

# **An Investigation into the Causes of Job Hopping within South African Construction Industry A Case Study Of Gauteng Province**

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## **Abstract**

This study was carried out to investigate the causes of job hopping within the construction industry in South Africa. The study adopted a source technique with the administration of a well-structured questionnaire to active stakeholders and construction professionals as well as interviewing human resource managers in the Gauteng Province of the South African construction industry. Data for this study was obtained through primary and secondary sources. The primary data collected was achieved through administering a well-structured questionnaire to 100 respondent professionals in the construction industry, in which 75 respondent professionals completed and returned the questionnaires. Data for this study were analyzed by percentage distribution. The questionnaires were administered to active professionals in the construction industry in the Gauteng Province of the South Africa. The findings of the study revealed that the significant causes of job hopping within the construction industry in South Africa are money and recognition, personal growth and new challenges, lack of experience and bad treatment from managers, not working as a team, and circumstances surrounding the individual that requires him or her to job hop. The study therefore suggests that to drastically reduce the causes of job hopping within the construction industry in South Africa, stakeholders in the construction industry must come up with strategies used as retention strategies by companies from a neutral or fair extent and hence, its practicality and effectiveness to retain employees.

## **Keywords**

Job Hopping, Causes, Strategy, Construction

## **1. Introduction**

There is a high rate of job hopping within the construction companies in South Africa. This has led to increased expenditure by employers as a result of lower productivity, failure to meet deadlines, and the costs associated with re-training of newly hired workers. In line with Ryan (2016), employees in the construction industry leave their current jobs and relocate abroad, or jump from one company to the next, to look for better remuneration and opportunities. This results in lower productivity at various projects. When an employee leaves an organization, efficiency is expected to fall due to the learning curve involved in knowing the job and the organization. To this effect, lack of intellectual capital adds. Not only do organizations lose the human and relational capital of the departing employee, competitors are also potentially gaining these assets (Stovel and Bontis, 2012). Therefore, this study investigated the causes of job hopping within the construction industry in South Africa.

## **2. Factors influencing job hopping**

There are several factors that influence job hopping among employees. Typically, a combination of factors influences job hopping. The table 1 shows the factors influencing job hopping among employees documented by several authors. Employees can be demotivated when other factors are unsatisfactory, these being termed hygiene factors, and mainly related to:

- ❖ Working conditions
- ❖ Salary
- ❖ Relations with superiors
- ❖ Company policy

Importantly, the hygiene factors apparently had little positive effect on job attitudes but served primarily to prevent job dissatisfaction. For instance, if a company fails to provide adequate hygiene factors the worker will become dissatisfied, no matter how adequate the salaries, working conditions, etc., the worker will remain unsatisfied unless the job has the intrinsic motivation elements.

The two-factor model of satisfiers and dissatisfiers was developed following an investigation into the sources of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction of construction employees, for example engineers. It was assumed that people have the capacity to report accurately the conditions that made them satisfied and dissatisfied with their jobs. Accordingly, the subjects were asked to tell interviewers about the times during which they felt exceptionally good and exceptionally bad about their jobs and how long their feelings persisted (Herzberg, 1957).

It was found that the accounts of good periods most frequently concerned the content of the job, particularly achievement, recognition, advancement, autonomy, responsibility, and the work itself. On the other hand, accounts of bad periods most frequently concerned the context of the job. Company policy and administration, supervision, salary and working conditions more frequently appeared in these accounts than in those told about good periods. The main implications of this research were that:

The wants of employees are divided into two groups. One group revolves around the need for personal growth to develop in one's occupation. The second group operates as an essential base to the first and is associated with fair treatment in compensation, supervision, working conditions and administrative practices. The fulfilment of the needs of the second group does not motivate the individual to high levels of job satisfaction and to extra performance on the job. All we can accept from satisfying this second group of needs is the prevention of dissatisfaction and poor job performance.

These groups form the two factors (Herzberg, 1957). One consists of the satisfiers or motivators, because they are seen to be effective in motivating the individual to superior performance and effort. The other consists of the dissatisfies, which essentially describe the environment and serve primarily to prevent job dissatisfaction, while having little effect on positive job attitude. The latter were named the hygiene factors in the medical use of the term, meaning preventive and environmental. The following are some of the causes of employee dissatisfaction within the working environment, which eventually will lead to or result in job hopping: The employees of today are working to meet their needs and to achieve their own goals (Drafke and Kossen, 2002: 10); they no longer want to have a long-term relationship with the company. On average, employees used to have 3 or 4 jobs during their careers, but now this number has increased to 7 or 8 jobs. This number grows as employees become more mobile (Gubman, 2003: 32). Employees are keen but employers struggle to retain, attract and develop talent, according to a recent national survey of the South African workforce. Local employers are failing to attract, retain and develop their employees. The research findings are based on more than 21 000 responses to a 70 question survey conducted among a broad spectrum of industries and employees at various job levels (Blue River Stone Research, 2008). South Africa's fastest growing jobs portal the second annual *Careers 24* Salary Survey was conducted between October and November, 2008. Some of the key findings of the study include: organizations implement and respond to performance reviews poorly, despite having proud and willing employees; as a result employees move from one company to the next; companies fail to invest sufficiently in skills development; due to this recruitment tends to happen outside the organization rather than developing and promoting employees internally; this also tends to lead to job dissatisfaction of employees within the organization. Men earn more than women and the wage gap widens with age and business; management expertise is the most sought-after skill across most industries (*Careers 24*, 2008). The true root causes of voluntary employee job hopping are hiding in plain sight. If we really think about it, we already know what they are: lack of recognition (including low pay), unfulfilling jobs, limited career advancement, poor management practices, untrustworthy leadership, and dysfunctional work cultures. So in what way are these root causes hidden, and from whom? Surveys tell us that they are hidden from the very people who need to be most aware of them, namely the line managers within companies who are charged with engaging and keeping valued employees in every organization. The vast majority of line managers in fact believe that most employees leave because they are pulled away by better offers. Of course most do leave for better offers, but it is simplistic and superficial to accept pull factors as the root causes. What these

managers fail to perceive is that push factors, mostly within their own power, are the initial stimuli, the first causes that open the door to the pull of outside opportunities. The important question that remains unasked in so many exit interview is not ‘Why are you leaving?’ but ‘Why are you not staying?’ (Branham, 2005).

**Table 1** Factors influencing job hopping

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Factors influencing job hopping</b>
Firth, David, Kathleen, and Loquet (2004)	Lack of commitment in organization Job stress/dissatisfaction
Pee, Woon, and Kankanhalli (2008)	Alternative employment opportunities
Schaefer, Terlutter, and Diehl (2019)	Economic reason
Sharabi (2008)	Large organization provide employees with better chance of advancement and higher wage
Reardon and Barrett (2000)	Increased international capital flow (globalization)
Meek, Roberts, and Gray (2005)	Company size
George, Gow, and Bachoo (2013)	Training opportunities
Gberevbie, D. (2010)	High performers insufficiently rewarded
Ghosh, Satyawadi, Joshi, and Shadman (2013)	Managerial style Poor hiring practice Lack of recognition Toxic workplace environment Lack of competitive compensation system
Songstad, Lindkvist, Moland, Chimhutu, and Blystad (2012)	Inadequate job training Lack of financial support to new agent/employee Lack of involvement in decision making Poor supervision Lack of good career policy Dissatisfaction with remuneration method
Lombardi, Verma, Brennan, and Perry (2009)	Wrong fit
Egan, Yang, and Bartlett (2004)	Job not standardized Procedure does not exist for transmitting knowledge to new member
Kok, Kane, Tulloch, Ormel, Theobald, Dieleman (2015)	Poor supervisory practices, Poor recruitment policies, Poor personnel policies, Poor grievance procedure, Lack of motivation
Xiong, Wang, Cheng, and Yu (2018)	High level of inefficiency
Tsai, Yen, Huang, and Huang (2007)	Needs to cut cost Restructure/ downsize
Rose, Mallinson, and Gerson (2006)	Resigning to take care of terminally ill family member Accompanying spouse to another area
Andrews and Dziegielewski (2005)	Lack of job satisfaction Job stress Alternative opportunities
Lu, Barriball, Zhang, and While (2012)	Age Gender Role conflict Co-worker support Job opportunity Organizational commitment

	Intent to leave Kinship responsibility
Pfeiffer and Reize, (2000)	State of the economy Unemployment level Size of firm Job design Family responsibility Expectations and abilities
Wong (2008)	Length of time in job Age
Ghignoni and Verashchagina (2014)	Qualification of the employees
Rad and Yarmohammadian (2006)	Work repetitiveness Perception of co-workers Intention to leave Importance of improvement
Kultalahti and Viitala (2014)	Motivated by higher pay Not engaged Bored Poorly managed

(Source, Author's own)

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Sampling and sample population

The population for this study were active stakeholders and construction professionals as well as human resource managers in the Gauteng Province of the South African construction industry. These construction professionals were chosen because, in the pilot study, they indicated knowledgeable contributions to meeting the objective of the study. The standard for selecting respondents for this study was that participants had to be actively involved in the South African construction industry from the Gauteng Province of the country. This study employed self-selection and random sampling which gives all participants an equal chance of being selected for the study. Data for this study was obtained through primary and secondary sources. The primary data collated for this study was achieved through administering of a well-structured questionnaire, which is mostly used for quantitative research (McDaniel and Gate, 2012).

The questionnaire was designed based on the review of related literature. Secondary data used in this study was derived from existing literature published in government reports, conference papers and journal articles. As appraised by Kumar (2011), literature review expands the knowledge base of the researcher and helps in integrating the findings with the existing body of knowledge. This study used closed-ended questions based on literature reviewed. Data for this study was collected with the aid of a well-structured questionnaire to investigate the cause of job hopping within the construction industry in South Africa and its subject matter. The respondents were given an average of fifteen minutes to complete the questionnaire without any form of coercion. 75 questionnaires were retrieved from a total of 100 administered. The questionnaires were administered to 21 female and 54 male participants who are actively involved in construction operations in Gauteng Province. It is important to note that these numbers were highly based on the availability, willingness, and consent of the candidates to partake in the study. From the pilot study, there were signs that indigenes of the Gauteng Province are liberal. As such, their cultural, traditional, or religious predispositions did not seem to have posed a barrier or limitation to their willingness to partake in the study nor did it hinder them from freely disclosing their opinions and sharing their knowledge with respect to the subject matter. Nonetheless, the general knowledge base and opinions of the male and female respondents in this study are considered vital as they offer a basis for comparison between respondents, providing crucial insights to the subject matter and indicate pertinent dynamics on the study of the causes of job hopping in South African construction industry through the Gauteng Province.

## Data analysis

Strydom and Delpont (2002) opined that data analysis is the process implemented by the researcher to give structure and meaning to the vast amount of data collected. The handling of information needs to happen creatively and meaning must be given to the vast amount of information. The study employed descriptive analysis for its data analysis. Descriptive analysis used frequency distribution to measure the significance of all the variables and to rank them. The questionnaire consisted of questions that were ranked using frequency distribution to examine and acquire the respondents' opinion on the causes of job hopping in South African construction industry in the Gauteng Province. This made it possible to determine the rank of each item. The comparison of the frequency distribution of the items as judged by the respondents was easy because the items were ranked. This helped in analyzing data collected from the survey questionnaire. After the mathematical computations were done, the individual criteria were ranked in descending order of their frequency distribution (from the highest to the lowest).

## 3.3 Results

Table 2 shows the main causes of job hopping within the construction industry in South Africa, the variables and the respondents' ranking. The study revealed that, with a frequency distribution (FD) of 41, 'money and recognition' is the leading factor influencing job hopping within construction industry in South Africa. 'Personal growth and new challenges' were ranked second with (FD = 17); 'lack of experience' was ranked third with (FD = 8); and 'ill-treatment from managers' was ranked fourth with (FD = 7). The table further shows that 'not working as a team' was ranked fifth with (FD = 1); and 'individual circumstances' was ranked sixth with (FD = 1).

**Table 2:** Main causes of job hopping within the construction industry in South Africa.

Job hopping related causes	Frequency distribution (FD)	Percentage (%)
Money and recognition	41	55
Personal growth and new challenges	17	23
Lack of experience.	8	11
Ill-treatment from managers	7	9
Not working as a team	1	1
Individual circumstances	1	1

In brief, 55% of respondents felt that money and recognition cause job hopping, whereas 23% of the respondents ascribed job hopping to not being given an opportunity to grow, with the least of the causes of job hopping being 1% for both not working as a team, and individual circumstances. Recognition that is valued in terms of financial rewards is the biggest single cause of job hopping; for instance, if you are a worker, you need to be recognized in your job so that you are able to be motivated in your job and get promoted. If this were to be done, there would be no job hopping within the construction industry. Employees move from one company to the next in the hope of gaining experience to enable them to earn more money. Others say that there are no fringe benefits in the company so they do not see the point of being in such a company. Unfairness, racism, sexism, political appointments, racial appointments, appointments based on colour, and appointing non-skilled employees with irrelevant experience and qualifications in specialized skills jobs – all of these factors also contribute to employees resorting to job hopping. Some workers are not well-trained in what they do and they are under pressure as they are not performing well in what they are required to do, resulting in job hopping. There is still much training to be done, especially on the White employees (Afrikaners). Participants said that they (the Whites) still believe that they own the building industry and personally participants said they would prefer to work in an environment with fewer Afrikaners.

## 4. Discussion

The main causes of job hopping within construction is the fact that candidates are more skilled today and tend to play the field when looking for work, which allows them to negotiate for higher packages and more benefits. Two years ago, employees in generally were most concerned about the location and the name of the company in the job advertisements, but now it is all about the money. The strong focus on salary is often at the expense of long-term security. Therefore, the decision to stay with a company or to resign involves evaluating costs and benefits, and if the present value of the returns associated with turnover exceeds both monetary and psychological costs of leaving,

workers will be motivated to change jobs. If the discounted stream of benefits is not as high as the costs, workers will resist changing jobs (Ehrenberg and Smith, 1994). The explicit and implicit benefits associated with staying or retaining a job will be reduced if a worker is unhappy, if the immediate cost of leaving is low, if the utility of the new job is great, or if the new job offers a comparable compensation package.

## 5. Conclusions

This study focused on the causes of job hopping within the construction industry in South Africa. The study sought the views of active stakeholders and construction professionals in the Gauteng Province of the South African construction industry. The study revealed that, out of the list of main causes of job hopping within the construction industry identified, the top three most severe causes as recorded by the respondents are as follows: money and recognition, personal growth and new challenges, and lack of experience. The results also indicated that, money and recognition is the leading factor/cause influencing job hopping within the construction industry in South Africa, based on respondents' viewpoint. Personal growth and new challenges, is considered the second most severe factor/cause influencing job hopping within the construction industry in South Africa. There is a pressing need for the government and all parties involved in the construction industry to intervene in order reduce employee turnover in South Africa. The study therefore suggests that to drastically reduce the causes of job hopping within the construction industry in South Africa, the South African government and stakeholders in the construction industry must come up with strategies used as retention strategies by companies from a neutral or fair extent and hence, its practicality and effectiveness to retain employees. *Rewards and recognition* are yet another crucial component to the success of a company's retention programme because they confirm to the employees that their efforts are meaningful, acknowledged and appreciated. One of the easiest and best ways to reward employees is to simply congratulate employees on a job well done. Long hours and hard work that go unnoticed will leave employees feeling deflated. Other forms of recognition include service awards, congratulatory or promotion letters signed by top executive, promotion announcements on the company intranet, in a company newsletter or in a trade publication and public accolades at company meetings. Companies might consider a systematic compensation/bonus programme designed to establish milestones and to reward top performers.

Companies that establish a clear, definitive strategy for retention will benefit tremendously. The following are some strategies that are invaluable in current retention strategies:

*Culture and commitment:* It is a common misconception that retention is the sole responsibility of a company's HR department. In practice, a successful programme includes buy-in from all departments and levels of an organization. Owners, top executives and managers must jointly establish company operating principles that define its value system. Further, these leaders must take an active role in promoting, communicating and practising this culture. A strong company culture is one that places value on people, fosters teamwork, is forwarding-thinking, and encourages open communication.

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