CHAPTER TWO
BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This chapter provides a conceptual background to present research. In this chapter, the definition, context, and theories utilized in the research study are presented. This chapter is intended to provide conceptual clarity which will further help to understand the linkages between various constructs in literature review covered in the following chapter.

2.1 Definition of New Recruits and their Challenges during Organizational Entry Period

The term ‘new recruit’ is closely associated with tenure of the employee in the organization. In most of the past research, the term ‘new recruit’ is used for the employees based on the tenure of the employee after they join the organization. New recruits are newly hired employees of the organization who has completed less than one year in the organization (Rollag, 2007). One of the prominent studies conducted by Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo and Tucker, 2007, on new recruits has considered the tenure of less than 13 months to define the new recruits. Also, the authors captured newly hired employees with and without previous experience under the umbrella of term ‘new recruit.’ However, a study conducted by Beus, Jarrett, Taylor, and Wiese, 2014, explained that the previous work experience of a newly hired employee has a positive impact on his or her adjustment, socialization and performance in the new organization. Thus, it is not fair to neglect the past experience of the employee and treat the transition of the individual whether from educational institute to corporate world or from one organization to another in the same way.

When it comes to transition, the newly hired employees joining the organization just after completion of education face more challenges as compared to ones who switch the job from one organization to another (Ashford & Black, 1996). The newly joined employees are likely to
adjust in the organization and start their assigned work within three months (Nifadkar et al., 2012). Previous research has also suggested that it takes three months to twelve months for an employee to adjust in the organization (Morrison, 1993; Wanous, 1980). Thus, the present study defines new recruits as newly joined employees in the organization who have completed three to twelve months in the organization, who do not have any previous work experience and are undergoing a transition from education institute to the corporate world.

Entry into a new organization leads to transition that thrusts the new recruits into an unfamiliar environment where their expectations may get challenged by the actual experiences (Louis, 1980). Newly hired employees get reality shocks which lead to tension and increase the level of stress. This, in turn, results in behavioral withdrawal (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004), interpersonal conflict, lack of productivity (Ganster & Rosen, 2013), dissatisfaction and turnover (Kammeyer-Mueller, Wanberg, Glomb, & Ahlburg, 2005).

Before joining the organization, new employees are always excited to start working on the new job responsibility, and they are confident in their abilities to perform. But soon after joining the organization the adjustment phase becomes a high-stress situation for new recruits (Bauer & Truxillo, 2000) and full of new surprises and shocks (Kim, Cable, & Kim, 2005). The question which starts bothering the new recruits are “Am I a good fit for the organization?” “What are the expectations of the organization from me?” and “Will I be able to fulfill those expectations?” (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Thus, the past studies suggest that to get rid of the uncertainty the new recruits are likely to seek new information about the organizational expectation, details about the job responsibility and the ideal way to behave in the organization. This attitude of new recruits leads to frequent feedback seeking behavior (Ashford & Cummings, 1985). Also, the past research indicated that the insider of the organization, especially the
supervisor plays an important role to boost the feedback seeking behavior in the new recruits and support the adjustment of new recruits in the organization (Bauer et al., 2007). The organization socialization tactics are also considered as one of the important antecedents of early adjustment of new recruits in the organization (Jones, 1986). Therefore, it is clear that new recruits are vulnerable after joining the organization and during first three months to one year period they require support from the supervisor and the organization to successfully adjust in the organization (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011).

2.2 Theoretical background

The present study explores the new recruit’s outcomes based on the supervisor’s behavior, the new recruit’s feedback seeking behavior as well as their intention to quit. The arguments in the studies are based on various theories from the past literature.

2.2.1. Social exchange theory

George Homans in 1958 introduced the social exchange theory which explained social change and stability between two people or parties as a process of negotiated exchanges. The theory proposes that human relationships are formed based on the subjective cost-benefit analysis and the comparison between the available alternatives. The social exchange between two individuals was defined as the tangible or intangible activity which can happen more or less frequently and can be costly or rewarding in nature (Homans, 1961). Here the author has viewed cost in terms of foregone opportunities or alternative activities by the individuals involved in the exchange. Also, the author used the reinforcement principles from the concept of behaviorism to explain the persistence of exchange among individuals. He argued that behavior of an individual is a function of payoffs and during a social exchange; the individual verifies the cost associated with the exchange. He further explained that during social interaction the behavior of individual A
reinforced the behavior of individual B, also further the individual B’s behavior reinforced individual A’s behavior in return. He claimed that social behavior of an individual emerges from the social process of mutual reinforcement among two individuals. The author has given the proposition which states that a behavior which generates positive consequences, gets rewarded and provides more valuable results, is more likely to be repeated by the individual (Homans, 1961).

Regarding organizational behavior, the social exchange theory is focused on the steps that the organization should take to improve the employee’s commitment (Blua, 1964). Employees’ should get support and respect while working with the organization to be more loyal which in turn reduced turnover (Gouldner, 1960). In the present study based on the social exchange theory, we argue that the relationship between supervisor and newly hired employees is governed by subjective cost-benefit analysis and the comparison between the available alternatives. Thus, a supportive behavior from a supervisor can reinforce the new recruit’s feedback seeking behavior, organizational commitment and intent to stay in the organization.

2.2.2. Uncertainty reduction theory

Uncertainty reduction is based on the need of individuals to make sense out of something or the given situation. Berger and Calabrese, 1975, claimed that when an individual interacts with a stranger, he or she experiences uncertainty as the expectations are not clear. Authors also explained that the gain of information about the expectation quickly reduces the uncertainty. The uncertainty reduction theory drives the communication behavior of an individual in an unexpected scenario.
Miller and Jablin, 1991, articulated the condition of new recruits during entry period as individuals who are "thrown in to sink or swim." New recruits often face uncertainty linked with the composite configuration of expectations and new professional relationships. Brett, 1984, claimed that new recruits face both effort-behavior uncertainty which refers to the uncertainty about the ability to perform in the organization and behavior-outcome uncertainty which is linked with the knowledge about the job assigned. This uncertainty can be the result of information deprivation, or conflicting information which can be ameliorated through information seeking. Thus, uncertainty directly affects the communication behavior of newly hired employees. Uncertainty in the organization can be reduced through information seeking from various channels, notably the interactions with supervisors (Ashford & Cummings, 1985). Also, Nifadkar et al., 2012, claimed that supervisor’s support behavior triggers the feedback seeking behavior of the new recruits. Thus, in order to reduce uncertainty and due to supervisor’s support behavior the new recruits are likely to seek feedback from their supervisor.

2.2.3. Theory of planned behavior

The theory of planned behavior suggested that the behavioral intention of the individual is a good predictor of the actual behavior (Ajzen, 2001). The author claimed that human behavior is guided by three beliefs namely behavioral, normative and control beliefs. The behavioral belief is linked with the predicted outcomes of the behavior and its evaluation. The normative belief is related to the social or situational pressure along with the motivation which compiles the behavior. The control belief is the perceived power of the individual on the factors linked with the performance of the behavior. Here, the behavioral belief leads to a favorable or unfavorable attitude of the individual towards the behavior; the normative belief leads to subjective norms linked with the behavior while the control belief leads to perceived control over the action of the
behavior. The combination of these three beliefs leads to the formation of an individual behavioral intention. Now, the favorable attitude of the individual along with the favorable subjective norm with greater perceived control results into stronger behavioral intention. Finally, the author claimed that when an individual has a sufficient degree of control and favorable attitude towards the behavior, he/she is expected to carry out their intentions once the right opportunity arises. Thus, the behavioral intention of an individual is assumed to be immediate antecedent of his/her behavior (Ajzen, 2001). In the case of turnover intention, the behavior intention to quit is a cognitive manifestation of the actual decision to quit. So, based on this theory we used ‘intention to quit’ of new recruit to predict the actual turnover of new recruits in the organization.

To sum up, this chapter provides insights on the context of organization entry and the new recruits struggle during early days in the organization. It also explains the theories which support the arguments presented in the study. The next chapter provides an inclusive review of literature which includes prominent past research work linked with the topic of present study.