



**INVESTIGATING CAREER PATHING AND RETENTION OF
AGENTS AT WNS GLOBAL SERVICES**

by

**NOORAIN MANJOO
21433078**

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for

**MASTER OF TECHNOLOGY DEGREE
IN HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

in the
Department of Human Resource Management
Faculty of Management Sciences

at

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

SUPERVISOR: DR A. RAJLAL

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DATE

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the research project submitted for Master of Technology Degree in Human Resource Management in the Department of Human Resource Management, Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology is my original work in the text and the References and has not been submitted to any other institution. I further declare that all sources cited or quoted are indicated and acknowledged in the References.

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Above all I would like to thank the Almighty Allah for affording me the perseverance and fortitude to complete the study (بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ).

ABSTRACT

This research was carried out to investigate the existence of career pathing linked to staff retention at WNS Global Services. Furthermore, the study aimed to highlight any shortfalls in the current career pathing and staff retention policies and procedures at WNS and subsequently provide recommendations for improvement. The research design adopted a quantitative paradigm. A pre-coded closed-ended questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale was sent to the sample (234) identified from the target population of 586 call centre staff across the Durban and Port Elizabeth WNS Global sites. Two hundred and four of the 234 sample respondents returned the questionnaire. However, it was discovered that certain respondents failed to answer all of the questions and were therefore omitted from the analysis. In total 198 completed questionnaires were returned which provided a response rate of 85%. The SPSS version 27 of Windows was used to test the variables that formulated the study. There were a number of noteworthy findings as a result of the empirical analysis of data. The descriptive analysis of the quantitative methods was presented using tables and graphs. Factor analysis, correlation analysis and Pearson's chi-square were utilised to calculate the statistical analysis. Additionally, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's test of sphericity were used to determine the factorability of an inter-correlation matrix. The correlation analysis of the two variables indicated that the correlation between employees taking steps in the near future to look for another job, and the perception that career pathing processes at WNS are effective, was -0.171 (Correlation Analysis 5). This is indicative that ineffective career pathing processes are highly likely to influence an employee's decision to seek alternate work opportunities. The findings of the study show that some elements of staff retention are practised at WNS Global Services. However, one could conclude that it is not fully implemented in a manner that has maximum impact on staff. Furthermore, career pathing as a concept is not fully established at WNS Global Services. One of the recommendations arising from this study is that career pathing strategies and policies to improve staff retention should be implemented.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In the age of globalisation and a greater reliance on intellectual capacity in a rapidly growing era of the knowledge economy, organisations are faced with a multitude of challenges including changing trends in the skilled market, loss of key and experienced talent, leading with a more diversified structure and keeping pace with technological advances and industry changes (Estedadi, Hamidi and Shahhoseini, 2015: 41). In this era, organisations worldwide have recognised that the knowledge, skills and abilities of their employees serve as a catalyst towards competitive advantage (Kamau and Omondi, 2015: 1777). For this reason, there is growing awareness of the importance of human capital in organisations (Kosterlitz, 2017: 396).

In the current global economic state and today's competitive environment, the business process outsourcing (BPO) industry has fast gained momentum and popularity. The new age workforce is made up of knowledge workers who are techno-savvy, sensitive to market changes, materially focused and have a higher inclination to switch jobs (Sople, 2016: 19-20). Evidence that exist suggest that job-hopping is a common occurrence among staff in the BPO industry. The prevalence of high turnover rates makes this a critical problem in comparison to workers parting from other industries (Ali, Hussain and Rahman, 2020: 2580). Dwivedi (2015:452) further ascertains that within BPO, the sector is particularly challenged with high turnover rates and the resultant low staff retention.

Gautam and Malhotra (2015:3) postulate that the importance of career progression and developing career paths appear to be significantly less in the BPO sector when compared to other industries. Saaiman (2015: 19) asserts that a well thought out and considered career path is an essential contributor in relation to employee engagement and retention. "A career-path assists an employee by means of providing a sense of direction, a tool to measure career

progress, career goals and predetermined landmarks". The limited career growth opportunity and lack of transparent and well planned out career paths contribute toward low employee retention in the BPO sector (John and Rao, 2020: 83). The purpose of this study is to investigate the extent to which having well planned, transparent and sound career pathing processes in place assists in improving staff retention at WNS Global Services. The study seeks to identify if career pathing processes is linked to higher loyalty and commitment to a firm, specifically in the BPO industry.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Business process outsourcing (BPO) has to do with assigning business processes which a company would ordinarily perform in-house, to a third-party service provider or vendor, who is then responsible for carrying out the services on behalf of the company. "As companies worldwide respond to increasing cost and efficiency pressures and the need to deliver meaningful, sustained, positive customer experiences, Contact Centres are favoured for business process outsourcing" (Altron, 2019: 1). The last four years in South Africa has seen significant growth in the business process services (BPS) industry. The industry has experienced growth of 22% annually which is twice the global growth rate of the industry (iContact, 2019: 1). In the context of this study, the BPO industry is represented by WNS Global services which is the third-party service vendor or contact centre for Telkom which is the client. "Contact centres are valuable to companies because they provide a platform to customers where the company has the opportunity to enhance its image, resolve problems and to create a stronger customer base" (Weald, 2019: 1). An imperative reality is that employees make up 70% of operational related costs (Paycor, 2019: 1). This statistic renders people as key asset of any contact centre. Despite advances in technology and processes, the people are still the core to initiating a meaningful impact on the customer (Saboo, 2019: 1).

Millennials are now entering the workforce. These are individuals who are born between 1980 and 2000. Millennials will soon constitute 50% of the nation's workforce, serving as successors to the baby boomer generation. There are

several consequences related to the surge of boomers retiring and the resulting gaps in organisations (Kosterlitz, 2017: 396). Allen (2017: 1) outlines the fundamental differences between Millennials and their predecessors. Millennials have a “me first” attitude in their work life, with a strong sense of entitlement, therefore are driven by learning and often want to see instant results. By virtue of their generation, Millennials will enter the market with more experience and knowledge than any other generation prior to them. These individuals are continuously looking for growth opportunities conducive to career development and prospects to expand their skills and experience. If these development needs are not met within the organisation, they will take steps to find it elsewhere. This is because Millennials have a much higher risk tolerance than Boomers. This generation likes to be given feedback, be communicated with frequently, and have clear goals and expectations. Millennials are more likely to be committed to organisations that nurture their career advancement and growth.

Within the past decade there has been a significant shift in focus in the corporate sector, as the era of the knowledge economy becomes more prominent. Many recognise human capital as a strategic resource and a fundamental contribution towards the long-term survival of a business (Alhajjar and Alnacheif, 2017: 1154). Career pathing can be applied as an effective tool and instrument to measure, develop, retain, and motivate existing staff as well as attract the right calibre of new talent (Vance, 2006: 21-25). Avery (2016: 33-38) states that a successful internal career coaching programme through the use of career pathing initiatives are useful in easing the burden of high turnover by engaging and motivating staff throughout the organisation. Today’s generation of employees crave new challenges and learning opportunities. A survey by Talent Guard (2019: 1) found that 22% of employees indicate that career development (or lack thereof) is the leading reason that they leave an organisation.

Employee retention strategies play a fundamental role in an organisation’s values, mission, vision and policies. These strategies ideally should be incorporated in all aspects of an organisation’s principles and operations (Cloutier, Felusiak and Hill, 2015: 120). Azeez (2017: 7-10) states that securing and reattaining a skilled workforce is essential for any organisation. This is

because knowledge and abilities of personnel are central to a business's capacity to be economically competitive for growth and sustainability. An increase in employee turnover can prove to be costly and negatively affect an organisation's morale. According to the 2015 Small Business Owner Report (Kin, 2017: 1), 38% of business owners indicated that finding the right talent was a leading concern, while 16% of respondents indicated that employee turnover was a major concern. Imna and Hassan (2015) affirm that the principal and pressing issue which businesses face today is related to the retention of their workforce. The authors further underline that retaining critical talent and key role players within the business adds to the lifelong success of a business. Maphisa, Nyide and Zwane (2017: 17-19) state that in today's world, the business environment is highly competitive and unstable, which has a subsequent impact of increasing turnover. By virtue of this instability, relevant career development practices and talent management policies that display commitment and investment in personnel advancement will result in loyal staff members within the organisation and a significant reduction in staff turnover. The holistic result of this is better performance on the individual level, increased productivity on the level of the organisation, and other added benefits at societal level.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Employees are valuable assets in any organization and play a critical role in helping an organisation attain its goals. Hence, the retention of employees is vital in aiding an organisation to achieve long-term sustainability, success and competitive advantage (Abadi, Barhate, Dirani and Garza, 2020:382). One of the critical challenges which contact centres face at present is the high voluntary turnover rates of its frontline staff. This has an impact on the delivery of quality service to customers, and the overall bottom line of the business (Amdany, 2017: 7). Masilela (2018: 2-5) points out that contact centres are notorious for having some of the worst known attrition rates in the world. According to Cornell University, there is a typical fluctuation rate of turnover anywhere from 30%-50% (with the highest turnover rate being from outsourced call centres typically being over 50%) (Jiwa, 2019: 1).

A study by Joshiya and Yadav (2021: 40) further highlights that one of the top-ranking factors causing low retention rates in the BPO industry lack of career growth. The problem, essentially, is that contact centres are inherently flat structures and therefore chances of career advancement are limited. There are scarce career prospects because there are many more agent (lower-level staff) positions than leader or manager positions. As a result, there is a risk to the organisation of losing their best people due to lack of career progression opportunities (Biswakarma, 2015:3). Most contact centres do not have defined career paths, and the lack of career paths is often identified as a cause of employee turnover (Amdany, 2017: 10).

Current studies and literature are very limited in focusing on the relationship between retaining staff through career pathing and career development practices in a call center environment, and this study aims to fill this research gap. In the context of this study, the aim was to investigate whether the implementation of sound employee career pathing can aid in the retention of staff at WNS Global Services.

1.4 DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

1.4.1 Career pathing

Career pathing helps employees understand the career trajectory opportunities available to them within an organisation. A formal career path consists of a logical and sequential list of job titles or positions which an individual has to attain in order to achieve their long-term career goals (Black, Corlett, Lee and Warhurst, 2017:13).

1.4.2 Staff retention

Kelliher, Mankin and Truss (2012: 16) explain that staff retention is the attempt made by organisations to sustain a working environment that is supportive of

existing staff staying with the organisation by way of implementing policies and procedures that address diverse staffing needs.

1.5 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of any organisation is to attract, retain, identify, engage and deploy individuals who exhibit potential and who are classified as key employees with critical skills. The aim of the study was to conduct research on the linkage of career pathing to staff retention in order to assist with the long-term retention of contact centre agents and improve organisation cost effectiveness at WNS. Furthermore, the study aimed to highlight any shortfalls in the current career pathing and staff retention policies and procedures at WNS and subsequently provide recommendations for improvement.

1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were:

- To identify the factors which contribute to employee retention at WNS.
- To determine the factors that contribute towards effective career pathing at WNS.
- To ascertain whether WNS has an effective agent career pathing model or strategy in place.
- To investigate the perception of agents at WNS around career pathing and staff retention.
- To determine whether agent development and career pathing has an influence on agent loyalty to the company.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research set out to answer the following questions:

- What are the factors that contribute towards effectively retaining staff at WNS?

- What are the fundamental components of effective career pathing at WNS?
- What are the current agent career pathing methods or models established by WNS?
- What is the view shared by agents toward career pathing?
- Does having career pathing strategies and methods in place encourage agent loyalty to WNS?

1.8 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The problem statement highlights that a critical challenge which contact centres face at present is the high voluntary turnover rates of its frontline staff (Amdany, 2017: 7). Masilela (2018: 2-5) points out that contact centres are notorious for having some of the worst known attrition rates in the world. Investment in an individual's growth and development opportunities are key factors to retaining staff (Biro, 2018:1). Therefore, the researcher endeavoured to investigate if staff retention is dependant on the presence of career pathing strategies at WNS Global Services. The contact centre industry has been booming in recent years in South Africa and it is therefore important to seek a resolution to the high attrition rates for the benefit of the organisations bottom-line, as well as the overall economic growth within the South African BPO sector.

The review of the literature revealed that various studies have focused on staff retention and career pathing in silo. A study carried out by Amdany (2017) focused on the perceived effect of career development practices on employee retention at the Safaricom call centres in Kenya. Research conducted by Saaiman (2015) explored employee retention at a selected South African petrochemical firm through career-pathing. There appears to be a gap in literature and research where the link between career-pathing as a retention factor specifically in South Africa is properly investigated and the findings published.

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

According to Jiwa (2019: 1), the rate of employee turnover and attrition serves as a means of measuring the health of a business. Elevated turnover is an undeniable threat impacting both internal and outsourced contact centres, which sets off a series of recruitment and training costs, as well as a host of ripple effects linked to reduced productivity, staff shortages, missed service levels and financial implications. The Global Call Centre Report (2020: 36-38) states that workforce instability is a pressing issue for contact centre managers as they find themselves constantly seeking additional workers. Along with replacement costs, new employees are not as productive as skilled employees. The report further underlines that beyond preliminary training, it takes an average of 11.5 weeks (almost three months) for new employees to have a good knowledge of products, processes, and customers and to perform tasks adequately. Due to the fact that labour makes up a significant proportion of costs in contact centre service activities (on average 65% of total costs), a reduction in turnover expenses can have a substantial impact on the bottom line.

Investment in human capital drives change in any organisation and therefore serves as a catalyst for success and competitive advantage. A report by Integrated Reporting (2015: 6-8) reveals that organizations are not paying close attention to the development of human capital resulting in an under-utilisation of talent in the workforce. This is a concern in a vastly emerging Millennial workforce which is characterised by individuals who are driven by an environment conducive to growth and personal development. Therefore, it is of interest to explore the relationship and to identify the benefits of employee career pathing for the purpose of improving employee retention.

The findings of the study intend to be beneficial to WNS. The importance of this study is to its contribution in the field of knowledge regarding the relevance of career pathing and its pivotal contribution toward staff retention in the BPO industry. This study will create awareness of career pathing practices and propose solutions that may be helpful for agent retention at WNS. The information compiled from the research study will be useful for WNS as it will aid managers

in their effort to ensure that career pathing practices as defined by the organisation's policies, procedures and processes are effective in staff retention. The retention of employees will improve overall company performance whilst simultaneously assisting to bridge the gap and align organisation goals and employee goals.

1.10 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study was centred on WNS Global Services which is a company within the BPO industry. The focus of the study was on the contact centre agents across the Durban and Port Elizabeth sites. The study was administered at three (3) of the WNS sites, namely Durban Riverhorse Valley, Durban Grideye and Port Elizabeth Coega. The theoretical frameworks which form this study are Alderfer's ERG Theory, Kanter's Theory of Organisational empowerment and the ERC Retention Model.

1.11 A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

1.11.1 Employee Retention

According to Sandhya and Kumar (2011: 1778) employee retention can be defined as the process by which an organisations labour force is motivated to stay in the employment of the firm for as long as possible, or until such time that a project has been completed. Amdany (2017:4) views employee retention as the policies and strategies which an organisation utilises in an effort to prevent valuable staff from leaving. According to Frank, Finnegan and Taylor (2004: 13) employee retention is an employers' undertaking to design a working environment that engages its employees for the longest time whilst ensuring that the organisation retains employees with the desired skills and knowledge in order to meet the business goals.

1.11.2 Factors which contribute to employee retention

According to Amdany (2017: 14) some of the factors influencing employee retention are career advancements, organisation culture, work-life balance, leadership styles and compensation. Nichols and Smith (2015: 40-41) state that by virtue of the Baby Boomer generation retiring and exiting the workforce, Millennials will dominate the employee market and workforce. To attract and retain a Millennial, it is imperative that managers and the organisation recognise what motivates and fulfils the younger generation's needs in order to retain them. Millennials are identified as being achievement focused which encourages them to strive for fresh learning opportunities. Therefore, Millennials are more inclined to look for career enhancing opportunities in an organisation. By presenting advancement opportunities, organisations are able to retain their Millennial staff talent. As a result of a surge of Millennials entering the workplace, it is critical for WNS to understand the characteristics of this new generation pertaining to what motivates them and what they seek in a working environment. Reference will be made to Alderfer's ERG theory and the core types of needs for individuals to grow in the workplace.

1.11.3 Factors that contribute towards effective career pathing

Career pathing is a common HRD practice used to help employees understand the career trajectory options internally available in an organisation. A formal career path consists of a logical and sequential list of job titles or positions which an individual has to attain in order to achieve their long-term career goals. Furthermore, the career path should outline the relevant qualifications, critical job experiences and competencies required at each position (Black, *et al.*, 2017:15). A career path contains an employee's desired career destination, and the required steps, development and experience expected in order to advance on this pathway. According to Saaiman (2015: 31-33), an effective career pathing model provides employees with a sense of direction and is a convenient tool which can be utilised to measure career progress and predetermined benchmarks. By doing this, employees gain an understanding of opportunities pertaining to cross-functional, lateral and vertical career moves which are linked to their interests, education and skills. Transparency within the business is therefore enhanced.

Employees are then cognisant of the learning, training, competencies and skills needed to advance their careers (Stevenson, 2019: 1). Additional factors which constitute toward a successful career path include communication, support, collaboration and a clear vision (Cao and Thomas, 2013: 28).

1.11.4 Career pathing models and strategies

Contact centres are inherently flat structures and therefore chances of career advancement are limited Joshiya and Yadav (2021: 40). To improve morale, culture and employee retention, contact centres will discover the implementation of career pathing models and strategies to be highly beneficial (Schultz, 2022:1). Career pathing models should ideally be tailored according to the individual's goals and career objectives. A typical career pathing model consists of 6 steps:

Step 1: Self-assessment. This involves a manager's engagement with employees to identify their individual abilities knowledge and skills as well as past experiences, accomplishments and interests (SHRM, 2021:1).

Step 2: Build position profiles. Position profiles create clear distinctions between job roles in career paths by defining the primary responsibilities, skills and experience required at each career position (Cao and Thomas, 2013: 30).

Step 3: Individualized career map. This step involves identifying positions in the organisation which matches the employee interest and career goals which may be a lateral or vertical move internally. This step entails developing a clear route to get the employee from their current to desired position internally. This step highlights the employee's development areas in terms of new knowledge, skills and experience required to meet the end goal, which gives the individual something to work towards and stay engaged. Career maps are typically displayed in a diagram which makes it easier to visualize each position as stage in a path (Cao *et al*, 2013: 31).

Step 4: Identify core competencies and expected behaviours. Competencies should be specific to required behaviours and standards which define the expected result at various stages of the career path. This helps establish a set of shared goals between employer and employee as well as identify any training gaps (Cao *et al*, 2013: 31).

Step 5: Incorporate training and development. This is an essential step in the career pathing process which provides individuals with an opportunity to develop competencies necessary to move to the next career stage (Cao *et al*, 2013: 32).

Step 6: Establish accountability. Given the resources invested in the career pathing process, accountability for the process should be established through defining the roles and responsibilities of all role-players involved in the process, ensuring the process can adapt to varying business conditions (Cao *et al*, 2013: 33).

Career pathing and career planning according to Amdany (2017: 11-13) is a shared responsibility between an employer and employee aimed to provide clarification in career pathways. The author further explains that employees tend to be emotionally committed to organisations that take steps to safeguard employees' positions by making them valuable through career pathing and planning. According to Cao *et al* (2013: 32) career paths are most effective when integrated into an organisations overall talent management strategy.

1.11.5 Career pathing and staff retention

According to Saaiman (2015: 18-20), a well thought out and considered career path is an essential contributor in relation to employee engagement and retention. A career path outlines an employee's aspired career trajectory is, as well as the necessary steps, development and experience needed in order to progress on this pathway. Amdany (2017:11) further concurs that career planning has been established to reduce employee turnover intentions and absenteeism. Career pathing and development is a critical factor to consider for retaining employees.

Research indicates that career pathing is associated with a variety of beneficial workplace outcomes, including greater organisational commitment and retention. Career pathing strengthens employees' identification with their organisation and provides structure for the exploration of provisional selves that employees might adopt in the future. These identity functions in turn facilitate performance, retention and a positive work attitude.

A career path gives individuals opportunities for growth and implies an organisations investment in the employee's career advancement, therefore enhancing morale and loyalty to the company. Having sound career pathing strategies in place which will cultivate a culture of mutual commitment on both the organisation and employees' part (Black, Corlett and Warhurst, 2017: 62-65). The study will analyse Kanter's Theory of Organisational empowerment which will aid in promoting an organisation at WNS conducive to commitment and loyalty through career pathing.

1.11.6 The importance of employee retention

Al-Emadi and Schwabenland (2015: 9-12) assert that it is widely acknowledged and recognised that people in an organisation are key factors in contributing to the value creation process. For this reason, people are often noted as being crucial to business success. Human capital is recognised as being a fundamental contributor in aiding the long-term competitive advantage of a company in the current knowledge economy era. The authors further highlight the turnover-related costs, and state that the added excesses that come with the loss of talented employees emphasises the need for contemporary organisations to classify and implement HRM in support of employee retention. Therefore, to enhance overall operational cost effectiveness, efficiency and productivity, it is imperative that WNS have sound retention strategies in place.

1.12 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This section addresses how the research was conducted and how the data was collected and analysed. It focuses on the research design, the target population,

data collection method, questionnaire design, sample selection and data analysis performed for this study.

1.12.1 Research design

Research design is an overall strategy used to integrate the various components of research in a consistent and logical way, therefore ensuring that specific reference and focus is placed on the research problem. Research design outlines the manner in which collection, measurement and analysis of data should be conducted. “The function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables you to effectively address the research problem as unambiguously as possible” (Sacred Heart University Library, 2019: 1). Research design is important as it serves as a plan for how to conduct research in order to achieve goals and provides a systematic approach to the study. Research design reduces inaccuracies and contributes to maximum efficiency and reliability (Universal Teacher, 2018: 1).

1.12.2 Target population

The target population for a survey is the entire set of units (the whole population or group), which a researcher is interested in researching and analysing, and will use to make inferences (McLeod 2017: 1). In this study the target population was $N = 586$

1.12.3 Sampling and sampling techniques

By definition, sampling is the process of statistically analysing observations obtained from a larger population. “A sample is a group of people, objects, or items that are taken from a larger population for measurement. The sample should be representative of the population to ensure that we can generalise the findings from the research sample to the population as a whole” (Investopedia, 2016: 1).

The sampling technique that was applied during this study was single-stage cluster sampling. Cluster sampling occurs when the researcher divides a population into smaller, more manageable groups referred to as clusters. Single-stage cluster sampling means that all elements in each selected cluster are used.

1.12.4 Data collection method

According to Rubin and Babbie (1989: 87), “the most common techniques for research to operationalise variables are to put forward questions so as to obtain data for analysis and interpretation”. In general, other methods of data collection include face-to-face, postal, telephonic and personal (Aryal, 2021: 1). Due to the nature of the 2020/2021 Covid-19 pandemic, the researcher utilised an internal link which redirected candidates to the electronic covering letter (Annexure B) as well as the questionnaire (Annexure C). Respondents did not need to disclose their names so the respondents remained anonymous throughout the process. The questionnaire used to gather information was newly constructed and comprised pre-coded statements. Once the questionnaires were completed, the data was automatically stored on an external drive where the researcher was able to export the results. The external storage drive was password protected and only the researcher had access to the results upon completion.

1.12.5 Primary data

According to Grimsley (2016: 1), primary data can be grouped as information that is collected specifically for the purpose of a research topic, which is advantageous in that it is “specifically tailored to your research needs”. Essentially, this is original data collected by the researcher, from first-hand sources, for the purpose of their study. For this study a structured quantitative questionnaire was utilised to gather the data from the selected sites.

1.12.6 Secondary data collection

Secondary data is public information that has previously been gathered from experiments, studies or surveys that have been run by other people or for other research, and can be accessed by researchers (Wolf, 2016: 1).

1.12.7 Measurement instrument design and protocols

A questionnaire, according to McLeod (2019: 1), is defined as a list of research or survey questions asked to respondents, designed to gather specific information relating to a particular topic. The purpose of a questionnaire is to gather suitable data, make data comparable and minimise bias. Questions should be engaging and varied. Questionnaires are advantageous in that they are familiar to most people, are cost effective and are easy to analyse. Questionnaires also tend to be less invasive than telephonic or face to face surveys (StatPac. 2017: 1). Limitations of questionnaires include the fact that if the wrong questions are asked this could limit insight into the topic, a questionnaire allows a limited choice of responses and questions could possibly be misunderstood or misinterpreted. Dishonesty can also be an issue (Debois, 2016: 1).

The questionnaire was designed by the researcher and comprised a cover letter (Annexure B) guaranteeing the respondents' confidentiality, and a consent form. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions that were easily understandable, in simple English and unambiguous, and followed a logical sequence. The Likert scale was used which is "... a device that is used to gauge attitudes, values, and opinions. It functions by having a person complete a questionnaire that requires them to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with a series of statements" (Williams, 2018: 1). The answer options were placed on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The main aim of a Likert scale is to measure the magnitude of an option.

1.12.8 Analysis of the data

According to Cosby (1989: 47), “statistics is a vehicle used to describe data collection in a study, as well as make inferences on the basis of the sample data of the population”. Answers to the closed-ended structured quantitative questionnaire were captured to form a data set. The preliminary records were analysed into descriptive statistics for the demographic variables. Thereafter the descriptive statistics were utilised to examine the composition and traits of the sample and were sorted and summarised data in the form of figures. In this research, Microsoft Excel was used for the preliminary analysis by means of pie charts and bar graphs.

1.12.9 Pilot test

Reliability and validity are fundamental to research. Reliability and validity are often used at the pilot study and initial analysis stage by researchers. According to Lowe (2019: 119) the purpose of a pilot study is to refine the questions in the questionnaire to verify that there is no ambiguity or bias. According to Connelly (2008: 411), the available literature suggests that pilot study samples should make up 10% of the projected sample for the larger parent study. For this study, the Cronbach coefficient alpha test was conducted for reliability with 25 selected participants who did not part of the main sample. The pilot test was performed with a chosen group of 10 agents from the Port Elizabeth site, 10 agents from Durban site 1 and 5 agents from Durban site 2 (as this is the smallest of the three sites). Commonly, a value above 0.7 indicates that the measuring instrument is highly reliable.

1.12.10 Reliability and validity

Reliability pertains to the degree to which an assessment is consistent in terms of producing the same or similar result if tested again, whilst validity refers to the degree to which an assessment tests for what it claims or is intended to test (Paul, 2016: 1). Prior to the pilot test, to show that the measuring instrument in this study was valid, the questionnaire was handed to experts in the field for correction and

comment. The necessary adjustments were made based on the suggestions and feedback received.

1.12.11 Ethical considerations and confidentiality

Jupp (2006: 46) observes that social research is a dynamic social and human process, often associated with an invasion in people's lives. Therefore, researchers must be responsible to respondents and ensure that the design, process, and implementation of the study is ethical and not exploitative. The application of ethical principles was strictly adhered to in the study, as the success of the outcome relied on mutual trust and co-operation between the respondents and the researcher.

1.13 STRUCTURE OF THE CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 provides a synopsis of the study – the problem statement is addressed, key objectives, significance of the study, an overview of relevant literature and the methodological approach to the study.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed account of the literature currently published pertaining to the variables identified in Chapter 1 in the Problem Statement, as well as provides an overview of the various models for managing succession planning and staff retention.

Chapter 3 delivers a detailed view of the relevant methodology and design for the study by providing an outline of the quantitative components of the study including a comprehensive discussion on the sample selection, the collection of the primary and secondary data, the pilot test and the formation of the measuring instrument.

Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the data using SPSS version 27 for Windows and a comprehensive discussion of the findings in the context of the current literature surveyed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 5 concludes with the limitations of the study and makes recommendations arising from the empirical analysis and concludes with suggestions for future research.

1.14 POTENTIAL OUTPUTS

The potential output of the study is to test the significant relationship between career pathing and staff retention and provide data drawn from statistical analysis. It is envisaged that this study will be of practical value to the BPO industry through identifying gaps in current career pathing practices and processes, as well as helping with the alignment of business and employee objectives through the holistic provision of findings and recommendations. Other potential benefits of the study include publishing of findings in accredited journals, as well as the sharing of outcomes at local and international conferences.

1.15 CONCLUSION

According to Alniacik *et al.* (2012: 355), the attraction and retention of talented employees is essential in aiding organisations to compete successfully in the current highly competitive business environment. Saaiman (2015: 19) further asserts that career pathing can be applied as an effective tool and mechanism to develop, retain, measure and motivate existing staff as well as attract the right calibre of new talent. This chapter provides a summary of the study. The purpose of the study was outlined along with the problem statement. Furthermore, this chapter made specific reference to definition of key terms, the significance of the study, scope of the study, as well as target population and research methods and techniques that were utilised. The next chapter presents an overview of the relevant literature in relation to the variables identified in the problem statement of Chapter 1.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the relevant literature pertaining to the variables identified in Chapter 1 in the Problem Statement. The researcher has used primarily secondary sources to compile the literature review, such as, textbooks, journal articles, dissertations and thesis, as well as relevant internet sites.

According to Alniacik *et al.* (2012: 355), in today's highly competitive business environment, attracting and retaining talented employees is imperative to be able to compete successfully. The authors further corroborate that employee retention is identified as the leading and largely uncontrollable human resources issue in a looming global talent shortage. Saaiman (2015: 19) further states that a well thought of and considered career path is an essential contributor in relation to employee engagement and retention. In a study on attrition rates in the Indian BPO industry, conducted by Dhal and Nayak (2015: 2246-2248), the industry's notorious reputation for high turnover is highlighted. The authors assert that high attrition rates lead to a chronic or systemic cycle as new hires need to be constantly added. This process is costly, time consuming and has a negative impact on company efficiency, productivity and bottom line.

With reference to the problem statement outlined in Chapter 1, the aim of the study was to conduct research on the linkage of career pathing to staff retention in order to assist with the long-term retention of contact centre agents and

improve business cost effectiveness at WNS. From this aim the below variables were identified:

Variable A: Career Pathing

Variable B: Staff Retention

Variable C: WNS Global Services

2.2 CAREER PATHING

This section provides an overview of the literature selected by the researcher to address career pathing.

2.2.1 Career pathing defined

When employees map and outline a course within an organisation that is specific to their career path and career development, this is referred to as career pathing (Agrawal and Tambe, 2016: 2467). A career path contains an employee's desired career destination, and the required steps, development and experience expected in order to advance on this pathway (Black, Corlett, Lee and Warhurst, 2017:13). By doing this, employees are provided with opportunities pertaining to cross-functional, lateral and vertical career moves which are linked to their interests, education and skills (Saaiman, 2015: 32). Through this process transparency within the business is enhanced and employees become aware of education, training, competencies and skills needed to progress their careers (Stevenson, 2019: 1).

2.2.2 The benefits of career pathing

According to Keller (2017: 1) the attraction and retention of talent is a critical challenge which all organisations are faced with. Amdany (2017: 15) asserts that a predominant cause of staff turnover is the lack of attention to career opportunities and career pathing. This contributes to turnover by means of decreased engagement and motivation among employees and consequent lack of loyalty to the organisation. Avery (2016: 2) further states that internal career pathing

and coaching programme can enhance performance, build commitment, promote equity within the organisation, capture qualified talent and ultimately decrease turnover. Sapling (2021: 1) explains that career pathing opens up channels of communication between employer and employee, whilst helping the organisation synchronise with the employees' career goals and requirements to retain them. Successful career pathing and planning creates a higher quality workforce which is regularly learning new skills and therefore has a positive impact on business profitability and productivity. Ginac (2018: 1) draws attention to the fact that on average "only 7% of employees take positions within their current organizations to advance in their careers". Without clear internal career pathing employees are prone to leave and companies end up with less engaged, less diverse and less creative workforces.

Career pathing is a strategic HRD practice which is commonly used to help employees apprehend the professional trajectories available to them within an organisation (Amdany, 2017: 18). According to Rothwell, Jackson, Ressler, Jones, and Brower (2015: 24) employees with more formalised career paths are able to actively equip themselves with the new and scarce skills needed in today's economy. The authors state that employees are more engaged in their own success, as career pathing gives employees higher autonomy and control over their careers. Hein (2012: 1) contends that career pathing gears individuals toward growing professionally, earning more money and staying relevant in a constantly changing and dynamic workplace. Additionally, Cavendish (2021: 1) highlights that sound career pathing offers individuals job stability as well as gives them a sense of purpose and belonging in the workplace. Career pathing promotes transparency in the workplace as it provides visibility of growth opportunities and gives individuals a sense of direction in terms of goals and expectations within the organisation.

2.2.3 The challenges associated with career pathing

Malhotra, Smets and Morris (2016: 375) explain that while future focused planning is valuable, career pathing does have some organisational and

individual challenges to overcome. One challenge employers may experience include career plateaus. “A career plateau occurs when employees reach a level in an organization in which they are either perceived to have reached their limit of progression or the organization does not provide for opportunities for future advancement.” (Black *et al*, 2017: 48). At times a situation may rise where the position needed for an employee to grow professionally is not attainable within the organisation. This situation may prompt employees to look outside the company for alternate, higher-level opportunities (SHRM, 2021: 1).

In today’s challenging economy some organisations are unable to advance all employees due to limited growth, resources, skills or financial constraints. (Mishra, 2017: 767). Furthermore, career pathing is usually a long term and time-consuming process. Organisations are not always ready to spend a lot of time and resources on a process that will only prove to be beneficial in the long term (Indeed, 2020: 1). An added limitation on an individual level is the rigidity associated with a career path. Individuals may be conditioned to follow one path only and stick to a mapped-out plan, potentially resulting in missed opportunities outside of the career plan (Techiev, 2021: 1).

2.2.4 The theoretical framework for career pathing

2.2.4.1 Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham Harold Maslow (1943) was a distinguished clinical psychologist who became known for his hierarchy of needs theory catered around what motivates people (Saaiman, 2015: 39). After several years of observing his patients, Maslow discovered that those individuals who grew up in environments where they were denied their basic needs, would manifest psychological disorders at a later stage in their life. This discovery led him to the awareness that those employees whose needs are not fulfilled at work, will not perform to their maximum potential. Hence, to enhance motivation in the workplace, managers need to understand these needs (Bangura, 2018: 26). Maslow postulated that every human being has five core hierarchical needs. His key proposition is that human beings are wanting

beings, who constantly need more and their needs usually pivot around what has already been achieved (Mutsvairigwa, 2021: 62).

In explaining the hierarchy of needs, Loganathan (2013:13) explains that the Maslow's hierarchy of needs consists of five essential groups which need to be understood in understanding employee behaviour. King-Hill (2015: 54) affirms that the bottom level of the pyramid is occupied by the most basic and broader human needs. The top of the pyramid consists of the higher order needs. Bangura (2018: 26) further explains that Maslow divided the five needs into higher and lower order needs. (Figure 2.1). Psychological and safety needs are identified a lower order needs. Love/belonging, esteem and self-actualisation are deemed as higher order needs.

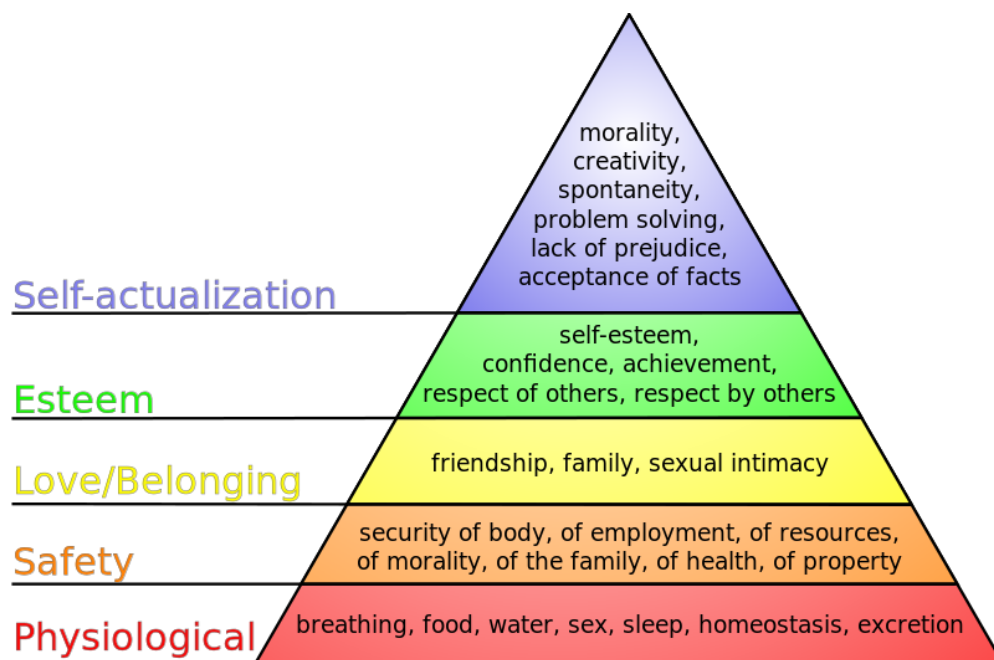


Figure 2.1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
Source: Adapted from Mutsvairigwa (2021: 62)

Physiological needs are most basic needs which contain biological needs such as water, food and air. Safety needs are set in motion once physiological needs have been sufficiently met. Love/belonging can be understood as social needs.

These needs centre around the need for affection, friendship, acceptance and a sense of belonging (Mutsvairigwa, 2021: 63).

Second in rank of higher order needs are esteem needs, which is the desire to feel an internal sense of self-respect, autonomy and achievement. Other needs pertinent to this level is the desire to achieve status and recognition from others (Bangura, 2018: 27). Self-Actualization needs are at the very top of the hierarchy. This level can be understood as the need for self-fulfilment, which is the desire to reach ones full potential and to reach personal growth which goes beyond a level of self-interest (Saaiman, 2015: 40). In the context of this study, when employees have a career path, this maps out their growth within an organisation, and provides them with training and development opportunities to help reach their maximum potential. Furthermore, as employees move from one position to the next within the career path, this gives them a sense of achievement. These conditions satisfy Maslow's hierarchy of higher order needs to motivate employees. Employees are more likely to be loyal to an organisation where they are motivated (Amdany, 2017:15).

2.2.4.2 Alderfer's ERG model

Alderfer's ERG theory on employee motivation corresponds with Maslow's theory on the hierarchy of needs. Alderfer's ERG theory contends that there are three basic needs which employees seek to fulfil: existence (E), relatedness (R) and growth (G) (Figure 2.2). The ERG theory allows for different levels of needs to be pursued simultaneously, unlike Maslow's hierarchy (Edmonson, 2018: 1). Furthermore, the ERG model includes a frustration-regression principle which explains that if higher level needs remain unfulfilled, an individual may regress to lower-level needs that appear easier to satisfy (Chikukwa, 2017: 45).

According to Chathuranga (2015: 2), existence needs refer to the need for basic material existence, such as physiological health and safety needs. Relatedness indicates an individuals need for interpersonal connections, social status and

recognition. The growth element of the theory highlights an individuals need for personal and professional development, including creative and meaningful work. Saaiman (2015: 45) asserts that satisfying employees' growth needs is positively related to employee retention. If an employees' growth needs are frustrated due to lack of a career trajectory within a company and deficiency of resources, there is a resultant increased risk of low morale and lack of productivity and loyalty.



Figure 2.2: Alderfer's ERG model
Source: Adapted from Avradinis (2020: 1)

2.2.4.3 Herzberg's Two Factor Theory

Similar to Maslow, Herzberg expressed his theory of motivation with reference to satisfaction as opposed to productivity outcomes. The implicit assumption of this theory is that a satisfied employee translates to a productive employee (Peerbhai, 2006: 26). Luthans (2011: 16) explains that Herzberg utilised a critical incident method to investigate employees. This was done by interviewing employees at times when they felt extremely good or extremely bad about their job. This led to the two-factor theory which states that there are two dimensions to job satisfaction, namely; motivation and hygiene factors. Bangugra (2018: 28) contends that if an organisation wishes to enhance employee job satisfaction,

factors to consider are the nature of the work, the opportunities presented to employees in gaining status, assuming responsibility and achieving self-realisation. Contrastingly, if an organisation wishes to reduce or avoid dissatisfaction, focus should be placed on hygiene factors (dissatisfaction) such as the job environment, policies, procedures, supervision and working conditions (Figure 2.3). Sibhoko (2017: 22) describes motivating factors (satisfaction) as a means of ensuring employees are satisfied with their jobs, which will in turn lead to fulfilled employees who you are more likely to be retained by a firm.

Hertzberg's Two-Factor Theory is fundamental in that it clarifies factors which satisfy and dissatisfy an employee and is therefore a useful tool to use as a framework for employee retention (Mutsvairigwa, 2021: 60), which is relevant to this study.

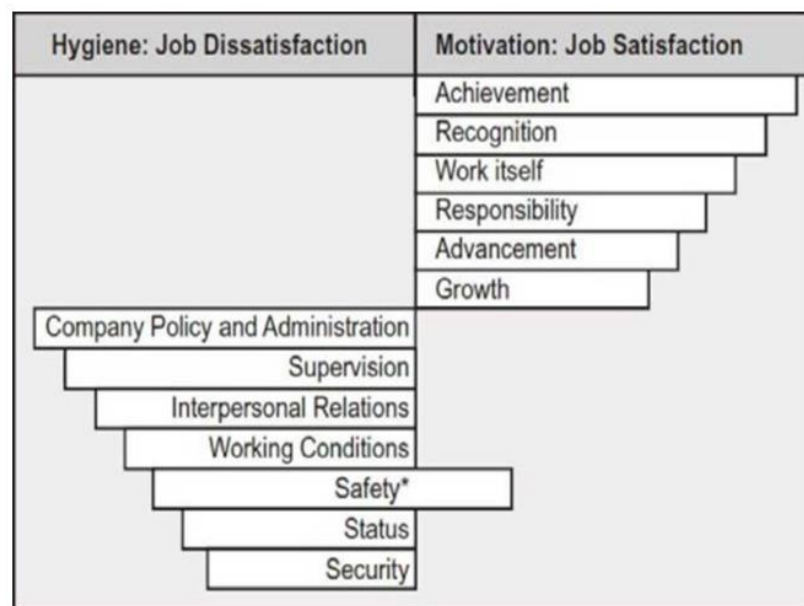


Figure 2.3: Herzberg's Two-factor theory
Source: Adapted from Luthans (2011: 23)

2.2.4.4 McClelland's Human Motivation Theory

David McClelland is known for illustrating the three types of motivational needs depicted in figure 2.4. The theory is also known as the "achievement-motivation" theory (Loganthan, 2013: 16). The first need is the need for achievement. This

need is linked to attainment of goals and striving for excellence. At this level there is a great need for feedback on progress being made, and a sense of accomplishment (Hansemark, 1998: 28). The second need is the need for affiliation which is an individuals need for friendship and socialising with others. The third need is a need for power where the motivating factor is for an individual to be influential and make a difference (Pirthiraj, 2017: 52). In the context of this study the process of implementing career pathing practices requires goal setting and striving toward a shared vision. This therefore is linked to McClelland's motivation theory as a contributing factor to employee retention, as this fulfils the first need of achievement.



Figure 2.4: McClelland's Human Motivation Theory
Source: Adapted from Loganathan (2013: 16)

2.2.4.5 Kanter's Theory of Organisational empowerment

Kanter's (1993) theory of structural empowerment is an organisational theory which centers around contextual factors within organisations that promote healthy working environments for individuals, organisational effectiveness and commitment. There are four essential social structures identified which individuals need access to, that constitute structural empowerment. These are:

“opportunity to grow and advance within the organisation; information regarding the work and organisation; support from subordinates, colleagues and leaders; and resources in terms of personnel, economy, materials and sufficient time.” (Hagerman *et al.*, 2017: 648) (Figure 2.5). Furthermore, according to Kanter (1993), accessibility to these empowerment structures increases with the individual’s access to formal and informal power within the organisation (Travers, 2020: 2). Formal power emanates from a flexible, visible and central job within the organisation. Relationships and alliances with subordinates, peers and leaders contribute to how informal power is established (Ramos and Ales, 2014: 15).

Consistent with Kanter’s theory, empowerment is endorsed in work environments that provide employees with access to information, resources, support, and the opportunity to learn and develop (Cierpial *et al.*, 2008: 8). In addition, Erickson *et al.* (2003: 96) ascertain that empowerment is conducive to an environment that “sincerely engages people and progressively responds to this engagement with mutual interests and intention to promote growth”. Access to opportunity refers to the possibility of growth and movement within an enterprise by virtue of understanding employee goals, the existence of career paths and the provision of opportunities by the employer to increase knowledge and skills.

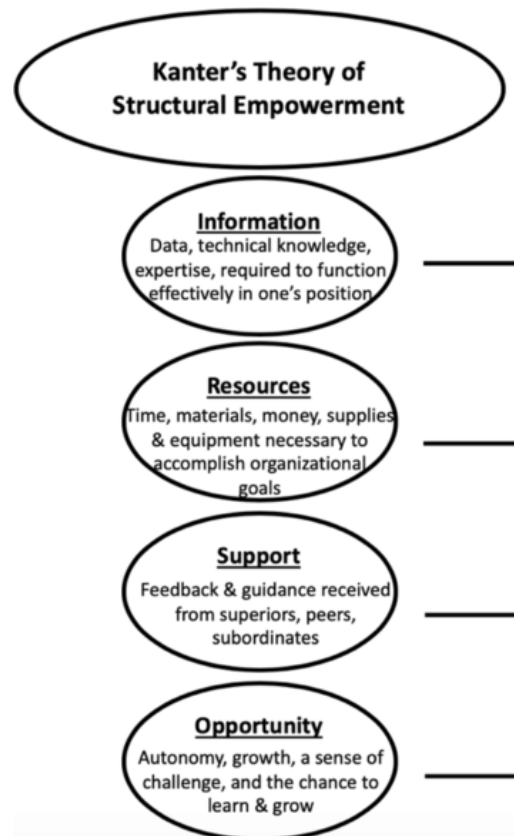


Figure 2.5: Kanter's empowerment theory
Source: Adapted from Travers (2020: 1)

2.2.4.6 Factors that contribute towards effective career pathing

Career pathing is a common HRD practice used to help employees understand the career trajectory options internally available in an organisation. A formal career path consists of a logical and sequential list of job titles or positions which an individual has to attain in order to achieve their long-term career goals. Furthermore, the career path should outline the relevant qualifications, critical job experiences and competencies required at each position (Black, *et al.*, 2017:15). A career path contains an employee's desired career destination, and the required steps, development and experience expected in order to advance on this pathway. According to Saaiman (2015: 31-33), an effective career pathing model provides employees with a sense of direction and is a convenient tool which can be utilised to measure career progress and predetermined benchmarks. By doing this, employees gain an understanding of opportunities pertaining to cross-

functional, lateral and vertical career moves which are linked to their interests, education and skills. Transparency within the business is therefore enhanced. Employees are then cognisant of the learning, training, competencies and skills needed to advance their careers (Stevenson, 2019: 1). Additional factors which constitute toward a successful career path include communication, support, collaboration and a clear vision (Cao and Thomas, 2013: 28).

2.3 STAFF RETENTION

This section provides an overview of the literature selected by the researcher to address staff retention.

2.3.1 Staff retention defined

Kelliher, Mankin and Truss (2012: 16) explain staff retention as attempts made by organisations to sustain a working environment which support existing staff in remaining with the organisation by way of implementing policies and procedures that address diverse staffing needs.

2.3.2 The benefits of staff retention

One of the greatest advantages of employee retention to the organisation is the cost-effectiveness of such programmes with a direct result on an employer's bottom line and effort in managing employee turnover (Maphisa, Nyide and Zwane, 2017: 18). Employee retention essentially means that the organisation is combating hiring costs which are experienced during the preliminary phase, training cost that form part of initial training, exit costs which would include payments, and replacements and pay-outs (Hlaing, 2019:11). Retention ensures that performance and productivity is maintained by making certain that there are no unfulfilled positions and by assisting in building teams of skilled and experienced employees (Amdany, 2017: 7). In keeping employees, organisations can utilise the time and money – otherwise spent on recruitment fees and

processes – to make investments within the business, brand or employees instead (Ibidunni, Osibanjo, Adeniji, Salau and Falola, 2016: 3).

Employee retention strategies are generally easy to implement and manage and can easily be customised to suit the employee's needs, as well as the organisation's goals (Cloutier, Felusiak, Hill and Pemberton-Jones, 2015: 124). Strategies may range from setting up mentorship and training programmes, providing personalized employee support, recognition and appreciation and creating career advancement opportunities (Al-Emadi *et al*, 2015: 8). Added to this is the benefit of experienced employees. The longer an employee stays within an organisation, the more experienced they will be in both the relevant industry and specific business approaches, therefore the greater the likelihood of targets being met (Ibidunni *et al*, 2016: 5). These employees will be in a more favourable position to endorse the organisations brand to customers and clients, train and mentor others, as well as produce higher quality work (Nijjer, Singh and Raj, 2019: 711). A reduction in turnover means that employee loyalty, commitment and morale is heightened. The more loyal and happy staff are, the more uplifting and motivational the workplace will be, essentially creating a more productive environment. An additional incentive is that this type of company culture will infiltrate customer relationships, leading to happy and loyal customers (Njanjobea, 2016: 29).

Besides the numerous benefits of staff retention to the organisation, employees also stand to benefit from such strategies. Employees with a longer tenure within an organisation are more acquainted with the company's policies, guidelines and therefore adjust well. They are capable of performing better than individuals who change jobs frequently (Pillay, 2020: 23). Staff are in a better position to make effective contributions when they spend significant time in an organisation and therefore know the organisation in and out (Utete, 2016: 68). Being retained within a company for a significant period of time gives employees a sense of belonging, importance and reassurance in terms of job-security (Scott, 2018: 1).

2.3.3 The challenges associated with staff retention

According to Mutsvairigwa (2021: 12) employees who possess the necessary skill, knowledge, will to learn and drive, are individuals whom an organisation should strive to retain. Maphisa *et al* (2017: 18) assert that there are undeniably many advantages associated with staff retention, however an issue arises when an organisation chooses to retain an employee even though they are not deemed as deserving of the post. This produces a hindering situation. Retention has an adverse effect when non performing or underperforming employees are retained. This is usually the case when employees are not yet prepared to grow therefore becoming a liability to the organisation. Reddy (2018: 1) states that by retaining staff that are non-delivering, the creativity and productivity of the more knowledgeable employees is stunted, and ultimately results in diminished performance. Amusa, Thambura and Swindon, (2014: 1203) contend that an additional challenge of staff retention is the promotion of groupism among the existing employees which in turn creates an environment of insecurity for the new employees. This causes a subsequent negative impact on productivity, quality as well as organisation culture. As per Boothe (2018: 1) staff retention also brings into focus the issue of organisation sustainability, considering challenges related to the average age of the workforce, talent viability and upskilling.

Various motivational theories such as Maslows Hierarchy of needs, Alderfers ERG model, Herzberg's Two Factor Theory and McClellan's Human Theory of needs, are all indicative that employee needs vary according to their circumstances (Peerbhai, 2006: 21). According to Pillay (2020: 22) employees need a good and safe working environment conducive to support and mentoring. Amdany (2017: 16-17) further elaborates that other retention factors to be considered are compensation, policies, job characteristics and training. The challenge comes in having an understanding of the various employee needs which have to be satisfied to retain them, especially when dealing with a large workforce.

High turnover poses a threat to an organisation's ability to think differently. This is because a diversity of views and approaches is endorsed by healthy turnover

rates (Zhang, 2016: 85). According to the Management Study Guide (2018: 1), retaining key and top talent also becomes a challenge in terms of the increased wage cost over a period of time associated with keeping more tenured staff within an organisation. This is because each organisation sets out a salary budget for each employee, and this salary can only be elevated to a certain extent and not more (the extent is limited). Retention becomes a challenge/hindrance when an employee puts forward a figure that is extremely high, often beyond the organisations budget, and the employee is unwilling to compromise. Added to this, retention brings into light the question of lower talent mobility opportunities concerning promotions, career pathing and succession planning.

2.3.4 The theoretical framework for staff retention

2.3.4.1 Factors Affecting Employee Retention

Retention strategies are a means of providing an organisation with fundamental tools to support its staff (Mutsvairigwa, 2021: 73). Various motivational theories such as Maslows Hierarchy of needs, Alderfers ERG model, Herzberg's Two Factor Theory and McClellan's Human Theory of needs, are all indicative that employee needs vary according to their circumstances (Peerbhai, 2006: 21). The following is a discussion on some of the factors affecting employee retention:

2.3.4.1.1 Compensation

Compensation refers to the holistic financial and non-financial benefits which an employee gains from an employment relationship (Amdany, 2017: 15). Sarmad, Shamim, Saleh and Malik (2016: 177) contends that organisation benefits in cooperation with a competitive compensation system encourage employee commitment to a firm and illustrate high retention levels. The authors further explain that organisations can nurture a retention of high-quality employees by valuing their skill and knowledge. Therefore, it is essential that compensation is linked to a knowledge and skill-based system. According to Peerbhai (2006: 41) organisations which have high compensation levels translate into lower employee turnover rates and a greater number of people applying to work for them. Abston

and Morrell (2019: 107) emphasise that once-off recognition rewards are futile in alleviating employee turnover and enhancing retention. For this reason, a combination of both non-monetary rewards as well as regular salary increases are most effective in retaining staff.

2.3.4.1.2 Job characteristics

The Job Characteristics Model of Hackman and Oldham suggest that the characteristics of work influence job satisfaction Peerbhai (2006: 43). Cheche and Siruri (2021: 163-164) assert that the five dimensions of jobs aligned to the Job Characteristics Model are skill variety, task significance, task identity, autonomy, and feedback. This model additionally proposes that an employee can achieve high job motivation if three psychological states are accomplished. The three psychological states are experienced responsibility for work outcomes, experienced meaningfulness of work and knowledge of the results of work. According to Blanz (2017: 35) employees value their job not only if it is high paying, but also if the job is a fulfilling experience, i.e., challenging, interesting and stimulating.

2.3.4.1.3 Training and development opportunities

According to Kalgora, Kossivi and Xu (2016: 261) training provides employees with the skills and knowledge to perform their jobs well, which aids in job satisfaction as they feel well equipped. Training and development are therefore considered a core factor in increasing employee retention. Utete (2016: 27) implies that when an employee feels that they are underequipped with the necessary skills and knowledge attitude to perform their job optimally, this leads to frustration and dissatisfaction with the job. Haider *et al* (2015: 64) link training to a decreased level of retention. The authors assert that individuals display loyalty to an organisation that provides growth opportunities by means of training and development, whilst allowing employees to apply the newly acquired knowledge and skills.

2.3.4.1.4 Supervisory support

According to Baruah and Das (2013: 9) supervisory support and leadership style are important contributing factors in staff retention. The authors cite that bad leadership and lack of supervisory support is one of the leading reasons which individuals leave an organisation. Amdany (2017: 26) further affirms that research has shown supervisors to have a significant influence over an employee exiting or staying. Therefore, it can be assumed that a negative interaction has a greater impact than positive ones. Bowman (2019: 6) highlights that supportive supervision is critical in driving Human Resource development programs. For any Human Resource initiative to be successful, there is a requirement for top management support. Top management must function as positive role models to their juniors. McFadden, Campbell and Taylor (2015: 1555) contends that the quality of relationship and support received from a manager lengthens an employee's tenure with a firm. It can therefore be concluded that bad leadership results in low job commitment, low employee retention and poor employee performance.

2.3.4.1.5 Career opportunities

According to Coetzee, Oosthuizen and Stoltz (2016: 233) employees who are given career opportunities within an organisation are less likely to exit. The need to look for opportunities outside of an organisation arises when an employee feels as if they have plateaued in their career. Njanjobea (2016: 32) maintains that an organisations belief and drive in career-orientated practices and job security has a direct and considerable impact on improving employee commitment to the firm. Coetzee and Harry (2013: 4) conducted research in a call center, and deduced that the absence of job opportunities can lead to job dissatisfaction causing employees to seek more challenging and better work elsewhere. When employees feel that there are better opportunities for them to progress or grow within an organisation, they are then more likely to perform better and less likely leave. A survey done by Kochanski & Ledford (2001: 35) found that the presence of career opportunities gave a strong prediction of employee retention when

compared to other forms of reward, followed by opportunities for training and an employee's relationship with their supervisor.

2.3.4.1.6 Work life policies

Work-life balanced is achieving a state of synchronized balance between an individual's work and family life, with no conflict between the two aspects of an employee's life (Zindoga, 2018: 12). Kar and Misra (2013: 63) note that organisation policies implemented to help enhance employees in their work-life incorporation centred around three prominent aspects. These aspects included special leave policies such as parental leaves, organizational support for dependant care and flexible working arrangements such as part time or shift work. Deery and Jago (2015: 461) highlight that work and family policies are recognized as being crucial in the attraction and retention of committed and dedicated employees. An empirical study conducted by Grover and Crocker (1995: 278) encapsulated that those employees who had access to work-life policies projected a substantially higher commitment to the organisation, and significantly lower intentions to resign from their job.

2.3.4.2 ERC retention model

The working environment can be made stimulating by offering a "variety of assignments, autonomy to make decisions, resources and support provided to do good work, opportunity to learn, feedback on result and understanding the significance of one's personal contributions" (HR Insights Blog, 2013: 1). The employee retention connection (ERC) model focuses on applied organisational proficiency indicating three main drivers of employee retention, as shown in Figure 2.4.



Figure 2.1: The ERC retention model

Source: Adapted from Integrated Retention Systems (2018: 1)

“Stimulating Work” means presenting employees with an assortment of assignments, authority to make decisions, and opportunity to learn, as well as providing feedback on results (Kaur, 2017: 167). For retention to be enhanced, employees need to understand the significance of their personal contributions, feel valued and be provided with resources and support in order to do their job effectively (Hussainy, 2022: 42). In terms of “Motivational Leadership”, the ERC retention model highlights the need for a leadership style that promotes change and is open to new ideas, as well as inspires others and shares the organisation vision and direction (Choudhary, 2016: 21). Employees need constant motivation and for their efforts to be recognised. The leader should also model behaviours that reflect the organisation values (Mutsvairigwa, 2021: 65). A working environment that promotes both “Recognition and Reward” is crucial in facilitating retention. Managers need to make every effort to reinforce desired behaviours and acknowledge good work and effort of employees (Kaur, 2017: 168). Organisations need to place importance and attention on acknowledgement through celebrating accomplishments, building self-confidence and enhancing teamwork and camaraderie (Choudhary, 2016: 28-29).

Through an integrated system for retaining employees, the ERC is able to transform the organisational culture and enhance competitive advantage. This is done through a five-phase approach (Figure 2.5).



Figure 2.2: Integrated Retention System

Source: Adapted from Integrated Retention Systems (2018: 1)

In Phase 1 of the five-phase approach (Figure 2.5), ERC is initiated by studying the company's motivation and retention culture by means of surveys and focus groups pertaining to motivating and demotivating facets in the culture. In Phase 2, ERC gives attention to designing jobs characterised by high involvement. This phase also involves creating work assignments which include an array of tasks and skills, learning opportunities and authority to make decisions. Phase 3 "trains supervisors and managers in proven methods of motivational leadership, such as inspiring a shared vision and direction and serving as a role model". In Phase 4, ERC develops a strategy around skill development as well as employee career paths. This entails the identification of fundamental capabilities for various career paths, planning training opportunities in order to develop competencies and providing employee guidance through mentoring. The composition of Phase 5 requires the establishment of a customised reward and recognition system that best fits the organisational culture. In this phase focus is placed on the identification of activities, attitudes and contributions that require recognition and

rewards, and correlating reward and acknowledgement options to performance inputs and forming specific motivational approaches for the retention of staff (Kaur, 2017: 166-168).

2.3.4.3 Determinants of loyalty to the workplace

Coughlan (2005: 45) defines employee loyalty as instances when an individual will remain with an organization for a lengthy period of time for reasons linked to their job satisfaction such as feeling valued and appreciated. Rajput, Singhal and Tiwari (2016: 2) asserts that employee loyalty is a psychological attachment or commitment to an organisation which develops as a result of job satisfaction. Khuong and Tien (2013: 83) suggest that contrary to popular belief, compensation is only one of several other factors linked to employee loyalty. Other determinants of employee loyalty to a firm include employee empowerment, teamwork, career development opportunities, training opportunities, recognition, culture, supervision and co-worker relations. Roehling, Roehling and Moen (2001: 147) further expand on the determinants of loyalty in an organisation related to formal and informal support. Formalised support such as work-life policies had a positive relationship to employee loyalty. Informal support via supervisors and co-workers was proved to have the greatest positive relationship with employee loyalty.

2.3.4.4 The relationship between career pathing and staff retention

According to Saaiman (2015: 18-20), a well thought out and considered career path is an essential contributor in relation to employee engagement and retention. A career path outlines an employee's aspired career trajectory is, as well as the necessary steps, development and experience needed in order to progress on this pathway. Amdany (2017:11) further concurs that career planning has been established to reduce employee turnover intentions and absenteeism. Career pathing and development is a critical factor to consider for retaining employees. Research by Peterson (2004: 212) indicates that career pathing is associated with a variety of beneficial workplace outcomes, including greater organisational commitment and retention. Career pathing strengthens employees' identification

with their organisation and provides structure for the exploration of provisional selves that employees might adopt in the future. These identity functions in turn facilitate performance, retention and a positive work attitude.

2.4 THE PROBLEM STATEMENT CONTEXTUALISED WITH THE BUSINESS PROCESS OUTSOURCING SECTOR

BPO is a time-tested strategy used to minimise costs and maximise revenue. BPO aids in improving productivity levels as there is a shift in focus to core business activities (Digneo, 2020: 1). Accenture is one of the largest international professional BPO service companies in the world, employing more than 500 000 people globally. In a recent write up by Gaetz (2021: 1) the staggering attrition rates due to the COVID-19 pandemic were highlighted. Specific reference was made to statistics which indicate that approximately 300 000 women have quit the Accenture workforce due to the covid-19 crisis. Owing to this is a number of reasons, one being that women were inexplicably the gender to leave their occupation so as to become full-time teachers at home and caregivers. Furthermore, remote work as a result of the pandemic has led to lack of social interactions and jobs becoming monotonous. For this reason, it is important that organisations find new ways of doing things so as to counteract monotony through refining employee experience and enhancing retention rates. Cognizant is a multinational, US-based BPO service company. Cognizant's attrition for the June 2021 quarter stood out as a key concern. The attrition rate for the period came in at a historic high of 31%, of which 29% was voluntary attrition. As a result, the company has had to look at revised career mapping options and plans on offsetting the high attrition rate laterally and through promotions (Moorthy and Srikanth, 2021: 1). IBM is another multinational American company which provides BPO services. Authors Bopp, Bing and Forte-Trammell (2009: 52) draw attention to the importance of linking employee-driven career development and career pathing with business goals. This becomes especially important in the 21st century where there is an increasing competitive need for companies to operate as a globally integrated enterprise that can effectively develop and utilise the skills and abilities of its workforce anywhere in the world. IBM utilises a structured

career development process to support career growth which offers a blended learning approach that presents employees with options for creating meaning and purpose in their jobs and learning experience. This has been an essential enabler in facilitating business success.

Over the last 15 years there has been significant government attention rendered in south Africa to endorsing the country as a destination location for call centres to facilitate job creation specifically for the unemployed youth (Rogerson and Pandey, 2014: 208). "The South African BPO industry accounted for 1% of the global BPO revenue in 2014 and is expected to account for 4% of global revenues by 2030" (Deloitte, 2016: 4). Additionally, South Africa was voted the second most attractive BPO location in the world for three consecutive years, as stated by the 2020 Front Office BPO survey by Ryan Strategic Advisory. The country's BPO industry's global reputation was boosted by virtue of their ability to react and adapt promptly to the COVID-19 crisis. During the crisis, the national government accorded the BPO industry 'essential service status', which enabled local providers to continue to service their clients during the course of the country's lockdown in April and May of 2020. Statistics indicate that 60% of the industry's employees have returned to working from office, while the remainder work from home. This new hybrid model gives rise to an expanded pool of talent who were previously excluded from the industry but can now work from home (Mitchell, 2021: 1). In a recent article by Mzekandaba (2021: 1) about the recovery of the South African economy post the COVID-19 pandemic, President Cyril Ramaphosa makes reference to the significant contribution of BPOs. Ramaphosa has pegged the South African BPO industry as one of the green shoots that will facilitate economic reconstruction and recovery.

Masilela (2018: 2-5) points out that the BPO sector is noted for having some of the most alarming attrition rates in the world. "The sector is typically characterised by high work pressure and work overload, which can lead to stress and burnout, absenteeism, performance problems and attrition". Given the shortage of skilled labour and the potential cost savings involved, BPO companies have become aware of providing long-term career pathing and growth opportunities to offset high attrition rates (Marcelo, 2018: 1). Employees are more prone to leave an

organisation where they feel that they are not being given opportunities to grow, try new things and exercise the full range of their skills. A good way to counteract this is to build career paths within the contact centre environment to add dimensions to employees' jobs' and give them an opportunity to expand the range of their professional skills (Ocampo, 2016). Generally, there appears to be lack of focus and emphasis on career pathing within the BPO sector. This can prove to be detrimental to any organisation within the sector, as career pathing and retention of staff cannot be viewed in silos when dealing with an emerging millennial workforce. Millennials are driven by career growth and progression. Thus, organisations should make an effort to retain employees through the development of career paths and investment in employee growth opportunities (Mehta *et al.* 2006: 292).

WNS Global services SA (Pty) Ltd was established in 2003. They operate in three major cities in three provinces – Cape Town, Durban and Port Elizabeth – and have made a name for themselves as an industry frontrunner. WNS has partnered with leading global companies to provide the finest in-class BPO services within their respective fields of operations. Some of the WNS's South African clients are amongst the major local and international participants in their particular fields including in financial services, utilities industries, insurance, telecommunications as well as travel and leisure. WNS Global Services employs 4 000 plus people in South Africa and has a growing footprint in Africa (WNS, 2021: 1).

2.4.1 WNS global services

WNS (Holdings) Limited (NYSE: WNS), is a leading Business Process Management (BPM) company with its headquarters in Mumbai, India. The company draws their strength from their extensive industry knowledge and innovative digital led transformational solutions. The company's international footprint extends across 16 countries with 57 worldwide delivery centres across South Africa, China, Sri Lanka, Poland, United States, Costa Rica, Romania,

Spain United Kingdom, India, Turkey and Philippines. The company has acquired a number of industry awards for providing world-class BPM service to the biggest local and international clients. WNS's mission centres around co-creation whether it be their clients or employees. WNS collaborates with their clients to co-create outcomes that enable them to stay ahead of the curve. Furthermore, the company co-creates with their employees by working with them to co-conceive their career paths and become future ready (WNS, 2021: 1).

WNS Global Services mission is guided by their set of CIRCLE values. C stands for "Client First", ensuring clients are at the core of everything they do. I is for "Integrity", that is being ethical and honest in all actions. The R is for "Respect" – being sensitive to individual differences and treating everyone with dignity. The second C is for "Collaboration" as the company prides themselves in being "one WNS". L is for "Learning" through experience and knowledge sharing to create innovative solutions. E is for "Excellence" in everything that WNS does (WNS, 2021: 1).

In addition, WNS Global Services takes heed of their employee experience and needs through the company's five people promises. The company promises employees the experience of mentoring and training, role clarity, structured career paths as well as development as professionals (ACCA Careers, 2021: 1). Despite this, the company has long since faced issues in terms of employee retention and staggering attrition rates. In 2013 the CEO and his team voluntarily decided to forfeit their bonuses in an attempt to get attrition rates from 43% to below 30% (D'Monte and Shinde, 2013: 1).

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter delivered a summary of the literature pertaining to the problem statement indicated by the researchers in the Chapter 1. Furthermore, the chapter highlighted the associated benefits and challenges of career pathing and staff retention. The problem statement contextualised with the BPO sector was discussed in detail and an outline of WNS Global Services and their relevant

contribution to the sector was presented. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology and design of the study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this chapter is to outline the relevant methodology for the study. The chapter provides an overview of the quantitative component of the study as well as the relevant research instruments.

3.2 TYPES OF RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is essentially a blueprint for the study which specifies the methods and procedures for collecting and analysing the required data (Kapoor, 2016: 26). To contextualize the research paradigm pursued in this study, the various types of research designs are initially discussed briefly as follows. Research design is an overall strategy used to integrate the various components of research in a consistent and logical way, therefore ensuring that specific reference and focus is placed on the research problem (Lewis, 2015: 473). Research design outlines the manner in which collection, measurement and analysis of data should be conducted. “The function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables you to effectively address the research problem as unambiguously as possible” (Sacred Heart University Library, 2019: 1). Research design is important as it serves as a plan for how to conduct research in order to achieve goals and provides a systematic approach to the study. Research design reduces inaccuracies and contributes to maximum efficiency and reliability (Universal Teacher, 2018: 1). The various research designs include Descriptive Research Design, Correlational Research Design, Experimental Research Design, Diagnostic Research Design and Explanatory Research Design:

3.2.1 Descriptive Research Design

According to Erickson (2017: 51) descriptive research design is a design which aims to attain information to systematically describe a phenomenon, situation or population. Akhtar (2016: 68) cites that descriptive analysis answers the questions what, who, where, how and when. Svensson (1984: 32) notes that in the descriptive method of research the researcher does not control or manipulate any variables. Instead, the variables are only identified, observed, and measured. This method includes data collection, analysis, and presentation. It lets the researcher clearly present the problem statement in order to allow others to better understand the need for this kind of research (Jovancic, 2020: 1).

3.2.2 Correlational Research Design

According to Seeram (2019: 177), a correlational research design investigates relationships between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of them. Erickson (2017: 54) elaborates that a correlation reflects the strength and/or direction of the relationship between two (or more) variables. The direction of a correlation can be either positive or negative. Curtis, Comiskey and Dempsey (2016: 22) explains that researchers utilise correlation research design to measure two or more variables to investigate the extent to which the variables are related. Cresswell and Guetterman (2018: 52) provide a detailed description of correlative research characteristics, such as the display of scores, associations between scores, and multiple variable analysis. The correlation coefficient range, -1 to +1, depicts a strong negative correlation to a strong positive correlation. No correlation is indicated if the coefficient is 0.

3.2.3 Experimental Research Design

Experimental design involves the process of conducting research in an objective and controlled fashion so that precision is maximised and specific conclusions can be drawn regarding a hypothesis statement (Mitchell, 2015: 3). Bell (2009: 12) states that the purpose of an experimental research design is to establish the effect that an independent variable has on a dependent variable. Seeram (2019: 179) states that experimental research is an approach to research, where one or more independent variables are manipulated and applied to one or more dependent variables to measure their effect on the latter. The effect of the

independent variables on the dependent variables is usually observed and recorded over some time, to aid researchers in drawing a reasonable conclusion regarding the relationship between these two variable types.

3.2.4 Diagnostic Research Design

In a diagnostic research design, a researcher is attempting to gauge the cause of a specific problem or phenomenon (Erickson, 2017: 57). This design usually consists of three research phases, namely (1) problem inception, (2) problem diagnosis, and (3) problem solution (Jovancic, 2020: 1).

3.2.5 Explanatory Research Design

Explanatory research is a method established to explore phenomena that have not before been researched or adequately explained (Akhtar, 2016: 68). Stebbins (2001: 64) affirms that explanatory research design is used to further expand, explore, and explain the researcher's ideas and theories. This type of research design is used to elaborate on the unexplored aspects of a particular topic and try to explain the missing pieces. According to Curtis *et al*, (2016: 31) The most popular methods of explanatory research are literature research, in-depth interview, focus groups and case studies

3.2.6 Research Design selected for the study

For the purpose of this study, the correlation research design is adopted to test the variables and identify if there is a positive or negative correlation between the staff retention variable and career pathing variable at WNS Global. This study also assumes the descriptive research design through data collection, analysis, and presentation through graphs and tables to clearly depict the problem statement and rational for the study.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

There are two main approaches to research, namely, the quantitative and qualitative. Albers (2017: 12) explains that a quantitative research study collects numerical data which is then interpreted and analysed to draw the conclusions of the research. "The goal of data analysis is to reveal the underlying patterns,

trends, and relationships of a study's contextual situation." Furthermore, there is tendency to consider numerical data as a reliable process of measurement. Lester (2020: 95) attests that qualitative data is non-numerical in nature and is data that approximates and characterises based on critical sifting of the data. A quantitative research paradigm was undertaken for the purpose of this research, using a structured closed-ended questionnaire (Annexure C), followed by a detailed statistical analysis of the data. This method was chosen as it enables easier analysis of attitudes, opinions and behaviours in a large sample population (Carol, 2016: 1), such as WNS Global services across the two provinces.

3.3.1 Quantitative research versus qualitative research

According to Crossman (2018: 1), "qualitative research is a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data", in an attempt to interpret this data and develop a better understanding of the social life and experience of targeted populations or places. This contrasts with quantitative research. Quantitative research uses numerical information to identify large-scale trends and statistical operations to establish correlations between variables. Qualitative research is designed to reveal the meaning that informs the action or outcomes which are typically measured by quantitative research. McLeod (2017: 1) explains the distinction between the two by asserting that qualitative research involves making sense of and comprehending human behaviour from the informants' perspective, whilst quantitative research is concerned with discovering facts about social phenomena. Qualitative researchers make use of diverse methods in order to develop deep understandings of how individuals perceive their social realities, and in consequence how they act within the social world. Contrastingly, quantitative research "gathers data in a numerical form which can be put into categories, in rank order, or measured in units of measurement. This type of data can be used to construct graphs and tables of raw data" (Bryman, 2017: 22).

Since qualitative research is often used for exploring and helping researchers better understand underlying reasons, opinions and motivations, methods usually

fluctuate between unstructured or semi structured techniques. Common methods comprise of focus groups, individual interviews, direct observation and diary studies (Jamshed, 2014: 87-88). Benefits of qualitative research are that subject materials can be assessed with greater detail, mostly because this type of research is open-ended in nature. Also, because of close researcher involvement, the researcher benefits from an insider's view of the field, which usually brings to light matters that are frequently missed. Several qualitative research projects are able to be finished quickly and on a limited budget. This is because this type of research typically makes use of smaller sample sizes than other research methods (Rahman, 2017: 69-71). However, disadvantages arise regarding the quality of the data gathered, as this data is highly subjective, which means that qualitative research results cannot easily be replicated. The problem of satisfactory validity and reliability is also an issue regarding the use of a smaller sample size. The analysis of qualitative data is not an easy task and therefore requires expert knowledge of an area in order to try and interpret qualitative data (Brannen, 2017: 54-56).

Quantitative research methods are utilised to quantify the problem through generating numerical data which can be transformed into visual statistics. This research method usually generalises results from a larger sample population. Quantitative data collection methods are much more structured and include various forms of surveys, online polls systematic observations or face-to-faced interviews (Dowd, 2018: 1). A major advantage of this method is that the results are valid, reliable and able to be generalised to a larger population. Due to the availability of sophisticated software, there is not much need for prolonged data analysis. These types of software allow for rapid analysis, particularly with large volumes of data. Quantitative data is based on measured values and can be checked by others because numerical data is less open to ambiguities of interpretation. However, some limitations of the quantitative approach are that survey instruments are vulnerable to errors such as mistakes in measurement and flawed sampling techniques. Also, due to the fact that this type of method is statistical based, quantitative research offers a less personal accounting of a given lived experience (Thomas, 2017: 1).

3.4 SAMPLING METHODS AND PROCEDURES

According to Sharma (2017: 749) sampling is a technique used by a researcher to systematically select a smaller number of representatives (items or individuals) from a pre-defined population to serve as subjects (data source). Schreuder, Gregoire and Weyer (2001: 284) state that there are two types of sampling, namely probability and non-probability techniques.

3.4.1 Probability Sampling

Acharya, Prakash, Saxena, and Nigam (2013: 330) explain probability sampling as each individual in the population having an equal chance of being selected in the study. Probability sampling is further classified as cluster sampling, systematic sampling, stratified random sampling and simple random sampling. Simple random sampling is employed when a population is considered to be homogenous. In this method every individual has an equal chance of being selected in the sample from the population (Singh, 2003: 71). Stratified random sampling involves the division of a population into smaller subgroups known as strata. The strata are formed according to members' common attributes or characteristics from every stratum the sample is selected using simple random sampling (Aoyama, 1954: 12). Systematic sampling involves researcher's selecting members of a population at regular intervals. This comprises of selecting every n^{th} element in order to obtain a sample frame (Iachan, 1982: 293). Cluster sampling is when researchers split a population into smaller groups referred to as clusters. Researcher's then randomly select among those clusters to develop a sample (Thompson, 1990: 1051). This study makes use of the cluster technique, as "this sampling technique is often used to study large populations, particularly those that are widely geographically dispersed" (Research Methodology, 2019: 1).

3.4.2 Non-Probability Sampling

Non-probability samples are those in which the probability in which a subject will be selected is unknown. The sample items selected are not determined by opportunity, but rather by expert judgement and personal convenience (Acharya

et al, 2013: 332). Non-probability sampling techniques most commonly include convenience sampling, quota sampling and snowball sampling (Singh, 2003: 75). Convenience sampling entails the sample being chosen on the basis of convenience to the researcher. Often respondents are selected because they are at the right place at the right time (Schillewaert, Langerak, and Duhamel: 1998: 4). Quota sampling involves stratification of a large number of demographic variables to have a sample of respondents from particular sub groups. This ensures that certain characteristics of a population sample will be represented to the exact extent which the researcher desires (Moser, 1952: 413). Snowball sampling involves researchers reaching out to a small number of initial contacts who fit the research criteria and are invited to become participants in the research. The agreeable participants are then asked to recommend additional contacts who meet the research criteria, who then in turn recommend other potential participants, and so on (Parker, Scott and Geddes: 2019). Acharya *et al* (2013: 332) highlights that non-probability sampling often results in selection bias in the study.

3.5 THE SAMPLE SELECTION

A sample is a subset of a population, which is selected as a representation of the broader population (Acharya *et al*, 2013: 330). The WNS employee groups were divided into geographical clusters, namely Durban, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town. All individuals in the cluster were taken in the sample. The clusters selected for the purpose of this study were the Durban and Port Elizabeth sites, and included all contact centre agents at the relevant sites. Thereafter the random sampling technique was employed in each cluster.

The source list and total headcount was determined from the Human Resource Department list of employees. Sekaran's (1992: 253) computed table was used to determine the optimum sample size from the population in this study. According to Sekaran's (1992: 253) computed table for sample size, if the target population is 586 a sample should be 234. Based on the recommendation of Sekaran (1992: 253) the sample for the study was 234. For this study with a population of 586, a

sample size of 234 was recommended. The sample comprised of 204 respondents out of the sample size of 234.

3.5.1 Exclusion and inclusion criteria

According to Fink (2005: 121), “A sample is a constituent part of a larger population to which the evaluation's findings will be applied”. Inclusion and exclusion criteria define who can be involved or omitted from the study sample. Typical inclusion criteria include demographic, clinical, and geographic characteristics. For the purpose of this study there was a geographical exclusion as well as an exclusion based on job title and position held in the business. All inbound and outbound agents under the WNS Telkom campaign, across both Durban and Port Elizabeth sites, were included in the research. The Cape Town site in its entirety was excluded. Team leaders, management and support staff were excluded from the study. There was no exclusion based on age, gender or race.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

According to Rubin and Babbie (1989: 87), “the most common techniques for research to operationalise variables are to put forward questions so as to obtain data for analysis and interpretation”. In general, other methods of data collection include face-to-face, postal, telephonic and personal (Aryal, 2021: 1). Due to the nature of the 2020/2021 Covid-19 pandemic, the researcher utilised an internal link which redirected candidates to the electronic covering letter (Annexure B) as well as the questionnaire (Annexure C). Respondents did not need to disclose their names so the respondents remained anonymous throughout the process. The questionnaire used to gather information was newly constructed and comprised pre-coded statements. Once the questionnaires were completed, the data was automatically stored on an external drive where the researcher was able to export the results. The external storage drive was password protected and only the researcher had access to the results upon completion.

3.6.1 Primary Data

Primary data is observed or collected directly from first-hand experience, using methods like experiments, interviews or surveys. Primary data is collected with the research project in mind, directly from primary sources (Stephanie, 2018: 1). Primary data refers to information gathered from a field which has not been applied by any other person (Lampard and Pole, 2015: 52). For this study, a closed-ended structured quantitative questionnaire (Annexure C) as a data-gathering instrument was utilised to gather the data.

3.6.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data can be defined as data that has already been collected by somebody else (other than the user) for some other purpose and is readily available for use (Crossman, 2019: 1).

Benefits of secondary data include the fact that is time saving, more economical (cheaper), helps with better understanding of a problem, allows for various comparisons on data collected by the researcher as well as helps in making primary data collection more filtered and specific in terms of identifying gaps and additional information that needs to be gathered. An added benefit of secondary data is the wide range of data readily available. Through the use of secondary data, “the data collection process often maintains a level of expertise and professionalism that may not be present with individual researchers or small research projects” (Management Study Guide, 2015: 1).

Potential challenges of this study regarding secondary data collection were lack of adequate information and reliable sources relating to the topic at hand, as well as the availability of data that was outdated. Although economical, the existing secondary data pertaining to the current topic may not answer all of the specific research questions. Secondary data for this study was sourced from a comprehensive review of e-books, internet sites, text books, journals, and other theses and dissertations.

3.7 MEASURING INSTRUMENTS

Instrument is the general term that researchers use for a measurement device. There are two broad categories which measuring instruments fall into - that is researcher-completed and subject-completed. The two categories are distinguished by those instruments which involve completion by participants versus those which are administered by the researcher. Researchers use the research question as a guide to decipher which type of instrument, or instruments, should be used. Researcher-completed measurements include tally sheets, interview schedules/guides, flowcharts, performance checklists, time-and-motion logs, observation forms and rating scales. Conversely, subject-completed measurements include attitude scales, questionnaires, personality inventories, self-checklists, achievement/aptitude tests, projective devices or sociometric devices (Patrick, 2017: 1).

3.7.1 Guidelines followed in developing the measuring instrument

Njanjobea (2016: 45) noted that “the ability to structure, phrase, focus and ask sets of questions in a brilliant manner is a very important skill for questionnaire design. The questions should be free of bias in order to provide data that can be analysed statistically”. A good questionnaire should use English which is simple and easy to understand, should not be too long and the questions should be unambiguous and not difficult to answer.

The preliminary stage of designing a survey questionnaire should involve the researched forming a set of objectives for the and a list of the information that the researcher is trying to capture. This list of objectives and research goals will serve as a plan for the survey questionnaire. This is dependent on the nature of the problem, the aim of the study, the target audience and the hypothesis framed. The researcher chooses the content/matter of individual questions and the type of questions they wish to utilise to collect information. This could either be a structured (fixed) response or a non-structured (open-ended) response (Management Study Guide, 2017: 1).

An important consideration when developing and designing a questionnaire, is for the researcher to clearly state their intentions with the research at the top of the survey, as well as emphasise the confidentiality of the participant. This will aid people in being more become involved by overcoming their concerns, and therefore increase response rates. Included in this is an attachment of clear, unambiguous instructions on how to answer, in order to ensure validity of results. Furthermore, there should be a concise introductory series of instructions at the very top of the survey questionnaire, and additional instructions for specific questions as needed (Science Buddies, 2018: 1).

The wording of the questions should be kept short and concise so that there is no misunderstanding of what is being asked. It is imperative for the researcher to ensure that they are only asking one question at a time – meaning there should be no double-barrel questions. The researcher should also avoid asking personal information, unless it is absolutely relevant to the study (Imotions, 2018: 1).

If the researcher has more than six questions in the questionnaire, then an effort should be made to organise the questions so the respondents can answer them as quickly as possible. This can be achieved by grouping the questions by subject. By doing so, respondents are able to focus their thoughts and answer a series of questions around these thoughts. Additionally, the researcher should endeavour to have a clean layout of the questionnaire. This will make it much easier for individuals to respond to the questions and for the researcher to collect the data (Thompson, 2018: 1).

A final step will be for the researcher to test the survey questionnaire. This step involves a pre-test of the questionnaire on a small, selected number of respondents. The objective of this pre-test is to identify any potential problems and subsequently eliminate those problems early in the research. This can be done through a pilot test of 5-10 individuals to assess whether respondents have a clear understanding of the questions being asked, and whether the survey is actually focused on capturing the information that is needed for the study (Management Study Guide, 2017: 1).

3.7.2 Advantages of a structured questionnaire

Structured or closed questionnaires are a quantitative method of research which is characterised by the low level of involvement on the researcher's side, and the high number of respondents. A well-constructed and responsibly administered structured questionnaire, becomes an essential tool by which statements can be formed about particular groups or people or populations as a whole. They are therefore a fast, efficient and valuable technique for the collection of a wide range of data from a vast number of individuals. Questionnaires are a very reliable method of research as it can be easily standardised, as every respondent is asked the same question in the same way (The History Learning Site, 2015: 1). Timpany (2018: 1) further elaborates those structured questionnaires generally have a higher response rate and greater accuracy of data, due to the associated lower cognitive load on the respondent to complete the task. Structured questionnaires are also simpler for the researcher to code and analyse, especially if they are working on their own.

3.7.3 The covering letter

A covering letter (Annexure B) addressed to the respondent outlines the importance of the study, the aim of the questionnaire and the value of participation. An incentive in the form of mailing the summary findings of the questionnaire was included to procure co-operation and support from the respondent.

3.7.4 Design of the questionnaire

In this study, the layout and construction of the questionnaire went through numerous drafts. This took a considerable amount of time to change before the final research tool was developed. The questionnaire for this study was created by the researcher to consist of a mix of structured closed-ended questions. The questions were formulated in a manner to concentrate on a particular area in

order to generate accurate data that would assist with the statistical analysis process. The questionnaire includes a combination of single response statements with nominal and ordinal categories, as well as scaled questions. Single response questions provided respondents with various alternatives to choose from. For the scaled questions, the five-point Likert scale was used to elicit the degree of agreement or disagreement, with provision for a neutral column for each of a series of statements related to the main theme.

3.7.5 An overview of the final questionnaire

The measuring instrument used for this study was a pre-coded structured questionnaire which was carefully constructed to facilitate a maximum response rate, whilst simultaneously procure detailed information. The questionnaire (Annexure C) consisted of 36 statements and comprised the following sections:

- Section A: General Information
- Section B: Career Pathing
- Section C: Staff Retention
- Section D: Career Pathing and Staff Retention at WNS Global Services.

3.7.6 Validity and reliability of the measuring instrument

Reliability of a study refers to how consistent over time a result is in terms of producing the same or similar result if tested again and is an accurate representation of the total population under the study. Furthermore, a research instrument is considered reliable if the results are able to be reproduced under a similar methodology (Golafshani, 2003: 598). Leedy and Omrod (2010: 93) outline three way in which the reliability of a measuring instrument can be increased, such as:

- There should be standardisation in terms of the measuring instrument being administered in a consistent manner.
- There should be specific criteria established which serves as a decree to which the researcher makes subjective judgements.

- Research assistants should be well trained in the use of the instrument to make certain that the same results are achieved.

According to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2008: 109) as cited in Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009: 156), research reliability can be measured by asking the following three questions:

1. Will the measures produce the same results on different occasions?
2. Will similar observations be achieved by other observers? and
3. Is there transparency in the interpretation of raw data?

During this study care was taken to administer the measuring instrument in a standardised fashion. A standard set of questionnaires were presented to all participants in the study. Reliability is considered a means of gauging the credibility of one's findings. Another indicator of research credibility is validity (Collis and Hussey, 2009: 64).

Golafshani (2003: 601) explains validity as the extent to which the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the results are. According to Newton (2012: 18) there are four different ways in which the validity of research can be determined. Face validity is the most common measure of validity which aims to certify that the test or measure being employed actually measured what it is expected to measure. Face validity depends on the researcher's subjective judgement. Saaiman, (2015: 56) states that another form of validity of value to research is construct validity. Construct validity specifies the suitability of the instrument of research in measuring that which it sets out to measure. Collis *et al* (2009: 65) ascertain that a third type of validity is criterion validity. Criterion validity makes use of multiple measurements combined, by making a comparison of scores of an instrument with known external criteria. Lastly, content validity is employed to evaluate the variables in question, This is the degree to which the measuring instrument incorporates complete content of a certain construct of which it is intended to measure (Yaghmaie, 2003: 25).

In this study, prior to the pilot test, to show that the measuring instrument in this study was valid, the questionnaire was handed to experts in the field for correction and comment. The necessary adjustments were made based on the suggestions and feedback received.

3.7.7 Pilot Study

Reliability and validity are fundamental to research. Reliability and validity are often used at the pilot study and initial analysis stage by researchers. “A pilot study aids in identifying possible problems and deficiencies in the research instruments that might create trivial distortion in the main research work” (Mohamad, Pulka and Ramli, 2018: 20-24). A pilot study in essence serves as a trial test on small scale, which is carried out by researchers before conducting the actual study. According to Connelly (2008: 411), the available literature suggests that pilot study samples should make up 10% of the projected sample for the larger parent study.

The Cronbach coefficient alpha test was conducted for reliability with 25 selected participants who did not part of the main sample. The pilot test was performed with a chosen group of 10 agents from the Port Elizabeth site, 10 agents from Durban site 1 and 5 agents from Durban site 2 (as this is the smallest of the three sites). Commonly, a value above 0.7 indicates that the measuring instrument is highly reliable.

3.7.8 Data Analysis

According to Cosby (1989: 47), “statistics is a vehicle used to describe data collection in a study, as well as make inferences on the basis of the sample data of the population”. Answers to the closed-ended structured quantitative questionnaire were captured to form a data set. The preliminary records were analysed into descriptive statistics for the demographic variables. Thereafter the descriptive statistics were utilised to examine the composition and traits of the sample and were sorted and summarised data in the form of figures. In this research, Microsoft Excel was used for the preliminary analysis by means of pie charts and bar graphs.

Correlation coefficient tests are used to measure how strongly a pair of variables were related. The most important result of a correlation is referred to as the correlation coefficient (or "r"). This ranges from -1.0 to +1.0. The closer r is to +1 or -1, the more intently the two variables are associated. If r is close to 0, this means that there is no relationship between the variables. If r is positive, it means that as one variable grows, so does the other variable. If r is negative, this is indicative that as one gets larger, the other gets smaller (often called an "inverse" correlation) (Statistics How To, 2020: 1).

3.7.9 Ethical considerations

In this study, the researcher informed the subjects about the methods which were to be used to protect anonymity and confidentiality, as well as disclosed the researcher's supervisor, with whom the participants could discuss the study further. A "Non-Coercive Disclaimer" was attached to the surveys, which states that participation is voluntary and that there is no penalty for refusing to participate, as well as the freedom to withdraw. The researcher has also taken into consideration that persons with physical, cultural and emotional barriers may require a very simple language in order to understand what is being asked of them (Fouka and Mantzorou, 2018: 84-86).

There was no deception or exaggeration about the aims and objectives of the study and all forms of communication regarding the research was executed with transparency and honesty. Any type of misleading information, as well as distorted representations of primary data findings in a biased way were avoided. There was no use of discriminatory, offensive or other unacceptable language. Throughout the study there has been acknowledgements of works of other authors with the use of the Harvard referencing system (Bell, 2017: 1).

The ethical considerations by Sekaran and Bougie (2013: 1) were also adhered to which ensured that the purpose of the research was clearly explained to the respondents prior to participation, no personal information was required, and the

self-esteem of the participants were respected and not violated. There was also no misrepresentation in analysing the data.

The clos-ended questionnaires were collected electronically. The ethical considerations and confidentiality of this research include the following:

- A formal request for a letter of permission (Gatekeeper's letter) to conduct research and use WNS Global Services during the investigation of the research project was presented to EXCO. Permission was granted from the HR VP (Annexure A).
- Ethical clearance was granted prior to the study being conducted;
- Participation was voluntary and participants had the right to withdraw partially or completely from the process at any stage;
- Informed consent from respondents once they had been truthfully informed about the purpose of the study;
- Maintenance of the confidentiality of data provided by individuals or identifiable participants and their anonymity;
- Privacy of possible and actual participants – the respondents were informed through the cover letter (Annexure B) that their identity would remain anonymous and participants need not divulge any personal information;
- Effects on participants of the way in which the data is used, analysed and reported;
- Behaviour and objectivity of the researcher; and
- Completed questionnaires as well as findings of the research will be stored on a password protected external drive. The external drive data will be permanently deleted after five years through means of an automatic clean up. Any printed documents will be stored in a locked cabinet and permanently destroyed through a shredder after five years.

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter described the research design, the description of the target population and how the sample was drawn. The target population, sampling

techniques, reliability, ethical considerations and data collection methods were explained. The chapter to follow presents a summary and discussion of the analyses of the results.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF DATA AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results and discusses in detail the findings obtained from the questionnaires in this study. The main aim of the study was to conduct research on the linkage of career pathing to staff retention in order to assist with the long-term retention of contact centre agents at WNS. The objectives of the study were to identify factors which contribute to employee retention as well as factors which contribute towards effective career pathing at WNS. The study further aimed to ascertain whether WNS has an effective agent career pathing model or strategy in place, to investigate the perception of agents at WNS around career pathing and staff retention, and to determine whether agent development and career pathing has an influence on agent loyalty to the company.

The questionnaire was the primary tool that was used to collect data and was distributed to 234 individuals. From there, 204 out of 234 sample respondents returned the questionnaire. However, it was found that some respondents did not answer all of the questions and were therefore omitted from the analysis. The data collected from the responses was analysed with the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 27.0. The descriptive statistics are represented by means of tables, figures and numbered graphs for the quantitative data that was collected. Inferential techniques include the use of correlations and chi square test values, which are interpreted using the p-values. A p-value is generated from a test statistic. A significant result is indicated with " $p < 0.05$ ". The research design adopted was the quantitative paradigm and a pre-coded structured closed-ended questionnaire (Annexure C) comprising a 5-point Likert scale was used to administer the instrument to the selected sample respondents.

4.2 THE SAMPLE

In total, 234 questionnaires were despatched and 198 were returned which gave an 85% response rate.

4.3 THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The research instrument consisted of 37 items, with a level of measurement at a nominal or an ordinal level. The questionnaire was divided into four sections which measured various themes (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Research variables

A	Biographical data
B	Career Pathing
C	Staff Retention
D	Career Pathing and Staff Retention at WNS Global Services

4.4 ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

An overview of the descriptive and inferential statistics used in this empirical study is presented below. Tables, charts and graphs are frequently used in statistics as a way of visually communicating data in a way that's easy to understand. Such instruments are frequent and efficient first steps in evaluating raw data for trends and outlying values which may impact the statistical interpretation. The goal of using such tables, charts and graphs is to take a large amount of data and present it in a condensed version which is clear, accurate and easily interpreted (Wainer, 2016: 1). Quantitative research is an effective way used to observe phenomena or occurrences impacting individuals. Kulkarni (2016: 658) asserts that the process of data checking, analysis and presenting is one of the most fundamental steps in the research process. The author affirms that effective ways to present quantitative data findings are by means of tables, graphs charts and statistical summaries which can make research easier to understand. The Cronbach's alpha score was used to measure internal consistency, reliability and how closely

related the variables are. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test were conducted to test the validity of the measuring instrument. Correlation and factor analysis was used to identify common themes/sub-themes and test the relationship between the variables of the study. The Pearson's chi-square test was also used to determine the goodness of fit.

4.5 REALIABILITY STATISTICS

The two essential aspects of precision are reliability and validity. Reliability is computed by taking several measurements on the same subjects. A reliability coefficient of 0.60 or higher is considered as "acceptable" for a newly developed construct.

The table below reflects the Cronbach's alpha score for all the items that constituted the questionnaire.

Table 4.2: Cronbach's alpha score for the variables that constituted the questionnaire

	Section	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
B	Career Pathing	10	0.773
C	Staff Retention	10	0.792
D	Career Pathing and Staff Retention at WNS Global Services	10	0.702
Overall		30	0.900

The reliability scores for all sections exceed the recommended Cronbach's alpha value. This indicates a degree of acceptable, consistent scoring for these sections of the research.

4.6 DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

4.6.1 Comparison between permanent, contract and other staff

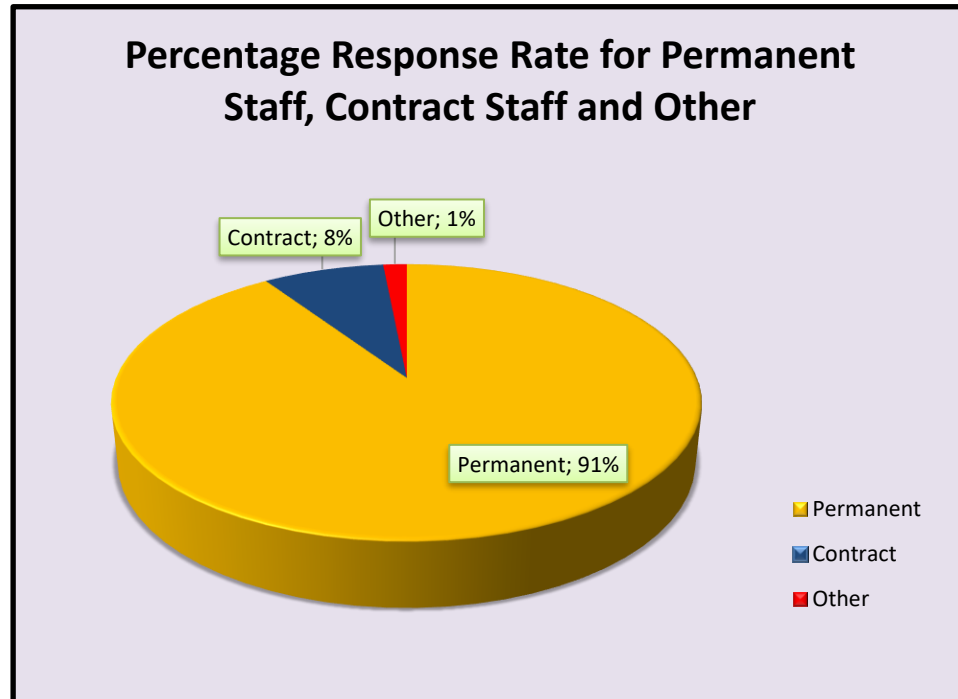


Figure 4.1: Analysis of permanent, contract and other staff at WNS global services (n = 198)

Respondents were requested to indicate whether they were employed at WNS Global Services as a permanent staff member, on a contract basis or other. Figure 4.1 represents the percentage responses by the sample respondents in relation to permanent, contract and other staff reported by the sample respondents. Figure 4.1 shows that most of the respondents (90.61%) were employed at WNS Global Services in a permanent capacity ($p < 0.001$), while 7.86% of the respondents were employed on a contractual basis. Other accounted for 1.53% of the respondents. The theory around having a higher staff composition of permanent staff in the BPO sector is that permanent staff buy into the company's goals, mission and values which aids in career progression and developing their transferrable skills. Customer service levels also benefit by having tenured staff who are experts at what they do (CallCentre Helper, 2017: 1). According to Baker (2021: 1), the economic uncertainty of the COVID-19

pandemic will result in organisations expanding their use of contractual workers to maintain more flexibility in the workplace and facilitate cost-saving methods.

4.6.2 Comparison between which line of business WNS staff belonged to

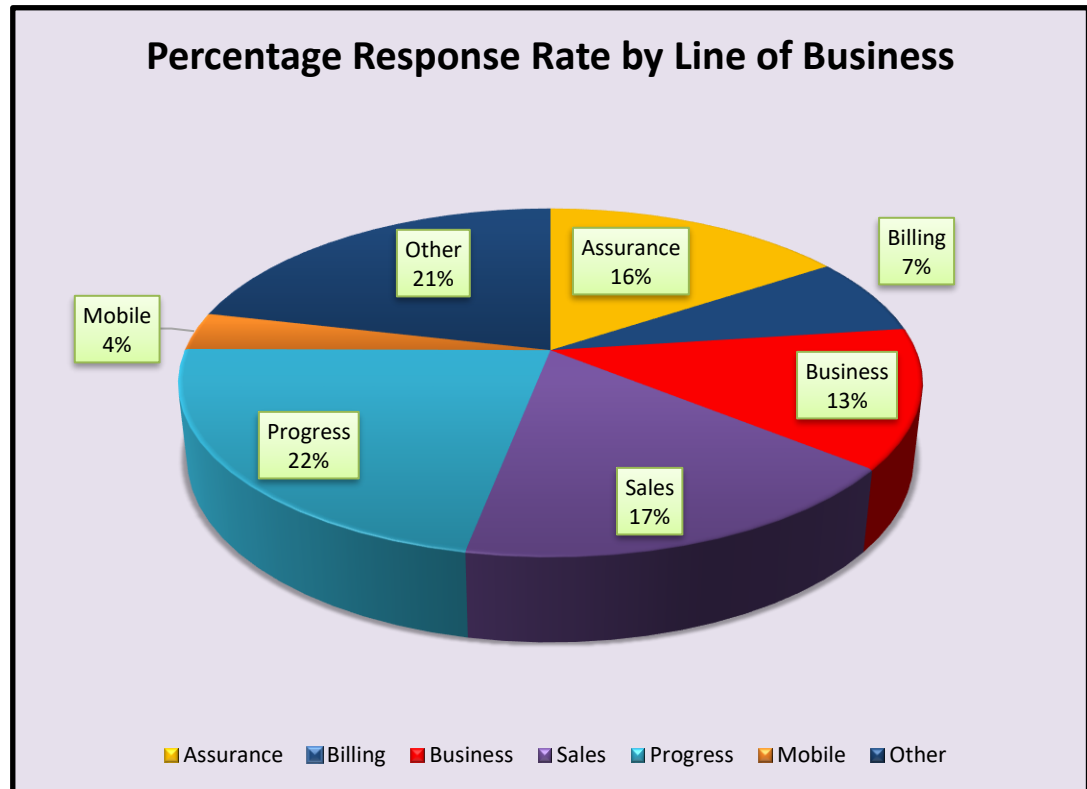


Figure 4.2: Analysis of the staff departmental composition at WNS global services (n = 198)

Respondents were requested to indicate which departmental line of business they belonged to at WNS Global Services. There were similar but higher numbers in Progress and Other, with similar and lower numbers in Sales and Assurance ($p < 0.001$). The results in Figure 4.2 show that the majority of the staff belonged to the Progress line of business (22.05%), followed by Other (21.39%) and Sales at (17.25%). The remainder of the respondents comprised individuals from the Assurance (15.72%), Business (12.88%), Billing (7.21%) and Mobile (3.50%) services offered by WNS Global Services.

4.6.3 Gender and age breakdown of the overall sample respondents at WNS global services

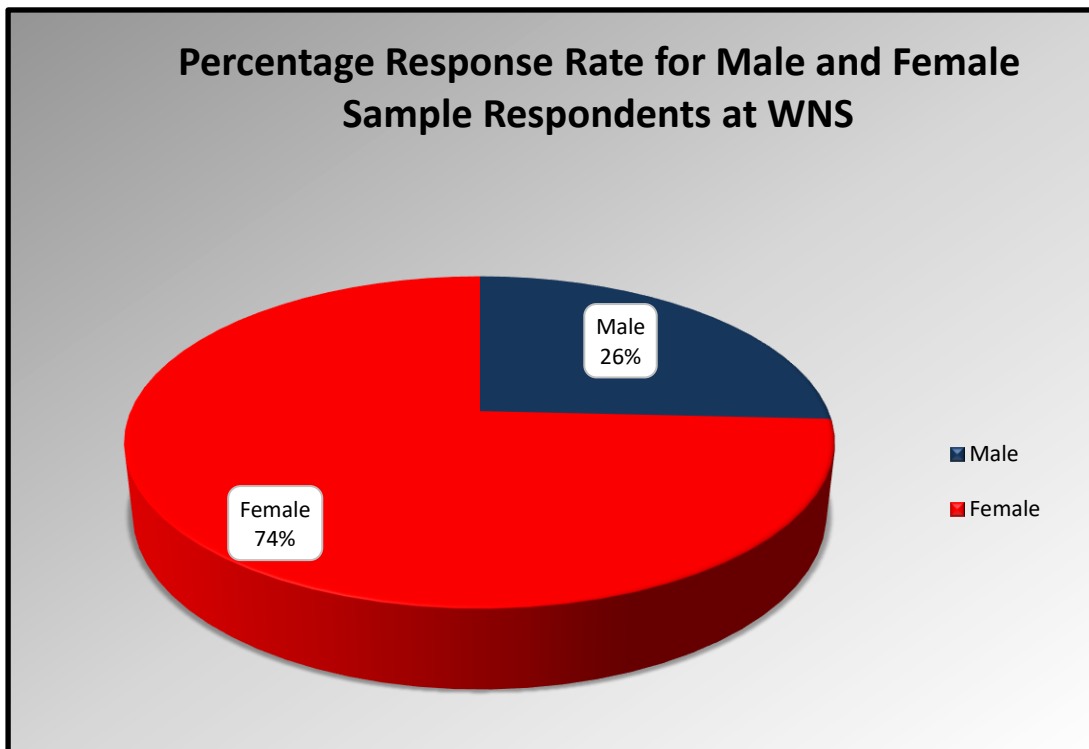


Figure 4.3: Analysis of the gender breakdown (n = 198)

The gender breakdown of the overall sample respondents is shown in Figure 4.3. A significant distinction can be drawn from the ratio in gender demographics. The vast majority of respondents were female (74.24%) compared to male (25.76%). Women make up 70% of the global call centre industry. According to a research article published by the BBC, women are better at following instructions than men, making them better contact centre employees. The concern is that women are being over represented in an industry characterised by high stress and low career progression (Walker, 2021: 1).

Table 4.3: Gender distribution by age

Age group (years)		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
20-25	Count	13	30	43
	% within Please indicate your age group	30.2%	69.8%	100.0%
	% within Please indicate your gender	25.5%	20.4%	21.7%
	% of Total	6.6%	15.2%	21.7%
26-30	Count	16	57	73
	% within Please indicate your age group	21.9%	78.1%	100.0%
	% within Please indicate your gender	31.4%	38.8%	36.9%
	% of Total	8.1%	28.8%	36.9%
31-35	Count	15	26	41
	% within Please indicate your age group	36.6%	63.4%	100.0%
	% within Please indicate your gender	29.4%	17.7%	20.7%
	% of Total	7.6%	13.1%	20.7%
36-40	Count	3	15	18
	% within Please indicate your age group	16.7%	83.3%	100.0%
	% within Please indicate your gender	5.9%	10.2%	9.1%
	% of Total	1.5%	7.6%	9.1%
41-50	Count	3	14	17
	% within Please indicate your age group	17.6%	82.4%	100.0%
	% within Please indicate your gender	5.9%	9.5%	8.6%
	% of Total	1.5%	7.1%	8.6%
> 51	Count	1	5	6
	% within Please indicate your age group	16.7%	83.3%	100.0%
	% within Please indicate your gender	2.0%	3.4%	3.0%
	% of Total	0.5%	2.5%	3.0%
Total	Count	51	147	198
	% within Please indicate your age group	25.8%	74.2%	100.0%
	% within Please indicate your gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	25.8%	74.2%	100.0%

Overall, the ratio of males to females is approximately 1:3 (25.8% : 74.2%) ($p < 0.001$).

The age distributions are not similar as more than three quarters of the respondents are younger than 35 years ($p < 0.001$).

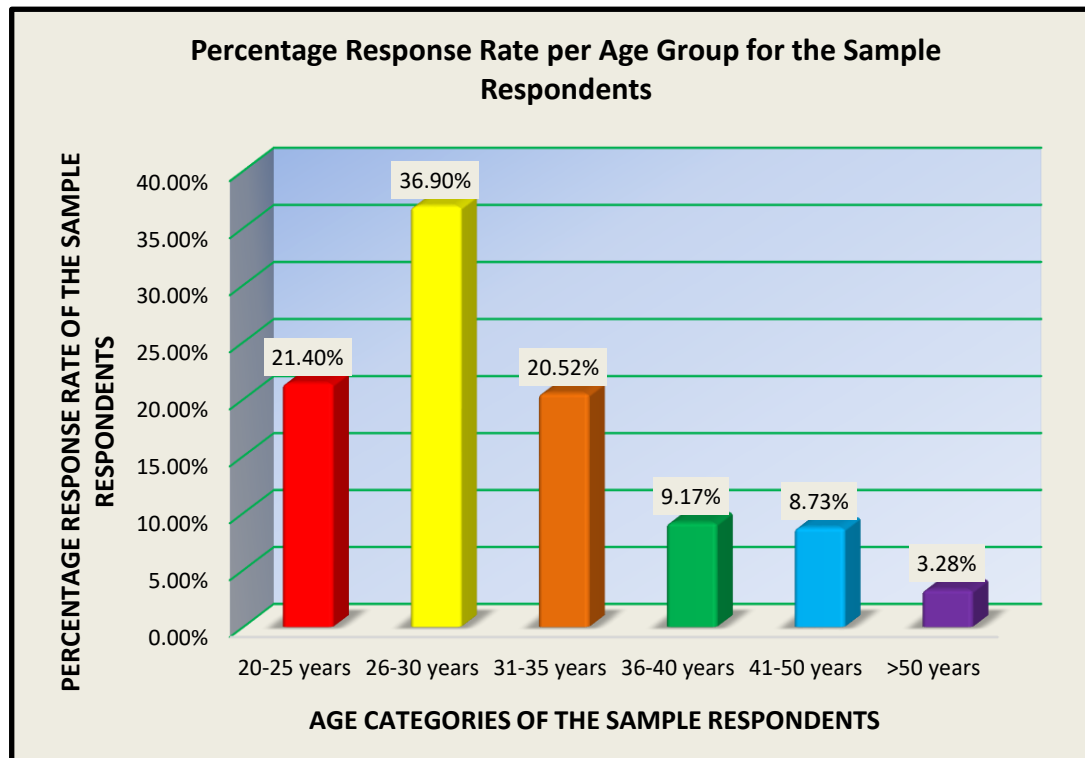


Figure 4.4: Analysis of the age breakdown (n = 198)

Figure 4.4 shows the percentage responses by the sample respondents per age category for the analysis. As represented by the stacked bar graph in Figure 4.4, the bulk of the sample respondents were within the 26 to 30 (36.90%) and 20 to 25 (21.40%) year age groups. The age categories representing the sample respondents between 31 to 35 years equated to 20.52% of the respondents, while 9.17% fell into the category of 36 to 40 years of age and 8.73% within the 41 to 50 age group. The smallest category (3.28%) was the 50 years or older category. Research from a recent YouGov survey depicts that on average only 10% of call centre agents are 50 or more years of age (CallCenter Helper, 2021: 1).

Contact centres are dominated by younger individuals who are at the early stages of their careers. This younger generation making up the industry workforce are driven by career progression and jobs conducive to developing their skills and knowledge (Dhanpat *et al.* 2018: 905). The easing of the economic downturn coupled with an influx of millennials entering the market makes the existence of employee retention strategies imperative. An influx of employees combined with an effort to retain a skilled, young workforce is a potential boost for the BPO sector

(Harrington, 2021: 1). Furthermore, most corporate jobs require experience. This is one of the reasons that call centre jobs attract young individuals, as the industry is likely to accept undergraduate applicants with minimum to no experience (Asia Premier, 2021: 1).

4.6.4 Period of employment of the sample respondents

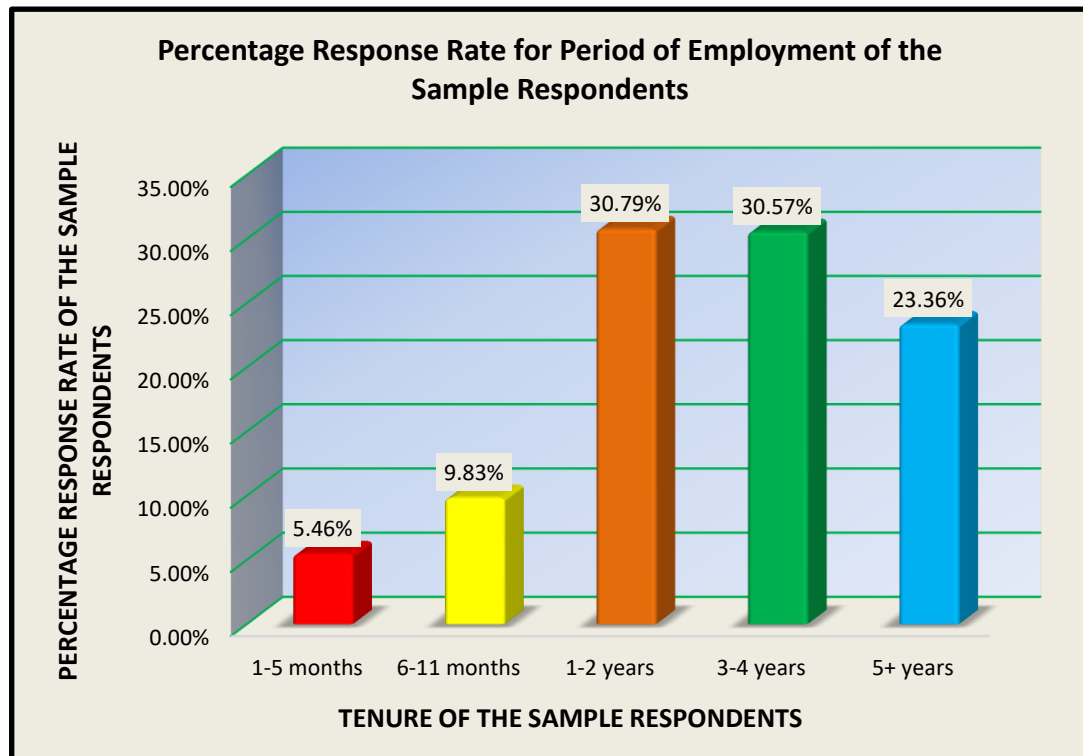


Figure 4.5: Analysis of period of employment (n = 198)

The employment period of the sample respondents is shown in Figure 4.5 above. Nearly 85% of the respondents had been employed for more than a year, with more than half of the respondents having more than 3 years experience ($p < 0.001$). This suggests that respondents had been employed by the organisation for a while. This is also a valuable fact as it is indicative of gathered responses from experienced staff. A fairly equal distribution is reported between a tenure of 1-2 years (30.79%) and 3-4 years (30.57%). This is followed closely with 23.36% of employees being with the business for 5+ years. Only 5.46% of employees were with WNS for less than 6 months and 9.86% were with the business for 6-11 months. Employees are more likely to be loyal to a company which offers training and development opportunities, recognition, empowerment and a good

reward system. The average tenure of a call centre worker is approximately 3 years, with a turnover of 33 percent. This is primarily due to a working environment characterised by monotony, lack of advancement and high stress levels (Marsden, 2016: 1).

4.6.5 Highest qualification level achieved of the sample respondents

The highest qualification level for the sample respondents is shown in Figure 4.6.

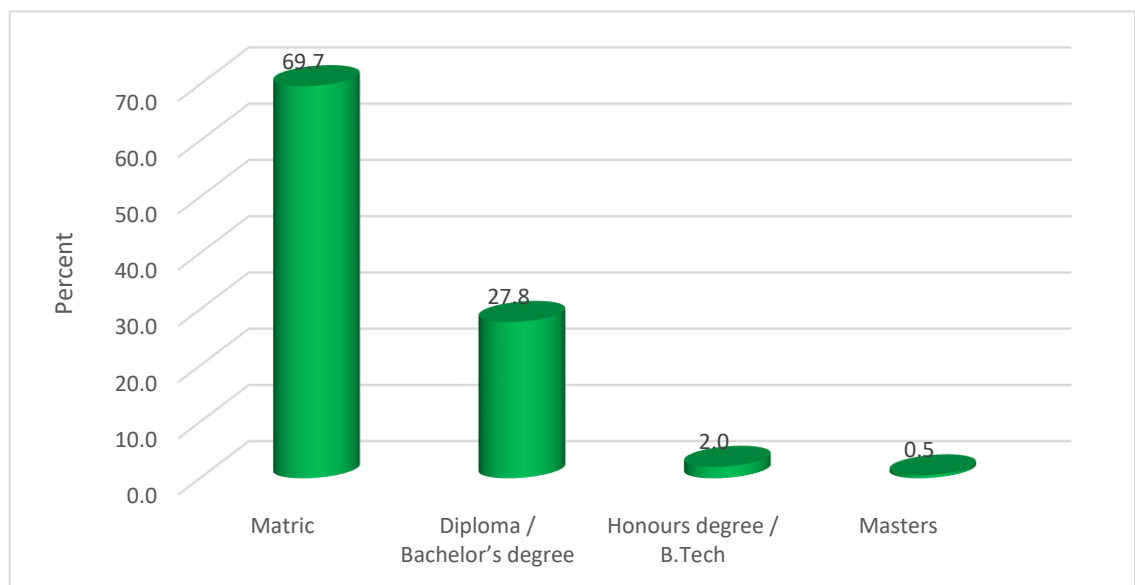


Figure 4.6: Analysis of qualification levels (n = 198)

The majority of respondents (69.7%) had a school leaving qualification, whilst 28.95% had obtained their Diploma/Bachelors degree. This is a helpful analysis as it suggests that a reasonable ratio of respondents have a higher qualification. This implies that the responses collected would have been from a knowledgeable (learned) source. Of the remaining graduate respondents, 2.5% had a post graduate degree ($p < 0.001$). No respondents reported any higher qualification than Honours/B.Tech.

4.6.6 Career pathing

Table 4.4 provides an overview of the perceptions relating to career pathing namely, Section B of the Questionnaire (Annexure C).

Table 4.4: Frequencies expressed as a percentage by sample respondents in relation to career pathing (n = 198)

STATEMENT	RESPONSES	RESPONSE OPTIONS					TOTAL
		STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	
7. My job makes good use of my skills and abilities.	COUNT	31	30	37	79	21	198
	PERCENTAGE	15.66%	15.15%	18.69%	39.90%	10.61%	100%
8. As a department we have supportive leadership.	COUNT	14	22	54	69	39	198
	PERCENTAGE	7,11%	11,11%	27,11%	34,89%	19,78%	100%
9. My contribution as an employee is of value and is recognised by WNS.	COUNT	23	86	51	26	12	198
	PERCENTAGE	11.62%	43.43%	25.76%	13.13%	6.06%	100%
10. I have opportunity for individual development and growth such as updating my skills and learning different jobs.	COUNT	30	71	47	37	13	198
	PERCENTAGE	15.15%	35.86%	23.74%	18.69%	6.57%	100%
11. Staff vacancies are always advertised.	COUNT	8	4	28	96	62	198
	PERCENTAGE	4%	2%	14%	48.89%	31.56%	100%
12. My supervisor and I have planned my future at WNS.	COUNT	31	55	51	46	15	198
	PERCENTAGE	15.66%	27.78%	25.76%	23.23%	8%	100%
13. I feel that it is important that performance be monitored.	COUNT	6	2	16	85	89	198
	PERCENTAGE	2.44%	1.11%	7.78%	43.33%	45.33%	100%
14. The staff promotion procedure in my department is fair.	COUNT	31	82	28	37	20	198
	PERCENTAGE	15.66%	41.41%	14.14%	18.69%	10%	100%
15. Training and coaching is provided to assist my personal development.	COUNT	12	15	48	79	44	198
	PERCENTAGE	6.44%	8%	23.56%	39.78%	22.22%	100%
16. There is a good fit between my needs and the needs of the organisation.	COUNT	18	51	58	50	21	198
	PERCENTAGE	9.09%	25.76%	29.29%	25.25%	10.61%	100%

Table 4.4 summarises the frequency response rate for Section B of the Questionnaire (Annexure C), namely, Career Pathing. The prominent findings reported by the respondents are presented below.

The majority of the sample respondents (88.66%) agree or strongly agree that it is important that performance be monitored (Statement 13) while 3.55% disagree or strongly disagree with this statement. There were 54.67% respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that there was the existence of supportive leadership within the various WNS departments (Statement 8) and 18.22% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. The advertising of internal staff vacancies is what WNS does well. This is indicated by 80.45% of respondents who reported that vacancies are always advertised via the WNS communication channels (Statement 11). Although advertising of vacancies is one of the notable strengths of the company, there is a clear indication that employees are of the belief that internal promotion procedures within the various departments' are not always fair. A mere 28.69% of individuals reported that the internal promotion procedures were fair (Statement 14) which is a concern as only 28.69% of respondents agree or strongly agree with this. With regards to whether there is a good fit between the needs of the organisation and needs of employees, the majority of respondents were neutral (Statement 16) and neither agreed or disagreed. Despite 62% of respondents affirming that training and coaching was provided to facilitate personal development (Statement 15), a substantial 55.05% of the staff disagreed with the statement that their contribution as an employee is of value and recognised by WNS (Statement 9).

Table 4.5: Summary of scoring patterns in relation to career pathing (n=198)

		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Chi Square p-value
		Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	
My job makes good use of my skills and abilities	B7	31	15.7%	30	15.2%	37	18.7%	79	39.9%	21	10.6%	< 0.001
As a department we have supportive leadership	B8	14	7.1%	22	11.1%	54	27.3%	69	34.8%	39	19.7%	< 0.001
My contribution as an employee is of value and is recognised by WNS	B9	23	11.6%	86	43.4%	51	25.8%	26	13.1%	12	6.1%	< 0.001
I have opportunity for individual development and growth such as updating my skills and learning different jobs	B10	30	15.2%	71	35.9%	47	23.7%	37	18.7%	13	6.6%	< 0.001
I am aware of vacancies or job opportunities within the company as they are always advertised	B11	8	4.0%	4	2.0%	28	14.1%	96	48.5%	62	31.3%	< 0.001
My team leader/direct line manager and I have planned my future at WNS	B12	31	15.7%	55	27.8%	51	25.8%	46	23.2%	15	7.6%	< 0.001
I feel that it is important that I get regular feedback on my performance	B13	6	3.0%	2	1.0%	16	8.1%	85	42.9%	89	44.9%	< 0.001
I feel that that the internal promotion process in my department is fair	B14	31	15.7%	82	41.4%	28	14.1%	37	18.7%	20	10.1%	< 0.001
Training and coaching are provided to assist my personal development	B15	12	6.1%	15	7.6%	48	24.2%	79	39.9%	44	22.2%	< 0.001
There is a good fit between my needs and the needs of the organisation	B16	18	9.1%	51	25.8%	58	29.3%	50	25.3%	21	10.6%	< 0.001

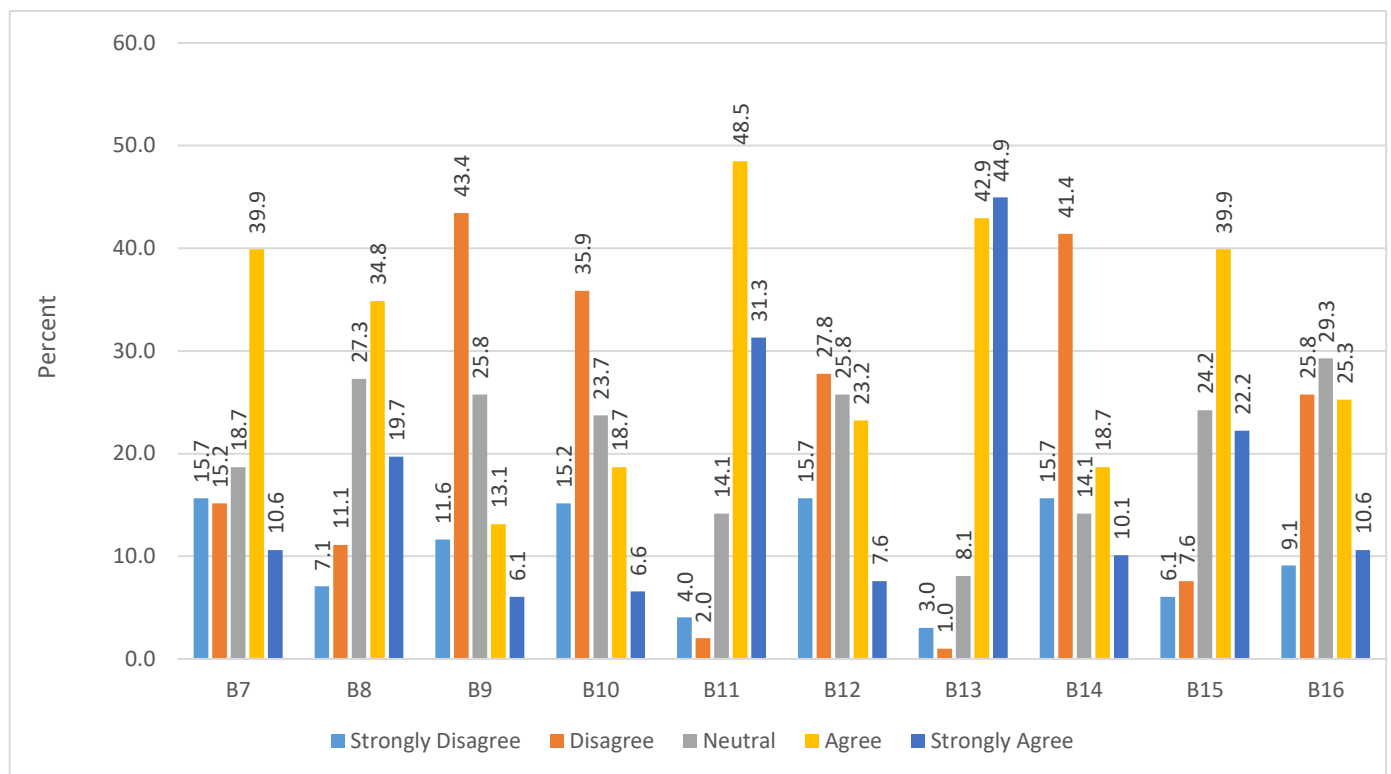


Figure 4.7: Summary of scoring patterns in relation to career pathing (n = 198)

In relation to Table 4.5 and Figure 4.7, the following patterns are observed:

- Six statements show (significantly) higher levels of agreement whilst other levels of agreement are lower (but still greater than levels of disagreement)
- Four statements indicate higher levels of disagreement (B9, B10, B12, B14)
- The significance of the differences is tested and shown in Table 4.9.

Factor analysis shows that the following two statements form a sub-theme – B7 (“My job makes good use of my skills and abilities”) and B10 (“I have opportunity for individual development and growth such as updating my skills and learning different jobs”). There are high levels of scoring in relation to this sub-theme “Skills and Development”. Significantly more respondents indicated that that their skills were well utilised with respect to their job description. However, significantly more disagreed that there were sufficient opportunities for growth in terms of upskilling.

To determine whether the scoring patterns per statement were significantly different per option, a chi square goodness-of-fit test was conducted. The null hypothesis claims that similar numbers of respondents scored across each option for each statement (one statement at a time). The alternate hypothesis states that there is a significant difference between the levels of agreement and disagreement. The results are shown in the Table 4.5.

The highlighted significance values (p-values) are less than 0.05 (the level of significance), which implies that the distributions were not similar. That is, the differences between the way respondents scored (agree, neutral, disagree) were significant.

4.6.7 Staff retention

An analysis of the summarised results pertaining to Section C of the Questionnaire (Annexure C), namely, Staff Retention is presented below by means of utilising descriptive tests and relevant non-parametric tests.

Table 4.6 below summarises the responses for the Staff Retention section of the Questionnaire (Annexure C).

Arising from the computed responses in Table 4.6, the majority of the respondents (80.84%) corroborated (by way of agreeing or strongly agreeing) that they have clear defined reasons for their existence as an employee (Statement 19). There were 45.96% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that their work gives them a feeling of accomplishment (Statement 22) while 23.74% disagree or strongly disagree. A relevant portion of respondents (49.76%) felt that the amount of work expected of them is reasonable (Statement 26) however 24.26% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Table 4.6: Summary of frequencies by sample respondents in relation to staff retention at WNS (n = 198)

STATEMENT	RESPONSES	RESPONSE OPTIONS					TOTAL
		STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	
17. I am rewarded for the quality of my efforts.	COUNT	23	53	57	35	30	198
	PERCENTAGE	11.62%	27%	28.79%	17.68%	15.15%	100%
18. I have reassurance in terms of my job security at WNS.	COUNT	22	58	66	28	24	198
	PERCENTAGE	10,61%	29,48%	33,96%	13,92%	12,03%	100%
19. I have clear defined reasons for my existence as an employee.	COUNT	6	4	28	97	63	198
	PERCENTAGE	3,12%	2,12%	13,92%	48,82%	32,02%	100%
20. As part of the WNS 5 people promises, my manager and I meet regularly for one on ones to discuss my development.	COUNT	16	31	70	47	34	198
	PERCENTAGE	8.08%	15.66%	35.35%	23.74%	17.17%	100%
21. I am satisfied with my personal and career development since my employment at WNS till now.	COUNT	25	60	59	31	23	198
	PERCENTAGE	12.63%	30.30%	29.80%	15.66%	11.62%	100%
22. My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.	COUNT	16	31	60	61	30	198
	PERCENTAGE	8.08%	15.66%	30.30%	30.81%	15.15%	100%
23. It is likely that I will be taking steps in the near future to look for a job in another organisation.	COUNT	13	16	56	63	50	198
	PERCENTAGE	6.57%	8.08%	28.28%	31.82%	25.25%	100%
24. When a staff member leaves my department, they are replaced within a reasonable amount of time.	COUNT	24	27	70	55	22	198
	PERCENTAGE	12,26%	13,44%	35,38%	27,83%	11,08%	100%
25. Among the staff at WNS, there is a sense of loyalty and commitment to the institution.	COUNT	23	52	68	38	17	198
	PERCENTAGE	11.62%	26.26%	34.34%	19.19%	8.59%	100%
26. The amount of work expected of me is reasonable.	COUNT	22	26	51	71	28	198
	PERCENTAGE	11,08%	13,21%	25,94%	36,08%	13,68%	100%

The computed responses in Table 4.6 further indicate that overall, there appears to be a lack of loyalty and commitment to the firm, as only a minority (27.27%) of respondents were in agreement with Statement 25. This was further substantiated by 57.07% of employees who reported that it is likely that they will be taking steps in the near future for jobs at another organisation (Statement 23). Only 27.28% of respondents were satisfied with their personal and career development since their employment with WNS (Statement 21).

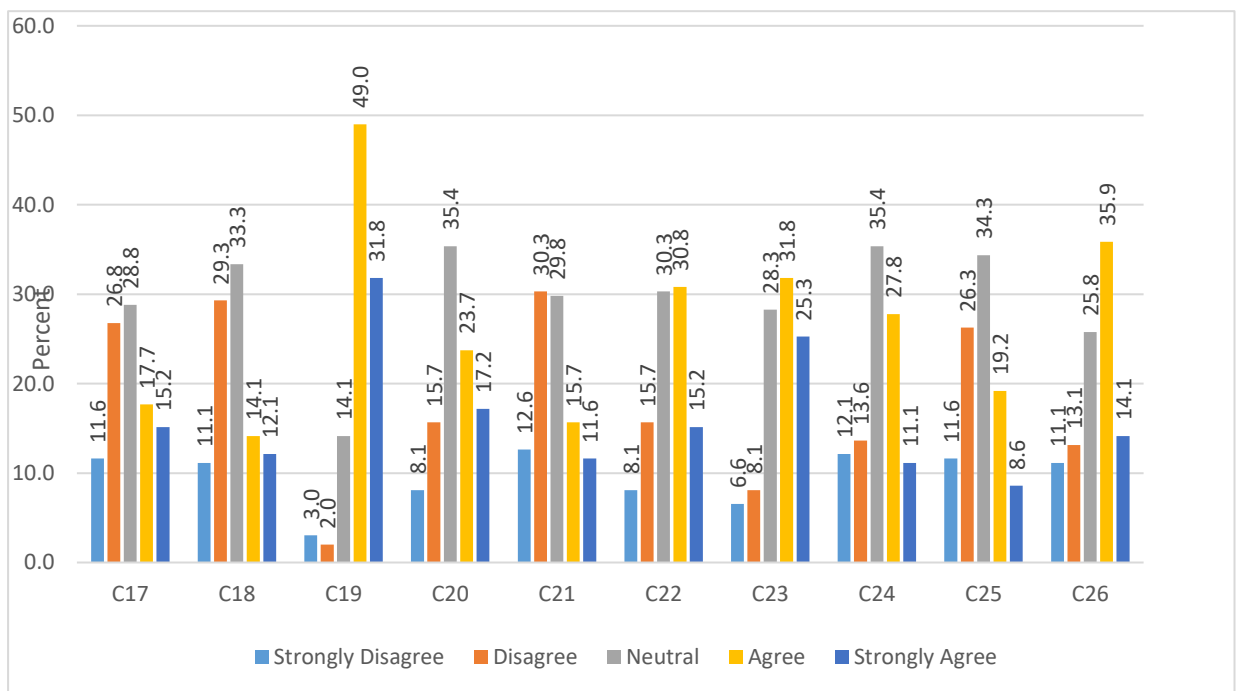


Figure 4.8: Summary of scoring patterns in relation to staff retention (n=198)

Table 4.7: Summary of scoring patterns in relation to staff retention (n=198).

		Strongl y Disagre e	Disagre e	Neutral	Agree	Strongl y Agree	Chi Square p-value	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	
		Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %					
I am rewarded for the quality of my efforts	C17	23	11.6%	53	26.8%	57	28.8%	35	17.7%	30	15.2%	< 0.001
I have reassurance in terms of my job security at WNS	C18	22	11.1%	58	29.3%	66	33.3%	28	14.1%	24	12.1%	< 0.001
I have clear defined reasons for my existence as an employee	C19	6	3.0%	4	2.0%	28	14.1%	97	49.0%	63	31.8%	< 0.001
As part of the WNS 5 people promises, my manager and I meet regularly for one on ones to discuss my development	C20	16	8.1%	31	15.7%	70	35.4%	47	23.7%	34	17.2%	< 0.001
I am satisfied with my personal and career development since my employment at WNS till now	C21	25	12.6%	60	30.3%	59	29.8%	31	15.7%	23	11.6%	< 0.001
My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment	C22	16	8.1%	31	15.7%	60	30.3%	61	30.8%	30	15.2%	< 0.001
It is likely that I will be taking steps in the near future to look for a job in another organisation	C23	13	6.6%	16	8.1%	56	28.3%	63	31.8%	50	25.3%	< 0.001
When a staff member leaves my department, they are replaced within a reasonable amount of time	C24	24	12.1%	27	13.6%	70	35.4%	55	27.8%	22	11.1%	< 0.001
Among the staff at WNS, there is a sense of loyalty and commitment to the company	C25	23	11.6%	52	26.3%	68	34.3%	38	19.2%	17	8.6%	< 0.001
The amount of work expected of me is reasonable	C26	22	11.1%	26	13.1%	51	25.8%	71	35.9%	28	14.1%	< 0.001

In relation to Table 4.7 and Figure 4.8, the following patterns are observed:

- C19, C23 and C26 show (significantly) higher levels of agreement whilst other levels of agreement are lower (but still greater than levels of disagreement).
- Three statements indicate higher levels of disagreement (C17, C18, C25).
- The significance of the differences is tested and shown in Table 4.11.

To determine whether the scoring patterns per statement were significantly different per option, a chi square goodness-of-fit test was conducted. The null hypothesis claims that similar numbers of respondents scored across each option for each statement (one statement at a time). The alternate states that there is a significant difference between the levels of agreement and disagreement.

The results are shown in the Table 4.9.

The highlighted significance values (p-values) are less than 0.05 (the level of significance), which implies that the distributions were not similar. That is, the differences between the way respondents scored (agree, neutral, disagree) were significant.

4.6.8 Career pathing and staff retention at WNS global services

An analysis of results pertaining to Section D of the Questionnaire (Annexure C), namely, Career Pathing and Staff Retention at WNS Global Services, is presented below by means of utilising descriptive and relevant non-parametric statistical tests. Table 4.8 summarises the responses for the Career Pathing and Staff Retention at the WNS Global Services section of the Questionnaire (Annexure C).

Table 4.8: Summary of frequencies expressed as a percentage by sample respondents in relation to career pathing and staff retention at WNS (n=198)

STATEMENTS	RESPONSES	RESPONSE OPTIONS					TOTAL
		STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	
27. In my opinion, career pathing processes at WNS are effective	COUNT	28	42	73	42	13	198
	PERCENTAGE	14.14%	21.21%	36.87%	21.21%	6.57%	100%
28. To my knowledge, there are training and development policies in place at WNS.	COUNT	27	46	33	58	34	198
	PERCENTAGE	13,46%	23,10%	16,83%	29,06%	17,55%	100%
29. To my knowledge, there are effective retention strategies in place at WNS.	COUNT	25	42	85	19	27	198
	PERCENTAGE	12,63%	21,21%	42,92%	9,60%	13,64%	100%
30. The company offers a long term opportunity for growth and career development.	COUNT	36	56	64	29	13	198
	PERCENTAGE	18.18%	28.28%	32.32%	14.65%	6.57%	100%
31. WNS values their staff members, no matter what their rank is.	COUNT	25	39	69	39	26	198
	PERCENTAGE	12.63%	19.70%	34.85%	19.70%	13.13%	100%
32. Career growth and development is considered a priority to WNS.	COUNT	50	60	49	29	10	198
	PERCENTAGE	25.25%	30.30%	24.75%	14.65%	5.05%	100%
33. Staff retention can be better dealt with at WNS.	COUNT	7	10	45	92	44	198
	PERCENTAGE	3.54%	5.05%	22.73%	46.46%	22.22%	100%
34. The current channels used to advertise staff vacancies at WNS are efficient enough to attract staff of a suitable calibre.	COUNT	22	20	52	65	39	198
	PERCENTAGE	10,82%	10,34%	26,44%	32,93%	19,47%	100%
35. At WNS we plan and co-ordinate our efforts together as an organisation.	COUNT	28	46	62	48	14	198
	PERCENTAGE	14,18%	23,08%	31,49%	24,04%	7,21%	100%
36. In my opinion, overall staffing needs are well managed by the company.	COUNT	28	55	66	35	14	198
	PERCENTAGE	14%	28%	33%	18%	7%	100%

As illustrated in Table 4.8, the sample respondents felt strongly (68.68% agreed or strongly agreed) that staff retention could be handled better at WNS Global Services (Statement 33) and only 23.24% of respondents were aware of relevant retention strategies in place at WNS Global Services (Statement 29). A comparative majority (46.46%) of respondents disagreed that the company offers long term opportunity for growth and career development (Statement 29) which is further solidified by the 55.55% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed that career growth and development is considered a priority at WNS (Statement 32). The majority of respondents neither agreed or disagreed that career pathing processes are effective at WNS (Statement 27). There is a lack of co-ordinated efforts as an organisation, which is depicted in 37.22% of respondents who reported this (Statement 35) and 42% of respondents who do not feel like the overall staffing needs are well managed by the company (Statement 36).

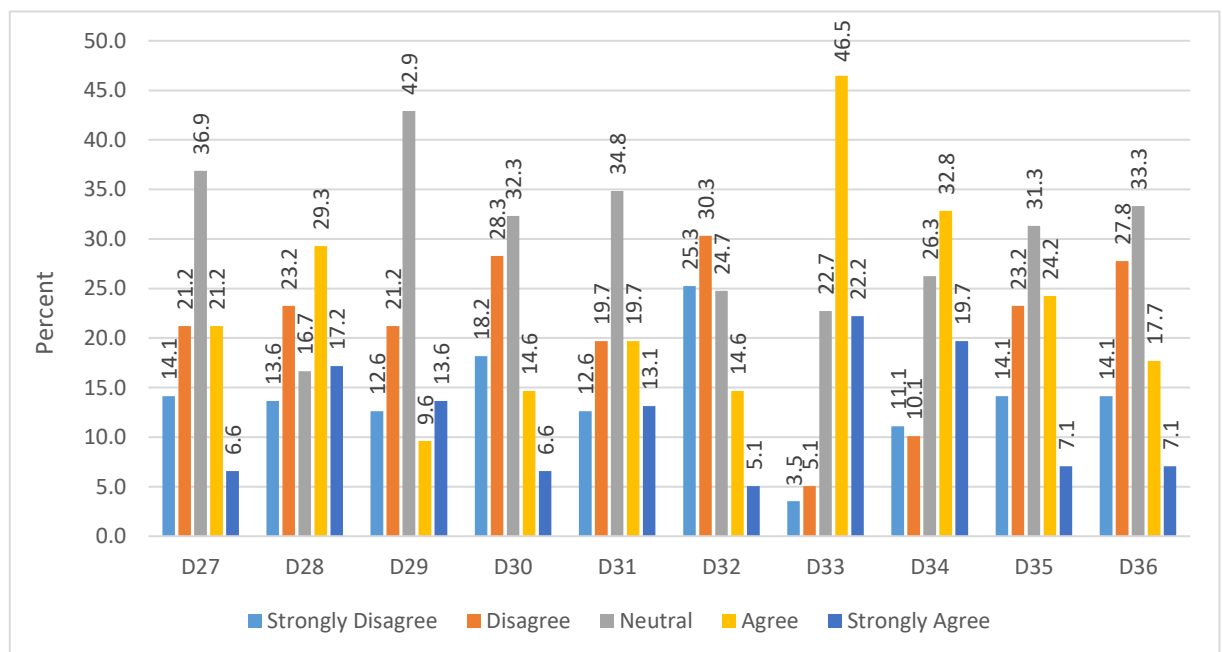


Figure 4.9: Summary of scoring patterns in relation to career pathing and staff retention at WNS (n=198)

Table 4.9: Summary of scoring patterns in relation to career pathing and staff retention at WNS (n = 198)

		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Chi Square p-value
		Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	
In my opinion, career pathing processes at WNS are effective	D27	28	14.1%	42	21.2%	73	36.9%	42	21.2%	13	6.6%	< 0.001
To my knowledge, there are training and development policies in place at WNS	D28	27	13.6%	46	23.2%	33	16.7%	58	29.3%	34	17.2%	0.004
To my knowledge, there are effective retention strategies in place at WNS	D29	25	12.6%	42	21.2%	85	42.9%	19	9.6%	27	13.6%	< 0.001
The company offers a long term opportunity for growth and career development	D30	36	18.2%	56	28.3%	64	32.3%	29	14.6%	13	6.6%	< 0.001
WNS values their staff members, no matter what their rank is	D31	25	12.6%	39	19.7%	69	34.8%	39	19.7%	26	13.1%	< 0.001
Career growth and development is considered a priority to WNS	D32	50	25.3%	60	30.3%	49	24.7%	29	14.6%	10	5.1%	< 0.001
Staff retention can be better dealt with at WNS	D33	7	3.5%	10	5.1%	45	22.7%	92	46.5%	44	22.2%	< 0.001
The current channels used to advertise staff vacancies at WNS are efficient enough to attract staff of a suitable calibre	D34	22	11.1%	20	10.1%	52	26.3%	65	32.8%	39	19.7%	< 0.001
At WNS we plan and coordinate our efforts together as an organisation	D35	28	14.1%	46	23.2%	62	31.3%	48	24.2%	14	7.1%	< 0.001
In my opinion, overall staffing needs are well managed by the company	D36	28	14.1%	55	27.8%	66	33.3%	35	17.7%	14	7.1%	< 0.001

In relation to Table 4.9 and Figure 4.9, the following patterns are observed:

- D33 and D34 show (significantly) higher levels of agreement whilst other levels of agreement are lower (but still greater than levels of disagreement).
- Three statements indicate higher levels of disagreement (D30, D32 and D36).
- The significance of the differences is tested and shown in Table 4.13.

Factor analysis shows that the following two statements form a sub-theme – D29 (“To my knowledge, there are effective retention strategies in place at WNS”) and D33 (Staff retention can be better dealt with at WNS “”) There are high levels of scoring in relation to this sub-theme “Existence of Retention Strategies”. Significantly more respondents indicated that that they were unaware of retention strategies at WNS. Furthermore, a substantial number agree that staff retention can be better dealt with at WNS.

4.6.9 Summary mean view of respondents in relation to staff retention at WNS global services

A mean is a simple mathematical average of a state of two or more numbers (Investopedia, 2021: 1).

Table 4.10 below summarises the mean responses for the Career Pathing and Staff Retention at the WNS Global Services. The overall mean for Statement 19 is 4.05. Respondents strongly agree that they have clear defined reasons for their existence. However, Table 4.10 further indicates the dissatisfaction among WNS employees depicted by the mean response of 3.61 for Statement 23 indicating that respondents are highly likely to be taking steps in the near future to look for a job outside of WNS. Furthermore, the mean for Statement 32 of 2.44 pertains to the fact that respondents perceive career growth and development as a low priority at WNS Global Services. In Statement 9 the mean is 2.59 – respondents reported that their contribution as an employee is not greatly valued.

Table 4.10: Summary mean view of respondents in relation to career pathing and staff retention at WNS (n=198)

Question	N	Mean
7 - My job makes good use of my skills and abilities.	198	3,15
8 - As a department we have supportive leadership.	198	3,49
9 - My contribution as an employee is of value and is recognised by WNS.	198	2,59
10 - I have opportunity for individual development and growth such as updating my skills and learning different jobs.	198	2,66
11 - I am aware of vacancies or job opportunities within the company as they are always advertised.	198	4,01
12 - My team leader/direct line manager and I have planned my future at WNS.	198	2,79
13 - I feel that it is important that I get regular feedback on my performance.	198	4,26
14 - I feel that that the internal promotion process in my department is fair.	198	2,66
15 - Training and coaching are provided to assist my personal development.	198	3,65
16 - There is a good fit between my needs and the needs of the organisation.	198	3,03
17 - I am rewarded for the quality of my efforts.	198	2,98
18 - I have reassurance in terms of my job security at WNS.	198	2,87
19 - I have clear defined reasons for my existence as an employee.	198	4,05
20 - As part of the WNS 5 people promises, my manager and I meet regularly for one on ones to discuss my development.	198	3,26
21 - I am satisfied with my personal and career development since my employment at WNS till now.	198	2,83
22 - My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.	198	3,29
23 - It is likely that I will be taking steps in the near future to look for a job in another organisation.	198	3,61
24 - When a staff member leaves my department, they are replaced within a reasonable amount of time.	198	3,12
25 - Among the staff at WNS, there is a sense of loyalty and commitment to the company.	198	2,87
26 - The amount of work expected of me is reasonable.	198	3,29
27 - In my opinion, career pathing processes at WNS are effective	198	2,85
28 - To my knowledge, there are training and development policies in place at WNS.	198	3,13
29 - To my knowledge, there are effective retention strategies in place at WNS.	198	2,90
30 - The company offers a long term opportunity for growth and career development.	198	2,63
31 - WNS values their staff members, no matter what their rank is.	198	3,01
32 - Career growth and development is considered a priority to WNS.	198	2,44
33 - Staff retention can be better dealt with at WNS.	198	3,79
34. The current channels used to advertise staff vacancies at WNS are efficient enough to attract staff of a suitable calibre.	198	3,40
35 - At WNS we plan and co-ordinate our efforts together as an organisation.	198	2,87
36 - In my opinion, overall staffing needs are well managed by the company.	198	2,76
KEY: 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree		

4.7 THE PURPOSE OF INFERENCE STATISTICS

The objective of inferential statistics is to decipher a general pattern about a large group by studying a smaller group of people. Generally, in inferential statistics two hypotheses are made before a study is conducted. The Null hypothesis states that the groups that are being studied are the same. The Alternate hypothesis states that the groups being studied are different (Purdue, 2021: 1). The following section makes use of statistical tests to lend credibility to the study. The SPSS computer software version 27 for Windows was used to determine the correlation between the independent and dependant variable. A p-value is generated from a test statistic. A significant result is indicated with “ $p < 0.05$ ”.

4.8 FACTOR ANALYSIS

Factor analysis is a statistical technique whose main goal is data reduction. A typical use of factor analysis is in survey research, where a researcher wishes to represent a number of questions with a small number of hypothetical factors. Factor analysis assists researchers with investigating factors that cannot be directly measured. This is done by breaking down a large number of variables into concise and comprehensible fundamental factors. The overall objective of factor analysis is to determine to what extent each variable in a dataset is associated with a common theme or factor and to provide an interpretation of the common factors in the dataset thereof (Alchemer, 2021: 1)

4.8.1 Ways to determine the factorability of inter-correlation matrix

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett’s test of sphericity are tests which determine the factorability of an intercorrelation matrix. The matrix table/s is preceded by a summarised table that reflects the results of KMO and Bartlett’s test. The KMO and Bartlett’s test table below shows two tests that indicate the suitability of data for structure detection. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy is a statistic that indicates the proportion of variance in the variables that might be caused by underlying factors. High values (close to 1.0) generally

indicate that a factor analysis may be useful with the data. If the value is less than 0.50, the results of the factor analysis probably won't be very useful (IBM, 2016: 1).

Bartlett's test of sphericity tests the hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix, which would indicate that the variables are unrelated and therefore unsuitable for structure detection. Small values (less than 0.05) of the significance level indicate that a factor analysis may be useful with the data (IBM, 2016: 1).

Factor analysis is done only for the Likert scale items. Certain components divided into finer components. This is explained in a rotated component matrix. Hadi, Abdullah and Sentosa (2016: 217) assert that the objective of the rotated component matrix is to help determine what the factors represent and allows for easier interpretation of results that are not as profuse. The KMO, Bartlett's test and rotated component matrix for the study are presented in Table 4.11. The interpretation of the construct validity of the questionnaire follows the tables.

Table 4.11: Rotated component matrix: the business role in employee pathing needs

Career Pathing	Component		
	1	2	3
My job makes good use of my skills and abilities	0.321	0.280	0.715
As a department we have supportive leadership	0.421	0.607	0.141
My contribution as an employee is of value and is recognised by WNS	0.184	0.541	-0.292
I have opportunity for individual development and growth such as updating my skills and learning different jobs	0.365	0.203	0.767
I am aware of vacancies or job opportunities within the company as they are always advertised	0.705	0.164	0.030
My team leader/direct line manager and I have planned my future at WNS	-0.107	0.774	-0.037
I feel that it is important that I get regular feedback on my performance	0.807	-0.098	-0.127
I feel that that the internal promotion process in my department is fair	0.351	0.622	0.080
Training and coaching are provided to assist my personal development	0.641	0.384	0.226
There is a good fit between my needs and the needs of the organisation	0.645	0.310	-0.030

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
 a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

- Employee Development Needs
- Leadership support in Career Pathing
- Skills and Development

Table 4.12: Rotated component matrix: the need for reward and development in retaining staff

Staff Retention	Component		
	1	2	3
I am rewarded for the quality of my efforts	0.756	0.151	-0.105
I have reassurance in terms of my job security at WNS	0.624	0.419	-0.071
I have clear defined reasons for my existence as an employee	0.546	0.364	0.067
As part of the WNS 5 people promises, my manager and I meet regularly for one on ones to discuss my development	-0.090	0.878	-0.041
I am satisfied with my personal and career development since my employment at WNS till now	0.844	0.022	0.041
My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment	0.511	0.546	-0.104
It is likely that I will be taking steps in the near future to look for a job in another organisation	-0.045	-0.035	0.986
When a staff member leaves my department, they are replaced within a reasonable amount of time	0.293	0.633	-0.067
Among the staff at WNS, there is a sense of loyalty and commitment to the company	0.681	0.152	-0.025
The amount of work expected of me is reasonable	0.377	0.623	0.104

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 4 iterations.

- Employee job fulfilment needs
- Role of Management
- Employees seeking alternate job opportunities

Table 4.13: Rotated component matrix: the existence of career pathing processes in retaining staff

Career Pathing and Staff Retention at WNS Global Services	Component		
	1	2	3
In my opinion, career pathing processes at WNS are effective	0.565	0.397	-0.256
To my knowledge, there are training and development policies in place at WNS	0.718	0.078	0.286
To my knowledge, there are effective retention strategies in place at WNS	0.068	-0.035	0.765
The company offers a long term opportunity for growth and career development	0.705	0.350	-0.070
WNS values their staff members, no matter what their rank is	0.207	0.562	0.149
Career growth and development is considered a priority to WNS	0.161	0.794	-0.136
Staff retention can be better dealt with at WNS	0.049	0.085	0.641
The current channels used to advertise staff vacancies at WNS are efficient enough to attract staff of a suitable calibre	0.205	0.714	0.018
At WNS we plan and coordinate our efforts together as an organisation	0.798	0.017	0.059
In my opinion, overall staffing needs are well managed by the company	-0.247	0.602	0.429

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

- Opportunities for training and development
- Employee Career Pathing Needs
- Existence of Retention Strategies

Table 4.14: KMO and Bartlett's test

	Section	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		
			Approx. Chi-Square	df	Sig.
B	Career Pathing	0.795	455.011	45	0.000
C	Staff Retention	0.855	552.838	45	0.000
D	Career Pathing and Staff Retention at WNS Global Services	0.688	393.696	45	0.000

INTERPRETATION OF TABLES 4.11 – 4.14

Factor analysis is a statistical method whose essential purpose is data reduction. Factor analysis is commonly applied in types of research which makes use of surveys, whereby a researcher wishes to represent a series of questions with a small number of hypothetical factors. With reference to the tables above:

The principle component analysis was used as the extraction method, and the rotation method was Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. This is an orthogonal rotation method that reduces the number of variables which have high loadings on each factor. Essentially, it simplifies the analysis of the factors. Factor analysis/loading demonstrate inter-correlations among variables. Items of questions that loaded similarly imply measurement along a similar factor. An examination of the content of items loading at or above 0.5 (and using the higher or highest loading in instances where items cross-loaded at greater than this value) effectively measured along the various components.

It is noted that the variables that constituted all three sections loaded along 3 components (sub-themes). This means that respondents identified different trends within the section. Within the section, the splits are colour coded.

All of the conditions are satisfied for factor analysis. That is, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy value should be greater than 0.500 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity significance value should be less than 0.05.

4.9 CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Correlation analysis is used to quantify the association between two continuous variables. Through a correlation analysis, the evaluation of a correlation coefficient indicates how much one variable is changed when another one does. Essentially, correlation analysis depicts a linear relationship between two variables (Editage Insights, 2021: 1). Bivariate correlation was also performed on the (ordinal) data. The purpose of bivariate data is to compare two sets of data as a means of determining a relationship between two variables. A correlation study indicates whether each of the variables foster a positive or negative correlation. “Positive values indicate a directly proportional relationship between the variables and a negative value indicates an inverse relationship” (Jackson, 2021: 1). Correlation analysis was performed on the ordinal data an SPSS version 27 for Windows was used to determine the bivariate correlation analysis pertaining to the study.

Table 4.15: Analysis 1: Opportunity for growth and development facilitates job accomplishment

ANALYSIS 1
The correlation value between individuals having work opportunities for growth and development and feeling personal accomplishment is 0.212 .
INTERPRETATION: The respondents indicated that they feel a sense of accomplishment when they are given opportunities to update their skills and learn different jobs conducive to growth and development.

Table 4.16: Analysis 2: Discussions with employees about their future in a company gives them reassurance in terms of job security

ANALYSIS 2
The correlation between employees and managers having discussed and planned the employee's future at WNS and employees having reassurance regarding their job security is 0.232 .
INTERPRETATION: The respondents indicated that when they have planned discussions with their managers regarding their future at WNS, this gives them clear job security and reassurance for the foreseeable future .

Table 4.17: Analysis 3: Aligning business needs and employee needs aids in retention of staff

ANALYSIS 3
The correlation between there being a good fit between employee needs and the needs of the organisation, and the likelihood of employees taking steps in the near future to look for a job in another organisation is -0.176 .
INTERPRETATION: Respondents indicate that the less the alignment of the needs between the individual and organisation, the greater the probability of the individual seeking employment outside of the organisation.

Table 4.18: Analysis 4: Making career growth and development a priority is linked to retaining staff

ANALYSIS 4
The correlation between career growth and development being made a priority and WNS dealing well with staff retention is -0.116 .
INTERPRETATION: Respondents indicate that the less priority is placed on career growth and development, the greater the hindrance on staff retention.

Table 4.19: Analysis 5: The absence of career pathing processes will persuade employees to seek employment elsewhere

ANALYSIS 5
The correlation between employees taking steps in the near future to look for another job and the perception that career pathing processes at WNS are effective is -0.171 .
INTERPRETATION: Respondents indicate that ineffective career pathing processes are highly likely to influence their decision to seek work opportunities elsewhere.

Table 4.20: Analysis 6: Having fair internal promotion processes encourage loyalty and commitment to the company

ANALYSIS 6
The correlation between having fair internal promotion processes and staff being loyal and committed to WNS is 0.297 .
INTERPRETATION: Respondents indicate that having fair internal promotion processes would heighten their sense of loyalty and commitment to the organisation.

Table 4.21: Analysis 7: Having effective retention strategies in place makes staff feel valued

ANALYSIS 7
The correlation between having effective retention strategies in place and staff feeling like they are valued no matter what their rank is at WNS is 0.123 .
INTERPRETATION: Respondents indicate that when there are sound and effective retention strategies in an organisation, they feel valued and loyalty is increased.

Table 4.22: Analysis 8: Having individual growth and development opportunities contributes to overall staffing needs being managed

ANALYSIS 8
The correlation between the presence of individual growth and development opportunities and overall staffing needs being well managed by the company is -0.161 .
INTERPRETATION: Respondents indicate that staffing needs are not well managed when there is a lack of individual growth and development opportunities

Table 4.23: Analysis 9: Training and development policies encourage employees to stay with the organisation

ANALYSIS 9
The correlation between the existence of training and development policies and staff taking future steps to look for alternate employment is -0.191 .
INTERPRETATION: Respondents indicate that lack of training and development would persuade them to look for a job in another organisation

Table 4.24: Analysis 10: Recognising and rewarding employee efforts facilitates work and development satisfaction

ANALYSIS 10
The correlation between employees being satisfied with their personal and career development since being employed at WNS and being rewarded for the quality of their efforts is 0.551 .
INTERPRETATION: Respondents indicate that when they are rewarded for the quality of their efforts, personal and career development needs are satisfied.

4.10 DISCUSSION OF CAREER PATHING

Saaiman (2015: 19) asserts that a thoroughly considered career path map plays a critical role as far as employee engagement and employee retention are concerned. This is especially critical as we are faced with a surplus of millennials entering the workforce. Special care needs to be placed on understanding what drives and motivates this new generation in order for organisations to enhance long-term sustainability through the retention of scarce skills. This generation likes to be given feedback, communicated with frequently and they have clear goals and expectations. Millennials tend to give their loyalty to organisations that nurture their growth and career advancement. Ocampo (2016: 1) points out that employees tend to leave an organisation when they feel that they are not being given opportunities to grow and expand their skills through effective career pathing practices. Career pathing can be viewed as a fundamental tool and the holistic organisational benefits of it have proven to be invaluable. Career pathing boosts retention rates, streamlines succession planning and heightens employee engagement. Subsequently, there is an increase in productivity due to enhanced engagement (SpriggHR, 2020: 1).

The aforementioned points are supported by the findings in Chapter 4. Employees are prone to stay in a business where they feel valued. Overall, respondents indicated that they feel valued when they have discussed and planned their long-term future with their managers (Correlation Analysis 2). Career pathing is a good way of initiating an alignment of organisational needs with employee needs and encourages long term loyalty to the firm. This should therefore be made a priority as only 35.86% of respondents indicated that they felt there was a good fit between organisation and personal needs. Furthermore, the correlation test, Analysis 1, indicated that respondents feel a sense of accomplishment when they are given opportunities to update their skills and learn different jobs conducive to growth and development. A notable 57.07% of respondents (Table 4.4, Statement 14) indicated that they felt the internal promotion processes at WNS Global Services were not fair (respondents who either strongly disagreed or disagreed with Table 4.4, Statement 14) . This is a concern as internal promotion processes are directly linked with employees

feeling valued. These two factors cannot be viewed in isolation when managing career pathing in an organisation.

4.11 DISCUSSION OF STAFF RETENTION

Employee retention strategies are a key part of an organisation's vision, mission, values and policies. These strategies should be a part of every aspect of an organisation's principals and operations (Cloutier, Felusiak and Hill, 2015: 120). By virtue of the current global talent shortage, employers find themselves faced with the most acute talent and critical skills shortage. For this reason, it is imperative that organisations have retention strategies and processes in place to retain key talent and alleviate the burden of attrition. The BPO sector in particular is notorious for their extreme attrition rates (Hash, 2017: 1). The drivers of employee engagement and staff retention include a shared purpose and values; pride about the company; trust and integrity; the nature of the job; the nature of relationships with co-workers'/team members and managers; employee voice, physical and mental well-being and career growth opportunities (NHS Leadership Academy, 2014: 2).

The literature aligns with several findings highlighted in Chapter 4. Correlation Analysis 9 indicated that lack of training and development would persuade employees to look for other job prospects that meet these needs. Additionally, Correlation Analysis 7 shows that when there are sound and effective retention strategies in place at the organisation, employees feel valued and thus loyalty is increased. A major concern is that the majority of the respondents (57.07%) indicated that they will be taking steps in the near future to look for jobs outside of WNS Global Services. A mere 32.83% of respondents (Table 4.6, Statement 17) agree or strongly agree that they are rewarded for the quality of their efforts. This is effectively a hindering factor for staff retention. Only a handful of respondents (27.78%) agreed that there was a sense of loyalty and commitment among staff.

4.12 DISCUSSION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CAREER PATHING AND STAFF RETENTION AT WNS GLOBAL SERVICES

According to Saaiman (2015: 18-20), a well thought out and considered career path is an essential contributor in relation to employee engagement and retention. A well-structured and developed career path can be utilised as a mechanism to retain, develop, measure and motivate current staff and to attract new capable and dedicated employees. Contact centres are high-pressure and stressful work environments, characterised by highly routine work, high turnover and absenteeism. Contact centre agents can easily become burned out when faced with performing the same mundane tasks day in and day out. Lack of growth opportunities often contribute toward rising attrition rates. If managers do not cross-train employees, rotate responsibilities or give attention to employee growth and advancement, it is highly likely that these individuals will consider looking for work elsewhere (Mwendwa, 2017: 18-20).

There was a general sense that internal promotion processes at WNS Global Services were not perceived as being fair (57.07% agreed to unfairness). This is a concern as Correlation Analysis 6 indicates that employee loyalty and commitment is subject to fair internal promotion processes. The majority of respondents (68.68%) agree that staff retention can be better dealt with at WNS and a meagre 19.7% agree that career growth and development is considered a priority by the company. Correlation Analysis 4 indicates that the less priority that is placed on career pathing and growth, the greater the likelihood of staff leaving the business. Furthermore, Correlation Analysis 8 confirms that staffing needs are not well managed when there is a lack of individual growth and development opportunities. Only 23.24% of respondents agreed that to their knowledge there are effective retention strategies in place at WNS Global Services. This has a potential negative impact on the company culture perception among staff and is also indicative of a possible lack of co-ordination and alignment of goals.

4.13 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the outcomes of the research and a discussion of the data analysis were presented. The data as analysed and interpreted from the questionnaires. The descriptive analysis of the quantitative methods was presented using tables and graphs in the first part of the chapter. Factor analysis, correlation analysis and Pearson's chi-square were used to calculate the statistical analysis. Additionally, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's test of sphericity were used to determine the factorability of an inter-correlation matrix. Correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between the variables of the study. Correlation analysis was conducted on ordinal data to establish whether the variables were positively or negatively related. Of the 10 correlation analyses conducted, 5 indicated a positive correlation. Through the analysis and discussion of the quantitative results received from the sample respondents, the researcher was able to establish links with current literature and subsequently draw conclusions regarding the effectiveness of career pathing and staff retention processes, policies and procedures at the WNS Global Services. Limitations and recommendations based on the empirical analysis of data are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to conduct research on the existence of career pathing linked to staff retention at WNS Global Services. The research study endeavoured to provide an understanding of career pathing and staff retention in order to assist WNS Global Services in the future. Career pathing and employee retention strategies, if not effectively implemented, could have an adverse influence on the long-term success and sustainability of an organisation. This chapter highlights the limitations of the study. Recommendations and conclusions are made in accordance with the objectives of this study, and attempt to answer the main research questions regarding career pathing strategies and factors which contribute to employee retention.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and discussion of this study, the following recommendations are presented to improve career pathing and the retention of staff in the BPO sector, specific to WNS Global Services.

5.2.1 Implementing career pathing strategies and policies to improve staff retention

It is recommended that the company put in place a formalised and documented career pathing strategy. The strategy should outline the various ways which the company will support and initiate employee growth and development. An effort should be made by management to sit down to plan and discuss each individual employee's career trajectory in the business. Ideally this should be done quarterly in conjunction with quarterly scorecard discussions and progress tracking. The career path model as explained in chapter 1 should include a self-assessment,

building position profiles, individualised career maps, identifying core competencies and expected behaviours, incorporating training and development and establishing accountability (Cao *et al*, 2013: 30-31). According to the literature in chapter 2, career pathing and development is a critical factor to consider for retaining employees. Research by Peterson (2004: 212) indicates that career pathing is associated with a variety of beneficial workplace outcomes, including greater organisational commitment and retention. This statement is supported by the findings of this research linked to Correlation Analysis 4 which implies that the less priority that is placed on career pathing and growth, the greater the likelihood of staff leaving the business.

Implementation of a career path strategy and model will highlight areas where employees require skills development, as well as facilitate conversations where employee needs are identified and aligned to the needs of the business. This will enhance internal communication, organisation synergy, and employees will feel valued as the company is investing in them, therefore loyalty is improved. This ties in with the literature in chapter 2 where Coughlan (2005: 45) defines employee loyalty as instances when an individual will remain with an organization for a lengthy period of time for reasons linked to their job satisfaction such as feeling valued and appreciated. Furthermore, having effective career pathing policies in place will assist the organisation in identifying and aligning to future staff planning.

Anwar (2021: 1) has identified the shortfalls of career pathing in the South African BPO sector. The author states that the sector “has not generated the kind of jobs that offer workers the chance of progressing up the career ladder”. There are few prospects for career and growth development. In this matter South Africa’s outsourcing industry is somewhat behind when compared to other industry leaders in India.

5.3 COMMITMENT BY TOP MANAGEMENT – INCENTIVE DRIVEN

Generally, the implementation of policies and procedures fail due to lack of management assistance and commitment. This can prove to be detrimental as

managers are the catalysts to driving change and are key players in the channel of communication to employees. The literature review in chapter 2 emphasises that research has shown supervisors to have a significant influence over an employee exiting or staying (Amdany, 2017: 26). Therefore, it can be assumed that a negative interaction has a greater impact than positive ones. Bowman (2019: 6) highlights that supportive supervision is critical in driving Human Resource development programs. It is therefore imperative to have top management buy-in when implementing career pathing and retention strategies.

A recommendation would be for the business to look at incentivising this process, by assessing departmental attrition rates and thereafter setting a targeted acceptable attrition rate for each manager of the respective departments to work towards. Those managers are then accountable for identifying and investing in their staff needs in an effort to reduce the number of staff leaving, whilst working towards the pre-determined target attrition rate. The manager whose department has the lowest number of staff exiting or significantly improved attrition rates should then be rewarded.

5.4 CONDUCT REGULAR STAFF SATISFACTION SURVEYS TO MANAGE RETENTION

WNS Global Services should conduct staff satisfaction surveys regularly. This will help the organisation keep abreast of employee needs and discover the extent to which factors influence employee commitment. This will assist the organisation to identify employee needs and be proactive about meeting those needs in an effort to retain staff. The company can draw from Herzberg (1959) Two-Factor Theory discussed in chapter 2, which deems employee satisfaction as a two-step process which entails the elimination of job dissatisfaction and the creation of conditions which lead to satisfaction.

5.5 HAVE CLEAR COMPANY OBJECTIVES TO FACILITATE RETENTION

WNS Global needs to have clear, easy to understand objectives which everyone is aware of and aligned to. The goals should be reviewed annually and regularly

communicated from top management all the way down. This will help employees feel like they belong and understand the value they add to the organisation. This will also give staff a sense of direction as to where they are heading and what they are working towards. Furthermore, this will enhance the overall organisation working together toward shared goals and a set of shared values. This will be essential in assisting with the retention of staff, as employees feeling valued and having a sense of belonging satisfies Maslows hierarchy of needs which must to be fulfilled for employee motivation. As identified by the literature in chapter 2, love/belonging, esteem and self-actualisation are deemed as higher order needs (Loganathan, 2013:13). This will be an important focus area for WNS to as the findings of the study depicted that only 32.83% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that WNS values their staff members (Table 4.8, Statement 31).

5.5.1 Training and development to enhance staff retention

The findings of the study indicate that the new millennial workforce is driven by prospects for growth and development and seek opportunities where their skills can be improved. The company should therefore invest in individual growth by having individual annual training and development plans. These training plans should include soft skill training, practical training as well as technical training. The literature discussed in this study outlines training and development opportunities as a key determinant of loyalty to an organisation. Haider *et al* (2015: 64) link training to a decreased level of retention. The authors assert that individuals display loyalty to an organisation that provides growth opportunities by means of training and development, whilst allowing employees to apply the newly acquired knowledge and skills. This is an area of development for WNS, as the findings of the study indicate that 51.01% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed to having opportunities for individual development and growth (Table 4.4, Statement 10).

5.5.2 Job rotation and cross skilling to combat monotony

Norman (2005: 6) states that call centres are usually characterised by repetitive yet stressful work making the nature of the job both physically and mentally monotonous. This is one of the major contributing factors of the elevated attrition rates. For this reason, it is recommended that WNS Global Services implements cross skilling and job rotation in order to give employees more exposure to various departments within the organisation. Job rotation will give employees a wider experience and help them gain more insights. This will aid in reducing monotony and reduce staff leaving the organisation because of this.

5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The focus of the study was confined to the contact centre agents across the Durban and Port Elizabeth sites. The Cape Town site in its entirety was excluded. Team leaders, management and support staff were also excluded from the study. Therefore, the findings of the study do not allow for generalisations to WNS Global Services as a whole or related BPOs in the sector. Furthermore, questionnaires were emailed to 234 sample respondents and 204 out of 234 sample respondents returned the questionnaire. However, it was found that some respondents did not answer all of the questions and were therefore omitted from the analysis. There was sufficient literature relating to staff retention, specifically in the BPO industry, however literature pertaining to career pathing for contact centre employees within the sector was limited

5.7 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The research was limited to WNS Global Services which is a BPO in the telecommunications sector only. Future research should focus on other sectors in which BPO's are prominent, such as the banking sector, airline sector, tourism sector or other telecommunication companies to gauge a better generalization of the findings.

5.8 CONCLUSION

The main purpose of the study was to conduct research on the linkage of career pathing to staff retention in order to assist with the long-term retention of contact centre agents and improve organisational cost effectiveness at WNS. Furthermore, the study aimed to highlight any shortfalls in the current career pathing and staff retention policies and procedures at WNS and subsequently provide recommendations for improvement. The SPSS version 27 of Windows was used to test the variables that formulated the study.

The study found that 55.55% of respondents felt that career growth and development is not given enough priority at WNS Global Services. The results also found that 68.68% of the respondents felt that staff retention can be better dealt with at WNS Global Services. Additionally, the correlation analysis of the two variables indicated that the correlation between employees taking steps in the near future to look for another job and the perception that career pathing processes at WNS are effective is -0.171 (Correlation Analysis 5). This is indicative that ineffective career pathing processes are highly likely to influence employee's decision to seek alternate work opportunities. This links to the literature of this study which emphasised that career pathing and development is a critical factor to consider for retaining employees. Research by Peterson (2004: 212) indicated that career pathing is associated with a variety of beneficial workplace outcomes, including greater organisational commitment and retention. The findings of the study show that some elements of staff retention are practised at WNS Global Services. However, one can conclude that it is not fully implemented in a manner that has maximum impact on staff. Furthermore, career pathing as a concept is not fully established at WNS Global Services.

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A: Gatekeepers Letter of Approval



29 April 2021

The Chancellor,
Durban University of Technology Faculty of Management Sciences
41-43 ML-Salton Road, Durban 4001
PO Box 1334
Durban 4000 South Africa

Re: LETTER OF REFERENCE FOR Ms NOORAIN MAANJOO (Student Number: 21433078 & ID Number: 9409100451081) TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AND USE WNS SOUTH AFRICA (PTY) LIMITED AND IT'S EMPLOYEES AS INPUT INTO RESEARCH PROJECT

This letter is to confirm that Ms N Manjoo has been granted permission by WNS to use her workplace in WNS and its employees to conduct research as input into her studies. WNS supports the growth and development of our employees and is fully supportive of project.

The topic chosen by Ms Manjoo is very relevant in the BPO industry and WNS is excited to part of the research. We also hope that the insights derived from the research will provide valuable insight into WNS as well as the BPO industry.

As the HR Head at WNS I am personally excited and committed to assist Noorain on this exciting project.

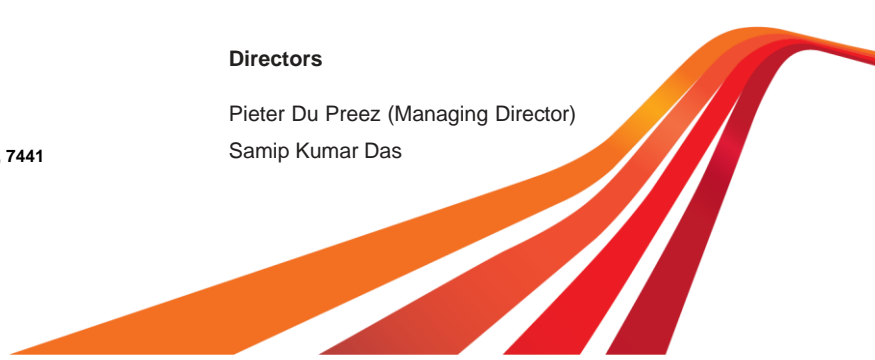
Should you have any queries you are welcome to contact me on 021 819 6271 or 082 928 3091 or e-mail me at leann.coetzer@wns.com

Leann Coetzer Corporate VP HR – WNS

WNS House, Heron Crescent Century City, Cape Town, 7441
Reg No: 2018/639604/0
WNS South Africa (PTY) Ltd.

Directors

Pieter Du Preez (Managing Director)
Samip Kumar Das



ANNEXURE B: Questionnaire Cover Letter to Respondents



WNS Global Services
10 Riverhorse Valley
Durban
4000

Durban University of Technology
PO Box 1334
DURBAN
4000

Dear Participant

ASSISTANCE: QUESTIONNAIRE COMPLETION

I am a registered student at the Durban University of Technology in the Department of Human Resources Management. I hereby request your assistance in completing the attached questionnaire for the MTech in Human Resources Management. My topic is titled: **An investigation on career pathing aligned to the retention of contact centre agents at WNS Global Services – Telkom**. In order to successfully complete the latter part of my research, the secondary component deals with the empirical investigation. This involves the completion of a structured close ended questionnaire.

Permission has been granted for me to conduct this research in-house (Annexure A). A structured closed-ended questionnaire will be used to gather information. You have been selected as one of the respondents comprising the sampling frame of this organisation. I will be most grateful, if you could please complete the questionnaire by clicking on the link which will redirect you to the electronic letter of information (Annexure D) as well as the questionnaire (Annexure C). The questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete and requires you to cross the relevant pre-coded response in an objective manner. Please answer all questions. (One response per question).

Please be assured that the responses you provide will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will not be divulged to any other party. Your name should not be mentioned on the questionnaire and will remain anonymous. The response once obtained will be used only for statistical purpose. You have the right to withdraw partially or completely from the process at any given time. Your cooperation in assisting me with this imperative component of my study is highly appreciated and I look forward to a prompt response to the questionnaire. Please do not hesitate to contact me at the below telephone number. I thank you in advance for assisting me with my studies.

Yours Sincerely

Noorain Manjoo
Cell: 082 6070 609

Supervisor: A Rajlal
Contact Details: 084 711 3608

ANNEXURE C: Questionnaire

Attached Questionnaire for completion (ANNEXURE C)

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION

Note: For this study, organisation refers WNS Global Services (WNS) and all its staff members, unless otherwise stated.

INSTRUCTIONS TO RESPONDENTS:

1. Please select **ONLY ONE** response with a tick ✓ for each question.
2. Answer **ALL** the pre-coded questions in this section.
3. Please **DO NOT** leave any question blank.

1. Please indicate whether you are a permanent or contract staff member at the WNS:

1.1	Permanent	1
1.2	Contract	2
1.3	Any other:	3

2. Please indicate which ONE of the following Lines of Business is applicable to you:

2.1	Assurance	1
2.2	Billing	2
2.3	Business	3
2.4	Sales	4
2.5	Progress	5
2.6	Mobile	6
2.7	Other – please specify	7

3. Please indicate your gender:

3.1	Male	1
3.2	Female	2

4. Please indicate your age group:

4.1	20-25 years	1
4.2	26-30 years	2
4.3	31-35 years	3
4.4	36-40 years	4
4.5	41-50 years	5
4.6	> 51 years	6

5. How long have you been employed at WNS?

5.1	1-5 months	1
5.2	6-11 months	2
5.3	1 – 2 years	3
5.4	3 -4 years	4
5.5	>5 years	5

Please indicate your highest level of qualification:

6.1	Matric	1
6.2	Diploma / Bachelor's degree	2
6.3	Honours degree / B.Tech	3
6.4	Masters	4
6.5	Doctorate	5

SECTION B: Career Pathing

Career pathing is the process used by an employee to map a course within an organisation around their career path and career development. A Career path consist of an employee's aspired career destination, as well as the steps, experience and development required in order to advance on this pathway. This provides employees with transparency into vertical, lateral and cross-functional career moves that align to their skills, education and interests. Employees become aware of the education, training, skills and competencies needed to progress their careers (Stevenson, 2019: 1).

INSTRUCTIONS TO RESPONDENTS:

1. Please select **ONLY ONE** response with a tick ✓ for each Likert Scale statement below.
2. Answer **ALL** the pre-coded statements in this section.
3. Please **DO NOT** leave any statement blank.

KEY: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

		SD	D	N	A	SA
7.	My job makes good use of my skills and abilities.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	As a department we have supportive leadership.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	My contribution as an employee is of value and is recognised by WNS.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I have opportunity for individual development and growth such as updating my skills and learning different jobs.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Staff vacancies are always advertised.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	My supervisor and I have planned my future at WNS.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I feel that it is important that performance be monitored.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	The staff promotion procedure in my department is fair.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Training and coaching is provided to assist my personal development.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	There is a good fit between my needs and the needs of the organisation.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION C: Staff Retention

Staff retention refers to an effort by a business to maintain a working environment which supports current staff in remaining with the organisation through the implementation of policies and procedures that address various staffing needs.

INSTRUCTIONS TO RESPONDENTS:

1. Please select **ONLY ONE** response with a tick ✓ for each Likert Scale statement below.
2. Answer **ALL** the pre-coded statements in this section.
3. Please **DO NOT** leave any statement blank.

KEY: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

		SD	D	N	A	SA
17.	I am rewarded for the quality of my efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	I have reassurance in terms of my job security at WNS.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	I have clear defined reasons for my existence as an employee.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	As part of the WNS 5 people promises, my manager and I meet regularly for one on ones to discuss my development.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	I am satisfied with my personal and career development since my employment at WNS till now.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	It is likely that I will be taking steps in the near future to look for a job in another organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
24.	When a staff member leaves my department, they are replaced within a reasonable amount of time.	1	2	3	4	5
25.	Among the staff at WNS, there is a sense of loyalty and commitment to the institution.	1	2	3	4	5
26.	The amount of work expected of me is reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION D: Career Pathing and Staff Retention at WNS Global Services.

INSTRUCTIONS TO RESPONDENTS:

4. Please select **ONLY ONE** response with a tick ✓ for each Likert Scale statement below.
5. Answer **ALL** the pre-coded statements in this section.
6. Please **DO NOT** leave any statement blank.

KEY: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

		SD	D	N	A	SA
27..	In my opinion, career pathing processes at WNS are effective.	1	2	3	4	5
28.	To my knowledge, there are training and development policies in place at WNS.	1	2	3	4	5
29.	To my knowledge, there are effective retention strategies in place at WNS.	1	2	3	4	5

30.	The company offers a long term opportunity for growth and career development.	1	2	3	4	5
31.	WNS values their staff members, no matter what their rank is.	1	2	3	4	5
32.	Career growth and development is considered a priority to WNS.	1	2	3	4	5
33.	Staff retention can be better dealt with at WNS.	1	2	3	4	5
34.	The current channels used to advertise staff vacancies at WNS are efficient enough to attract staff of a suitable calibre.	1	2	3	4	5
35.	At WNS we plan and co-ordinate our efforts together as an organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
36.	In my opinion, overall staffing needs are well managed by the company.	1	2	3	4	5

ANNEXURE D: Letter of Information



LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study: Investigating Career Pathing and Retention of Agents at WNS Global Services.

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: Noorain Manjoo, BTech: Human Resources Management

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s: Ashnee Rajlal, DTech: Human Resources Management

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:

Good Day,

I hope this letter finds you well and in the best of health. I am a registered student at the Durban University of Technology doing research for my Masters Degree in Human Resources Management and would like to invite you to participate in the research.

Research is a systematic search or study of materials, aimed at establishing facts and reaching new conclusions. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. In order to protect you and your identity, you will remain anonymous at all times and need not disclose your name or any personal information. It is essential to me that you as a participant fully understand the study and your purpose, therefore you are at liberty to ask as many questions as you wish regarding the study and your participation. You are welcome to discuss the study with their family and friends and are under no obligation to commit at this stage.

The aim of this study is to conduct research on the linkage of Career Pathing to Staff Retention in order to assist with the long-term retention of contact center agents at WNS. As a participant of this research, you will be required to complete a structured close-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire will consist of 36 statements to which you will indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Completion of the questionnaire will take you roughly 20 minutes. The approximate number of participants to be involved in the research is 586, and participants will be randomly selected. Please be assured that the responses you provide will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will not be divulged to any other party. Your name should not be mentioned on the questionnaire and will remain anonymous. The response once obtained will be used only for statistical purpose. As stated previously, your participation is voluntary and you are at liberty to withdraw from answering this questionnaire at any time.

There are no foreseeable risks associated by you participating in this study. In line with the COVID-19 protocols and to safeguard yourself, there will be no direct contact at any stage. All information will be shared via an easily accessible link and communication will be done electronically.

As a participant in the research, a short synopsis of the findings of the study will be made available to you upon your request. It is envisaged that this study will provide a practical value to the BPO industry through underlining gaps in current career pathing practices and processes, as well as facilitate in aligning the business and your objectives as an employee through the holistic provision of findings and recommendations. Other potential benefits of the study include publishing of findings in accredited journals, as well as the sharing of outcomes at local and international conferences.

Kindly be advised that there is no remuneration nor costs incurred on the participant for involvement in this study. There are also no costs imposed in you as a result of your participation in the study. On completion of the study, a copy of the thesis will be in the library and the DUT Repository. It is not for commercial gain and other students may peruse through it.

As a respondent you will remain anonymous throughout the process. The questionnaire used to gather information is newly constructed and comprises of pre-coded statements. Once the questionnaires are completed, the data will automatically be stored on an external drive where the researcher will be able to export the results. The external storage drive will be password protected and only the researcher will have access to the results upon completion.

Findings of the study will be made available to you upon your request via email. I will also gladly take you through the findings telephonically if you wish. Completed Questionnaires as well as findings of the research will be stored on a password protected external drive which only I will have access to. The external drive data will permanently be deleted after 5 years through means of an automatic clean up. Any printed documents will be stored in a locked cabinet and permanently destroyed through a shredder after 5 years.

Persons to contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries: (Supervisor and details) Please contact the researcher (tel no.082 607 0609), my supervisor Dr. Ashnee Rajlal (tel no. 084 711 3608) or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Postgraduate Support Dr L Langaniso on 031 373 2577 or researchdirector@dut.ac.za.

ANNEXURE E: Consent Form



CONSENT

Full Title of the Study: Investigating Career Pathing and Retention of Agents at WNS Global Services.

Names of Researcher/s: Noorain Manjoo

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Noorain Manjoo, about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number:
 - I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
 - I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
 - In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
 - I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
 - I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
 - I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Participant Thumbprint	Date	Time	Signature / Right

I, Noorain Manjoo, herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

_____ Noorain	_____	_____ Manjoo
Full Name of Researcher	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Witness (If applicable)	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)	Date	Signature

ANNEXURE F: Ethics Certificate



Zertifikat Certificat

Certificado Certificate

Promouvoir les plus hauts standards éthiques dans la protection des participants à la recherche biomédicale
Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants



Certificat de formation - Training Certificate

Ce document atteste que - this document certifies that

Noorain Manjoo

a complété avec succès - has successfully completed

Introduction to Research Ethics

du programme de formation TRREE en évaluation éthique de la recherche
of the TRREE training programme in research ethics evaluation

Release Date: 2021/06/07

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Coordinateur TRREE Coordinator



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Swiss Academy of Medical Science (SAMS/ASSM/SAMW) (www.sams.ch) - Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (www.kfpe.ch)

[REV: 20170310]

ANNEXURE G: IREC Ethical Clearance



Institutional Research Ethics
Committee Research and Postgraduate
Support Directorate 2nd Floor, Berwyn
Court
Gate 1, Steve Biko Campus
Durban University of
Technology

P O Box 1334, Durban, South Africa,

4001 Tel: 031 373 2375

Email: lavishad@dut.ac.za

http: //www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics

www.dut.ac.za

23 August 2021

Ms N Manjoo
219 Blair Atholl
Road Westville
North Durban
3629

Dear Ms Manjoo

INVESTIGATING CAREER PATHING AND RETENTION OF AGENTS AT WNSGLOBAL SERVICES

Ethical Clearance number IREC 028/21

The Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your notification regarding the piloting of your data collection tool.

Kindly ensure that participants used for the pilot study are not part of the main study.

Please note that **FULL APPROVAL** is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the IREC according to the IREC SOP's.

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the IREC as outlined in the IREC SOP's.

Yours Sincerely

Prof J K Adam
Chairperson: IREC

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ANNEXURE H: Editing Certificate

DR RICHARD STEELE

BA, HDE, MTech(Hom)

HOMEOPATH

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Practice No. 0807524

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EDITING CERTIFICATE

Re: Noorain Manjoo

**Master's dissertation: INVESTIGATING CAREER PATHING AND
RETENTION OF AGENTS AT WNS GLOBAL SERVICES**

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Dr Richard Steele

01 August 2022

per email

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