now you will find Omanis are able to work in the areas of interdisciplinary work. I am with the Omanization law and the government then remembered that it should not shut out the world ... Regardless of the structure of those companies (in the private sector), they have a clear view with regard to some of the local employment regulation... Did you get me ... they always avoid bringing their highly skilled staff to our organizations or introducing training courses for fresh graduates. Simply, that is because these things cost huge amounts of money. Instead of doing the above two mentioned moves they will fish for trained staff”* **Senior Manager**

*“I think we have reached a saturation stage in many of the work disciplines in the public sector. Thus, I think we should encourage the Omanization policy ... we have reached 100% in administrative posts in the public sector and we need to see the Omanization of the private sector”* **Senior Manager**

*“I think that Omanization policy needs a massive review ... We should review the managerial philosophy of this policy in Oman, review it as a tool that can help in maintaining the Omani labor market for the present and for future. We should go back to the objectives and compare them with existing results ... The observations are suggesting there are many negative sides to this specific issue”* **Senior Manager**

*“As for the policies of the government, I think they have a very indirect impact on an employee's decision”* **Senior Manager's Feedback**

As one of the extracts above illustrates, it is perceived that quitters relocate to better positions in the private sector and, once there, use their power to employ other Omanis. One respondent believed that the government wanted to nationalize top management in the private sector. Accordingly, it introduced an early retirement scheme in the public sector in the 1990s, knowing that high performers would move to the private sector, as indeed happened. This suggests that senior managers view their labour as a tradable asset. They approved the early retirement scheme because they hoped this would improve the quota of Omanis in the private sector. They based this hope on their assumptions that quitters are highly patriotic, and highly committed to Omani society. In the Western context, as argued by Schlicht (2005), staffing adheres to strict standards that facilitate firms' pursuit of their goals. The recruitment process concentrates on attracting individuals who can meet and achieve the organization's as well as their own personal goals. It is not concerned with attempting to solve macro-economic problems of the state. These are understood to be the concerns of the government. In contrast, in the Omani context, public sector managers are concerned with the nation's financial investments, *see page 153*. The analysis now focuses on the responses of the middle managers about the Omanization theme.

#### **Middle Managers' Responses about the 'Omanization Theme'**

Table 16 illustrates the data from middle managers that was categorized into the Omanization theme. Several points can be drawn from this data. First of all, Omanization is seen to be a lengthy and financially costly process. One respondent argued that a public sector organization might lose employees to the private sector while they are still being trained for the role. The offers of the private sector firms attract them. This is illustrated in the following extract:

*"Instant Omanization in my opinion is impossible. For example, in pure banking we cannot replace foreign specialists with Omanis unless the Omanis undergo an intensive development process that enables them to take charge. This takes time. Sometimes those under training would find better offers and would shift. That means we return to the first quadrant where we need to find new Omanis and invest in them, hoping they stay with us"* **Middle Manager's Response**

Second, managers try to convey the principles of Omanization to employees during the hiring process, hoping to develop a sense of commitment in newly hired employees. Accordingly, they use employment interviews to inform potential Omani employees that they intend to

replace foreigners. Respondents pointed out that, on the whole, foreigners tend to be appointed to higher ranks with higher salaries. The following extract shows this;

*“In the appointment interview we are telling the potential employees that we are appointing them to replace the foreigners and sort of cultivating the sense of commitment to the state”*  
**Middle Manager’s Response**

As discussed throughout the theorization, the superiority of private sector remuneration was seen to be a major issue in Omanization. Senior managers reported that private sector firms wanted to cut the costs of up-skilling new employees. Hence, they fish for fully trained, highly skilled employees in the public sector by offering attractive salaries. This motive can be disguised as compliance to Omanization Law. Moreover, private sector firms are motivated to offer better salaries due to their commitment to the achievement of economic and financial objectives. As presented earlier, the majority of quitters are high performers. Thus, in the opinion of these managers Omanization played a role in increasing employee turnover. The following two extracts illustrate this:

*“In order to achieve their economic and financial objectives, and because they are required – by law – to employ a high percentage of Omani nationals (as part of the overall Omanization policy), they have sought to offer employees in different government institutions attractive packages. Hence, these employees, being attracted by the new offers, find themselves in the position of departing from their government jobs and seeking employment in one of the new forces in the private sectors”*  
**Middle Manager’s Response**

*“I think that Omanization as a policy has contributed to an increase in employee turnover since public sector organizations are required to employ Omanis. They are always profit oriented and would seek to employ readymade employees plus they can afford to pay more than public sector organizations can pay”*  
**Middle Manager’s Response**

A further issue was the extent to which Omanization was simply a means of increasing the quantity of Omanis employed, without paying attention to the quality of these employees. There was a perception that the government used quota achievements as a means of improving their political power:

*“One ex-minister was manipulating the Omanization figures in the media to convince the political power he was working hard to accomplish the targets. I think we should review this policy and focus on the quality of employees, not just the quantities employed by the private sector”*  
**Middle Manager’s Response**

#### **Comparisons and Conclusions on the ‘Omanization Theme’**

Some consistency exists in senior and middle managers’ responses. In general, both groups agreed with the principle of Omanization. However, they reflected real concerns about its



effects, particularly in terms of quantity as opposed to quality. They believed the policy required an official review. Both groups agreed that Omanization is implicated in employee turnover in the public sector. Finally, the manipulation of the achieved Omanization figures by some managers in order to please the government was a real concern.

This situation is not one that is familiar to Westerners. The labour forces in Arab Gulf Countries are overpopulated with foreign labour, according to Al-Lamki (1998), *see chapters 3 & 4 for more details*. There are possible negative consequences of having higher ratios of foreign labour than local labour in the workforce (Al Dosary, 2004). These consequences relate to cultural, economic, demographic, security and even political aspects. I think the localization of jobs is not a convergent issue between Omani and Western contexts. The divergence, I believe, stems from different aspects like the objectives of applying this act, and the labour market structure. For example, the objectives of Omanization policy as pointed out in the Omani economic vision 2020 are: (i) to raise Omanization ratios from 68% in 1995 to 95% by 2020 in the public sector, (ii) to elevate the ratio of Omanis working in the private sector from 15% in 1995 to 75% by 2020, and (iii) to increase the manpower ratio of Omanis in the total population from 17% in 1995 to 50% by 2020. These ratios show also that Oman relies heavily on expatriates in both the private and the public sectors.

The Western context does not appear to reflect similar objectives or problems. Countries such as the UK and economic zones such as the EU have regulations aimed at controlling employment of foreigners. Information from the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development OECD (2001) shows that the ratios of foreign labour in the Western context are not very high. For example, expatriates represent respectively: 1.7%, 3.9%, 6.1%, 11.7% of the total labour force in Italy, UK, France, and USA. Thus, it is suggested that there is a divergence between the two contexts with regard to the objectives of regulating employment and nationalizing jobs. In the Omani context a public policy like Omanization is directed to employ national citizens and give them preferential treatment. However, there are different calls from senior and middle managers with regard to this policy. Some of them called for it to be reviewed, some said it contributed to increasing employee turnover, *see sections senior managers' data on Omanization theme and Middle managers' data on Omanization theme above this subsection*. In the Western context the ratios of expatriates do not represent a big issue or threat to their labour market structures as their percentages are low compared with percentages of national workers. Moreover, in the Western context of the USA, for instance, they have opposed preferential treatment in hiring on the basis of national

origin by imposing affirmative action through the civil rights act of 1964. Analysis now follows of the ‘Foreign Investment Laws Theme’.

### 8.5.2. Senior Managers’ Responses about the ‘Foreign Investment Laws Theme’.

This theme is located under the regulative pillar because the Omani government has imposed and enforces foreign investment laws to attract foreign investors. Foreign investors are obliged to conform to these laws as well as to the Omanization law. The laws are very attractive to foreign investors. Figure 4 illustrates the Ministry of National Economy’s emphasis on the positive aspects of the foreign investment laws. Senior managers’ claimed that although these laws are for the good of the Omani market, they nevertheless have negative consequences for the public sector, most obviously, that of increasing employee turnover.

In fact, like Omanization, foreign investment laws are seen as a double-edged sword. A positive aspect of the law is in attracting international firms to enter the Omani Market, which is economically desirable and creates jobs in the labour market. More negatively, these jobs are often filled by highly skilled and educated Omanis, not those requiring training and education. Such individuals are frequently poached from the public sector.

#### Foreign Investment

##### Incentives for foreign investment in Oman’s Securities Market:

- No tax on capital returns or profits.
- No restrictions on capital and profit transfers.
- No restrictions on exchange processes.
- The convertibility of the Omani Rial and fixed exchange rate with US\$.
- Low corporate profit tax.
- Foreign investors can invest in the shares of listed companies or investment Funds without prior permission.
- There is an independent regulatory and supervisory authority for organizing, monitoring, and supervising Muscat Securities Market to ensure the protection of investors.

##### The advantages of investment in the Sultanate of Oman:

One of the most progressive countries in the Middle East, the Sultanate has worked at creating the right climate for new investments by developing a free, competitive economy with equal opportunities for all, and shaping laws and regulations that encourage enterprise.

##### Advantages of Investment in the Sultanate:

- Free economy system.
- Political and economic stability.
- Up to 100% foreign ownership.
- No restriction on capital and profit transfers.
- No personal income tax
- Provision of soft loans with low interest rates and easy payback periods.
- Corporate tax holiday of up to 10 years.
- Export credit insurance through the Export Guarantee and Financing Agency.
- Specific laws to protect foreign investors’ rights.

Figure 5. The advantages of investing in Oman. Source: Retrieved from Capital Market Authority Official website as May 20th 2011 (<http://www.cma.gov.om/template/default.aspx?c=5&s+90>)

The extracts below illustrate respondents' views of the foreign investments laws, drawn from Table 8.

*“The organizations in the private sectors, especially the international ones, are benefiting from the good environment for running their businesses, with attractive regulatory incentives for foreign investment. According to this law they can own up to 100% of their business in the Sultanate. Moreover, they are exempted from paying taxes for a period of time of 10 years. So, they do not really have any extraordinary or challenging costs that would deter them from investing the Sultanate ... Instead of investing in new employees they attract those highly skilled employees by giving salaries that are triple or quadruple in some cases their salaries from the government”* **Senior Manager**

*“Foreign investments attracted high capabilities by offering higher rewards to them”* **Senior Manager**

*“we should get benefits from them, as they are getting benefits from the government, by having Omani employees working with them to gain financial and other experience”* **Senior Manager**

The general features of the Western and Omani economic systems differ. The Omani economy, as mentioned in chapter four, is highly dependent on revenues from its natural resources of oil and gas. It depends also on foreign labour. This turns the society into a consumer rather than a productive society. On the other hand, Western states, which diversified their economic resources, are not dependent on international labour; hence, they have become productive societies. In the West, there are strict laws specifically governing taxation and interest rates; in advanced capitalist societies direct and indirect taxation is typically one of the major sources of government revenue. Foreign firms wishing to invest in the West do not enjoy similarly attractive laws to those offered in Oman.

Accordingly, foreign investors must comply with local laws and pay their due taxes. Foreign workers pay taxes on their income that may account for 40% of their annual income in countries such as the UK. These kinds of restrictions distinguish the Western economies from Oman. The Omani economy focuses on attracting foreign investments while, in Western economies, there is a tendency for home companies to invest outside of their geographical borders. Indeed, the majority of multinational and international investments involve firms from the West, in their pursuit of new markets, cheap labour, and facilities that will enable them to expand their sales and profits; see Johnson & Turner (2003). Thus, it is suggested that in this respect divergence exists between the two contexts.

### 8.5.3. Grass Roots Employees' Responses about the 'Civil Services' Legislation Theme'

This theme is located under the regulative institutional pillar since respondents believed that civil service legislation reflected definite rules and laws. Table 28 illustrates the data regarding the civil service regulations. While many employees believed that civil service regulations were positive in principle, in practice these laws were poorly applied by managers. The following extract illustrates this point.

*“Unfortunately, neither the laws of the civil services that I know of, nor the people who are supposed to apply them, work on behalf of the employee. These laws do not serve to increase the financial or job satisfaction of the employees. Additionally, they neglect employees' efforts and give no incentives. At the same time, counterparts in the private sector are enjoying high salaries and incentives”* **Shop-Floor Employee**

Public sector employees are sometimes seconded to the private sector. In these circumstances, civil service regulations do not prevent them from actually taking up an offer of employment from the seconded organization. Some employees saw this as a mistake:

*“I think my ex-employers' major mistake was they did not protect themselves when they agreed with my existing employer to proceed at the outset with a secondment contract. To clarify, they did not put any binding conditions on that contract that prevented me from moving permanently to that organization”* **Shop-Floor Employee**

Nonetheless, this lack of regulation makes sense in that Oman is obliged to conform to the World Trade Organization WTO regulations which prevent organizations from exerting any kind of pressure over employees' freedom of choice. Moreover, according to Khan (2011), Oman has to conform to provisions of the US-Oman free trade agreement (FTA) signed in 2006. Accordingly, a public sector organization is obliged either to offer an employee better inducements or let him/her leave to obtain these. This argument is illustrated in the following extract:

*“According to the world trade organization treatment which we are part of now, you can't, as an employer, impose any conditions that prevent employees from moving to another organization. You are either expected to give him/her a better offer or let him/her go”* **Shop-Floor Employee**

Respondents were frustrated with management's manipulation of the existing civil service legislation. For instance, sometimes an employee would be entitled to promotion, but this would not happen until a decision from top management was issued confirming this. Although promotion decisions by top management are covered by the civil service laws, there are no time stipulations. In practice, employees may meet all the requirements for promotion,

but the decision can be delayed for years in some cases. Thus, at times it seems there is inconsistency between the written laws and their application, perhaps created by financial restrictions.

*“the strange thing, at least to me, is that you might be eligible for promotion according to the laws laid down by the legislature but yet you are denied that promotion because of other procedures like waiting for a decision from the president of the institution”* **Shop-Floor Employee**

## **8.6. Conclusion**

Investigation and theorization of the data using the regulative pillar in the Omani public sector led me to certain conclusions. For instance, the Omani regulative system is described as weak and it needs revision. This conclusion is consistent with the finding of Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006) that labour laws are weak and need to be revised. Their weaknesses stem from the poor planning of regulation, which creates labour problems. In Oman, managerial action, whether in the public or private sector, complies totally with the regulations of Omanization and the foreign investment laws. However, due to the weak remuneration system in the public sector, attractive compensation schemes in the private sector and the tendency of managers in the private sector to attract readymade employees from the public sector talent pool, the employee turnover rates increase.

The investigation of this pillar revealed some junctures that explain employees' behaviour and reveal the weaknesses of the Omani public sector's regulative system. For example, the managers' tactic of postponing promotion decisions, in spite of employees' entitlement, led staff to feel unfairly treated. In addition, as the above mentioned example affirms, the employees do not experience financial or job satisfaction. Moreover, the government bodies who second employees do not receive any protection from the law against host companies who subsequently employ these workers permanently after the end of the secondment period, attracting them with tempting benefits.

In fact, in contrast to the situation in the Omani context, Western contemporary systems for regulation of human resources practices appear to be consistently applied and based on appropriate measurements and planning of human resources needs and expectations. Jackson & Schuler (1990) argues that a human resource planner should provide information and make plans about hiring, employee promotions and rates of employee turnover. Moreover, Westerners are more confident with their abilities and skills. These individualistic

characteristics of Westerners as pursuers of self interest provide direction for their behaviour regarding public policies and HR practices.

In contrast, Al-Omar (1996) contends that, in Oman, regulation of the economy is weak. The Omani government has adopted public policies that have negative side effects on employee turnover, for example, the Omanization and foreign investment laws. The Omani and Western governments do not share the same objectives in nationalizing jobs. Although the civil service laws encompass certain well-structured human resources strategic plans, such as promotion policy, managers appear only to pay lip service to them as, unfortunately, the grass roots employees complained that these policies lacked practical application. Thus, the research suggests a divergent relationship exists between the Omani and Western contexts regarding the regulative institutional pillar. The following chapter analyzes themes influenced by the normative institutional pillar.

## **Chapter 9: Theorization (3): Convergence between Omani and Western Contexts from Normative Perspective**

### **9.1. Introduction**

This chapter focuses on analyzing themes involved under the normative pillar. The logic of doing this is similar to the approach adopted in the previous chapter while analyzing the cognitive pillar. First there is discussion of why a particular theme is located under the normative pillar. This is followed by reflection of respondents' thoughts on the theme and finally these are compared with the Western view on that theme.

The normative pillar in this work is simply illustrated. It focuses on reflecting or interpreting the actions of respondents that are initiated normatively. The sociologists and proponents of this pillar assert that social life or action is informed by normative rules (e.g. Scott, 1995). Compliance with these rules stems from their prescriptive, evaluative and obligatory features. In addition, actors' conformity to certain behaviours is directed by morals and binding social obligations, according to Scott (1995). Hence, actions are either morally accepted and expected or morally unacceptable. For example, in Oman there is an accepted and expected dress code. There is also a code for non-Muslims in Oman prohibiting them from eating in daytime in public in the Holy Fasting month of Ramadhan. Breaching this code is morally unacceptable.

### **9.2 Normative Pillar and the Themes of this Research**

The challenge is to find out the roles or norms in themes that influence social behaviour or action. Scott (1995) contended that normative systems are not only concerned with defining goals and objectives. They are involved in constructing the best and most appropriate ways of achieving these identified goals. For example, suppose that the normative system requires that a certain organization conducts its procedures to some extent in an ethical manner. The system defines exactly the ethical conduct in that context and explains precisely how it must be practiced.

Furthermore, the normative themes can be identified by defining the normative judgments (value judgments given by respondents) that formulate respondents' actions. For example, let us say that respondents think that their financial compensation should be improved through reforms to the remuneration system. This is a normative statement implying that employees of the public sector need better financial remuneration. Hence, the financial problem theme falls under the normative pillar. In short, the logic used in locating themes and analyzing

them under the normative pillar depends on how they are normatively constructed. I argue in this chapter that concepts of organizational norms are convergent between the Omani and Western contexts. I think it is very difficult to trace and make comparisons between Omani and Western contexts with regard to the normative pillars. This is due to the contingent nature of application of norms that I think cannot be generalizable in all organizations in any context. Moreover, the studies covering employees' or quitters' assessments about HR functions such as exit interviews are rare. Analysis of the themes of normative pillars takes the form shown in columns three, four and five of the following table 41.

Category	Similarities across all categories	Similarities between two categories	Differences across all categories
Senior management	Financial Factor Management Thinking	Not Reported	Communication Commitment
Middle management		Not Reported	Attempts to solve Performance Appraisal
Employees		Middle management and employees (Exit interviewees)	Working Environment/ Training/ Decision Making/ Unequal Salary/Career Path

Table 42. Normative Themes

### 9.3. Similar themes across all categories

#### 9.3.1. Financial Problem Theme

This theme was reflected by the three categories of respondents: senior management, middle management, and shop floor employees. This research argues that this theme falls under the normative pillar because respondents from all three categories saw the employee turnover situation as influenced by the compensation system. For example, the grass roots employees thought that the remuneration system needed reforming, such as by increasing their salaries. The middle management thought that top management should do something about the remuneration system. They believed that employee turnover rates were bound to increase due to poor remuneration. The top managers believed they would be able to retain employees using strategies other than payment, such as enhancing job security and providing better pension schemes in the public sector.

The following discussion offers further insights into these expectations and perceived causes of employee turnovers within the data are identified. These perceived causes of employee



turnovers are then compared across the Omani and Western contexts in order to shed further light on the research questions. The research questions are concerned with investigation of the convergence, divergence, and/or crossvergence between the Omani context and Western context. The senior managers' data are analyzed first, followed by the data on middle managers, and lastly the shop floor employees' responses are analyzed. Comparison is made of the views among the three categories before they are compared with Western views.

**Analysis of Top Management Views (financial problem theme)**

There are several expectations of senior managers in relation to employee turnover. For example, the senior HR managers are expected to examine, review, and evaluate the public plans and policies with regard to human resources (Ministry of Civil Services). Furthermore, they are expected to play a major role in activities, such as planning and proposing regulations, which direct and control manpower of the public sector. The roles they are expected to fulfill include examining, evaluating and proposing, when necessary, regulations that concern the compensation system, pension systems, and other financial motivational incentives. The Sultan of Oman, middle management, grass-roots employees, and the community are the salient actors who hold these expectations. These expectations usually are not anticipative but normatively prescriptive, as contended by Scott (1995). They specify what an actor is expected to do. Hence, the jobs, roles, specifications, and authority systems make up some of the normative indicators of what is expected from managers.

The senior management respondents discussed the compensation system in the public sector. The data indicates that these managers see their roles in terms of the normative rules specified above. The argument is, with regard to their roles, it is not enough to just understand the problem, as they are also supposed to examine, review and evaluate the human resources practices in the public sector. Furthermore, they are expected to propose appropriate solutions to problems:

*“We promote in the induction period of time for new employees, and in the exit interviews, and conduct seminars and workshops ... the idea that the public sector is more secure than the private sector from several aspects. For example, we have good retirement schemes while there are no such ones in the private sector. Furthermore, we have job security and there is no danger of the government going broke”* **Senior Management Respondent**

*“The solution as it is applied in some of the Western countries is to define the rare specialties and give rarity allowances”* **Senior Management Respondent**

The two statements above, however, were contradicted by other respondents. As I discuss below, the shop floor employees claimed that exit interviews in the public sector were non-existent. Furthermore, other senior managers made no mention of retirement schemes and job security. The exit interviews as they are understood in the West are dealt with later on in this chapter. The majority of the senior management respondents were pessimistic that solutions to the compensation issue could be found, as is illustrated by the following extracts taken from Table 7.

*“I think financial issues are the most important problem that we are facing in this respect. You know... dear brother... the government depends mainly on the oil and gas for its funds, plus we are a developing country which means we have a lot of projects for developing the infrastructure of the country, into which most of the resources are directed. For example, the government has many projects for developing health, education, paved roads, telecommunications, and electricity services ... As I stated earlier and I repeat, we, frankly, as a government cannot compete with the private sector in the reward terms given to employees. Although the government has increased the public sector employees’ salaries in the range of 15% to 25% of the basic salary in the last two years, I think that is not enough to compete financially. Once again, government has limited resources and too many infrastructure developmental projects”* **Senior Manager Respondent**

Senior managers, on the whole, reflected the following when talking about employee turnover;

1. *We have limited resources*
2. *We have so many development projects in Oman*
3. *There is a lack of budget*
4. *Public sector cannot provide better financial schemes*
5. *People face the challenges of high cost of living*
6. *We cannot restrict their movement to the private sector while they are committed to providing better living standards for their families and for themselves*

As can be seen, the economic situation is considered to be the biggest problem. Consequently, the key terms in the above sequence are: limited resources, development projects, financial schemes, costs of living, and better living standards. These suggest that the economic situation is believed to be a strong factor informing the decision to undertake certain behaviour. Economic or financial factors were seen to have a range of influences:

- *“We will incur a great loss operationally and financially by losing them to the private sector”*

- *“The talent drain consequences are different and I shall mention here the financial loss”*
- *“The motive for most of them was to find an employer who paid more”*
- *“I do believe that organizations should be aware of the need to retain their employees in the face of the danger presented by some rival or competitor using their financial advantage to absorb competencies”*

As these extracts illustrate, a large number of senior managers asserted that the financial factor was the main factor behind employee turnover. Unfortunately, there did not seem to be any real attempts from senior management to solve this problem, such as those proposed formally by the government for discussion and application. Senior management respondents appeared to be conservative in their views about what could be done. For example, they spoke about the scarcity of resources and never mentioned some proposals of solving this as diversification of resources.

According to Gylafson (2004), diversification has a positive impact on economic growth. Although most countries in the West do not have as many natural resources as Arab Gulf countries, they enjoy better economic growth and GDP, as stated by Sachs and Warner (2001). Some nations, such as Canada and Norway, do have enormous oil reserves. Nonetheless, they are diversifying their resources and do not depend mainly on oil production. For instance, the respective contributions of oil revenues of Canada and Norway to their GDP are 4% and less than 25%. Diversifying is a strategy for assuring sustainable development and has enabled these nations to be considered among the world's advanced countries.

On the other hand, despite being among a cluster of states that are producing most of the planet's oil, Oman is considered to be a developing state. Ironically, the Oman Vision Forum 2020, which was held in 1995 in Muscat, asserted the importance of diversifying the national income (Ministry of National Economy, 1995). Now, 16 years on from that strategic plan, senior management officers are still talking about the limits and scarcity of resources. The senior managers are not directly blamed for the failure to diversify as this normally is a macroeconomic policy guided by the government. However, the failure to implement the diversification plans approved in 1995 might have increased the senior managers' pessimism about solving the financial incentives problem.

Some of the senior managers did stress the importance of infrastructure projects in the Sultanate to economic development. Canning and Pedroni (1999) and Heintz et al. (2009)

assert that infrastructure projects are very important to national performance. Hence, there is a convergence between the Omani and Western context with regard to the importance of the infrastructure in boosting the economic growth.

Finally, there is one more similarity between Omani and Western contexts. The top management respondents argued that the public sector cannot compete with the financial schemes offered by the private sector (see Table 7). They admitted that the private sector has the advantage in terms of the remuneration system. Some respondents claimed that employees who shift to the private sector sometimes receive double, triple, or even quadruple the salary in their previous post.

The Western context seems to manifest similar attitudes toward compensation for employees. For instance, Bender and Heywood (2010) argued that in general the local and national government employees in the USA are better rewarded than their counterparts in the private sector. Nevertheless, they found that among employees with similar educational and training qualifications employees in the private sector were paid more than their counterparts in the public sector.

I think there is an obvious dilemma about solving employee turnover problem in the Omani context. From one side, senior managers, as mentioned at the beginning of chapter eight, see it as a healthy phenomenon. Furthermore, some of them still think reactively by claiming it is not time to make an intervention as indicators of employee turnover are not high. Moreover, they are cognitively conditioned by Islamic orders not to stop people from aiming for a better life. In addition, they see, as indicated in the latter part of chapter eight, that regulations and practices of HR like Omanization constitute a problem and need to be revised. In spite of these cognitive and regulative issues, senior managers are normatively expected to intervene and solve the employee turnover. However, senior managers acknowledge their inability to make interventions due to the limited financial resources they have for upgrading the remuneration system. In fact, the economic factor was mentioned in chapters three and four as one of the major factors shaping HR in GCC countries, including Oman. I think that without trying to think creatively out of the constraining boxes, the senior managers will do nothing about the employee turnover problem.

#### **Analysis of Middle Management Views (financial problem theme)**

Members of middle management are expected to fulfill many different roles. The expectations are normatively prescribed in their job roles, descriptions, and specifications.

Their roles are very important since they impinge directly on the grass roots employees' day to day transactions. For example, they are expected to coordinate with their peers from other Directorates to conduct employment needs planning. In addition, they are expected to set bases and standards for employment and to undertake supervisory roles. They are also expected to tackle the problems that concern employees and work processes and propose appropriate solutions. Moreover, they are expected to undertake important tasks such as performance appraisal that have motivational implications, see Ministry of Civil Services. Middle managers' responses suggested that they did make attempts to solve the employee turnover problem. The relevant comments were gathered in a separate theme which is discussed later on in this chapter.

Regarding the employee turnover problem, middle management respondents asserted that financial compensation is the main problem. Table 17 gives more insights about middle managers' responses regarding this issue. In fact, the data drawn from these respondents are similar to the findings in a range of different studies conducted in the Western context. These studies contended that inadequate remuneration systems are the major reason for employee turnover. For example, Martin (1993); Munasinghe (2000); and Fochsen et al. (2005) argued the existence of a negative relationship between employee turnover and the remuneration system. Accordingly, they asserted that employee turnover would be high if salaries were low.

However, some additional and important insights can be drawn from the middle management data. For instance, some of the middle management respondents acknowledged that "quitters" were highly qualified, high performers, but did not receive competitive salaries. Some Western studies conclude that the aforementioned factors are negatively related to employee turnover. For instance, Marsh & Mannari (1977) suggested the existence of a negative relationship between job performance and employee turnover. Hence, convergence is apparent between the Omani and Western contexts with regard to the importance of qualifications, performance, and salaries and their relationship with redundancy.

There is also divergence between Omani and Western contexts in how managers evaluate loyalty. For instance, some respondents remarked that when people quit the public sector their loyalty is not questioned. See for example the following extract from table 17;

*"We are not questioning employees' loyalty but the increase in prices is encouraging people to seek the best deal"* **Line Manager**

Loyalty in this context is an interchangeable term with commitment. The decision to leave is never linked to disloyalty. Rather, it is linked to people's right to seek better rewards that would assure a better life. In the West decisions to quit are often considered to signify disloyalty to an organization. Moreover, disloyalty is seen to be a product of an organization's failure to provide better incentives (Chen et al., 2002).

Chen et al. (2002) suggested that organizational commitment (loyalty) has a positive relationship with motivation, job performance, and job satisfaction. But these have negative relations with redundancy (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004; Marsh & Mannari, 1977; and Mobley, 1977). This is somehow valid in the public sector because of its inability to provide better incentive schemes. But managers reflected that as long as employees continue working within the state then their loyalty is not questioned. The next section analyzes grass roots employees' views about the financial problem as the main reason for the action of leaving public sector.

#### **Analysis of Shop Floor employees' views (financial problem theme)**

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, shop floor employees committed themselves to accomplishing certain targets in their careers and lives (*see Personal Planning Theme, Chapter 8*). As was also discussed in the foregoing chapter, some of the influences on this theme can be seen to stem from the cognitive pillar. However, the data suggest that the normative pillar may also be influential. Grass roots employees, for instance, had definite expectations about the incentives system that they believed the public sector should be obligated to provide. They were not satisfied with the incentive/financial schemes of the public sector.

The following analysis reflects the employees' opinions on the financial and incentive systems in the public sector. This helps to explain their actions in leaving their ex-employers. The data from employees is shown in Table 26. These findings are then compared with those of Western studies on the wages-employee turnover relation. Subsequently, any similarities or differences between the Omani and Western contexts are identified.

One of the grass roots employees said the top manager in her previous post told her explicitly that she was too young to receive a higher salary. This response reflects the fact that, in the Omani context, some managers see financial incentives as linked to age or tenure and not to performance. Performance, the focus of incentives in many of Western compensation systems

according to Beer and Cannon (2004), is not considered as the base for pay entitlement in the Omani remuneration system.

Hinrichs (1969) argued that young people usually have significantly higher expectations about increases in salary than older staff. Topel and Ward (1992) asserted that an employee's salary usually increases by 66% in the first ten years during a career lasting 40 years. Accordingly, employees tend to have high expectations about salary increases in their first ten years. In the West, it has been shown, according to Beer and Cannon (2004), that organizations that invest in performance-based compensation gain net returns equal to 134% of that investment. Thus, pay is attached to performance, not just to tenure. Apparently, this is divergent from the pay system applied in the Omani public sector.

Another issue is that employees consider the existing promotions and benefits systems in the public sector as discouraging higher productivity. They are pointing here to the low inducements employees receive as incentives. They echo senior managers by blaming this situation on scarce resources and limited budgets. Indeed, in some cases, respondents argued, management was cutting off benefits and postponing promotions to cut costs. Although there is a specific rule about promotions in the Omani Civil Service's Law issued by the Royal Decree (120/2004), employees seem not to be satisfied with it. The relationship between tenure and promotion was seen to be particularly problematic and unfairly dealt with. Hence, regardless of how exceptional an employee's performance might be, promotion is not available until, for instance, they have been in a post for 4 years. Thus the inducements offered are not aligned with their expectations. The private sector's inducements, however, are satisfying to them. Accordingly, they take the step of leaving the public sector. A new post in the private sector may shorten the career life plan by about 15 years as one respondent claimed (see Table 26). The salary of the new post is equal to that of a general manager in the public sector, one respondent argued.

How can that situation be compared with Western views about the promotions-redundancy relationship? There is a negative relationship between promotion and employee turnover, according to Porter and Steers (1973). Other scholars, such as Trevor, Gerhart, & Boudreau (1997), suggest that promotions and compensation play a major role in defining the performance-employee turnover relationship. Therefore, there appears to be couple of conclusions here. First of all, I think there is a divergence in managers' attitudes and behaviours with regard to promotion system in the Omani and Western contexts. The Omani

context uses tenure as it is apparent from responses, though the Civil Service Law states that promotion is based 70% on merits and 30% on tenure, as the primary basis for promotion. The western context, in contrast, uses performance. Second, there is a suggestive convergence in employees' expectations and behavior with regard to promotion-employee turnover relation in both Omani and Western contexts.

In conclusion, the three categories agreed that financial compensation is a major problem that informs the employee's decision to leave the public sector. Indeed, this supports the findings of many Western studies. In Western contexts the compensation system plays a major role in predicting employee turnover, see for example, Martin (1993); Munasinghe (2000); and Fochsen *et al.* (2005). However, the three groups of respondents understand the role of financial compensation in employee turnover somewhat differently. For instance, senior managers have a passive attitude towards intervening in this situation, blaming the economic situation in Oman for creating the lack of financial incentives available in the public sector. This differs to attitudes common in the West, where, in the view of Pennings (1998), senior managers tend to believe they can have some role in responding to socio-economic problems. The differences between the respondents and the extent to which their responses correspond to the Western context are illustrated in the following table 42.

Category	Perceived causes of employee turnover	Omani Context	Western Context	Relation Cell(3) Vs C(4)
Senior Management	Problem Solving	Not Responsive	Responsive	Divergent
	Infrastructure priority	Has priority	Has priority	Convergent
	Scarce resources	Limited Resources	Diversification of Resources	Divergent
	Competing with Private sector	Cannot compete	Can Compete	Divergent
Middle Management	Quitters are highly qualified, high performers, got competitive offers	Positive	positive	Convergent
	Loyalty	Quitting is not linked to loyalty	Quitting shows disloyalty motivated by low payment	Divergent
Shop Floor employees	Payment	Linked to age and tenure	Linked to performance	Divergent
	Inducements & Productivity	Low lead to low productivity	High lead to high productivity	Divergent
	Promotion	30% Linked to tenure, 70% to merits	Linked to Performance	Partially convergent

Table 43. Comparing Junctures found in 'Financial Problems' themes' analysis between Omani and Western Contexts.



### 9.3.2. Management Style Theme

#### Top Management Respondents' Data about 'Management Style'

It has been mentioned in earlier sections that top managers have prescriptive and normative roles. One of their responsibilities is the development of appropriate responses to socio-economic problems. Therefore, in normal situations they are expected to examine, evaluate and propose solutions to phenomena such as employee turnover. In fact, there was no consensus among respondents in their reactions to the employee turnover problem (see Table 12). The following analysis reflects how senior management behaved with regard to this phenomenon.

One top manager suggested that employee turnover was healthy and actively encouraged employees to move into the private sector. The following extract illustrates this.

*"I encourage movement because most of people who shift are highly experienced and we need leading capabilities in the private sectors who can participate in making opportunities for Omanis who replace them in the public sector and Omanis who apply for jobs in the private sector"* **Senior Manager's Feedback**

This respondent gave two particular justifications for his viewpoint. First, quitters are high performers and their move to the private sector would mean that key Omani employees would gain employment in the private sector, which is seen to be positive. However, as mentioned in chapter one, none of the Western studies discussed considered encouragement of people to leave their organizations to be a good thing. Instead, the studies focus on involuntary turnover in terms of downsizing and cutting costs (Barrick et al., 1994). Indeed, Barrick et al. (1994) argue that an organization normally does not lay off employees if this action is avoidable. Thus, this illustrates some divergence in senior management actions between the Omani and Western contexts in terms of their general attitude to voluntary turnover. However, I think this divergence might not be absolute and might be confined to an objective like Omanization policy. Hence, the senior managers might behave just as their counterparts in the Western context when Omanization targets are reached.

The second critical point in the data from senior management relates to styles of leadership and management thinking in the public sector. Several respondents were concerned about the lack of progressive and forward thinking among senior managers. The following excerpts from Table 12 illustrate this problem.

*"I tell you frankly that the managers or leaders of the public institutions must have the necessary capabilities and skills to lead their organizations ... We really need innovation in*

*leadership styles in the public sector. The new generation of leaders should be equipped with enthusiasm, initiative, new approaches to administration, knowledge...etc.”* **Senior Management Respondent**

*“I don’t think saturation of the labour market is the case, but the issue is the maturation of management thinking. Once we have this I think many of the administration problems in the Sultanate will disappear”* **Senior Management Respondent**

Indeed, the data is suggestive of a leadership problem in the public sector, with existing styles seen as outdated and immature. Moreover, there is a claim of the existence of a skills gap between the aging leaders and newer staff. Leadership style is important for satisfactory employment relations, according to Graen, Liden, and Hoel (1982); and Branham (2005). Hence, it can be claimed there is a convergence between the Omani and Western context with regard to the importance of leadership and its relation to the retention of employees. However, there is divergence in as much as there appears to be a leadership problem in the Omani context. This conclusion was reinforced by Badawy (1980), who concludes there is a difference between the western and Middle Eastern leadership styles, considering the Omani context among these Middle Eastern contexts. He argued that Middle Eastern leadership style is characterized by being highly authoritarian, giving many managerial commands, and strict instructions. Thus, in a Middle Eastern context there is great emphasis on leader personality. Moreover, I mentioned in chapters three and four that social factors interfere with HR functions in the GCC countries, including Oman. Hence, leadership styles in GCC countries are distorted and conditioned by the surrounding social forces. The Western leadership style, on the other hand, as Badawy (1980) argued, emphasizes more the leader’s style and performance rather than his/her personality.

A final point to note is the call from senior managers for lessons to be learned from private sector practices. They assert that a gap exists between the two sectors that urgently need to be bridged. Indeed, in the view of Heracleous and Johnston (2009), the philosophy of exhorting the public sector to learn from the private sector has its roots in Western studies, although they also claim that some public sector organizations can teach important lessons to the private sector. Hence, the drawing of theoretically absolute conclusions about which sector is superior in terms of management practices is impossible. In general, the research suggests convergence between the Omani and Western contexts in that the orthodoxy is that the public sector should learn from the private sector. There is some consensus on the view that the

public sector is dysfunctional: too bureaucratic and inertia-ridden (Heracleous and Johnston, 2009). An exploration follows of middle management views on management styles.

#### **Middle Management Respondents' Views about Management Styles**

The middle management views about this theme are shown in Table 19. Middle management articulated several factors that encouraged employee turnover in the Omani context. For example, they mentioned the lack of appropriate HR practices in areas such as career path and human resources needs analysis, training, bureaucracy and routine, unresponsiveness from top management; the autocratic behavior of managers ; effective and ineffective managers; lack of trust in employees, and lack of job descriptions; see table 36. It is worth mentioning here that some of these problems, such as training, career path, bureaucracy and routine, are discussed separately in a later chapter as part of the working environment theme. The unresponsiveness of top management has been discussed in the previous section.

There was an indication of an autocratic style of management in the public sector, particularly in top management. In fact, some leaders had previously held high ranks in the Army or other Security organizations, although respondents did not actually point this out. For example, the ex-minister of Civil Service held the Chief Police Officer for long time before coming minister of civil services. The ex-minster of the Manpower was a highly ranked officer in highly recognized security organization in Oman. This style of management relies on the rather inflexible doctrine of control and command that is typical of classic military management. This is also typical of extremely hierarchical organizations. In such organizations creativity and innovation decreases as you move down the pyramid of the organization, according to Whyte (1957). Systems of communication are generally the subject of much criticism in such contexts. Consequently, the environment is discouraging, which generates dissatisfaction and intentions to leave.

In contrast, in many of the Western contexts, organizational structures tend to be flatter and more flexible, and as they are more friendly to employees; ultimately there is less employee turnover, as contended by Dobrev (2006). Ashkenas, Ulrich, Jick, & Kerr (1995); and Mabey, Salaman, & Storey (200) described the evolution of the organizational structure term in a Western context. They showed that organizational structures started to be flatter in the 1980s as many organizations in the West dispensed with some layers of organizational structure. For example, many organizations dispensed with the middle management layer. Badawy (1980) contended that organizational structures in the West are characterized by being more

flexible in delegating authority, have less bureaucracy and fairly decentralized. The Middle Eastern organizational structures are over-centralized, extremely bureaucratic, authority and power is confined to top management, organizational environments are ambiguous and unpredictable and display ambiguous relationships, see chapters three and four. Therefore, there is divergence in organizational structures between the Omani and Western contexts.

A further perceived cause of employee turnover issue lies in claims expressed by some respondents of the mutual lack of trust between employees and management. Management, in general, tends to trust expatriate employees more than native Omanis, and some managers have poor levels of education and this is reflected in harsh management styles. In fact, Duggar (2010) argues that trust is built by people on the basis of integrity. In turn, integrity develops through shared values. One of the positive outcomes of such a culture, as argued by Duggar (2010) and Turknett and Turknett (2006), is a reduction in employee turnover rates. Thus it seems there is convergence between Omani and Western views regarding the importance of building trust and its potential effect on employee turnover. Divergence occurs in the application of building trust as it seems Omani managers are able to produce the rhetoric of the importance of trust but do not apply this in reality.

The third issue to be discussed here is the lack of job descriptions in the Omani context described by the respondents. Actually, these responses are supported by Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006), who argued that most of the employees in many departments in Oman do not have a career path. Logically, without proper job descriptions, employees will not be able to conduct their jobs effectively. The job description is, therefore, a very important document. De Nobile and McCormick (2010) argued that an unclear or non-existent job description leads to role ambiguity. Ivancevich and Donnelly (1974); Cotton and Tuttle (1986), and De Croon et al. (2004) postulated a positive relationship between role ambiguity and employee turnover. Job descriptions help to increase employees' certainties about their duties and tasks, thereby decreasing the anxiety that role ambiguity causes and that leads to an increase in employee turnover. Hence, there is convergence between the Omani and Western contexts about the importance of providing employees with job descriptions. Apparently, the findings suggest the Omani public sector has failed to meet its plans of providing its employees with job descriptions.

### Shop Floor Respondents' feedback about 'Management Styles

Table 31 shows the shop floor employees' responses regarding the management style theme. They articulated several features of management in the public sector that encouraged them to take the decision to leave their posts. The following are the key features and/or descriptions of the management style in the public sector as reflected by the grass-roots employees.

*“Powerless managers, classic management, bureaucracy, change resistant, emerging lobbies, old mindset of management. Compliments and Courtesies are the basis of management practices, they are not setting any challenging objectives, poorly qualified managers cause bureaucratic problems, not easy to meet a manager, talk down to employees, rejecting development to safeguard their chairs, they are looking after themselves”* **Key features of Managers in Public Sector Table 36.**

In general respondents linked their decisions to quit to management styles in the public sector. Existing management styles do not encourage the development of a healthy workplace. Typical unhealthy practices include: talking down to employees, refusing to listen to them, refusing to meet them, dismissing employees' suggestions, and resisting change. None of these behaviours is considered to be appropriate in the Omani workplace. In the West there is a great emphasis on employee participation. It is seen to promote teamwork enthusiasm in problem solving, and to maximize productivity. Participatory practices are seen to be the hallmark of the modern organization. Managers are expected to be practical and considerate in their behaviours. Thus, they are expected not to base their practices on subjective assessments of employees, but are expected to be qualified or even trained in how to deal with people. The lack of these attributes is seen to be an indication of weak management and leadership. In turn, this increases employee turnover, according to Khatri et al. (2005) and Branham (2005).

These responses are in line with those of the top management and middle management. For instance, it has been mentioned above that both these groups believed that there were problems with existing management and leadership styles. Employees used the saying that “they did not leave the organization”, rather, they “left the managers”. They described the management of the public sector as classically autocratic or bureaucratic. They retain power and decisions are centralized.

As mentioned in the analysis of top and middle management data, such kinds of management and leadership are associated with employee turnover. Conceptually, actors in the Omani and Western contexts know that certain styles of leadership and management can lead to employee turnover. Hence, there is a conceptual convergence. In practice, it seems there is

also a convergence, despite that, between Omani and Western contexts with regard to the leadership and managers' styles. Despite the fact that contemporary theories of leadership are generated in Western contexts, many studies in the West reflected that Western managers can simply be described as being autocratic and inflexible. For instance, a research programme in the University of Pennsylvania called Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) revealed a study in 2004 about culture, leadership and organizations. That study, according to House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta (2004), covering 62 countries around the globe and drawing responses from 17,300 respondents, indicated that Middle Eastern and Western (Anglo, Nordic, and Germanic) managers are autonomous. I think there is an overall convergence between the Omani context and Western context about the importance of leadership styles, building trust between managers and employees, have job descriptions,... etc. However, some divergences appear in the application of these HR functions.

Category	Perceived causes of employee turnover	Omani Context	Western Context	Relation C(4) Vs C(5)
Senior Management	Encouraging employee turnover	Positive	Negative	Divergent
	Management styles	Outdated and immature	Contemporary	Divergent
	Public sector should learn from private sector practices	Positive	Positive	Convergent
Middle Management	Leadership Styles	Autocratic	Autonomous	Convergent
	Lack of trust	exists	Do not exist	Divergent
	Job Description	- Important - Does not exist	- Important - Exist	- Convergent - Divergent
Shop Floor employees	Leadership Style	Not considering employees	Considers employees	Divergence

Table 44. Comparing Junctures found in 'Management Style' themes' analysis between Omani and Western Contexts.

The analysis now moves on to discuss the 'exit interview theme' as mentioned by two categories of respondents.

## 9.4. Similarity of Themes across Two Categories of Respondents

### 9.4.1. Exit Interview Theme

There are several reasons for locating this theme under the normative pillar. First of all, there is an expectation that management will conduct formal exit interviews for employees. Although, exit interviews are not practices that are made obligatory by civil service law, one of the duties of the general directorate in the ministry of the civil services is to:

*“Follow up on the developments and changes that occur to the reality of performance in civil service units and its staff in order to monitor the positive phenomena and the difficulties that must be studied and addressed - if necessary - to find solutions thereof in coordination with those units” Ministry of Civil Services*

With reference to that duty, which incidentally is common to all those organizations subject to civil services’ law, managers would therefore be expected to conduct exit interviews, given that employee turnover represents a “difficulty that should be studied and addressed”. Some of the respondents considered employee turnover indeed to be a problem that needed to be studied so that solutions could be proposed.

Two categories of respondents raised issues related to this theme: middle management, and grass roots employees.

#### **Middle Managers**

The data from middle management regarding this theme are shown in Table 21. All respondents in this category claimed that public sector organizations do conduct exit interviews on an informal basis. Some respondents saw exit interviews as important for three key reasons: (i) to identify the reasons underpinning the decision to leave the organization (ii) to try to convince the employee not to leave, and (iii) to find possible solutions to prevent turnover in the future. However, not all respondents were convinced of the worth of exit interviews:

*“All in all, this committee cannot stand in the way of the ambitions of those people ... In fact, there are very few cases where the committee managed to convince employees not to leave the organization” Middle Manager’s Feedback*

*“Unfortunately, it is considered a secondary issue whether the employee who is leaving chooses to attend this interview or not” Middle Manager’s Feedback*

*“First, most of the leavers have spent more than 15 years in service and they want the benefit of a pension. In general, not too many interviews were conducted and most of the people who left had been offered better opportunities” Middle Manager’s Feedback*

The above extracts, from table 21, suggest that these respondents do not believe exit interviews to be effective in convincing employees not to leave. For instance, they suggest that the exit interview panels cannot militate against the ambitions of employees. Moreover, they mentioned that there were few instances where these panels had managed to convince employees not to quit. In addition, they believed that people leave to obtain better opportunities. Furthermore, the fact that some respondents see exit interviews as secondary processes suggests that it is not seen as an important tool for improving and developing human resource practices in the public sector.

Other respondents argued it is difficult to convince quitters not to leave due to the benefits of retirement, salary and work available in the private sector. This indicates a tendency for the younger generation of employees to satisfy their desires while they have a greater confidence about themselves, possibly reflecting the influence of western individualistic values. The data may be suggestive that we are witnessing a transitional stage in the Omani context to a more individualistic ethos. Further evidence for this claim will be presented later in the analysis.

Lastly, some respondents claimed if exit interviews were conducted, their outcomes would depend on the agendas of those actors conducting them. It was suggested, for instance, that some panels do not conduct exit interviews for the sake of retaining employees. Rather, they hold them in order to encourage the employee to quit. In short, it seems these interviews are often undertaken to meet the subjective goals of the panel, not to meet the professional goals of the organization. This, at least theoretically, differs from how exit interviews are conducted in many of the Western organizations: where the objectives of exit interviews usually are designed to meet the interests of both the employee and the organization and not the desires of the panel. For instance, the CIPD annual report for the year 2007 suggested that exit interviews continued to be the most important instrument in the UK for providing information about the causes of employee turnover. Hence, there is a divergence between the two compared contexts.

Several advantages of exit interviews have been observed in the Western context. Kreuter (1951); Habbe (1952); This (1955); Lefkowitz and Katz (1969) and Johns and Johnson (2005) argue that exit interviews are not designed with the primary aim of retaining employees, though some scholars agreed with Neal (1989) that exit interviews are the best method for controlling and managing employee turnover. Rather, they are used to build



public relations, to identify inadequate supervisors, to detect any undesirable management practices, to check on the appropriateness of the original hiring and selection processes, and to find out what might be causing dissatisfaction among employees. Conceptually, there appears to be convergence between the two contexts with respect to exit interview practices. However, the findings of reasons for conducting the exit interviews in the Omani context seem to be different from reasons emerging from studies conducted in the Western context. Therefore, there is divergence between the Omani and Western contexts in actually implementing this practice. In the next section middle management claims that exit interviews are regularly conducted are challenged by shop floor employees.

**Shop Floor Employees: ‘Exit Interviews Theme’**

Shop floor employees’ responses with regard to the exit interviews theme are shown in Table 34. It seems that employees’ had high expectations about what could be achieved in exit interviews. There are ten respondents in this category. A total of four respondents were not called for exit interviews. Two interviewees argued they were not called for exit interviews. They were called instead to finalize outstanding financial matters existing between them and the organization. A further two interviewees argued they also were not called for exit interviews, but rather to have an informal chat with their direct supervisors about their decisions to leave. Of these, one supervisor tried to convince the employee not to quit. A core benefit potentially gained from such interviews is to build and maintain a good relationship with the employee, especially when a manager is advising an employee to “go for the best”. The quitting employee can be a potential guide, stakeholder or customer for the organization.

The remaining four interviewees were called to an informal exit interview. In these interviews, supervisors wanted to know their reasons for quitting. These interviews were informal in as much as processes and outcomes were not documented and no consequent direct actions were taken. Two managers attempted to persuade the employee to stay by offering them promotion. The employees declined these offers. This was because the managers’ offers were based on expected changes in the civil service system, whilst the employees did not want to take the risk of waiting for such changes and possibly losing the existing opportunity in the private sector. One respondent claimed that improvements in human resources practices and schemes had been implemented following his exit interview:

*“I frankly told them if they could not compete in terms of salaries, they could focus on other motivations for consideration by employees. For example, the employers can give free-interest loans to employees, health insurance whether in or outside the country, free*

*membership of some of the high-end clubs, and scholarships abroad. To be honest they did start giving most of these, but after I had left the organization. I think giving prestige to an employee would ensure to some extent his loyalty to this organization”* **Shop Floor Employee’s Feedback**

In general, exit interviews held in an Omani context differ from how they are conducted in the Western context. The chief difference is in the informality of these interviews, suggesting that they are not taken seriously as a meaningful HR intervention. In contrast, in the Western context, these interviews are taken seriously, to the extent it is suggested they can influence employee turnover dynamics (Smith and Kerr, 1953).

## **9.5. Themes discussed by only one category of respondents**

### **9.5.1. Top Management Themes**

#### **Communication Theme**

Jablin (1987) stresses the importance of a good communications system to the retention of employees. Senior managers discussed this issue and I have located it under the normative pillar because respondents expressed some shared expectations about what constituted good communication, which were reflected in concerns expressed over the appropriateness of existing communication processes in the public sector. Following the analysis of this theme, comparison is made between the Omani and Western contexts regarding any perceived causes of employee turnover similarities or differences.

The senior managers’ views about communication can be categorized as reflecting two main sub-themes. First, there were issues concerning communication *between* public sector organizations. Second, there were issues about communication *within* public sector organizations. Most respondents focused on communications between public sector organizations. Only one respondent mentioned communication within public sector organizations. These responses are shown in Table 11. Negative views about communication were more apparent than positive views. Two respondents claimed that communication was inefficient, though this was not seen to influence employee turnover. Finally, two respondents claimed communication in the public sector was good. Of the latter two respondents, one argued that communication was likely to improve over time:

*“Each governmental body ... has its own culture with regard to its business but there are some general tenets of communication that are applied in those bodies. We are making sure that is happening and we are studying some new ways of communication that should ease the job ... Regarding the communication with the governmental bodies and especially the members of the Civil Services Council there are still problems with bureaucracy and this is*

*something that is expected in the public sector. I think we need better communication so that we can ensure better quality of discussion of issues and plans” Senior Manager’s Feedback*

*“there is no effective communication in this regard, I assure you” Senior Manager’s Feedback*

*“I think there is good communication planning between the bodies in Oman that regulate the human resources in the sultanate” Senior Manager’s Feedback*

*“I think the communication between them is good and will become more effective as they grow mature” Senior Manager’s Feedback*

*“From my experience I can say that communication has nothing to do with employee turnover. I think that it is employee interests that inform decisions to quit, not communication” Senior Manager’s Feedback*

The data suggest that the following issues are seen as central to communication in the public sector: First, is the idea that bureaucracy has a negative influence on communication between governmental bodies. This possibly reflects cultural issues in hierarchal organizations, where communication is expected to be poor due to the increased remoteness of power and prevailing authoritarian pattern (Pandey and Garnett, 2006). Theoretically this problem should not exist in the Omani Civil Services Council, because it has a flat structure, composed of only seven organizations. However, within individual public organizations, it is common to find many levels of hierarchy.

A second issue concerns the claim that public sector communication is likely to improve over time. Grass roots employees were not convinced by this claim. It is now forty years since the current government came to power, and in that time, the country has not suffered from any major political or economic crises. It is thus expected that in this climate, top managers should already have managed to develop an efficient communications system. The continuation of their rather old fashioned management and communication styles, with their tendencies to ignore employees’ suggestions and resist change, suggests that this has not, in fact, been achieved.

Thus, managers’ claims about communication conflict with or contradict what grass roots employees reported about their experiences with senior management. Thus, there is a convergence between the Omani and Western contexts in relation to the importance of communication. Divergence might appear in application as grass roots employees argued that communication was poor in the Omani context. This conclusion goes along with Badawy (1980), who argued the divergence of communication between management in Western and

Middle Eastern contexts. Badawy (1980) asserted that the tone of communication in a Middle Eastern organization depends on communicants' power and social position. Furthermore, the influence of family, the rigidity of chain of commands and friendship intensity are factors that characterize communication in the Middle East. On the other hand, communication in the Western context emphasizes the equality and lessens difference, friendship is not intense and not binding, and employees relate to each other loosely.

#### **Commitment Theme**

This theme is also located under the normative pillar, because it reflects what senior managers expect from employees in terms of commitment. On the whole, senior managers expected employees to show commitment to Oman and did not, on the whole, view employee commitment as suspect. They tended to be more concerned about the commitment of international workers. Statistics support these concerns in that the numbers of expatriates quitting the public sector are greater than the numbers of Omanis leaving the public sector, according to the Ministry of National Economy (2009, 2008, and 2007). However, despite the fact the rate at which foreign workers are leaving the public sector is greater than that at which nationals are quitting their posts; I think there might be different reasons causing foreign workers to leave other than commitment. For example, the reason could be that foreign workers are not satisfied with management, pay is too low, and there are better opportunities in a different sector or different country ... etc. After all, these foreign workers have their own norms, values and expectations, which would participate in informing their decision of staying or leaving.

Another issue concerns the relationship between workforce diversity and organizational commitment. It is important to mention here that some public organizations are very diverse in terms of employees. Indeed, some Omani public sector organizations are overpopulated with expatriate employees, *see chapter four*. This was seen as a significant problem, with some respondents calling for change to this hiring policy and an increase in investment and trust in home country nationals. Another respondent argued that the loyalty and commitment of employees is not questioned because these attributes are cultivated in Omanis during their school education. The following extracts from table 6 illustrate these arguments;

*“In the (public organization) there are employees from 50 different nationalities ... We are suffering somehow on account of expatriates who are not loyal to their work. I do believe that we should concentrate on commitment and should trust the sons of this land. That is because*

*the Omani is not looking at work as something to be done from 8-4 but beyond that”* **Senior Respondent’s Feedback**

*“We are cultivating loyalty to Oman in Omanis from early stages in school and I don’t think we need to start from scratch in enhancing that when they start work”* **Senior Respondent’s Feedback**

Some Western scholars have argued that high levels of workforce diversity could lead to low levels of organizational commitment. For instance, Jackson and Joshi (2003) argued that a highly diverse workforce can weaken social cohesiveness. Consequently, increases in employee turnover may occur (Miliken and Martins, 1996). Thus, it seems there is a convergence between the two contexts in terms of recognition of the potential effect of diversity on employee turnover.

The following point can be raised about the description of organizational commitment itself. One senior manager claimed that commitment is linked to an employee’s expectations and beliefs about his skills and abilities. Accordingly, the more skills and abilities an employee has and which are also needed for undertaking the job, the more commitment he will experience:

*“If the worker is not convinced inside him/herself that s/he has the proper abilities to work at this post, then the commitment and loyalty to the place will not be high. In contrast, the worker who has ability and confidence knows that he is an asset and can achieve something for the organization”* **Senior Manager’s Feedback**

An interesting question here is which form of commitment would increase through the belief of a good fit between skills and abilities and the job: commitment to the organization or commitment to the occupation? Ritzer and Trice (1969), in the Western context, differentiate between these two types of commitment. Ritzer and Trice (1969) and Gray (1989) argue that employees, including cosmopolitans, who understand their professions, are more committed to their occupation than their organizations. The senior employees’ responses show a belief that Omani individuals embrace commitment to occupation when they have more confidence in their skills and believe more in themselves and their abilities. This appears to illustrate similar views to those prevailing in the West. I think this can be attributed to cultural imperialism whereby the Western cultural tenets of individualism and materialism transferred

to the Omani context during colonial times. Once again, there is convergence between Omani and Western views with regard to commitment to occupation.

A final point concerns the organization's role in enhancing employee commitment. One manager claimed that the greater the role clarity, the greater the employee's organizational commitment.

*"If the organization makes the employee fully aware of his duties, accountability and role in developing day to day operations, the yield of staff creativity, loyalty, and commitment will be greater"* **Senior Manager's Feedback**

This view converges with the findings from studies conducted in the Western context. For example, Kroposki *et al.* (1999) and Mukherjee and Malhotra (2006) argue that role clarity is positively related to commitment. This convergence is interesting because the two contexts have different characteristics. The Western context, according to Lam, Chen and Schaubroeck (2002), embraces individualistic values. Hence, individuals tend to be self-seeking and change their organizations to fit their desires, rather than changing themselves to fit the organization. In the Omani context, despite the cultural value placed on balancing the individual's values with collective values, it seems that people are moving jobs in order to find roles that fit their abilities and their expectations. This is a further indication of a possible transition to individualistic values in Oman. Alternatively, it could be an indication of emerging effects of cultural imperialism whereby Western values were transferred to the colonies; *see chapters three and four.*

### **9.5.2. Themes Mentioned By Middle Management**

#### **Attempts to Solve Employee Turnover**

This theme was placed under the normative pillar because solving employee turnover problems is expected from this group as part of their duties as managers. This can be understood as an internalized social obligation. The data reflecting this theme are shown in Table 20. Middle managers' reports of their attempts to control employee turnover differ. Three strategies were observed. First, attempts to influence motivation; second an emphasis on ensuring organizational continuity; and third, the provision of a better working environment. Attempts to influence motivation included raising salaries and incentives, awarding promotions, reforming the pension scheme, exempting high performers from the normal salary system in the public sector and offering them higher salaries, and sending employees on training courses. Nevertheless, middle managers did not see this strategy as

efficient because the scarcity of public financial resources limited what they could actually do, which, in any case, was generally insufficient compared to the benefits offered by the private sector.

The second strategy was directed at sustaining organizational processes. Middle managers claimed they achieved this by ensuring that vital positions were occupied by more than one key employee. In addition, they claimed that employees were made to sign long term contracts with the organizations. By this action, importantly, as they argued, they sustained organizational continuity and minimized the potential risk of operational disruption should an employee decide to quit. Not only is disruption very costly in terms of loss of productivity, but also in terms of re-hiring costs (Staw, 1980; Cascio, 1982; Anderson et al., 1994; and Wright and Bonnet, 2007). However, this strategy could be dangerous since it involves overlooking employees' needs in order to satisfy the organization's needs.

The third strategy concerned the development of a better working environment along with provision of good salaries. Holtom et al. (2008) argued the significance of maintaining a good employee-context interface in reducing employee turnover. However, the only strategy for improving the working environment that middle managers mentioned was the provision of an improved performance appraisal system; more insights about the performance appraisal theme are presented in the following section. The performance appraisal in the Omani context is not complying with the contemporary performance appraisal theories being promoted in the Western context. I think this might be attributed to the humble role of performance appraisal in compensation and promotion in Omani context as Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006) argued. Shockingly, the Omani Civil Service Law stated that promotions are based 70% on merits/performance, and 30% on tenureship. Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006) argued that 44% of organizations they assessed depended on work experience for promoting and paying employees. Hence, I think there is a rhetorical gap between the civil service law and application of this law in practice. Holtom et al. (2008) argued that a good employee-context interface can be enhanced by assuring the quality within organizations of six vital elements: justice, leadership, person-organization fit, realistic job previews, and interpersonal relationships. There is further analysis of the working environment later in this chapter in discussion of the 'nature of the job theme': a separate theme generated by the grass roots employees.

Managers in both the Omani and Western contexts believe in the importance of intervening in order to solve employee turnover. Apart from the constitutive rules informing Managers behaviour as shown in chapter 8, the solutions proposed by the Omani middle managers are not efficient. This, I think, is due to the scarcity of public financial resources and the inability of the public sector to compete with the terms and conditions offered by the private sector. I think also that the overreliance of Omani economy on the revenues of oil and gas limited Omani managers' thinking with regard to creative solutions. Although Oman is undertaking a certain degree of privatization, this is hampered by the weakness of its institutional capabilities and economic regulations, as contended by Al-Omar (1996). In chapters three and four I reflected more information about the factors shaping human resources management in the GCC countries and in Oman. Two of the most important factors were the economy and labour laws. The GCC context, including Oman, is vulnerable to economic crisis, despite its wealth of oil and gas, since GCC countries are surrounded by unstable political environments in the form of Iran, Iraq, Palestine, and Yemen. Moreover, the labour regulating systems in GCC countries are fragile due to the infancy of HRM in the Middle East, according to Mellahi and Budhwar (2006), and challenges of embracing international labour laws, especially after joining the WTO or signing free trade agreements with USA, see Khan (2011). Hence, the strength of both the economic and regulatory system is critical in addressing human resource problems and this highlights major differences in institutional and economic context between the West and the GCC (including Oman).

#### **Performance Appraisal Theme**

This theme is placed under the normative pillar for two main reasons. First, the ministry in charge of the public sector developed standards for conducting this practice. Hence, it can be understood to be a social obligation which managers are expected to fulfil. Second, employees expect this practice to affect their potential motivation as performance appraisal constitutes part of the promotion system according to article (32) in civil service law. This states that an employee is not to be promoted if s/he gets a poor evaluation in his/her most recent performance appraisal report. Table 22 shows the data from middle managers with regard to this theme.

Middle managers were highly critical of performance appraisal in the public sector. Their concerns included: (i) it is very old, (ii) it is not effective for accurately assessing and consequently rewarding employee performance, (iii) it is not undertaken professionally as many managers use their emotions in evaluating their employees, (iv) no concrete rewards



are given to employees as a consequence of this practice. Nonetheless, according to the law of the civil services (120/2004), an employee can be fired on the basis of two respective appraisals with weak ratings. As a matter of fact, the Omani data showed similar behaviour to the performance appraisal in the Western context,

Overall, the data are suggestive of convergence between the Omani and Western contexts with respect to performance appraisal. For instance, middle managers in the Omani context asserted they are using an old system that has unfair distribution of marks for unequal appraisal categories such as appearance, grooming and performance. Moreover, under the existing law of the civil service a supervisor is not obliged to show the employee his performance appraisal report, and appraisers are not considered to be sufficiently trained in conducting appraisals. Finally, middle managers see the practice as inefficient since no motivational consequences result from the completion of the procedure. The reasons for these problems are similar to those that have been discussed throughout this section: limited resources, weak promotion systems, and powerless managers.

On the other hand, this practice is often taken seriously in Western contexts such as the UK, see Redman, Snape, Thompson, & Yan, (2000), partly because it is seen as a genuinely effective management tool for improving performance and, in consequence, for increasing profit. Western studies do show that appraisal has a positive relation with performance as employees expect rewards for good performance reflected by the performance appraisal and this spurs them on to perform even better, according to Latham and Wexley (1981) and Locker and Teel (1988), and results in a negative relation with employee turnover. However, Redman, Snape, Thompson, & Yan (2000), focusing on the NHS in the UK, argued that performance appraisal in the public sector is less effective in human resources management despite its importance. They concluded that from the viewpoints of the appraisees there are problems with the performance appraisal system which led them to call it 'deadly management disease'. These problems are related to the way performance appraisal is conducted, its failure to meet objectives, politics around the way it is conducted, and the absence of discussion of pay in relation to performance. Hence, I think there is convergence between the Omani and Western contexts with regard to the importance of performance appraisal

### 9.5.3. Themes Mentioned By Grass Roots Employees

#### Nature of the Job

This theme has also been placed under the normative pillar given that all employees had expectations about the nature of their jobs, and their roles. Unfortunately, these expectations were, by and large, not met, while their new employer offered them the opportunity to achieve their expectations. Shop floor employees' data in relation to these themes are shown in Table 25. The following excerpts illustrate some of their responses;

*“the only factor that affected my decision to shift was the nature of the job...in the existing post I have already worked on several projects that are more than boring routine and they serve a national cause which is my preference”* **Grass-Root Employee**

*“My job in the public sector was very routine, I assure you. You do the same job every day. The accumulated experience consequently is so limited”* **Grass-Root Employee**

*“I left because of two main reasons: financial returns and the nature of the job ... What annoyed me was the unbearable work load. In fact, now I am working less hours, with no pressures, and better pay”* **Grass-Root Employee**

*“At the outset the job was fun and challenging, but after you have spent like two years in a government body the work becomes routine. I mean the objectives and challenges that are put before an ambitious employee are so few ... any ambitious employee who lives in such environment will definitely think to move out once he senses it is a non-dynamic environment”* **Grass-Root Employee**

The failure in meeting their expectations was partly attributed to a boring working environment which offered few, if any, challenging objectives, see above excerpts. These individuals were keen to work in a dynamic environment, not one characterized by mundane routines. They expected to apply and build on the knowledge acquired through education and training. Additionally, they wanted opportunities to participate in setting objectives that would improve their work and not to be simply a “cog in the machine”. They also expected the organization to have developed simple effective procedures for the duties central to their roles, rather than the excessively complicated systems that they had to work with. Another expectation was for a reasonable work load, as opposed to an unreasonable amount of work for which they received little or no appreciation. They expected clear guidance to enable them to perform their duties. Many critical points were therefore raised in these themes, and some of these were closely related to other themes.

The concerns discussed above were those that motivated employees to leave the organization. They represented employees' dissatisfaction with their jobs that made them quit. Westerman and Yamamura (2006) argue that management should take employee preferences, such as those discussed above, very seriously, as they have a major impact on employee attitudes, including intention to quit. Is this what makes the Western forms of management different from Omani management? In the former context, there is a genuine concern with developing a good working environment that meets employees' expectations (Kyriakidou and Ozbligin, 2004). In fact, it has been indicated in so many Western references, see for example March and Simon, 1958; Gerhard, 1990; Porter and Steers, 1973; Mobley, 1977, who urged that an employee would leave any organization if s/he could not satisfy his/her expectations. Hence, it may be suggested there is convergence between employees in Omani and Western contexts with regard to the nature of job theme.

#### **Training Theme**

This has been placed under the normative pillar because it is regulated by the royal decree 120/2004 that set the civil service law. Table 27 illustrates shop floor employees' responses, some of which are shown below:

*"I did not attend any training courses while I was working for the ex-employer"* **Shop Floor Respondent's Feedback**

*"There was no training in my former post, it was so rare, at the same time the number of employees was large"* **Shop Floor Respondent's Feedback**

*"In other words, the training given was random rather than being a part of a long-term plan"* **Shop Floor Respondent's Feedback**

*"Training was a neglected field in my former post. The very few, superficial training courses we attended did not add anything important to our knowledge"* **Shop Floor Respondent's Feedback**

*"The nature of the job with my ex-employer was fun, everything was there. For example, there was no routine, no boring tasks, and a nice job environment" "I moved to the current place because it is new organization and I wanted to be among pioneers, contributing even to setting up a new firm in a brilliant environment that guarantees good working conditions"* **Shop Floor Respondent's Feedback**

In fact, the majority of employees' expectations were unmet. Their prevailing views were negative. The two major issues that can be drawn from their responses are: (i) public sector managers do not appear to see training as important, and (ii) there is little concern with training quality. The data provided some further insights into these views. For example, many respondents claimed that (i) they had not attended any training courses, (ii) training had been subject to organizational cuts, (iii) training was, in general, neglected, and (iv) training courses were offered very infrequently. Further issues were that (i) the training that was on offer was very superficial and did not add anything important to knowledge, (ii) no training needs analysis was conducted to assess the relevance of the training offered (iii) there was no concern over the quality of institutions that provided training courses.

Although a very small number of respondents did not share these views, claiming that high quality training courses were provided for employees, it seems these are exceptional cases. Generally, the data suggest that training is inadequate in the Omani context. The top managers did assert the importance of training, considering it as a basic employee right, and one that was critical to enhancement of knowledge and experience. The top managers' views are echoed by the royal decree 120/2004 that regulates this vital aspect of civil service law. Despite this apparent commitment to training from top management, however, according to shop floor employees, middle managers did not follow this regulation. This seems to be another instance of management rhetoric failing to be realized in practice. This conclusion supports the fact that Oman's HRD programmes failed due to its inability as a country to extend its workforce's skills, as contended by Budhwar, Al-Yahmadi, & Debrah (2002).

In contrast, in the Western context, training is seen to be very important. Researchers believe that training has a major role to play in improving the performance of individuals and organizations. Consequently, studies have examined the transferability of knowledge to the workplace achieved by training (see Broad and Newstrom, 1992; and Machin, 2002). Furthermore, scholars such as Staw (1980); Cascio, (1982); Anderson et al. (1994); and Wright and Bonnet (2007) consider training costs to be a major cost of employee turnover, in that when an employee quits, the organization's investment in that individual is lost. Thus, there is convergence between the Omani employees and Western employees in the importance of training for employees. Frazis, Gittleman, Horrigan, & Joyce (1998); and Brum (2010) argued that training in countries like USA is very important. For instance, Frazis et al. (1998) and Brum (2010) reported that from 1993 to 1994 training expenditure rose by \$135 per individual in the USA. Moreover, they mentioned that \$7.7bn was spent on

in-house trainers for staff in 1995. Furthermore, Scholl (1981); Steers, (1977) and Brum (2010) contended that training increases commitment to an organization. Organizational commitment has a negative relationship with employee turnover according to Eagly and Chaiken (1993). This suggests convergence between the Omani and Western contexts with regard to the importance of the training theme. The divergence might be stem from the actual training courses given to employees by Omani employers.

### **Decision Making**

This aspect of the normative pillar reflects the way regimes and authority systems in public sector organizations influence decision making. The only category of respondents that mentioned this theme was the shop floor employees. Their responses can be seen in Table 30.

According to grass roots employees, decision making was confined to the higher managerial ranks, and was therefore highly centralized. In fact, I have demonstrated in chapters three and four the extreme centralization of human resources management in the GCC countries, including Oman. Hence, I think this is supported by the existing feedback from respondents in this theme. This centralization of decision making affected other processes, including communication processes, delegation practices, production, and work progress. Some employees did have access to top management and were consequently able to convey their opinions about decision making. The excessive centralization of decision making gave rise to a number of other practices that seemed to worsen employee turnover phenomenon. For example, managers would often refuse to meet employees, would not involve employees in making decisions that directly affected their work, and, with respect to this latter issue, this led employees to procrastinate until top management had decided what needed to be done:

*“The only people who could make decisions in the public sectors are the minister, undersecretary, and, rarely, general manager”* **Shop Floor Respondent’s Feedback**

*“I moved to an organization that is administratively and financially independent from a governmental organization that was centralized to the extent it could not take decisions without referring to the ministry of civil services and this prolonged the processes and complicated the day to day jobs ... that consequently affected other organizational processes like delegation and managerial communication”* **Shop Floor Respondent’s Feedback**

*“in the decision making dimension, you might not be able to see the general manager if you want to discuss issues, even if you try to make an appointment it won’t be that easy”* *“I think*

*the employee should be involved in decision making as this will make them feel appreciated and committed to the organization” **Shop Floor Respondent’s Feedback***

*“To be honest when I want to make a decision I go directly to the president because I, unlike others, have access to him. I think that the administrative hierarchy in the organization is a sterile system for decision making” **Shop Floor Respondent’s Feedback***

In the Western context there is much emphasis on involving employees in the decision making process (Lam, Chen and Schaubroeck, 2002). Some scholars have argued that employee participation is related to performance and retention (Grissom, 2011; Lam, Chen and Schaubroeck, 2002). Lam, Chen and Schaubroeck (2002) contend that Western organizations focus on participative forms of decision making. They tend to do that in order to encourage high levels of commitment in the workplace, smooth the progress of reengineering, and improve the quality of jobs. If they do not involve their staff, then staff may seek alternative employment where participative decision making is more likely to occur. However, several Western studies have asserted that the decision making in public organizations is experiencing conflicts, interruptions, and environmental turbulence within organizations see for example Perry & Rainey (1988); Rainey, Backoff, & Levine (1976), and Nutt (2005). Buchanan (1975) studied 75 public organizations and 69 private organizations and concluded that job involvement is lower in the USA’s public sector. Thus, there seems to be convergence in decision making processes between the Omani and Western contexts. This is indicated from the actual behaviour of Omani employees who acted, as their counterparts in Western context, by leaving their posts when they saw they are not participating in decision making.

#### **Unequal Salaries Theme**

Shop floor employees had expectations about pay equality and there are also standards in the public sector regarding compensation systems. For this reason, this theme was placed under the normative pillar. Table 33 illustrates the data with regard to this theme. I did consider placing this theme under the cognitive pillar, due to the fact that the principle of equality was so central to this theme and reflects a fundamental idea that all employees undertaking the same role should receive the same amount of compensation. Senior managers, however, suggested that salary should be paid according to various individual attributes, such as abilities and effort, and did not believe that unifying pay across employees was fair:

*“I think we spoke about different things, but let us agree on one thing. Allah almighty has created us with different abilities, thinking, power, and therefore, we are not equal in tender and productiveness. I think also our participation in our societies and organization is based on that. I believe that unless we accept this in the public sector and specifically in the civil services, the matter will stay as it is”* **Senior Manager Respondent**

Grass roots employees seemed dissatisfied with the existing payment system. The majority of them argued, as shown in table 33, that the existing system creates inequality among employees precisely because individuals differ in terms of ability and motivation. Some of them even believed that the compensation system encouraged discrimination and injustice and were skeptical of government claims about the scarcity of financial resources. Pay inequality was, according to respondents, a key reason behind their decision to leave the public sector for the private sector. Despite this, some respondents did seem to understand why these problems existed:

*“The inequalities in remuneration among people doing same job represent an injustice. This can be called discrimination, which negatively affects staff and makes them feel unequal among citizens”* **Shop Floor Respondent’s Feedback**

*“I think if the government has a limited budget, then the consequences should be the same for all public sector bodies. I mean there should be equality for all employees in terms of financial compensation in government employment, especially for those doing the same job. However, I think disparity in pay might stem from the fact that working hours in some governmental bodies like public authorities are greater than working hours in ministries ”* **Shop Floor Respondent’s Feedback**

*“From my point of view I would say that this disparity affects the performance of the work, which makes the lowest paid employees in the same job think of moving, either to a similar department in a governmental institution that pays higher salaries or to private sector companies where they can receive far higher salaries”* **Shop Floor Respondent’s Feedback**

*“I think this is normal and healthy, to encourage competition, and sometimes it is very justifiable because different government organizations have different scales of projects”* **Shop Floor Respondent’s Feedback**

In general, employees’ expectations of receiving adequate remuneration are not met. In the Western context, extensive studies have been conducted to investigate pay equity. Brown

(2001) suggests this issue is central to organizational competitiveness. According to Adams (1965) and Brown (2001), most of the dissatisfaction concerning payment systems usually emanates from underpaid employees. Goodman (1974) identified three main referential categories for individual when evaluating his pay. They are; (i) self, which concentrate on one's financial needs, abilities and historical pay, (ii) other, family or neighbours, and (iii) system, payments within an organization. Blau (1994) suggests that individuals use five referents when evaluating their pay: historical, financial, social, market and organizational. The following table is derived from Brown (2001). It illustrates the five pay referents introduced by Blau (1994).

N	Pay Referent	(an individual would compare his pay with)
1	Historical	Pay individuals received for performing a similar job in the past
2	Financial	Adequacy of pay to satisfy the financial needs of an individual
3	Social	Pay of relatives, family, and friends
4	Market	Pay outside the organization in comparative occupations
5	Organizational	Pay within organization

Table 45. Pay referents as suggested by Blau (1994) comiled by researcher from Brown (2001).

Goodman (1974) argued that for referent selection an individual is affected by three factors. These include: salience of the object, the availability of information, which means available information about the pay others get in comparison with an individual's income, and the functionality of a referent, which according to Goodman (1974) refers to the significance of the referent in satisfying an individual's need for self esteem, recognition, and achievement. Goodman (1974) argued that the significance of the object, for example remuneration as a salient object, leads individuals to make comparisons. However, this must be critically analyzed since people's views about objects' saliency are informed by their values; see Goodman (1974) and Schneider (2010). In this research I argued that Western values are informed by cultural materialism and capitalism, see chapter two. On the other hand the Omani culture is supposed to be informed by Islamic values and not focused on materialism.

To sum up, the research suggests that in Omani and Western contexts having appropriate standards for pay is seen to be important. Employees in each context may have divergent views about pay inequity. In the Omani context, some employees expected equal salaries for all employees within the public sector. They found the existing system whereby employees with similar qualifications and experience but working in different bodies of government were getting different salaries to be unfair. For example, an accountant in the public authorities receives greater financial compensation than his counterparts working for any of the ministries. However, one respondent claimed that employees should be rewarded in



accordance with their contributions. In contrast, in the Western context payment systems are seen to be fair as long as they reward people for their actual contribution.

I think there is to some extent a divergence in the understanding of the equity term within the Omani context. I think that equity should be considered when talking about the rights of humanity, right to a good life, right to elections, right to choose a religion, rights to perform economic, social and political roles, of course, within the parameters of the law and without harming others and rights to get reward equals to performance or efforts. These rights are secured and assured to Omanis by Sharia law and state laws. These could be considered as constitutional rules of Islamic cognition about equity, see chapter eight for more information about the constitutional rules. The problem, I think, lies with those employees who think that they should get equal treatment to their counterparts in other organizations. I do not think they are equal in terms of the effort and time spent on their jobs. Regardless of the overtime hours, the working hours in governmental authorities and state owned companies are longer than those in public sector organizations as stated by one of the grass roots employees. Hence, under these circumstances it is to be expected that employees of public authorities and semi-govt organizations will receive more compensation. Therefore, I think there is misunderstanding or misjudgment about equity terms within the Omani governmental sector. If this is the case, as I can see from the findings, then I think there is convergence between the public policy regarding compensation in Omani contexts and Western contexts where payment emphasis is on the employees' contribution.

#### **Career Path Theme**

This theme was placed under the normative pillar because it is expected that employers provide all employees with career path plans: an expectation that is encompassed by the obligation for managers to show commitment to developing human resources and the workplace as a whole. Table 32 shows the data with regard to this theme.

The data indicate that no employees had a career path plan while working for the public sector. It seems that when they were first taken on they knew nothing about the importance of the career plan. Their experience curve about labour issues shifted upwards over time. The following excerpt represents an employee response on this issue:

*“I am really concerned with this issue. I would definitely shift from this organization if they don't provide me with a satisfying career path. Where I am heading I do not know, and this is*

not good” “I think if I could put the clock back, I would demand so many things to be documented in my career path” **Employee Response**

This supports the following comment by a senior manager who asserted earlier that the quitters mainly focus on their career routes.

*“In my opinion, the employee focuses primarily on (i) his career route, (ii) in the financial allocations, (iii) in the work environment, and (iv) the functional relationship with the supervisor and managers plus the relationship with his peers. These are the things that are paramount in the decision of the person. As for the policies of the Supreme, I think they have a very indirect impact on an employee’s decision”* **Senior Manager’s Feedback**

The grass roots employees reported, as shown in Table 32, that they never experienced any career planning in their previous posts. The following excerpts illustrate a sample of responses from grass roots respondents;

*“I did not see any career plan when I signed up to work for the ex-employer”* **Shop Floor Respondent**

*“there was nothing mentioned with regard to the career path in the contract when I signed for the ex-employer or for my current employer ... to be honest I was told verbally about the career path, and it was a silly mistake on my part not to ask for something written down”*

**Shop Floor Respondent**

*“There is no clear career path in our governmental body. Our manager always evades our questions about the career path. Instead of answering the question he argues that we must work very hard and our country is in need of our support”* **Shop Floor Respondent**

There is convergence between senior manager’s claims about career development and what is happening in reality, with employees abandoning the public sector for other employers who give better offers and career paths. Grass roots employees can be understood to represent a new generation of employees in the Omani labour market. It seems that their demands are changing and they want more personal benefits than those typically received by older generations. They have personal plans; more confidence about their abilities and skills; they want more pay, training, and involvement in decision making. These represent values of individualistic societies. The Omani society, however, is trying to achieve a balance between individualistic and collectivist approaches. One explanation for the differences observed

between senior managers and grass roots staff is that Omani society might be in a transitional stage, perhaps developing into a more individualistic society. One should keep in mind that GCC countries, including Oman, used to be colonies of the UK and colonialism will have participated in transferring Western values into the eastern context; see chapter three and four. Moreover, today, former colonial countries use soft powers, which are concerned with influencing attitudes through cultural activities, including Hollywood movies and the increasing exposure of international students from states such as the GCC to Western cultural values (Nye, 2004).

The career planning theme is connected with several practices that have been discussed in this section, for example, performance appraisal, and training needs analysis. These are practices that, as we have seen, are not conducted in any coherent or developmental manner.

Career planning is taken so seriously in the Western context that some Western countries start to teach people about this practice while they are at the educational stage, say at university. For example, many UK universities focus on teaching students about career planning and development, and many of them have centers for personal development planning. Therefore, potential employees understand their perceived strengths and weaknesses and their ambitions for their professional lives. Likewise, in the Western context several theories have been developed to provide guidance for career development practice, including, for example, Social Cognitive Career Theory, and the theory of Work-Adjustment (Leung, 2008). The above evidence is suggestive of convergence between the Omani context and Western context in terms of ideas about the importance of career planning to grass root employees, and divergence between them with regard to applications of career development.

## **9.6. Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter I dealt with themes that I considered to fall under the normative pillar. The logic of analyzing data of these themes involved (i) discussing themes mentioned by all of the three categories such as financial issues and management style, (ii) discussing themes mentioned by two categories, namely the ‘exit interviews theme’, the only theme reflected in data from grass roots employees and line managers, and (iii) discussing themes mentioned solely by one category. For instance, the senior managers mentioned communication and commitment themes, line managers mentioned their attempts to solve the employee turnover theme, and grass roots employees mentioned working environment, Training, Decision Making, Unequal Salary, and Career Path themes; see table 41.

The logic of placing these themes under the normative pillar is straightforward. I traced the respondents' data of value judgments, expectations, prescriptions and proscriptions of each theme. I expected earlier in the beginning of this chapter there would be convergence between the Omani and Western contexts with regard to the normative pillar. I have mentioned also in chapters three and four that Omani and GCC contexts were conditioned to some of the Western organizational values and culture due to the cultural imperialism effects and impacts of social elites who studied abroad. Moreover, I mentioned there that Western theories were assumed to be universal to GCC countries and were uncritically applied. Hence, the Omani organizations are structured, and operated in Western ways. Consequently, the prescriptions and proscriptions of operating these organizations were purely western, though they were not exactly applied. The following paragraph will reflect the main findings of this chapter (nine).

First of all, in spite of the divergence between the Omani and Western contexts in terms of the cognitive and regulative pillars (see chapter seven), it seems from the findings of this chapter that they do converge normatively. I think this convergence, as I mentioned above, is due to conceptual similarities, which might differ in application, between Omani contexts and Western contexts in prescriptions and proscriptions. For instance, low financial compensation is expected to have an impact on both contexts on employee turnover, the conducting of exit interviews was seen in both contexts to have least effect on managing human resources as they are not conducted properly.

Second, it seems to me there is a rhetorical problem in the Omani context. For example, normatively, employees expect pay and promotion to be based on the prescriptions mentioned in the Civil Service law, whereby promotion is based 70% on employee merit and 30% on tenureship. However, Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006) found that 44% of Omani departments depend on working experience to promote employees. Moreover, the Omani documentations of Ministries of Civil Service and National Economy, while embracing the Omani Economic Vision 2020, concentrated on training and HRD to develop manpower. Despite these plans, employees reported the insufficiency of training programmes received in the public sector. Moreover, Budhwar, Al-Yahmadi and Debrah (2002) supported this conclusion by stating that Oman has failed to meet its sixth national five-year development target for developing Omani labour. In addition, Oman in its pursuit of job classification projects supposed that all public organizations should have career paths for all employees, according to Budhwar, Al-Yahmadi and Debrah (2002). I think this shows another rhetorical

problem wherein plans are made but not carried out. In support of this finding, more than 50% of employees of 40 public units did not have a clear career path; see Al Hamadi and Budhwar (2006); and Budhwar, Al-Yahmadi and Debrah (2002). Unfortunately, the data from this research support the fact that career path plans for employees in the public sector are inadequate.

Third, the existing HRM in Oman is lacking in effectiveness as the data reflects. The senior managers are unable to offer better financial schemes due to limited economic resources and budget, and employees cannot stand to stay under the existing social and economic pressures. Moreover, the grass roots employees were the actors most affected by the cultural norms, see table 41. I think they hold the greatest expectations from the existing human resources system in Oman and bear its burdens. They are expected as well by their managers and families to meet respective work and social needs. However, their decisions and behaviour of leaving their organizations showed they have much confidence about themselves with regard to their skills, abilities, and qualifications. I think they realized that they have become real human capital that public organizations have to deal with as untradeable assets. More discussion of these findings and findings of analyses of the regulative and cognitive pillars is presented in the following chapter.

## Chapter 10: Discussion & Conclusion

### 10.1. Introduction

This chapter comprises five main subsections followed by a conclusion. The subsections are: (1) reflection on the research, (2) summary of the study, (3) discussion of the findings, (4) contributions and implications of the outcomes, (5) and limitations of the study. The first section aims to remind the reader about the initial inquiry, the environment in which the research is conducted, the purpose of undertaking this research, and the designated structure or framework used to conduct the inquiry. The second subsection presents a brief summary of the research study under three main subheadings: (i) the inquiry design, (ii) overview of the strategies for data gathering and analysis, and (iii) snapshots of the results of that analysis.

The third subsection represents the core both of this chapter and the research and aims to (i) reveal unpredicted results and locate them within the current debate on the universalism of Western theories with regard to employee turnover; (ii) consider whether the results align with or go against the main established views about the universalism of western theories in different contexts, with the focus in this study on the Omani context; and (iii) consider critically the contribution of this research to existing knowledge. The fourth subsection reflects on the implications of the research results in terms of adding to understanding of the research issues. The impact of this study is threefold: theoretical, practical, and methodological.

The implications of the findings could be at the theoretical level of accepting, disproving, or even expanding the theoretical basis of the research field. They could be at the practical level of directly affecting Omani human resources practices – in this research situation – as understanding about them evolves or is changed. Finally, the above implications might influence future studies conducted in the same field. The last major subsection presents the constraints that restricted the research and suggestions for addressing them in future studies.

### 10.2. Reflection

The research falls into three major parts. Part one presents a thesis overview, and the literature review. In this part I showed how the research problem evolved from a positivist approach to an interpretive approach. The introduction chapters explain as well the importance of undertaking this research. To reiterate, the Omani public sector has been losing employees to the other sectors in Oman: about 3936 employees on average per year from 2004 to 2008, as indicated by annual statistics issued by the Ministry of Civil Services.

At the beginning of this research the assumptions of Western literature about employee turnover were considered, and there is no doubt the loss of such large numbers of employees has negative consequences, which are represented in the financial costs associated with employee turnover and include costs of settling outstanding financial matters between the employee and the organization. Further costs include burdens of finding, selecting and recruiting replacements for departed employees. In addition, the loss of high performers leads to disruption of organizations' processes. The implications can be described as financial if an organization fails to meet customers' needs or its contractual obligations. Implications might also include a decline in the reputation of a public organization. For more insights about the consequences of employee turnover see Staw (1980); Anderson *et al.* (1994); Holtom *et al.* (2008); and Tracy & Hikin (2008).

The positivist approach seeks a causal relationship behind the employee turnover phenomenon. However, the results of the field work showed that employee turnover, which is described as highly institutionalized in the Western context, is not so institutionalized in the Omani context. The mindsets of Westerners and Omanis are not completely similar or dissimilar in constructing their understanding about employee turnover. To provide an example, Westerners consider employee turnover as an unhealthy phenomenon that requires intervention to conserve the organization's human and financial resources, and assure its prosperity; see Fulmer, Gerhart, & Scott (2003); Kacmar, Andrews, Van Rooy, Steilberg, & Cerrone (2006); Holtom *et al.* (2008); and Hom, Roberson, & Ellis, (2008). On the other hand the Omanis see employee turnover as a healthy phenomenon; see chapter 8. Consequently, the research evolved into consideration of the universality of employee turnover common assumptions developed in the West and their applicability in the Omani context.

Chapter two presents investigation into the universality of Western theories. I supported the crossvergence theorists' argument which suggests there is a middle way of management between the convergence and divergence approaches; see chapter two (section 2.2.3). It is true that the Omani context is different in social, economic and cultural aspects from the Western context as is illustrated in chapters one, three, and four. For instance, the Omani context is characterized by being religion oriented, based on extended families, high influence of clannish relationships on HR functions, a vulnerable economy that is mostly dependent on oil and gas revenues, and located among neighbouring states with very serious international political problems namely, Iran with its nuclear issue, Iraq, and the Palestine-

Israel situation. On the other hand, the Western contexts are not religion oriented, are based on the nuclear family, embracing individualist values where clannish influences are rarely reported, have strong economies, rely on their own labour and are politically stable; see chapters one, three and four. However, the Western cultural imperialism which is indicated in these chapters has impacted the Omani culture and resulted in behaviours and practices that are more or less similar to some found in western contexts. For example, in some GCC countries individualistic tendencies similar to those found in the West have been reported, such as having small families and a focus on individual interests.

Accordingly, this argument was anecdotally drawn from the literature review, and partially supported by the results of the field work. As a result, I suggested that the crossvergence between the two contexts required empirical investigation. This was a turning point in the research: when the inquiry evolved into investigation of the convergence, divergence and or crossvergence between the Omani and Western contexts.

### **10.3. Summary of the Study**

The second major part of this research comprises the methodology, analysis, and theorization. As was indicated in the thesis overview the initial objective of this study was to seek solutions to the employee turnover problem in the Omani public sector. Hence, the essence of the initial inquiry was positivism. The proponents of this approach embrace the idea that in order to reach certainty of knowledge of a phenomenon, some empirical study based on experimental science must be undertaken. Hence, in an effort to establish a causal relationship behind the phenomenon of employee turnover, I designed and administered a questionnaire.

Data rendered from the questionnaire indicated no real attempts have been made by management in the public sector to reduce employee turnover. Moreover, there was collective agreement among respondents that employee turnover is a healthy phenomenon. These interesting results were cross checked through semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, I felt encouraged to delve deeper into the behaviour of Omanis to discover how it is formed and how it is different/similar compared to the West with regard to human resources practices. Therefore, this result represents a turning point in the research which led to the research questions being reshaped to investigate this unexpected finding. Subsequently in the research the main topics dealt with were: a review of the limited amount of literature that questioned the universality of management ideas and whether these ideas ‘travel,’ and how the ideas



were translated in different cultural contexts. Then I presented arguments about why precisely Scott's framework of the three institutional pillars is such a good lens for looking at those processes and addressing this issue.

Proceeding from the last section 10.2, I felt that in order to undertake this comparative inquiry, a universal framework applicable to all contexts was needed; see chapter 5 and 7. The work of Scott (1995) provided a suitable framework for this inquiry because the aim was to explore and explain how employee turnover as an organizational behaviour is informed in both the Omani and Western context. As indicated in chapter 7, institutional theory, according to Lawrence and Suddaby (2006), accentuates how organizational behaviour is enabled and constrained by formal structures and their effects on the interface between the organization and its surrounding context. Being able to see how the behaviour is informed would therefore enable a comparison to be made between the two contexts in order to answer the research question relating to convergence, divergence, and crossvergence between the two contexts. Scott's three structural pillars of institutions, cognitive, regulative and normative, are transferable and bring stability, meaning, and order to social behaviour, using international language.

However, before this interpreting and theorizing was undertaken, I conducted a template analysis and data matrix analysis of the data collected qualitatively; see chapter 6. Template analysis, as is confirmed by Crabtree & Miller (1999), is very helpful in evaluating and managing large amounts of qualitative data and enabled different themes to be extracted from the respondents; see section 5.5. Themes were categorized under the three pillars to ease the analysis, comparison and discussion processes. The results of this analysis are presented in the following discussion section.

#### **10.4. Discussions/Conclusions**

The main discussions and concluding points are presented in the final chapters: 8, 9 and 10. In Chapters Eight and nine the research theorized the qualitative data using Scott's (1995) structural framework and discussion now follows of the findings. The importance of the findings is explained and their meaning is evaluated in terms of agreement with the views of leading scholars in this field. This move enables me either to support or challenge the prevailing theories about the employee turnover phenomenon. The flow of the discussion is as follows. First, I present the research questions. Then, these questions are answered based on the findings and results of the analyses in chapters eight and nine. Subsequently I attempt

to extract the meaning of these findings in terms of: (i) the universality of Western theories and concepts about the employee turnover, (ii) how employee turnover is perceived in the Omani context, and (iii) how the findings relate to the arguments discussed in the literature review. Do they support them or challenge them?

The theorization generated a better understanding about human resources practices in Oman in relation to employee turnover and the second part of the discussion chapter focuses on this aspect of the research. The last part of the discussion chapter presents the contributions of the research to knowledge and practice.

#### **10.4.1. Answers to the Research Questions**

To reiterate, the research questions evolved from the attempt to establish the causal relationship behind employee turnover in the Omani public sector. This positivistic investigation was changed to an interpretive approach as a result of respondents supplying data describing employee turnover as a healthy phenomenon. This data led me to suspect that the way the phenomenon is understood in the Omani context might be not quite the same as how it is perceived or understood in Western contexts. Hence, the direction of the study changed from seeking to identify the causes of employee turnover to seeking to understand Omani behaviour and perceptions about employee turnover. Moreover, doubt was cast on the alleged universality of theories generated in Western contexts, where employee turnover is seen as negative. The research aimed to investigate the convergence, divergence, and/or crossvergence between the Omani and Western contexts by posing the following new questions:

**Can the commonly accepted employee turnover concepts be universally applied? Or, in the light of their application to the Arab Gulf States, will another way of thinking about them emerge? Is the way employee turnover is understood in the West relevant to the Arab Gulf States?**

I systemically answer these questions by discussing the conclusions drawn from interpretation of the data using the three structural pillars of Scott (1995) in terms of cognitive, regulative and normative reflections. I will reflect in the following paragraphs my understanding about how Omanis institutionalize employee turnover with reference to findings from the analysis based on Scott's (1995) three structural pillars.

#### **10.4.2. Reflections of the Cognitive Pillar, Regulative and Normative Pillars**

Before reflecting on the findings I think it is helpful to give snapshots about Scott's (1995) structural pillars and what they precisely aim to show. They aim to show how behaviour is informed. To illustrate, in the cognitive pillar this study is seeking the kind of constitutive rules that inform behaviour. These constitutive rules could be imposed upon an individual externally by society or through an ideology or could reflect internal understanding of an individual about behaviour. The regulative pillar is used to assess the regulations set out to control and organize public, organizational and individual interests. Any attempt to breaching or avoid compliance with those regulations could lead to punitive actions or sanctions. The normative pillar is used to provide insight into the kinds of prescriptions and proscriptions occurring in organizations; see chapter 7 for more detail.

Reflection on the cognitive pillar allows much deeper analysis of respondents' behaviour. If the respondents have the same cognitive map as Westerners or vice versa, this means that the contexts are convergent and Western theories will be universal and applicable in the Omani context. However, the results provide more evidence for the inapplicability of Western theories about employee turnover in the Omani context. Thus, the findings support in general the argument of divergent scholars such as: Gonzales & McMillan (1961), Jaeger and Kanungo (1990), Boyacigiller & Adler (1991), Clarke et al. (1999), and Ozbligin (2004), who assert that Western theories do not travel to different contexts, see chapter 2. The findings support the idea that uncritical application of Western concepts and theories of employee turnover to management practices in the Omani context would result in oversimplification. This exactly what I meant by the parochialism in Western Management Theories. As I mentioned in chapter two some managers took the Western theories for granted to be universal to other contexts. This idea of management parochialism in Omani context is challenged by the finding of divergence between the Omani and the Western context on the majority of the themes deduced from the qualitative data using template analysis.

For example, as was made evident in tables 5 and 14 which were analyzed in the section 7.4.1, the Omani managers consider employee turnover to be a healthy phenomenon whereas Westerners consider it an unhealthy and an unwanted phenomenon according to Fulmer, Gerhart, & Scott (2003); Kacmar, Andrews, Van Rooy, Steilberg, & Cerrone (2006); Holtom et al. (2008); and Hom, Roberson, & Ellis, (2008). In the Omani context this behaviour is

constituted by the ideological rule that people have the right to a good life. Scott's framework indicated that the cognitive structural pillar has an influential role in forming behaviour. Hence, difference should be expected between contexts if they embrace different constitutive rules or social identities that inform their behaviour. Moreover, the differences might stem from different ideological roots, despite the constitutive rules being similar in the different contexts.

For instance, Omanis' behaviour regarding employee turnover is based on the constitutive rule that everyone has a right to a good life. The origination of this constitutive rule is believed to be divine and conveyed to Muslims in the holy Quran and Sunnah. Any Omani believer in Allah and doomsday has to submit to the divine and not cause harm to others. This submission is not meant to destroy interest in this life. Rather, it emphasizes the pursuit of personal interests as long as this does not cause harm to any living creature or breach divine orders. The Sunnah explicitly states that Muslims should stick to the rule of "There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm." This in turn points to the fact that an individual in Oman, which is a Muslim context, must bear in mind both the lifetime interests and interest in the afterlife. The two are dependent on each other. So, any harm caused by an individual is counted and s/he shall be accountable for that on judgment day.

On the other hand, in Western contexts the constitutive rule of the right to a good life is based on liberal democracy. Liberal democracy itself is connected to the Age of Enlightenment that was revolutionized in 17th century France. It focused on ideas such as separation of power, people as the main source of the government's power, and individual freedom of behaviour. The Enlightenment embraced rationalism and positivism. It is also termed the Age of Reason. Auguste Comte linked social studies to positivism. He argued that humanity developed through theology, metaphysics, and positivism. Thus, belief in God (Allah) in theology developed into belief in science and the certainty of knowledge proved by experiments in the Enlightenment Era. Furthermore, additional developments to the philosophical approaches have occurred in Western contexts.

I propose at least two potential explanations for the differences between the two contexts. First of all, according to the Comte view of the development of humanity, Omani cognition is still located in the first stage, namely that of theology. Despite the acknowledgment in Chapter four that religious rule ended in Oman with the fall of the Imam in the 1960s, the Omani contemporary government and constitution embrace Islamic religious approaches.

This is because they still believe in and submit to the divine despite certain individualistic and materialistic tendencies that were discussed in chapters 3,4,7, and 8.

The examination of the data also supported the conclusion that divergence exists between the Omani and Western contexts with respect to the cognitive pillar. Respondents reflected some beliefs and behaviours which are cognitively stored. The managers, for example, were found to be reactive to the employee turnover problem in general in the Omani context. Hence, their approach is to wait and see how things go, then propose solutions. This represents a slow response to problems. In fact, this behaviour can be located in either cognitive or normative pillars. In the cognitive pillar this behaviour is based on the constitutional rules in different holy Quranic verses that both explicitly and implicitly urge those in charge of Muslims to solve problems. For example, see Joseph Chapter, Al-Kahf (The Cave) Chapter, Al Bakara Chapter in Quran. Managers in the Omani context are normatively expected to respond to problems as I pointed out in chapter eight; see section 8.3.1.

Moreover, respondents saw no waste or investment loss if an employee left a public organization to work within the geographical borders of Oman; see Section 8.3.2. The constitutive rule here can be explained by the obligations set out by Sharia and the national constitution for senior managers to preserve the national investments made in citizens. Hence, the senior managers see employees as tradable assets as long as they are working within the state, which in turn means the state will harvest the return on investments made in those employees. These behaviors are informed by an ideological cognition and/or constitutive rule acknowledged by Sharia law in the Omani context that public funds and investments are sacrosanct and must be protected.

The differences between the Western and Omani contexts can also be said to stem from the different philosophical approaches the organizations and individuals adopt. To consolidate, modernism has affected the behaviour of society's actors in the West. For instance, modernism supports the belief that science can cure social ills (Carter and Jackson, 1990). Furthermore, it concentrates on individualism; see sections 1.4 and 2.2.1. The individualism embraced in the West, in addition, emerged to liberate individuals from feudalism, monarchies and church powers. Thus, the individual has absolute freedom to choose where to work or where to go. Moreover, individuals in the Western context of liberal democracy are protected from absolute power of state and monarchy by the constitutional laws. This is one of the most important tenets of capitalism. Hence, the association of management ideologies

and theories with the evolution of the capitalism is apparent (Guntman, 2005). On the other hand the Omani context is still, as shown from the above constitutive rules, dependent on religion to inform individual and organizational behaviour. Science, as it appears, is not the only means of curing social ills. The Islamic prescriptions and proscriptions documented in Sharia play a pivotal role in curing social ills. However, in terms of cultural imperialism some individual values have been located in GCC countries and specifically Oman, Qatar, and UAE, see chapter three, four and eight. In fact, this led to rethinking of the idea of complete divergence between the Omani and Western contexts in favour of crossvergence as will become more evident in the discussion of regulative and normative findings.

In the regulative and normative pillars, there was an obvious dilemma. It was clear from government documents, managers' data and public units' websites that good human resources practices including regulations, prescriptions and proscriptions had been put in place. For example, the promotion process was clearly laid out in the Omani civil services law that was issued by the Royal Decree no. 120 in 2004. The government has undoubtedly set rules that are supposed to assure jobs for Omanis, such as the Omanization law. Unfortunately, according to the data analysis, the theories were not applied in reality. This represents rhetorical practice (see Argyris (1980)). DiMaggio & Powell (1983) argue that management might adopt universally recommended human resources practices to gain institutional legitimacy or reputational advantage. However, the grass roots employees contended through different themes (see chapter 8) that the reality does not match the rhetorical allegations of the managers. Hence, there is a gap between what is stated in government documents and policies, and/or claimed by managers (rhetoric or espoused theory) and what actually is happening in reality (the theory in application). Carter & Jackson (2004) postulate that the reasons for rhetorical conduct are ostensible or hidden and unclear to employees.

In fact, the rhetorical gap idea itself is identical in both Omani and Western contexts. Groos (1994) postulated that when using rhetorical language a person is using available means to convey a message to persuade the public. Moreover, Gross (1994) argued that rhetorical activity is a response to a certain situation. I believe that the rhetorical behaviour exhibited by senior managers in this study is strongly based on and informed by the cognitive pillar despite the existence of relevant regulations in the Omani civil service law. Furthermore, I do not think their rhetorical activity is a response to the employee turnover situation. I think this would draw us into the debate as to whether "the ends justify the means" or "the means justify the ends". To illustrate, the Omani senior managers did not respond to the employee

turnover problem because they had a deeply embedded perception of it as a healthy phenomenon, and that it was not harmful as long as quitters carried on working within the state and the state was able to get a return on its investments. Their beliefs are deeply rooted in the Islamic rules as is shown at the beginning of chapter 8.

I think the way in which the rhetorical gap is understood in the Omani context is not a difference between espoused theory and theory in practice but it is more or less about compliance with divine orders. Thus, senior managers' engagement with practices designed to solve employee turnover is suggestively weak. Moreover, I think there is a suggestive difference between the Omani and Western ways about the rhetorical gap. In Oman, I think the senior managers are conforming more to the divine orders and country's rulers and seemingly overlook the rest of people. This could, I think, represent a wrongful understanding about divine orders that advice managers to submit to divine orders, rulers, and consider the needs of people. Hence, may be as one of the implications of this work is that those managers need some reinforcement about their understanding of divine orders. However, this idea, I think, is not totally institutionalized into the other categories. For example, the middle managers made some attempts to address employee turnover due to the fact that despite it being a healthy phenomenon, organizations needed to retain employees. On the other hand, because in west most of secular societies separate divine orders from normal life, managers do not really concern about divine orders. Moreover, they are more pragmatic to use means to persuade and or convince public as they are showing efforts in pursuit of the public interests.

Moreover, I was convinced by the responses of participants that the prevailing regulative system in Oman is weak and immature. Respondents reflected that all human resources actors in the Sultanate comply with government rules and policies such as Omanization and foreign investment laws; see chapters 4, 8 and 9. However, problems stem from concurrency of these policies in the public and private sectors, the weak public sector remuneration system as discussed in chapters 8 and 9, absence of policies to protect employers against international investors who have the advantage of experience and high payment scales, and the restrictions imposed by international treaties deriving from such organizations as the US-Oman FTA and WTO on the existing Omani regulative system; see Khan (2011). Furthermore, the contexts in which these treaties were formed and structured are totally different from the Omani context. The West has stronger regulative systems because the experience curve in relation to known and written human resources is suggestively higher than the Omani experience curve,

plus some Western practices require stronger regulations. For example, the West has strict regulations regarding taxation imposed on foreign investments. Hence, the Omani and Western contexts are indicatively divergent and consequently I believe that in the Western context the regulative bases for institutionalizing HR concepts, including employee turnover, are not identical to and are more advanced than those existing in the Omani context.

With regard to the normative pillar, Omani and Western contexts can suggestively be described as convergent. This pillar was used to identify the norms and socially mediated values that inform the social order and behaviour in the Omani context; see section 6.3.2. In the organizational context under investigation the prescriptions and proscriptions of managing organizations in the Omani context are found to be similar to those that apply in the Western context despite the existence of specific Omani cultural and religious factors. This was explained fully in relation to the three evolutionary periods in Omani culture of before Islam, post Islam, and the oil discovery and trade period in chapter four. It is my belief that the abandonment of the original Omani managerial and cultural practices based on Islamic and Arabic values due to colonialism and imperialism, the impact of social elites who studied in the West and brought western practices to Oman, plus the uncritical application of Western theories and models inherited from the colonial forces (Chapters 3 and 4) led to convergence between the Omani and Western contexts. Chapter 9 gives examples of normative pillars found to be identical in Omani and Western contexts, for example, respondents' expectations for remuneration, from management and supervisors, exit interviews, and performance appraisal.

In sum, I think the analysis and discussion of data assures the argument I posed in chapter two about the crossvergence between Omani and Western Contexts. Hence, I believe there is institutional crossvergence with regard to the understanding and application of HRM functions in general and employee turnover specifically between the Omani and the Western contexts. This is evident from findings and discussions of Scott's three structural pillars. Scott's framework appears to provide a better way to understand how mindsets in both contexts are programmed to behave in response to HRM. Accordingly, the two compared contexts were found to be divergent in terms of the regulative and cognitive pillars. However, they were found to be convergent in the normative pillar. Hence, I do not think that Western theories and practices are completely applicable and transferable to an Omani context.



## 10.5. Contributions and Implications of the Research

I believe that this study contributes to current knowledge in the following ways. It reaches different conclusions using one set of data and is a groundbreaking study into employee turnover in the public sector in the Omani context. For the first time the Scott (1995) framework of the three heuristically structural pillars is applied to explain employee turnover in the Omani public sector, thereby challenging the convergence theorists, divergence theorists and providing much support for the crossvergence theorists. The following paragraphs will discuss these contributions in greater depth.

First of all, the research reached basically two different conclusions using one set of data. The first conclusion was briefly presented in the research overview and was based non-intentionally on two main assumptions. The first assumption was that the Omani and Western contexts are identical and accordingly the Western common assumptions about employee turnover transfer and can be applied into Omani contexts. The second unintentional assumption was my presupposition that Western theories are perfectly applied in Western contexts as they are well established and written about in academic publications. If the Omani context were found to be identical to the Western context then Omani behaviour regarding employee turnover would stem from poor institutionalization of the HRM functions in the Omani context. We could then say Omanis committed the “crow’s mistake”. The crow’s mistake is deeply rooted and documented in Arabic literature and I think it metaphorically represents the existing Omani public sector situation. The crow started to err when it decided it did not like its own way of walking. It decided to imitate the peacock’s way of walking. The crow’s action went against divine and socio-cultural orders. Moreover, it was not a good or effective attempt since the crow uncritically tried to imitate a different creature, not a creature from the same species. The consequences were severe. The crow could neither imitate the peacock’s beautiful way of walking nor go back to its original way of walking. It ended up with the ugliest way of walking of all creatures in the world. Hence, when you see a crow moving you cannot tell whether it is jumping, running or walking. The random walk of human resources practices, with regard to the first conclusion, in the Omani public sector might stem from the failure of the Omani context to completely and uncritically apply and imitate the Western HRM practices. Hence, shortcomings were found such as the unsatisfactory remuneration system in Oman, poor supervision, and unplanned and/or very limited training programs.

The second conclusion arose from questioning the two assumptions mentioned above regarding: (i) the universality of Western common assumptions about employee turnover into different contexts and (ii) the supposition that published academic Western theories about the HR practices are perfectly applied in Western contexts. Hence, the second conclusion is more about trying to explore and explain Omani behaviour about employee turnover and compare it to the western context. Furthermore, I think this study contributes to the theory by re-evaluation of management as a discipline or concepts in an international world. I concluded there is a crossvergence on the basis that there is a lack of consistency between the non-identical Omani and Western contexts. The Omani context, as shown in chapter four, rests on the Islamic, Arabic, and Eastern values reflected in Omani constitutional law (Basic Statute of the State). The human resources in the Western context rest on neoliberal conduct, individualistic, contemporary management, and materialistic values as shown in chapter one.

However, the Omani context appears, from the findings of this research, to have a special identity and characteristics that are strongly bonded to religious and socio-cultural factors. Omanis institutionalize the HRM functions in ways governed by socio-cultural-economic-religious factors. As was shown in the previous section this conclusion was drawn through using the Scott (1995) three structural pillars framework as an underpinning theory to answer the research questions through analysis of themes rendered from the qualitative data. I think this can be considered as an additional contribution of this research, where it establishes interpretation of how behaviour can be culturally informed in Omani context. I think this establishment expands the theoretical knowledge of HRM in cross cultural and international perspectives. There have been a few studies according to Aycan et al. (2007) that linked the HRM functions with cultural values. Moreover, majority of these few studies used quantitative approach to prove that linkage like Aycan et al. (2007).

Secondly, this research presents for the first time generic data about the employee turnover phenomenon in the Omani public sector. As I mentioned previously in chapters three and four, very few studies about employee turnover have been undertaken in Oman especially and in GCC countries in general. This research is generic for two main reasons. First, it presents a study that conducts a basic investigation into employee turnover. It (study under scope) is not merely a secondary finding in a study devoted to a different topic: unlike in the study of Swailes and Al Fahdi (2011), who were basically investigating the obstacles faced by HRM in an Omani context; see chapter three. Moreover, Swailes and Al Fahdi (2011) were attempting to explain the causes of employee turnover in Oman, whilst the current study

strives to give an explanation as to how employee turnover as behaviour is understood in the Omani context; see section 3.1. Hence, the outcomes of this research will help employers to gain a better understanding of the nature of employee turnover in Omani contexts.

Furthermore, the current research claims to be a groundbreaking GCC study designed to understand employee turnover across public and private sectors. In chapter three I reflected that almost all of the studies conducted in the GCC countries about employee turnover were conducted in the private sectors. This is because the employees in GCC, as mentioned in chapter three, tended to shift from private sector to public sector. Furthermore, GCC citizens, as reflected in chapter three, tended to take for granted that they have a constitutional right to work in the government sector. Moreover, salaries are better in the public sector in other GCC countries, and HRM functions in GCC public sectors are more likely to be affected by clannish and familial influences than the private sectors. In addition, previous studies had uncritically accepted the transferability of Western common assumptions about employee turnover to GCC contexts. In fact, this leads us to reveal the third contribution of this research.

Third, this research contributes to the knowledge and debates about the universalism of Western theories, which is a very complicated area. I think there is a double problem with regard to the assumption of the universality of employee turnover theories. I argued that scholars conducting studies about employee turnover in the West made the mistake of assuming the transferability of employee turnover theories generated in the private sector into the public sector; see chapter one. Moreover, scholars who conducted studies about employee turnover outside western context assumed the universality of Western theories about employee turnover in different contexts. In terms of the universality of Western theories, this investigation provides support for crossvergence theorists such as Ralston, Holt, Terpstra, and Kai-Cheng (1997) who asserted there is neither complete convergence nor complete divergence of the different contexts. Findings also challenge the argument of divergence theorists by showing evidence of convergence between the Omani and Western contexts in the normative pillar. This appears to provides support for scholars such as Bond and King (1985); and Robertson et al. (2002) who postulated that some Middle East countries have adopted certain elements of the Western philosophy of management as they surge for development; see chapter two. Moreover, this study also appears to provide support for Khan's (2011) statement that Oman has neither complete convergence with nor divergence from any HRM models initiated in the West. The existing study reinforces that conclusion in

terms of employee turnover as one of the HR functions. I have cautious expectations of finding similar crossvergence in other countries in the Middle East, especially in GCC countries, that exhibit similar contexts and dispositions. I think this conclusion provides predictive assumptions about how citizens in Omani and GCC countries behave, especially with regard to organizational and HR functions. In addition, I believe that the convergence in the normative pillar and the divergence in the cognitive and regulative pillars can help or be used to explain how people behave with regard to other HR functions in other parts of the world. Moreover, in different contexts we need to be thinking institutionally in order to predict and recognize the usefulness of employee turnover approaches that have been generated in the West. Hence, we should examine them using Scott's framework to investigate the cognitive, regulative and normative dimensions. This leads us to the next contribution of the thesis.

Fourth, this research potentially contributes to the knowledge about relevant methodology as its usage of Scott's (1995) institutional framework as an underpinning theory and an analytical framework. This usage meant to interpret data rendered from the thematic analysis has rehashed our understanding about behaviour relating to employee turnover in Oman. Scott's three institutional pillars provided a wider and deeper way of understanding how behaviour in HR aspects such as employee turnover is informed. As was mentioned in chapter 7, there has been a plethora of studies based on institutional theory in general and Scott's (1995) three structural pillars in particular. However, none of the available studies into employee turnover, especially in an Omani context, have applied Scott's three pillared institutional framework to interpret the data. Chapter 7 also explained that this framework was chosen because its universal language transfers into different contexts. Furthermore, Scott's regulative, normative and cognitive pillars exhibit additional advantages over other theories that attempt to explain behaviour, such as the Foucauldian Discourse approach, and post-colonial lens. The Foucauldian discourse analysis concentrates more on the two dimensions of power and knowledge. They might have some relation to the scope of the study but are not as directly linked as Scott's institutional pillars. Much of the Foucauldian work is located in political, linguistics, and media fields that are not the focus of this study.

The potential use of the postcolonial lens as an underpinning theory for examining cultural specificity was also rejected by this study. However, it is used partially for explaining and interpreting some values in GCC countries in chapters 3, 4, 8, and 9. I think that the Omani behaviour evolved through different timelines. It cannot be restricted to post-colonialism

where the Omani cognition, as seen, for example, from the data analysis still adheres to constitutive rules initiated in earlier periods. Moreover, it is my belief that characteristics of both the Foucauldian discourse analysis and the Post-Colonialism Lens can be located within Scott's Structural Pillars. For example, respondents' data showed some indications about the behaviour conducted in submission to divine power and/or governmental power. For instance, managers refused to intervene when an employee wanted to leave as they believed that submission to Allah gives all people the right to seek a good life. Moreover, managers complied with governmental policy, obeying its sanctions over them. In the post-colonial dimension there have been indications that grass roots employees believe more in their skills, abilities, and tend to be more realistic. This indicates that Western individualistic values have an imperialistic influence on the Omani context in the post-colonial era. I will turn now to reflect some implications of this research.

I have grounds to believe that this study makes a contribution to the methodology. This can be depicted in the possibility of integration of the abstract methodology used in this research with action research. Hence, I believe that if I were to revisit action research to design an intervention on employee turnover in Oman, taking into consideration all the research circumstances, such as premises, limitations, contextual situation, and actors' expectations, it would be possible to infuse and investigate the ideas of convergence and divergence between the actors involved in the system, in the relevant areas of the Omani HR system.

Another implication is that when conducting studies in contexts different to those where the original body of knowledge about management practices was initiated, academics and managers should be exceedingly cautious about the generalizability. As is made apparent by the current study, the uncritical application of western common assumptions about employee turnover that originated in Western Europe and Northern America was not useful in the different context of a developing and third world country such as Oman. Adherence to these assumptions would have resulted in parochialism and over-simplification about management theories and practices as was postulated by Boyacigiller and Alder (1991); Clarke et al. (1999) March (2004); and Ozbligin (2004). Based on that I think management theory needs to be amended for the international context. I think as well that there is no super identical convergence between any two different contexts. Thus, I think homogeneity is almost an impossible status between contexts. This is because of the different cultural factors that affect organizations in their local levels. Hence, despite that Germany or France and UK are considered from western context, but they are suggestively not totally identical contexts as

each context has its host of cultural factors. No doubt there is some convergence to some extent. However, in local level there will be some difference in the many issues (for example, in dress, addressing people, food, driving, language, and attachment to religion). Furthermore, the implication for managers in practice is that they should be aware of how to locate the differences created by a particular context. They consequently can develop suitable practices or programs and solutions to problems. In addition, managers in practice should adapt their assumptions to these international difficulties.

### **10.6. Limitations**

First, the research is confined to the public sector and semi public sector organizations. Second, almost half of the quitters from the Omani civil service are not Omanis. This study set out to understand how Omanis understand and behave regarding employee turnover. Hence, I do not think that findings can be generalized across those non-Omanis who quit the civil service. Although high percentages of those quitters are Arabs, they originate from non-GCC countries that do not have much in common with the Omani context. Moreover, I think this represents a case that can be separately studied in the Omani context. Third, the shortage of time available to me to address this problem had some consequences. For example, the sample size of population in the quantitative method had to be relatively small. A larger sample or number of participants would have rendered the results more generalizable across the population.

Fourth, the task of using the Scott institutional lens was not easy. This is because the constitutional rules, that are main element in detecting the cognitive pillar's factors, in general are so abstract and cannot be identified easily. Moreover, there is a difficulty sometimes in differentiating between the normative and cognitive pillars. The existing literature about constitutional rules, prescriptions and proscriptions of behavior in different context is so rare.

Fifth, I encountered some ideological difficulties while conducting this research. For instance, as a graduate of a college of commerce and economics that focuses totally on Western theories, it was very difficult to escape from the influence of these theories. I was advised by supervisors not to take for granted or idealize the Western practices in human resources while undertaking analysis and discussion. I believe that the rhetorical hump, as seen in managers' data, college experiences and the uncritical application of Western theories in Arab countries feeds that unintentional idealization of Western theories. I think this

represented a limitation for me in the early stages of this research. I think also this idealization of western theories will represent a limitation in future studies unless it becomes known to researchers in GCC in general and in Oman in specific.

Sixth, some problems occurred while conducting the semi-structured interviews in the Omani public sector. For instance, respondents in some bodies of the public sector asked me first to write a formal letter to their employers asking their permission to undertake the interviews. In order to comply with such requirements and speed up the process I presented to respondents and/or to their employers two more documents besides the one required. These were supporting letters from the Omani cultural attaché and another from the supervisor and these are shown in the appendices. Due to red tape and bureaucratic requirements, it is strongly recommended that all potential researchers in the Omani public sector prepare in this way. Moreover, they should prepare drafts of interview requests to send to respondents' employers.

Some respondents declined my request to recording the semi-structured interviews. They did not give a reason for their refusal. I did not push them too hard on this matter because I sensed the danger that those respondents might refuse to undertake the interview. In these cases I used shorthand skills, read back the interviews to the respondents to check for accuracy, and finally sent them the drafts of their interviews for their approval.

### **10.7. Suggestions for Further Research**

I mentioned above in the limitations that this study was undertaken in the Omani public sector and I concentrated in understanding how employee turnover is understood by Omanis. That is why all of my respondents were Omanis. I mentioned as well there that statistics of the ministry of civil services showed that half of the quitters are non-Omanis. Based on these limitations I think there are at least two studies that can be undertaken in future here. First, investigating how these non-Omanis understood the employee turnover and does that has any impact on the turnover behavior of their Omanis counterparts. Second, it might be a good idea investigating the employee turnover within the private sector and find any particular lessons exerted by private sector's organizations to retain their employees and the possibility of accommodating these lessons in the public sector.

Additionally, I mentioned in different places in this research that I used Scott structural lens to interpret my data and to answer the research question. I think it would be useful for future research to use different underpinning theories for interpreting the behavior. I think this

would enrich the knowledge and theories about employee turnover in Oman. Moreover, it would present some support or challenge to the findings of the present study. Besides, due to the scarcity of literature about the abstract constitutive rules and their importance in informing behaviour in religious and conservative contexts like the Omani context, I think it is useful to conduct research about this matter in Omani context.



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# Appendices

## **APPENDIX 1: Empirical Evidence on Factors Influencing Voluntary Turnover of Labour**

This Part of the literature review has been conducted for the first phase of the study where I thought that employee turnover is a problem that can be positivistically solved. I am showing this part in appendix as a support to my work in the second phase while I am trying to interpret how employee turnover phenomenon is understood in the Omani context and answer the new research question. I argued in the theorization chapter 7 that I will use the Scott the institutional pillars (regulative, normative, and cognitive) to theorize my data. There I discussed about the normative pillar as prescriptions and proscriptions in society. I needed to give some clarifying examples about that from western views. I think this part give some normative examples about employee turnover phenomenon in the West. Moreover, I needed this to enable me to make comparison easier with the Omani context.

### **1.1. Introduction**

I believed – initially - that investigating the reasons for high or low employee turnover is very important to providing a strong background to the phenomenon and hence in designing methodology to answer the research question. This section argues that there are many causes of employee turnover as reflected in the Western context literature. Moreover, the Western studies supply several categorizations for the variables or factors that cause employee turnover, according to Abdul Razak (1991). The causes of high or low percentages of turnover within an organization can usually be attributed to some of the many reasons defined by different scholars. For example, Merwe et al (1971); Porter and Steers (1973); and Muchinsky and Morrow (1980) introduced categorizations for causes of employee turnover. However, all of their categorizations revolved around three major and common factors: external factors, organizational factors and individual factors. To consolidate the similarities between existing categorizations I present in the following paragraphs two examples of categorizations of employee turnover variables, introduced by Pettman (1973) and Muchinsky and Morrow (1980)

In 1973 Pettman categorized three basic correlates that could cause changes in the turnover or retention rate. They are: external correlates, work-related correlates, and personal correlates. The external correlates could be the unemployment rate, employment perception, accession rate and union presence. The work related correlates include pay, job performance, role



clarity, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. The personal correlates are age, tenure, gender, education, marital status, behavioural intentions and others.

The correlates were reintroduced in 1980 by Muchinsky and Morrow as the main determinants of turnover. They called them respectively: general economic conditions, work-related conditions, and individual factors. Cotton & Tuttle (1986) applied a meta-analytic technique to study turnover and confirmed that about twenty six variables are positively related to turnover.

Morrell et al. (2002) argued that the majority of studies on employee turnover processes fell into two schools of thought, economic and psychological, that inform quitters' decisions. For example, Morrell et al. (2002) argued that the economic school concentrated on explaining variables that included salary, unemployment rate, and opportunity. Furthermore, he argued that the psychological school concentrated on the variables of satisfaction and commitment. Hence, I think is that the two schools are not presenting a comprehensive view about the reasons that inform employee's behaviour of leaving his or her post. Morrell et al. (2002) contended that factors affecting employee's decision of quitting were categorized under pulling theory 'for the labour market factors' and pushing theory 'for the personal and psychological factors' according to Lee and Mitchell (1994). My argument here is that culture can affect the employee turnover behaviour. The culture from my point of view in this context cannot be deemed just to be pushing or pulling theory. I think it is more or less about adaptive behaviour exerted by an individual in accordance with principles and virtues that s/he acquired spiritually, religiously and/or by man.

Maybe for the time being the best plan for exploring this phenomenon is to categorize variables under a mixture of cultural/economic factors; role or occupational factors; and psychological or attitudinal factors. To answer the research question posed at the beginning of this chapter by investigating the employee turnover in Omani context using Western theories, and to achieve both flexibility and compliance with a systematic approach, I intended to employ the following: (i) Psychological Factors, (ii) Economic/Cultural factor, and occupational Factors. The logic for choosing this plan stems from inability of the precedent literature to cover this issue in a holistic way. The following two subsections and their subheadings will deal with the dimensions of Psychological factors, and Economic/Cultural factors.

## 1.2. Psychological Factors

In this research psychological factors are defined as mental and behavioral stressors that could lead an employee to take the decision to quit an organization, according to De Vos, Buyens, & Schalk, (2003). Due to time limitations I will cover the best known psychological factors related to employee turnover as reflected in the Western theories: job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job performance, and role clarity.

### 1.2.1. Job Satisfaction

A very important fact to be reflected here is that until 1972 all scholars who traced the term job satisfaction were concentrating either on measurement or its relationships with absenteeism and turnover (Wanous & Lawler, 1972). They did not concentrate on its epistemology and ontology. Wanous and Lawler (1972) defined it as being embodied in a number of personal feelings. These feelings can affect people's satisfaction with their job. In their landmark theory of organizational equilibrium March and Simon (1958) concluded that fulfillment of the job satisfaction need within the employees' perception helps significantly in reducing turnover (Peterson, 2004). The essence of that theory mainly relates to the decision making in organizations and the belief that staff will choose to continue working for an organization as long as the inducements they are getting are more than or similar to their expectations (Mangolte, 2000). Carsten and Spector (1987) tested the correlation between job satisfaction and turnover and concluded that there is a moderate correlation of  $r = 0.4$ . They found that this relation depends heavily on the unemployment rate in the industry or economy.

Some scholars have studied factors related to job satisfaction, such as tenureship, which are somehow related to employee turnover. For example, most of the studies that have covered the tenure issue and its relation to turnover treat tenure as a reason for job satisfaction. Hunt and Saul (1975) argued that there is a linear relationship between job satisfaction and tenure. In 1957, Herzberg *et al.* stressed that the relation of job satisfaction to age and tenure is U-Shaped, with the satisfaction curve diving down in the first year and lasting until an employee matures and acquires sufficient experience to allow him to adjust his ambitions and expectations more realistically. There is then an increase in satisfaction.

Hulin and Smith (1965) argued that age, tenure and satisfaction relationships may not be consistent among individuals in all contexts. Their analysis revealed a negative relationship between age, tenure and satisfaction. Unlike Herzberg *et al.* (1957), Hulin and Smith postulated that by increasing tenure, an employee would fulfill his expectations through the

real opportunities available and thus the relation with satisfaction would not be U-Shaped. Gerhard (1990) demonstrated that job satisfaction can be considered as a direct predictor of the intention to stay with or to leave an organization. In other words it can be a predictor for turnover level. In 1977 Mobley established a new model showing how job satisfaction is related to turnover. His model is outlined in figure 6.

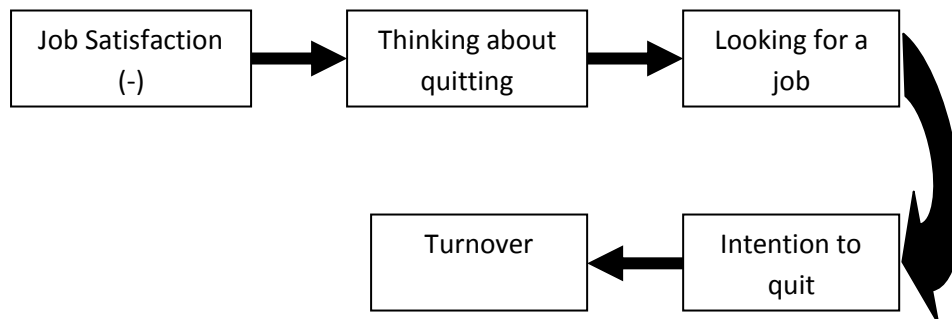


Figure 6. Mobley Model

In 1973 another model depicting job satisfaction, called the Expectation-Met Model, was developed by Porter and Steers. Their approach assumed that each employee joining an organization has a set of expectations. If these expectations are not met, this causes dissatisfaction and increases the probability of quitting the job. Wright & Bonnet, (2007) argued that job satisfaction may be moderated by employee psychological well-being. The results showed that when psychological well-being is low, a strong and negative relation between job satisfaction and turnover would occur and vice versa.

The studies reviewed above have a number of methodological weaknesses. First, all of the studies tested employee turnover after the termination of employment. This makes it difficult for a researcher or a reader to say which variables were dependent. Second, they failed to provide control groups in their study designs. To clarify this point further, suppose that a research study concluded that the main reason for employee turnover was the inability of an organization to provide job security for those who had left. This conclusion would fail if it were found concurrently that remaining employees did not feel or have job security.

Third, there was a lack of valid and reliable techniques for data collection and measurement. For example, most studies used the questionnaire technique. The dependence on a single technique precluded comprehensive examination of such a complicated issue. In order to validate the information gathered it is preferable to use triangulation of a mixture of techniques to affirm the conclusions. Fourth, all of the studies conducted before 1973 attempted to address the problem of turnover or absenteeism at one point of time, neglecting

the possibility of changes in behaviour and attitudes over time. Finally, those studies failed to provide any clues as to the causality of job satisfaction-employee turnover. Wanous and Lawler (1972) argued that the failure of those scholars to first define the meaning of satisfaction and job satisfaction led to problems in defining proper and valid measurements.

### 1.2.2. Organizational Commitment (OC)

Steers (1977) was among scholars who asserted the importance of organizational commitment (OC) in measuring the effectiveness of an organization. Organizational commitment (OC) is defined as: the level of staff's psychological attachment to their organizations and the positive relation of this to motivation, job performance, and job satisfaction (Chen *et al.*, 2002). Other scholars, such as Eagly and Chaiken (1993), preferred to define it as staff attitudes toward the organization. Becker (1960) defined it as consistent lines of activity or an implicit mechanism which informs individual behaviour. Eagly and Chaiken (1993) assumed that highly committed workers are those who would choose to stay in the organization.

The relationship between organizational commitment and turnover differs from one level to another within an organization. Cohen and Hudecek (1993) conducted a study to test the relationship between organizational commitment and turnover across occupational groups (*see below figure 7*).

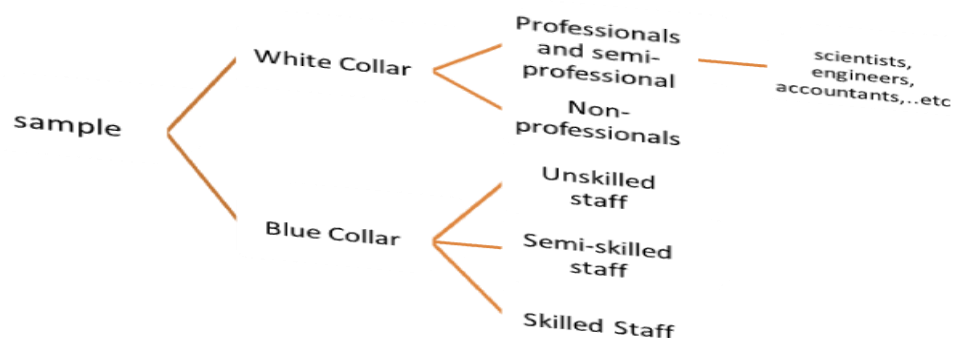


Figure 7. Organizational Groups Used by Cohen and Hudecek (1993) to explore OC and ET relationship

They undertook several comparisons between subgroups with regard to the OC-turnover relationships. They found a stronger negative relationship between OC and turnover among the white collar group (high status positions) than the blue collar group (low status positions). The numbers of participants in each category was small, and so the generalizability of this

study is questionable. Ritzer and Trice (1969) disaggregated commitment as being either commitment to an organization or commitment to an occupation. Their results suggest that people who lack meaningful content in their work (blue collar) are not very committed to an organization: unlike the people whose jobs have meaningful content (white collar). They found as well that commitment to organization among those who majored in personnel and administration education was higher than among staff who majored in other fields. In 1981 Angle & Perry suggested the existence of a negative relationship between employee turnover and organizational commitment.

### **1.2.3. Job Performance**

A hypothesis of Marsh & Mannari (1977) produced a negative relation between job performance and employee turnover while they were examining why employee turnover in Japanese organizations is lower than employee turnover in American organizations. Marsh and Mannari (1977), did a multiple regression of eighteen independent variables with turnover. Job performance was one of these variables, and the researchers found a negative relation with turnover. That means turnover within a firm is high when job performance is low. In 1982, Dreher examined the performance-turnover relationship in a national oil company. He carried out a longitudinal study on employees' progress and performance from 1964 to 1979 on about 7000 subjects.

The finding of his study was contrary to the argument of Marsh and Mannari (1977). Dreher concluded there was no indication that high performers are always the most likely to quit an organization. In short, no positive high performance-turnover relationship was evident. Similarly, Sheridan & Vredenburg (1978) in a study of nursing employees found no relationship between turnover and job performance.

A new approach to testing the relationship linking performance and turnover was suggested by Jackofsky (1984) whereby the term voluntary turnover was applied to two main roots. They are, according to the definition: (i) perceived desirability of movement from the organization and, (ii) the perceived ease of movement. Jackofsky then introduced a model to test the turnover linkage to both perceptions. Jackofsky found that the relation was indirectly positive with the first perception and strongly positive with the latter perception. This more nuanced analysis suggests that there is a significant link between turnover and job performance.

#### **1.2.4. Role Clarity**

Role clarity can be conceptually attributed to two factors (Lyons, 1971). First, it refers to the level of availability of satisfactory information on employee roles in an organization, which is called objective role clarity. Reasons for the availability or lack of satisfactory information could lie in the extent to which the inherent nature of the information makes it restricted or in variation in the quality of the information itself. Second, subjective role clarity can be attributed to an employee's feeling of having as much or too little information regarding the role as compared to what should be available.

Cotton and Tuttle (1986) postulated that role clarity has a negative relation with turnover. Their conclusion was based on a meta-analysis of turnover correlates which identified 26 variables directly related to employee turnover. Role clarity is very important for assuring good performance, and failure to provide such clarity may have an impact on an employee's decision to leave an organization. They found as well that nationality, industry and population act as moderators that rule the variables-employee turnover relation. Among these variables was role clarity, which they found to have a negative relationship with turnover. Whenever role clarity was low turnover would be high.

The lack of role clarity is generally accepted as increasing an employee's anxiety since he/she cannot proceed with achieving target outcomes expected from him/her. That anxiety would cause frustration that would eventually turn into tension. As a natural response to that situation an employee would respond either by recording a high level of absenteeism or by simply quitting the job and looking for a more suitable alternative (Ivancevich and Donnelly, 1974). In 1981, Bedian and Arminakis found both direct and indirect effects of role conflict and ambiguity variables upon job attitudes. In support of this theory, De Croon *et al.*, (2004) in a longitudinal study found evidence that anxiety results directly in voluntary turnover. Moreover, it was found that tension stimulates voluntary turnover more at inter-occupational (moving to a job outside the existing industry) level than intra-occupational level (moving to a job inside the existing industry).

#### **1.2.5. Job Security**

This stressor can be defined, according to Pearce (1998), as a mental condition about expectations of whether an employee would be able to carry on working within an organization or not. These expectations diverge among employees and this could be attributed to their relationships with their employers; see Pearce (1998); and (Tsui *et al.*, 1997). Jackson, Schwab, & Schuler (1986) contended there is a positive relationship between

employee turnover and job insecurity. Lack of job security could have severe consequences on an employee. For instance, Dekker & Schaufeli (1995) postulated that increased job insecurity affects psychological health negatively and leads to burnout and distress. They went on to argue that ultimately such symptoms lead to withdrawal from an occupation and from organizations.

#### **1.2.6. Summary of Psychological Factors**

This brief summary about the psychological factors leads to some general assumptions about them in the Western context. Basically, these assumptions assume in general the existence of a negative relationship between psychological factors and employee turnover. To recap this section, it focused on four psychological factors: job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job performance and role clarity. The following paragraphs present brief respective summaries. First, most of the studies conducted on job satisfaction and employee turnover point to a negative relationship between them. This finding is considered in the design of my methodology as it could be a reason behind employee turnover in the Omani public sector. Also, my design attempts to avoid the main pitfalls encountered by the above scholars, for example, by triangulating the data and not depending in my investigation on just one method, such as the questionnaire. Second, my investigation will involve not just respondents who left their organizations but also employees who are planning to leave and key managers who have access to information, and/or could do something about it.

Second, several of the scholars cited above regard OC as one of the main factors leading to employee turnover. Thus, I argue it is important to investigate organizational commitment as it could be one of the causes of employee turnover in the Omani public sector. Third, many studies into job performance showed it could be an important factor in leading an employee to leave. This will be considered in the current research, potentially by asking about the quality of quitters' performance and its relation to employee turnover. Fourth, the Western theories claim that role clarity has a negative relation with employee turnover. Finally, as several studies have highlighted the dangerous and negative consequences of an increase in job insecurity and its impact on employee turnover, this aspect will also be explored in the current inquiry.

#### **1.3. Economic/Cultural Factors**

Economic factors can in this context be defined as aspects that can urge or lead an employee to take the decision to quit an organization. In this section, I will discuss two such factors: wages and unemployment rate. My argument here is that the economy, as is seen in the West,

is a major issue in predicting employee turnover. Moreover, this section highlights factors that impose cultural or occupational stress on employees and lead them to take the decision to leave their organizations. This economic/cultural factors subheading includes aspects such as gender issues, employment relations and some occupational issues.

### **1.3.1. Wages**

Because of the important effects of wages upon macroeconomics and microeconomics, economists, such as Campbell (1993), developed efficiency wage models. As a consequence, some sectors focus on wages and remuneration in order to control rates of turnover. To illustrate, the US army has relied on remuneration to ensure that recruitment and retention are maintained at desired levels (Noznisky *et al.*, 1990).

In their introduction to “Job Mobility and The Careers of Young Men”, published in 1992, Topel and Ward suggested that a new employee who is looking forward to working for about forty years of his life would change his job ten times and, most interestingly, his wage growth would be 66% in the first ten years. Topel and Ward (1992) reached that conclusion after conducting a ten year analysis of longitudinal data on job mobility and wage growth among young men in the labor market. The study tracked the individuals’ job mobility in the labor market at three month intervals for ten years.

Their findings are contradicted by certain studies. For example, Mobley *et al.*, (1979) denied the existence of any momentous relationship between wages and turnover. The first evidence to suggest a direct and positive relationship between wages and turnover was produced by Bartel and Borjas in 1981. They assumed as well that there was an increase in the wages of young people when they left one job for another.

Wages and salaries can be considered as major players in determining and predicting employee turnover (Munasinghe, 2000). In fact, a number of different studies show that wages or salaries are a very important determinant of leaving an organization. For instance, Fochsen *et al.*, (2005) conducted a study among Swedish nursing personnel. They examined the factors that led nurses to take a decision to quit the nursing sector. They concluded that the level of remuneration nurses were getting for their work was the main incentive behind that decision. A study conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) to examine the impact of wages on turnover found an inverse relationship whereby whenever wages were high the turnover rate of that organization was low (Martin ,1993).



### **1.3.2. Unemployment Rate**

Unemployment rate is considered as one of the external factors that affects employee turnover (Pettman, 1973). Several scholars have asserted the importance of the unemployment rate as a kind of economic-labor factor that influences the employee turnover. Mobley *et al.*, (1979) and Shikiar and & Freudenberg (1982) used the unemployment rate as a moderator between job dissatisfaction and turnover. They postulated that periods of high unemployment promote high rates of job dissatisfaction and logically result in high employee turnover. On the other hand, in their 1987 study of 250 hospitals in the USA to test the relationship between unemployment turnover and employee turnover, Pfeffer & O'reilly (1987) concluded that there is a negative relationship between the two variables.

Warn (1994) suggested that the employee turnover rate would increase if redundancy rate of a certain economy or country were to go up simultaneously with the salary levels. That might be attributed to the vacancies that are created as people leave their organization. This would encourage people in other organizations who are looking for better postings and benefits to utilize this opportunity and leave their organization for these postings. That, according to Warn, could cause a mismatch between the real skills wanted in an organization and staff availability. The unemployment rate was found to be a direct predictor for turnover level (Gerhart, 1990).

### **1.3.3. Gender Issue**

It can be argued historically that Benson (1929) was the first scholar in the modern era to study gender in relation to turnover. She argued that, while there was always enough female labor for seasonal industries, most of this was semi-skilled or unskilled. Moreover, she argued that the employee turnover costs for males were very high, but were low in the case of females. Thus, turnover rates among women are much higher than among men. Moreover, the turnover among married women is higher than the turnover among single women.

Cotton and Tuttle (1986) suggested that the employee turnover rate among females is higher than that among males. Scholars such as Ragan and Smith (1981) suggested that there is, economically, no discrimination involved in discounting the wages of women and hiring more males than females. The reason given is that the turnover among women is higher than among men, and this is very costly for the employers since they are paying for the hiring process, wages, and training fees. Those costs lower the annual earnings of their organizations. Their argument is that employers are thinking economically about the quality

of the human capital. It has been found that turnover among women is higher among less educated women than more educated women (Royalty, 1998).

Tolbert *et al.*, (1995) found that an increase in the number of women working for one department or organization is accompanied by an increase in the turnover rate. They claimed that when there is an increase in the number of workers from the same gender or inter-group, the rate of competition and conflict rises and that causes the increase in the turnover rate. The rate starts to stabilize when the percentage of women is between 35% and 40%. In addition, they found no relationship between the size of female workforce and turnover among males.

**FYI:** In Oman there are rules which encourage some employers to employ more males without considering this move as discrimination. While representing the 1998 cohort of College of commerce and Economics in the Student Council of Sultan Qaboos University, the researcher had the opportunity to discuss students' problems with the vice chancellor. One of the discussed issues was the employment of graduate females as demonstrators and qualifying them to be the next generation of academics. As an administrator sitting at the top of the hierarchy of the university, he said, "I, personally, do not encourage employing too many females in such positions". He suggested that despite their academic superiority to the male students, they inevitably confronted problems that in different situations led to their leaving the institution. He also said that when they get pregnant, their unstable health situation in the first days and last days of pregnancy affects their performance. Furthermore, after delivery of a new baby they have the right by law to take a motherhood break of 45 days. This actually disrupts the educational process. Moreover, this situation makes it necessary to find replacements, which again means incurring costs to the organization. Some of them would refuse to complete their academic studies because their religion and culture were against the idea of travelling abroad alone without husband, father, brother or a mature son.

We can possibly suppose that stability of turnover at a female employment level of 35% -40% can be attributed to the fact that longer tenure results in promotion to managerial level posts. This supposition is supported by a relatively new study conducted by Lyness and Judiesch (2001) that examined the relationship between gender and employee turnover. A large number of those investigated were working in managerial positions. The results showed turnover among females to be slightly lower than among males.

#### 1.3.4. Occupational Factors

These are role related aspects that might intensify the intention of an employee to quit an organization in cases where they are not well designed and/or applied. It has been argued in the Western theories that lack of good occupational conditions for employees would lead to an increase in employee turnover. This subsection presents some studies supporting that argument about these occupational factors within a Western context. These factors could include: employee treatment, pension schemes, supervision issue, performance appraisal, and organizational regulations. Brief discussion of these aspects is offered in the following paragraph.

First, many studies have supported the idea that unfair treatment of employees increases employee turnover in any organization. Rubin (2009) argued that in Ohio (USA) principles of fairness are the basic and fundamental aspects guiding civil services procedures in areas such as recruiting, assessment, performance appraisal, promotion, and employee turnover in government agencies. Battaglio & Condrey (2009) contend that fairness is the most fundamental aspect in managing the public organizations. Several studies have claimed that failing to provide or operate with fairness would lead ultimately to an increase in employees' intentions to leave an organization; see for example, Alexander & Ruderman, 1987; Kurland & Egan, 1999; Eisenberger *et al.*, 2001; and Hassan, 2010). Based on these studies, consideration of these issues was incorporated into the original methodology for the study.

Second, many studies in UK and USA have examined pension-job mobility relations. For example, McCormick & Hughes (1984) argued that the employees who do not have pension schemes are more likely to move to other jobs. That conclusion was supported by Mealli & Pudney (1996), who argued that employees without pension schemes are less likely to have such long tenure as their counterparts who have pension schemes. The U.S.A. Department of Labor, (1964); Parnes, (1974); and Ippolito, (1987, 2002) argued there is a negative relationship between pension and employee turnover. Ippolito (1987;2002) argued that the underlying theory for this relation is the implicit pension contract theory. This theory states that an employee would get a lower pension if s/he chose to quit an organization earlier than agreed by contract and vice versa. As the issue of pensions seems to be highly relevant to answering the research question, it is considered in the methodology design.

Third, Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, (2002) postulate there is a negative relationship between perceived supervision support and employee

turnover. Krackhardt, McKenna, Porter, & Steers (1981) pointed out that some Western studies show a negative relationship between employee satisfaction with their supervisors and employee turnover. Moreover, Krackhardt et al. (1981) suggested that by behaving in a certain, optimal way supervisors can play a major role in reducing employee turnover. Furthermore, Buckingham & Coffman, (2005) contend that people do not leave the organization but they leave their immediate managers. They stressed the pivotal role of managers in magnetizing and keeping highly skilled employees in an organization. The underlying argument in this section is that supervisors have an important role in retaining employees. Bassett (1972) argued that a common assumption about employee turnover is that it can be used to index managers' ability to manage human relations. This important argument will be tested in the Omani context. It could be a stressor behind employee turnover in the Omani public sector.

Fourth, some studies indicate that poorly designed and conducted performance appraisal might increase employee turnover. Performance appraisal as a domain of practice dates back to the 1800s, according to Prowse & Prowse (2009). In the earliest times, the practice was very basic; simply an assessment of whether performance was considered good or bad. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Taylorism and scientific management theory gave rise to a number of procedures for measuring performance. The psychological approach to performance appraisal was developed in the 1930s. Here, rating scales such as the Likert scale were used for the first time to evaluate performance. The 1940s saw the introduction of behavioral methods such as behavioral anchored rating scales (BARS), behavioral observation scales (BOS), behavioral evaluation scales (BES), the critical incident technique, and job simulation. Post WWII, performance appraisal tended to be results oriented and management by objectives was born. In the 1960s, the method of self-appraisal was developed as a means of more effectively involving the individual in the process, whilst the 1990s saw the introduction of the 360 degree method for performance appraisal. Prowse and Prowse (2009) add that performance appraisal can motivate employees because it provides role clarity, clarity about potential goals and the opportunity to identify training courses for developmental purposes. Hence, this issue is considered important to my inquiry.

Finally, the employment laws can be categorized under protection of workers. In the USA the civil service has protected employees by instituting affirmative action such as prohibiting termination of employment because of political or racial affiliation. Capitalist countries adopt liberal concepts such as man's freedom of choice of work based on the French saying

'Laissez-faire' (Let do and let pass). This individual freedom of choice of work and to do what one will with one's life is constitutionally protected. It seems to me that it is important to assess the extent to which employees are free in the Omani context to move from one sector to another and whether there are any public laws that constrain the movement of employees.

To sum up this section, it raises some important issues that will be examined in answering my research question on finding the causes of employee turnover. This section has revealed that economic/cultural factors related to employee turnover have been examined in the Western context and majority of them proven to have a negative relationship with employee turnover. The following section covers the third dimension, namely the measurement of employee turnover.

In light of the pilot study I did to investigate the causes of employee turnover in Omani public sector, I think these two schools are not adequate in explaining the employee turnover behaviour.

## Appendix 2: Supporting Letter from the Cultural Attaché Of Omani Embassy in London to Participants

<p>Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman The Office of Cultural Attache</p>		<p>سَفَارَةُ سُلْطَنَةِ عُمَانَ الملحقية الثقافية - لندن</p>
<p>التاريخ: 04 يونيو 2008</p>	<p>الرقم: ص.م.ث/٤٥٩٤/2008</p>	
<p><u>الى من يهمه الامر</u></p>		
<p>السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته</p>		
<p>تؤكد سفارة سلطنة عمان - الملحقية الثقافية بلندن بان الفاضل/ عبدالمجيد بن عبدالله الصوافي طالب يدرس الماجستير في مجال الادارة بجامعة شفيلد، وهو يقوم باجراء بحث بعنوان:</p>		
<p>Assessing the Omani Public Sector Ability to Control Employee Turnover Quiet Crisis</p>		
<p>نظرا لاهمية الموضوع ولما سيعود بالنفع ليس فقط على الباحث بل على السلطنة يرجى التكرم بالتعاون مع المذكور ومساعدته في تسهيل مهمة حصوله على المعلومات المطلوبة لاتمام البحث.</p>		
<p>وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام</p>		
<p>سعيدة بنت عبدالله الصبيح ٥٠٠٨ سعيدة بنت عبدالله الصبيح الملحقة الثقافية</p>		
<p>64 Ennismore Gardens, London SW7 1NH Tel: 020 7838 3853 / 020 7838 3860 Fax: 020 7589 3810 / 020 7584 6435 E-mail: cao@omanembassy.org.uk www.omanembassy.org.uk</p>		

## Appendix 3: Supporting Letter from My Supervisor to Participants



Management School.

Dean of the School  
Professor Keith Glaister

9 Mappin Street  
Sheffield  
S1 4DT  
United Kingdom

Telephone: +44 (0)114 222 3461  
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<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/management>

To whom it may concern

### **A A R Al-Sawafi**

A A R Al-Sawafi is studying for a PhD here at Sheffield University Management School and I am his Director of Studies. He is in the first year of a 3 year PhD exploring the challenge of employee retention in the Omani workplace. I have found Majeed to be a friendly and committed person, who takes his work seriously and is very well motivated. I have no doubt that he will succeed in being awarded a PhD in due course.

In order to carry out his research he needs access to team meetings in your institution for observation purposes and he needs to videotape and/or audiotape these meetings. I can assure you that the data collected in these recordings will be treated with the utmost respect and regarded as entirely confidential. I do hope that you can enable Majeed to have access to your team meetings and thereby help him to achieve her goal of being awarded a PhD.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with me if you require any further information.

Best regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Kawalek', written over a horizontal line.

Dr John Paul Kawalek,  
Director of the MBA,  
University of Sheffield,  
Management School.

## Appendix 4: Survey

The questionnaire consisted of three main parts. The first part can be considered as a case preface for gaining information about how respondents perceived the employee turnover in order to give me far better understanding about employee turnover in Oman. The second part concentrated on investigating the psychological factors. The third part focused on examining the economic/ cultural factors. The following three sections reflect the structure of the questionnaire.

### 4.1. Case Preface

The questionnaire begins by asking respondents to value statements that measured general issues that normally accompanied the phenomenon. Among these issues were: their perception about the percentage of employee turnover, the role of human resources in dealing with people who wanted to quit, the nature of quitters, the consequences of employee turnover for an organization, and their upcoming positions with their new employer. The researcher aimed to get more information about how officials and the phenomenon stakeholders viewed the situation.

The first statement in table 46 is designed to see whether employees perceived the employee turnover as high or low in their organization. According to Holtom et al. (2008) there is consensus among scholars that employee turnover is harmful, mostly bad, and leavers are high performers. The emphasis in conducting employee turnover studies is always directed towards addressing employee turnover as an unwanted and undesirable phenomenon. The argument here is that what counts is not the number of people who leave an organization but how people (e.g. managers, employees) perceive the employee turnover phenomenon.

N	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	St Disagree	Don't Know
1	<i>The 'Turnover' rate in this organization is abnormally high.</i>						
2	<i>HR department has convinced many employees not to leave the organization.</i>						
3	<i>The process of resigning from the organization is very flexible.</i>						
4	<i>It is easy to find a qualified substitute for those who leave the organization.</i>						



N	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	St Disagree	Don't Know
5	<i>Hiring costs a cause for concern in our organization.</i>						
6	<i>I think people who quit reflect a positive image about this organization because they get better positions reliant on their previous job.</i>						
7	<i>I think people who quit reflect a negative image on the organization.</i>						
8	<i>People who quit are generally high performers</i>						
9	<i>People who left this organization found better positions.</i>						

Table 46. Statements that were used in the Case Preface

The second and third statements were designed to see if HR departments made efforts to retain their employees and how flexible the quitting process was in the Omani public sector. In general managers do not encourage this phenomenon and they do attempt to minimize it (see Morrell et al., 2001, and Holtom et al., 2008). One way to do this might be by convincing employees to stay.

Statements from four to nine are designed to see how respondents in the Omani public sector see the consequences of the employee turnover (see relevant section in introduction chapter). Tracking such consequences can give the researcher more insights about how employee turnover is perceived and hence facilitate answering the research question.

## 4.2. Psychological Factors

The variables measured in this dimension included remuneration, motivation, promotion, job satisfaction/organization commitment, job security, healthy environment and communication. These variables were measured by twelve statements with an average of two statements for each variable, see Table 47. The importance, theoretical basis, and relation of each one of these variables to employee turnover is as follows.

N	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	St Disagree	Don't Know
1	<i>Each employee gets a competitive salary compared with his/her job market.</i>						
2	<i>The promotion process is well defined and clear for all</i>						

N	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	St Disagree	Don't Know
	<i>employees.</i>						
3	<i>Managers provide regular positive feedback to the people who they manage.</i>						
4	<i>Managers pay more attention to the positive things people do rather than the negative.</i>						
5	<i>Employees are encouraged to give suggestions for process improvements.</i>						
6	<i>Feedback from management to employees' suggestions is always given.</i>						
7	<i>Reasonable recognition is given to employees' extraordinary achievements.</i>						
8	<i>Management ensures that the employees have a healthy working environment.</i>						
9	<i>Job security is provided by all possible means to employees.</i>						
10	<i>A longitudinal questionnaire about job satisfaction is always conducted</i>						
11	<i>Managers use different means to imbue organizational commitment culture in employees.</i>						
12	<i>Normally, employees treat each single organizational problem like their own personal problems.</i>						

Table 47. Statements that were used in testing Psychological Factors

First, Bartel and Borjas (1981) postulated that there is a strong relationship between wages and staff turnover. They stated that staff that leave their positions because of low payment tend to look for better payment. Heneman (1985) stated that there is an obvious negative relation between remuneration and staff redundancy. Second, a study to show the motivation-turnover relation was undertaken by Maertz and Griffeth (2004). They introduced eight motivational factors that affect employees' decisions about staying or leaving, using two items to measure this variable.

Third, the relationship between promotion and employee turnover is negative (Porter and Steers, 1973). Price and Mueller (1986) state that promotion plays a key role in staff turnover. Carson et al. (1994) argue that promotion can be divided into the three sub-terms

of: (i) promotion satisfaction; (ii) perceptions of promotional opportunity; and (iii) actual promotion. They found that redundancy had a significant negative relation to ‘actual promotion’. Promotion was measured using one item. Job security was found to be affected and moderated by the unemployment rate and the economic situation in a society (Hogan & Ragan, 1998). When the job security factors, such as conditions of quitting the job are listed legally in the contract between employer and employee, existence of governmental laws that protect labor, availability of substitutes for leaving labor, are provided, then the likelihood of a worker staying in the job is higher. That results in a lower staff turnover rate. This conclusion was supported by Fry (1973), and Greenhalgh (1980). Job security was measured using range of items.

Fifth, Jablin (1987) suggests eight communication categories that could influence a decision by an employee to leave, including organization-wide communication, organizational structuring characteristics, integration in emergent communication networks, supervisor communication relationships, co-worker communication relationships, communication-related work expectations, perceived role ambiguity and conflict, and communication-related traits and competencies (Scott et al., 1999). Jablin (1987) asserts that organizations which have a well established process of communication will be more likely to have highly committed employees, which will result in a low rate of turnover. For the purpose of this study, four items were used to measure these communication processes.

### 4.3. Economic/ Cultural Factors

The variables investigated in this dimension are recruitment processes, fairness or justice, the pension scheme, relationship with supervision and performance appraisal, job movements in public law and the Omanization of law impact. A total of twenty items as shown below in Table 48 were developed to measure this dimension. A description and theoretical justification for each item is now presented.

N	Statement	St Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	St Disagree	Don't Know
1	<i>There is a job specification for each posting.</i> متطلبات شاغل الوظيفة						
2	<i>There is a job description for each posting.</i>						

N	Statement	St Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	St Disagree	Don't Know
	الوصف الوظيفي						
3	<i>Recruiting officers are carefully appointed for recruiting.</i>						
4	<i>Requirements are defined by management regarding newcomers. (e.g. skills, competence, knowledge, and experience)</i>						
5	<i>Each employee has to sign a contract with his/her organization.</i>						
6	<i>Contracts are compatible with Civil Service laws</i>						
7	<i>Contracts show how long an employee must work for the organization before being able to resign.</i>						
8	<i>Contracts show the employee rights on training, annual leave, compensation, benefits</i>						
9	<i>All new employees are given an induction before starting their job.</i>						
10	<i>All employees receive the right to a medical insurance package</i>						
11	<i>Generally all employees are promoted according to the organization's promotion system.</i>						
12	<i>Each employee has a pension scheme.</i>						
13	<i>Each employee has a supervisor ( Head of Department)</i>						
14	<i>Knowledge about the job is the main factor in appointing supervisors in this organization.</i>						
15	<i>Employees' Supervisors have experience in supervision.</i>						
16	<i>Supervisors conduct an annual appraisal for each employee.</i>						
17	<i>Employees get the right to comment on their reported appraisals.</i>						
18	<i>New laws are needed to control the turnover rate in this organization.</i>						
19	<i>Omanization of law has an impact on employee turnover in</i>						

<b>N</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>St Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>St Disagree</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
	<i>Governmental sector</i>						

**Table 48. Statements that were used in testing economic/cultural dimension in the questionnaire**

Barrick and Zimmerman (2005) argued that the majority of employee turnover studies focused on explaining why an employee chose to leave an organization after s/he had already been in employment there. They found few studies that traced this problem before employees were employed or during the recruitment process. They asserted that an employer can reduce rates of turnover by focusing first on the recruitment process. This encouraged the researcher to see how such ideas are reflected in the Omani public sector. Four items measure recruitment strategies; five items measure the recruiting process. The first four statements investigate: (i) availability of job specification for each post, (ii) existence of job descriptions, (iii) the existence of appropriate recruitment officers, and (iv) clear objectives for recruiting teams in the staffing process.

The first statement comprises a description of the education, knowledge, experience, skills and abilities a prospective candidate should have acquired in order to fill the job vacancy. The second statement investigates the existence of job descriptions. It has been indicated in the literature review while covering role clarity and its relation to employee turnover, that the lack of a job description leads to role ambiguity. Role ambiguity increases the employee turnover rates. The third statement explores the importance of having a professional team for recruiting. Gomez-Mejia, Balkin, and Cardy (2009) asserted that employee turnover increases as a consequence of a poor hiring process. The fourth statement examines the real needs of departments in relation to the qualities of potential employees. According to Pynes (2004), organizations normally hire in response to changes in the economy, technology, culture, and legal aspects to cope with the changing environment and continue to achieve their goals. If the organization is not able to implement high quality hiring processes and employees are not employed in accordance with defined specifications then the probability of their not being able to achieve work objectives is high.

The following five statements were used to explore employment relationships in the Omani public sector. The emphasis was on the contractual aspect. The lack of an effective contract between the employee and employer can also lead to precarious work performance. Kalleberg (2009) asserted that precarious work can be described as unpredictable, risky, and/or

uncertain employment from the worker's viewpoint. This can cause the worker distress. Distress as shown in chapter two can lead to dissatisfaction which in turn increases employee turnover. The emphasis was on the existence of a contract, its compatibility with Civil Services laws, and technical items that protect workers' rights, such as the right to quit while on probation, and rights to training, payment, and annual leave.

Three items are used to measure fairness (Eisenberger et al., 2001). The first of these measures the pension scheme. According to Traylor (2000), it has been found that employees who are keen to increase their pension benefits tend to stay longer in a job. Logically, such people would choose an organization that provides a good pension scheme. Some workers consider it unfair that different pension schemes apply to workers who are at the same level but work for different bodies in the public sector.

The second item focuses on the medical insurance package. The fairness here from workers' viewpoints derives from the fact that all employees get medical insurance. The Omani government supplies free health care to all citizens, in or out of work, except for in the cases of certain diseases which are rare and costly to treat. However, some organizations of the private sector are offering their top management extra health care provision, often supplied by well-known health service providers, both inside and outside the Sultanate. The third item is concerned with training and development (Ferris, 1987). There are two different schools of thought on the relationship of training to employee turnover. For example, Colarelli and Montei (2006) argued that training was influential in retaining employees within an organization. On the other hand, Holtom et al. (2008) suggested that training might increase employee turnover since some workers have in advance formed plans to leave an organization once they have completed their training.

Eisenberger et al. (2002) argued that the supervision has a noticeable impact on and relationship with employee turnover. Tapper (2000) contended there is a positive relationship between employee turnover and disagreeable forms of supervision. Khan, Qureshi and Ahmed (2010) argued that as abusive supervision increases, the emotional exhaustion of an employee increases and the intention to quit the job increases as well. Five items were designed to measure the workers' thinking and feelings about the supervisory process, their supervisors, and performance appraisal.

The last two items concentrated on legal aspects. One item measured public law on job mobility (Omani Labor Law that was issued in accordance with the Sultan's Decree no. 35/2003, see also <http://www.directory-oman.com/laborlaw.htm>), and the other statement measured the impact of Omanization law on turnover rate (Al Lamki, 2002). It has been contended that localization of jobs has an impact on employee turnover. In this study, an argument was made that Omanization law is a two edged sword. It was designed to absorb the outputs of the higher education and to inject the private sector with Omani talent. Those talented people were offered early retirement so they could enter the private sector and help it to attract manpower.

#### 4.4. Reflections of data collected Questionnaire.

This section is going to reflect on four issues. They are respectively; employee turnover case preface, psychological factors, economic/cultural, and conclusion about the reflections on the data collected by questionnaire.

##### 4.4.1. Case Preface

N	Statements	strongly disagree	disagree	Neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	the ETR is abnormally high in this organization		36.8%	31.6%	31.6%	
2	HRD convinced not many staff quit this organization	8.7%	17.4%	21.7%	43.5%	8.7%
3	the quitting process is very flexible in this firm	12.0%	20.0%	8.0%	48.0%	12.0%
4	finding substitutes for quitters is easy	4.8%	57.1%	28.6%	4.8%	4.8%
5	Hiring costs are of concern to this organization	9.5%	19.0%	19.0%	47.6%	4.8%
6	quitters reflect positive image about this organization		38.1%	23.8%	19.0%	19.0%
7	quitters reflect negative image about this organization	16.0%	16.0%	12.0%	32.0%	24.0%
8	normally the quitters are high performers		4.0%	20.0%	36.0%	40.0%
9	quitters have been appointed to better positions			18.2%	45.5%	36.4%

Table 49. Participants' responses to the case preface statements

The data shown in Table 49 suggest many things to the reader. For example, 31.6% of respondents perceived that the employee turnover rates in the assessed organizations were abnormally high. In chapter one the Omani labor market showed how people were desperate

for jobs before His Majesty Sultan Qaboos came to the throne. Moreover, the new government formed by His Majesty in 1970 had secured thousands of jobs for Omanis. At that time, other sectors such as the private or the third sector were unknown and did not provide any kind of job security for Omanis. That is why almost all Omanis preferred to remain in their governmental jobs and would not compromise their positions by moving to the other sectors. From the viewpoint of 31.6 % of respondents who actually are coming from different organizations in the Omani public sector, it is perceived that existing turnover rates are abnormal for employees to shift from the public sector. On the other hand, 36.8% disagreed with this statement. In sum, it is suggested that all agreed that the employee turnover rate in their workplaces was noticeable and not to be ignored. The differences in views might be attributed to the fact that respondents are not drawn from one organization but from different organizations in the public sector. The contexts and backgrounds of respondents are different and consequently their feedback is different despite the fact that all are working under the public service umbrella. The differences might stem from the fact that some public organizations have different pay systems regulated by royal decrees.

It became obvious that more than half (52.2%) of the human resources departments investigated had considered the issue of convincing staff not to leave their jobs, whilst 26.1% had not. These ratios suggest that although modest efforts are being made regarding this issue, more attention needs to be paid by HRDs to the retention of human capital. The reason behind their behavior might be that they do not consider it their duty to convince employees to stay on in their jobs. The Regulations of the Civil Service Act did not specify directly any law or duty on the part of managers regarding this important issue. Consequently, managers are not accountable by law, in accordance with the Civil Service Act, to investigate, or to ask for or conduct an exit review with the employees who leave.

One of the missing links in the above mentioned Act might be that it failed to cultivate a culture that would help in understanding any potential quitting behaviour. In fact, there is a section in this Act regarding the end of service 'separation'. The categories mentioned in this section are: referral to pension, resignation, separation disciplinary decision, isolation order or by royal decree, lack of medical fitness, abolition of the post, loss of nationality, and conviction of a crime involving moral turpitude or dishonesty. However, there is no explicit rule or even hint at the end of each of these subsections as to whether directors or supervisors



should investigate or convince quitters to stay. The data on the relevant statement supports this conclusion.

Some organizations tend to put conditions in place for employees in terms of quitting the organization. For example, some organizations would ask employees to sign an agreement to work for 10 years before s/he could quit the organization. Some other organizations give employees long term loans and they are unable to leave without paying these off. Respondents were asked to rate this statement: 'the quitting process is very flexible in this firm'. The results were surprising in that about 60% of firms were very flexible in terms of the termination process whereas only 32% were not. This is all the more striking because while they were flexible in the quitting process, they neglected the fact that finding substitutes for quitters is very difficult. More than 61.5% of respondents affirmed this fact against only 9.6% who said otherwise. Moreover, these people appeared to overlook the financial costs of recruiting new staff. 52.4% of respondents confirmed that staffing expenditure was of concern to their organizations, whilst 28.5% disagreed and had never considered the issue of hiring costs.

28.5% is not a small ratio, so maybe there is (i) a lack of knowledge about estimating or imagining how much a firm can lose financially by having to recruit new employees, (ii) people in HRD have a big budget for recruiting and they think they have to utilize this budget regardless of consequences, (iii) misguided attitude to staffing, (iv) weak control and follow up over the employment of staff and in/out movements...etc. As has been documented elsewhere in this thesis the costs of employee turnover are potentially a massive drain on the financial resources of an organization.

Regarding the image of an organization and its relation with the rate of employee turnover, 38% of respondents agreed that quitters reflected a good image of the organizations. Some managers think, especially if they come to know that employees who have quit are working in better positions, that those departed employees are reflecting a good image about the organization. That good image may relate, for example, to the fact that the organization has good recruitment and training strategies and that is why the people who left them were subsequently appointed to higher and better posts.

Conversely, 38.1% of respondents confirmed that people who left reflected a bad image of the organization. The idea here is that hosting or new employers would suspect the

professionalism of the initial organizations where quitters come from because of their failure to retain their most valuable human capital assets. The fact that these two ratios are almost the same warrants further examination. To focus on this particular issue, a separate statement was put to respondents: "The quitters reflect a negative image of this organization". Surprisingly, 56% of respondents affirmed that quitters did reflect a bad image of the organization as against 32% who said otherwise.

In the organizations under examination the characteristics of staff who had left were considered via the following statement: "normally the quitters are high performers". More than 75% of participants confirmed the validity of that statement, whilst only 4% disagreed. Moreover, 81.9% of the respondents knew that those people who had left had moved on to better positions with their new employers. This conclusion supported March and Mannari's (1977) finding of a negative relationship between job performance and employee turnover.

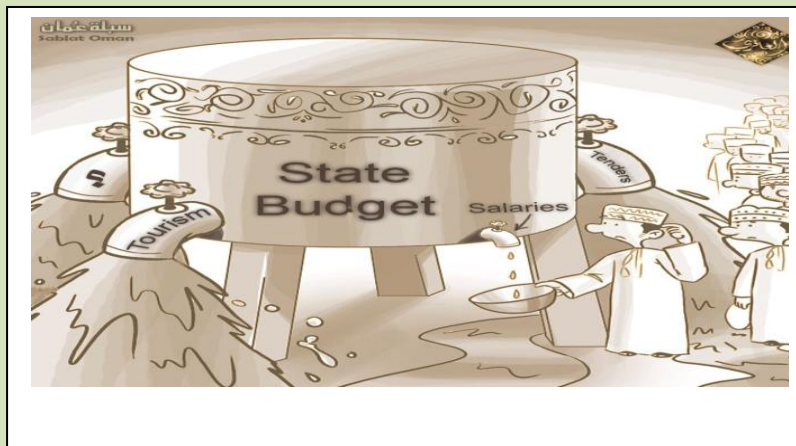
#### 4.4.2. Psychological Dimension

N	Statement	strongly disagree		disagree		neutral		agree		strongly agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
1	staff get competitive salary	5	22.7	3	13.6	6	27.3	6	27.3	2	9.1
2	defined promotion system	5	21.7	5	21.7	8	34.8	5	21.7	-	-
3	staff get positive feedback from managers	3	12.5	2	8.3	8	33.3	9	37.5	2	8.3
4	attention is greater to staff – positive not negative things	2	8.3	7	29.2	5	20.8	8	33.3	2	8.3
5	staff encouraged to give suggestions	4	17.4	6	26.1	5	21.7	5	21.7	3	13.0
6	staff get feedback for their suggestions	7	29.2	4	16.7	8	33.3	5	20.8	-	-
7	outstanding performance get recognition	2	8.3	4	16.7	6	25.0	10	41.7	2	8.3

Table 50. Participants' responses to general economic/cultural statements

Table 50 illustrates data on a number of social psychology factors that were presented to respondents. First, results on participants' feedback on "do HR managers think that the remuneration given to employees in their organizations is competitive compared with their

counterparts in other sectors?" are inconclusive because only 36.4% of participants agreed with the question, whilst 36.3% said otherwise. At the same time, the latter figure is quite high and suggests that action is needed to organizations retain staff.



**FYI.2:** The above caricature “republished with consent from the originator of the caricature” is a sarcastic informal representation of how staff in the public sector think the investment in human resources is taking place. This cartoon depicts the state budget as a big barrel full of oil, in a clear reference to oil as the most important economic resource, the state budget relies on. This barrel contains a set of taps, which symbolize some of the lanes down which the investments of the state budget go. For example, taps that channel investments with high pressure are related to tourism and tenders. What is striking is that the flow of gasoline from between the legs of the staff might be a euphemism for financial corruption and thefts. The thickest tap tagged with a question mark!! Maybe these are signs of corruption. In late 2009 an employee was found to have embezzled 1 million riyals over several years. Furthermore, two senior officials in the government were removed without the public being informed of the reasons, although there were frequent rumors of their involvement in cases of abuse of their roles. Despite that, Oman has been placed at number 41 globally in terms of transparency and freedom from corruption in the public sector, ahead of countries such as Italy, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia, according to the INTERNATIONAL TRANSPARENCY report for 2010. Contrary to the other taps, the public sectors’ salary tap is closed and just a few lucky drops are leaking as salaries to the employees who are standing in long lines waiting for promotion, increments, motivation...etc. Furthermore, the minister responsible for financial affairs has declared several times that no increments in public sector salaries are to be given. Meanwhile, the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf is accelerating the pace of setting up a project of economic integration among the GCC countries of the Gulf Cooperation. Among the plans is one to treat the employee as a citizen in all the Gulf countries that belong to the Council. If this happened, then the possibility of a brain drain from Oman to its sister states would be significant. For example, the B.Sc holder in UAE, Qatar, or Kuwait earns a salary which is double, triple or quadruple what s/he would receive in Oman.

On the 25th of October 2010 His Excellency the President of the Omani Civil Service Council signed two resolutions relating to the executive regulations of the Civil Service Law and the system of classification and order of the functions, to take effect from the day following the date of publication in the Official Gazette. What is guaranteed is that many public sector employees, if not all of them, will be frustrated by the failure of these resolutions to meet many of their aspirations, in particular with regard to increasing their salaries. The only consolation regarding this new law is that it abolished limits to the granting of financial compensation in exchange for hours worked in excess of official working hours, whereas the former law did not permit good compensation to employees who worked extra hours. For instance, the old law stated that after working hours compensation is not to exceed 25% of the total basic salary cannot be granted more than twice annually.

More insights about these promulgated laws will be discussed thoroughly in the findings and discussion in the qualitative data chapter. This could be considered as an imitation of the U.S. army's attempt to control employee turnover by manipulating remuneration, as Noznisky *et al.*, (1990) and Warn (1994) suggested. They argued that the US military depended on increasing the salary and overtime allowances for employees in an attempt to increase employee retention. Warn (1994) and Noznisky *et al.* (1990) argued there is a negative relationship between employee turnover and salary. The findings are consistent with Martin (1993) and Fochsen *et al.*'s (2005) contention on the negative relationship between wages and employee turnover.

Since wages normally increase when an employee gets promotion, the promotion system within the organization definitely needs to be clearly defined. The findings on this issue displayed an element of vagueness and were as follows: (i) about 43.4% of respondents believed that there was no defined system for promotion within their organization, (ii) 34.8% of the informants' feedback regarding this issue was neutral, and (iii) 21.7% of respondents agreed with the statement. Moreover, 8% of respondents did not respond to this statement. Ambiguity in respondents' feedback to this clause arose from the fact that there is a separate section, of the Civil Services Act 120/2004 (section 6) that deals specifically with promotion in the public sector.

No one can deny the existence of a defined system of promotion in the public sector, but with the findings in hand many possible explanations arise. For example, one can say it is just ink on paper, meaning it is not an activated law. Another explanation is that it is largely based on

the interests of the managers. Third, one could say it is just to satisfy the formalities and bureaucracy of the government. Another point of view is that all parties, including managers, employees, and the system, are not sufficiently mature in administrative terms in the sense that joint failures occur through managers not clarifying how the system works, employees not asking about or trusting the system, and the system itself not being clear enough. All of these possible explanations give rise to pessimism regarding the existing situation. This could lead to dissatisfaction with promotion systems in governmental organizations, even among managers (Perry and Porter, (1982)). Such a situation could allow favouritism or nepotism to occur within the organizations and that would lead to stress among high performers, bringing into play the Mobley Model that explains dissatisfaction and employee turnover relations.

While examining the communication factor in the organizations investigated the researcher found contradictions in the feedback on statements 3, 5, and 6 of Table 50. For instance, in statement number three it is clear that 45.8% of respondents affirmed that staff did get positive feedback from managers against 20.8% of participants who disagreed with this statement. Amazingly, 43.5% of the same respondents said that employees were not encouraged to give their suggestions, while 34.3% said saying otherwise. Worryingly, 45.9% of respondents confirmed that staff did not get feedback from their managers and at the same time 20.8% of respondents took the opposite view. This gives an indication of the inefficiency of communication methods in the different organizations from which the research respondents were drawn.

In terms of motivation, it seems that some consideration is given to motivating staff in these organizations. In support of this conclusion, about 41.6% of participants said that managers normally give attention to this matter, and appreciate the positive things achieved by employees. In contrast, 37.5% of respondents disagreed with this. Moreover, 50% of respondents said recognition in their organizations is given for outstanding performance, whilst 25% said that generally this did not happen in their organizations.

So far, four dimensions of the social psychology factor have been assessed: remuneration, promotion, communication, and motivation. The data regarding the remuneration of those who see the public sector as giving competitive salaries (36.3%) and those who do not (36.4%) are extremely convergent. Hence, it is difficult to establish any causal relationship between remuneration and employee turnover in Oman at this point. I think the fact that all respondents are managers in the public sector and some of them will tend to massage the

figures is relevant to this matter. However, I intended to explore this matter thoroughly in the semi-structured interviews.

The findings, in respect to statements 3, 5, and 6 of Table 50, also suggest that more effort needs to be made by governmental organizations regarding organizational communication. The respondents supplied results that were often contradictory from one statement to another, and did not reflect professional knowledge and experience of the issue. In cases where organizations neglect this issue, according to Jablin (1987), the lack of established communication could lead to an increase in employee turnover.

Finally, the data on table 50 with respect to the subject of motivation showed no real desire on the part of the public sector to fight to retain well qualified staff in the face of the existing fierce competition from the private sector. Although the notion that motivation occurs outweighs the opposite notion, the two ratios are convergent. Moreover, they are normally, in this context, below the average. The findings did not coincide with the conclusion of Jurkiewicz *et al.*, (1998) that organization leaders must concentrate on motivating people since this is strongly linked to productivity and commitment. If that does not happen then adverse results are to be expected. One of these adverse results is an increase in the turnover rate. Next, additional analysis of different statements used to measure the economic/cultural factors is presented.

To proceed to the social psychology factors illustrated in Table 6, four issues are highlighted: healthiness of the working environment, job security, job satisfaction and commitment. On the first issue, 54.2% of respondents said that a good working environment is guaranteed to all staff in their organization, while 16.7% of participants gave different opinions. Healthy environment in this context means a workplace where things like duplicity, jealousy, calumny, and disloyalty are kept to a minimum. Simultaneously, collaboration, mutual assistance, unity of general organization objective, a clean workplace *that adheres to the minimum standards of safety for employees*, teamwork, and honest competition between employees are fostered within the organization.

N	Statement	Strongly disagree		Disagree		neutral		Agree		strongly agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
1	healthy environment is provided for staff	1	4.2	3	12.5	7	29.2	10	41.7	3	12.5
2	job security is provided for staff by all means	5	21.7	7	30.4	2	8.7	5	21.7	4	17.4
3	longitudinal survey on job satisfaction	6	30.0	10	50.0	-	-	3	15.0	1	5.0
4	managers enhance staff commitment	4	18.2	7	31.8	5	22.7	6	27.3	-	-
5	employees are committed to this organization	3	13.6	7	31.8	4	18.2	5	22.7	3	13.6

Table 51. Results regarding Organization Healthiness, Job Security, Job Satisfaction and Commitment

Regarding job security, it is a common perception that insecurity among employees results from a lack of job security and stability Marcotte, (1995). The findings show that about 39.1% of respondents agreed that job security is provided by all possible means to staff. In contrast, 52.1% of respondents stated that this was not the case in their organizations. The percentages are not encouraging as they both imply that job security in these organizations is less than average by about 11% (that is the ratio of respondents arguing there is job security (39.1%) subtracted from the average (50%)), and insecurity is greater than average by about 2% (that is the ratio of respondents claiming of job insecurity (52.1%) minus the average (50%)). These findings suggest the vulnerability of these organizations to incurring high ratios of employee turnover, as is reinforced by Fry (1973) and Greenhalgh (1980). In fact these findings contradict statements by some middle and senior managers in the semi-structured interview as will be reflected later on this chapter. The middle and senior managers argued that the government is using job security as one of its tactics for retaining its employees, whereas the private sector does not provide job security.

The third issue from the above table 51 relates to "how usually job satisfaction is assessed" in the Omani public sector. The statement was narrowed down to examination of whether the public organizations conduct a longitudinal survey on job satisfaction. The focus is not on the implementation process in general but on the method used for assessing job satisfaction. It

has been shown in chapter two that the classic methods of measuring employee turnover have disadvantages. Using the longitudinal method allows continuous following up on job satisfaction. Consequently, an organization would learn how to satisfy their employees and reduce employee turnover. The main objective is to examine how the staff turnover issue is affecting the organizations, so they can respond to this through continuous follow up and proposing solutions.

About 80% of respondents affirmed that no longitudinal survey about the job satisfaction is conducted in their organization, while 20% said the opposite. Two of the possible conclusions in this particular case are that these organizations are applying traditional methods that do not allow the time for measuring job satisfaction, or they do not see job satisfaction as a major issue.

Anyway, none of the explanations and results reflects well on the organizations and further action needs to be taken on job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is one of the most important issues to address in terms of solving human resources problems, according to March & Simon (1958); Porter & Steers (1973); and Mobley (1977). They suggested that there is a negative relationship between job satisfaction and employee turnover.

Last but not least, organizational commitment was measured by means of two statements. 50% of respondents affirmed that managers were not enhancing staff commitment as against 27.3% of participants who said otherwise. In fact, increasing or enhancing the staff commitment is not an end in itself because, as Balfour & Wechsler (1991) suggested, although increasing the organizational commitment would encourage staff to remain, that is not necessarily reflected in an increase in employees' efforts.

For that reason another statement measuring staff commitment to organizations was provided for respondents and results were as follows. More than 45% of respondents confirmed that employees are not committed to their organization and 36.3% said the opposite. Thus, the researcher concluded that there is consistency between the results of statements four and five in Table 51, with a high possibility that both would lead to an increase in the turnover rate in the government sector. The next section will unfold results about the second dimension of the staff turnover problem: the economic/ cultural dimension.



### 4.4.3. Economic/ Cultural Dimension

#### Recruiting Strategies

N	Statements	strongly disagree		disagree		neutral		agree		strongly agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
1	job specification is provided for all postings	1	4.0	4	16.0	6	24.0	11	44.0	3	12.0
2	job description is provided for all postings	2	9.1	3	13.6	6	27.3	7	31.8	4	18.2
3	recruiting is conducted by highly qualified staff	1	4.2	6	25.0	4	16.7	13	54.2	-	-
4	there are defined standards for the newcomers	1	4.2	3	12.5	4	16.7	10	41.7	6	25.0

Table 52. Participants' responses to recruiting strategies statements

In an attempt to evaluate the recruiting strategies and their relation to employee turnover, the researcher provided participants with four statements (*see Table 52*). The first statement is about the availability of job specifications for all posts in the recruiting process. This recruiting strategy is clearly apparent and shows that human resources' departments are to some extent implementing good employment practice, and this could be attributed, somehow, to the centralization of employment in governmental bodies through the Ministry of Civil Services and the clarity of the existing Act of Civil Services with regard to recruiting aspects. For instance, according to 66.7% of respondents, specific standards on newcomers are passed on to recruiting units, whilst 16.7% refuted this, see statement 4 in Table 52. Moreover, 56% of participants confirmed the existence of job specifications for all postings, as opposed to 20% who gave opposite data (statement 1 in Table 52). Furthermore, the data regarding second statement in Table 52 state that only 22.2% of respondents suggested a lack of job descriptions for postings, whereas 50% disagreed. Finally, 54.2% of respondents stated, in their responses to statement 3 in Table 52, that recruiting is carried out by highly qualified people and only 29.2% of responses contradicted this.

Apparently, the data is to some extent on the positive side regarding the existing recruiting system. But one should be cautious when attempting to make sense of statistics. For example, the figures on recruiting strategies mentioned above illustrate the fragility of the current system of employment. For example, the rate of 66% is fairly good but not excellent in terms of people affirming the existence of standards for staffing as it means that there is deficiency

of 34% in quality and efficiency. It could be that informants do not know enough about how the system works due to factors such as lack of interest or lack of training or increasing rates of dissatisfaction. In fact, these ratios could be enough to justify the causality of deficiencies in the system if we rely on the positivistic view. However, this would not be enough to provide a better understanding about what the public sector organizations in Oman look like. The following section will consider other aspects of the economic/ cultural factors.

### Legal aspects of recruitment

N	Statements	strongly disagree		disagree		neutral		agree		strongly agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
1	each newcomer should sign a contract	2	9.5	1	4.8	3	14.3	5	23.8	10	47.6
2	contracts are compatible with laws of the civil service	1	5.0	2	10.0	3	15.0	10	50.0	4	20.0
3	contracts show the minimum time before quitting is possible	3	15.0	4	20.0	3	15.0	6	30.0	4	20.0
4	contracts show rights, leave entitlement, payment, benefits	2	8.7	3	13.0	4	17.4	9	39.1	5	21.7
5	newcomers are given induction before starting work	3	12.0	2	8.0	3	12.0	7	28.0	4	16.0

Table 53. Respondents' Feedback on the legal aspects of recruitment

In this context an overall review of the minimum legal aspects of recruitment in the public sector is provided. This review relates to contracts and their compatibility with laws of the civil service, the minimum period of time an employee should spend in a position before being allowed to leave an organization, and finally the inclusion in these contracts of basic conditions and orientations about the workers' rights, annual and legal leave, payments, and benefits (*see Table 53*).

The feedback from respondents showed that minimum legal standards are guaranteed to new staff in government bodies. For example, 71.4% of participants said that all newcomers to their organizations had to sign a contract, 14.3% of respondents remained neutral about this issue and a similar ratio affirmed that newcomers were not required to sign contracts.

Moreover, 70% of responses showed the compatibility of their contracts with the laws of the civil service, while 15% remained neutral and a similar ratio refuted that fact. Furthermore, 60.8% of respondents insisted that contracts contained conditions about workers' rights, annual and legal leave, payments, and benefits, as against 21.7% who said otherwise.

Regarding the minimum period of time an employee should spend in post before being allowed to quit, 50% of participants confirmed the inclusion in their contracts of such a condition, whereas 35% of respondents confirmed otherwise, and 15% remained neutral. Such figures show a noticeable defect in the contracts of some organizations because workers might consider such organizations as a transitional station while searching for a better position in a different place. They will certainly utilize the lack of proper regulation on this issue to their advantage.

The last statement in Table 53 relates to whether or not newcomers are given induction before starting work. The statement is very simple but there is a strategic objective lying behind the provision of such statements: if newcomers are given induction, this would constitute part of clarifying their roles. In fact, role clarity has a negative relationship with employee turnover, as suggested by Ivancevich and Donnelly (1974). Feedback from respondents showed that only 44% of organizations gave induction, whilst 20% did not. Figure 8 below gives further insight into this issue.

To sum up, the preceding paragraphs illustrated briefly the feedback of respondents about some legal aspects of recruiting, which include: requirement for newcomers to sign contracts, compatibility of these contracts with civil service law, some basic conditions of contracts, and whether newcomers are given induction before they start work. The results were barely above average in some cases except for the first two statements in table 53. It seems that much more effort and attention must be given to improving performance in these areas. I think that regulations regarding practices of recruitment need some review and reinforcement to enable better understanding by employees and managers and this would participate in decreasing the employee turnover.

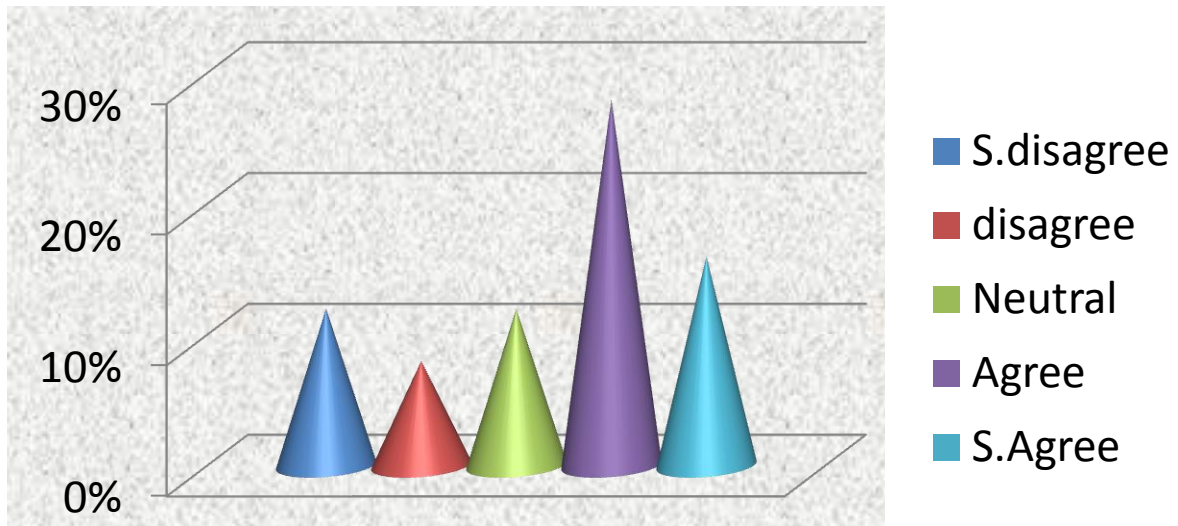


Figure 8. Respondents' feedback on induction given for new comers

Illustration and discussion will follow of participants' feedback on the other issues mentioned in the proposed model. These include: (i) fair treatment for all staff regarding health treatment and promotion (*see Eisenberger et al., (2001)*), (ii) pension scheme, (iii) supervision and appraisal, (iv) laws that govern movement of workers from sector to another, and (v) the relationship of Omanization of law with employee turnover.

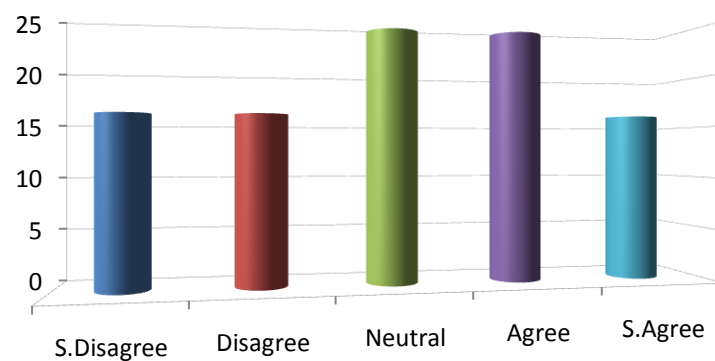


Figure 9. Respondents' feedback on medical packages for employees

Figure 9 traces an aspect that is of great importance to employees. Actually, health treatment is freely guaranteed for all Omani citizens in Oman except for in cases of rare and costly to

treat diseases. The crucial issue here is that some organizations give special offers exclusively to top or middle management employees to undergo treatment in private hospitals, where care is normally better, or to go abroad and they bear all incurred costs. What can be noticed from the figure 9 regarding this issue is that the percentage of respondents who agreed that all employees get medical packages was almost the same as for those who did not agree.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	3	12.0
	neutral	6	24.0
	agree	6	24.0
	strongly agree	7	28.0
	Total	22	88.0
Missing	Don't know	3	12.0
Total		25	100.0

**Table 54. Participants' Feedbacks on existing promoting system for employees**

The promotion system is examined in a similar way to medical treatment. In this particular case, one can see that 52% of respondents confirmed the existence of one system for promotion in the assessed organizations and this applied to all employees equally. Only 12% said otherwise, whereas 24% of participants remained neutral. Truly, the ratios do not show if there is a real intent by the government to retain their key staff, and the negative relationship between promotion and staff turnover (Porter & Steers, (1973)) must again be taken into consideration. More insights on this subject were given in discussion of the previous dimension.

In focusing on the case of fair treatment, the researcher examined statements relating to medical treatment and promotion systems in the relevant organizations. Unfortunately, governmental bodies' efforts concerning these two issues have been very modest, and if no action is taken, an increase in employee turnover is to be anticipated. Once again this shows the fragility of the system and its consequent inability to cope with phenomena such as employee turnover.

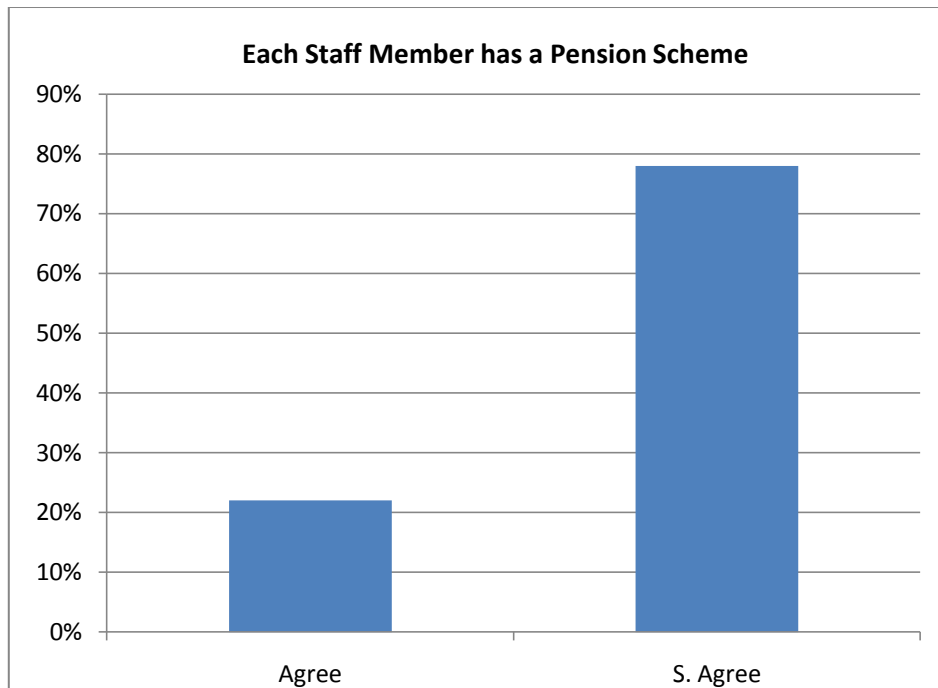


Figure 10. Respondents' feedback on Pension scheme provision for employees

The findings, as shown in figure 10 above, suggest that a pension scheme is provided for all employees in the public sector. This can be considered as an advantage over sectors that do not guarantee pension schemes for their staff, as indicated by Ferris (1987). Respondents' feedback on the effects of supervision and appraisal on employee turnover will now be discussed.

Regarding supervision and appraisal issues, participants were provided with positive statements relating to logically desirous situations in organizations nowadays. Feedback confirmed the existence of supervisors for each staff member, qualified and experienced supervisors, and that appraisals of staff are conducted annually, and they are willing and allowed to see and comment upon their appraisals. Five statements, as depicted in Table 55 below, were designed to investigate the supervision and appraisal issues. Specifically, 64% of data suggest that each employee in the public organization has a supervisor whereas 20% disagreed with that statement. This was examined because if an employee has no supervisor then either his role would be not clear or he might have more than one supervisor with many and insupportable responsibilities. In both cases the expected decision of leaving increases according to Cotton and Tuttle (1986) and Eisenberger et al. (2002). The second and third statements were designed to investigate supervisors' efficiency by looking at whether they had experience and knowledge about such supervision. In response to the second statement 56% of respondents agreed that supervisors in the public sector have knowledge about

supervision, 30.4% of them did not. The statement 3 in Table 55 relating to supervisors' experience suggested that 70% of respondents agreed that supervisors in the public sector have experience against 16.6% who did not. The data on statements 2 & 3 of Table 55 suggest that supervisors are barely efficient. I mentioned somewhere in this research that employee turnover has a positive relationship with poor supervision. However, the existing data states that only 54% of respondents agreed that supervisors conduct performance appraisal annually for employees, 33.3% of them did not. Moreover, 62% of respondents argued that employees have the right to see and comment on their appraisal, whereas 25.8% did not. Thus, the data suggest that performance appraisal is not emphasized in the public sector as a tool related to performance and role clarity.

Statements →	each staff member has a supervisor		supervisors have knowledge about supervision		supervisors have experience of supervision		supervisors conduct annual appraisals of staff		staff have the right to see and comment on their appraisals	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
strongly disagree	1	4.0%	2	8.7%	2	8.3%	2	8.3%	2	10.5%
Disagree	4	16.0%	5	21.7%	2	8.3%	6	25.0%	3	15.8%
Neutral	4	16.0%	3	13.0%	3	12.5%	3	12.5%	2	10.5%
Agree	6	24.0%	9	39.1%	9	37.5%	7	29.2%	10	52.6%
strongly agree	10	40.0%	4	17.4%	8	33.3%	6	25.0%	2	10.5%
Total	25	100.0%	23	100.0%	24	100.0%	24	100.0%	19	100.0%

**Table 55. Respondents' feedback on supervision and appraisal issues**

The next section will highlight the remaining two factors tested in the dimension, namely regulations and Omanization of the law.

About 40% of respondents suggested that there was a need for new laws to regulate the movement of labor (see above in Table 55), while only 24% of the respondents disagreed. These results can be attributed to the general understanding among employees that the

presence of laws on labor movement will help in controlling employees' turnover. The 24% of the respondents who answered 'don't know' reflect a lack of awareness about this concept.

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Strongly disagree	4	16.0
	Disagree	2	8.0
	Neutral	3	12.0
	Agree	6	24.0
	Strongly agree	4	16.0
	Total	19	76.0
Missing	don't know	4	16.0
	not answered	2	8.0
	Total	6	24.0
Total		25	100.0

Table 56. Participants' feedback on the need for new laws to regulate movement of labor



Figure 11. Respondents' feedback on the impact of the Omanization law on the staff turnover rate

The above figure (11) illustrates respondents' views on the impact of the Omanization on the staff turnover rate. About 44% of respondents confirmed that the Omanization has an impact on employee turnover, whilst 20% of respondents disagreed. Some respondents said that the



Omanization has exerted pressure on the private sector to employ Omanis at all managerial levels. Thus, vacancies were available but the only qualified people were employees in the public sector. The private sector attracted those employees by offering better positions, salaries and benefits, thereby increasing the employee turnover rate in the public sector.