CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Classification of Research

Boyd et al (2005) classified research into two general types – Exploratory and Conclusive. Exploratory research looks for hypotheses, while conclusive research can be classified as either descriptive or experimental. Descriptive research portrays an accurate profile of persons, events or situations.

“Social research is theoretical, meaning that much of it is concerned with developing, exploring or testing the theories or ideas that social researchers have about how the world operates. But it is also empirical, meaning that it is based on observations and measurements of reality - on what we perceive of the world around us” (Trochim, 2006). Most research can be thought of as a blending of these two terms - a comparison of our theories about how the world operates with our observations of its dimensions. This research is a blend of theoretical and empirical. As state earlier, the exploratory research lays the foundation for the formulation of hypotheses. Conclusive research tests the hypotheses of a research problem and draws definite conclusions for implementation. The research work is descriptive as it is carried out with specific objectives and resulting in definite conclusions. It also tries to portray verifiable reasons for job hopping and employee turnover which is tested for reliability and validity.
3.1 Types of Research

- Exploratory (Literature survey, experience survey and study of problems-Case study to have an insight)
- Conclusive (Descriptive and Experimental)
- Modeling (Symbolic, Mathematical, Simulation Models)
- Algorithmic (Gibaldi, 2002)

3.2 The Key Research Question

"Is there a possibility by proactive HR initiatives to manage job hopping and employee turnover in the telecom industry in Tamil Nadu?"

To answer this question the following research objectives were also taken up:

- To investigate whether the trends are impacting organizations differently
- To investigate whether this social phenomena has any broader dimensions and can be managed for the betterment of individual careers, corporate success and stability in the society

3.3 Conceptual Framework

At the conceptual level, employee job hopping can be thought of a decision process that makes an employee to voluntarily terminate his present employment with an organization to join another organization to pursue his career ambition. The decision process is conscious and is driven by the causes that reside in his personality and his membership of the present organization and the alternative avenues of employment that are available to him.

The decision rests on the balancing act of values that an employee perceives that he stands to derive from the alternate organizational membership. The impetus for
employee job hopping emanates from dissatisfaction with current position and eminent promise of a bright future elsewhere.

The personality of an individual is a sum of his convictions, values, experience and expectations. It is reflected in the way he views his acts and of those around him in the workplace. The personality constructs of an individual decide how well he can integrate in any given situation personally, socially and organizationally. And it is the degree of integration with his surrounding that determines his level of satisfaction or sense of belonging. While a proportion of his experience is likely to reinforce his perceived belief others may push him to look elsewhere. Since the experience is an on-going process, its composition is fluid.

An organization on the other hand possess a unique culture and a structure of its own, the two distinctive constituents of its identity, it has its distinctive way of an operational life to which its members have to adjust to keep it going. As an entity, it is inevitable that it commands conformance from its constituents. However, constant changes in the environment demands flexibility for survival and growth.

The environment that exists around an organization is not really stable, as it undergoes changes from time to time. In the case of an individual employee the environment is characterized by the organization he works for and the organization he has interest in, his colleagues and peers at work, his social circle and his family both nodal and extended. For an organization it is everything else in the world other than itself that needs its attention, such as its stakeholders, its competition, the Government and the industry at large. Given the descriptive picture, employee job hopping can be considered as a process of decision making and an act by the employee after deliberate balancing of options in two different careers in organizations.
An employee is at peace in his current organization till such time he is driven into dissolution due to extrinsic and intrinsic factors. On the other side of the spectrum he may have multiple reasons to stay in his current organization. Therefore, every employee experiences push or pull factors during the process of job hopping.

The relationship between the employee expectations vis-à-vis reality at work and employee turnover can be conceptualized in terms of the cause and effect model as shown below (Figure 21):

![Figure 21: Cause and Effect model of Employee Turnover in the Telecom industry](image)

The model describes that when the employee expectations in terms of job content, work environment, compensation and recognition are not fulfilled at the workplace, it causes discontent. This may lead to a drop in productivity, morale and commitment levels. The long-term outcome of this is that an employee either stops contributing at his full potential or exits from the organization in the quest of a role where his expectations would be fulfilled. Another undesirable outcome of this can be warm chair attrition.

### 3.4 Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1** There is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and employees decision to stay in an organization

**Hypothesis 2** Alternate employment opportunities are positively associated with job hopper's intentions to exit an organization
Hypothesis 3  HR Policies and Practices have a direct bearing on employee intention to stay in an organization
Hypothesis 4  Age and total work experience have a direct influence on the employee’s intention to stay in their current organization
Hypothesis 5  Knowledge workers intention to job hop is influenced by the training initiatives and scope for innovation at work
Hypothesis 6  Pay and benefits is a motivating factor for job hoppers for selecting a job or continue to stay in the current organization
Hypothesis 7  High potential employees, top performers and critical resources exit their current organization for better career prospects if there is no differential treatment
Hypothesis 8  The industry growth is creating multiple job opportunities in rural markets – however, employees prefer to remain in home location and do not explore growth prospects resulting in relocation

3.5 Research Design

A good research design can be judged by the way it approaches the two issues of comparison and control. Designing a piece of empirical research requires the researcher to decide on the best ways of collecting data in research locales which will permit meaningful and insightful comparisons.

A good research design is one which gives the researcher confidence in the solidity of the conclusions drawn from the data. The ideal research design is reproduced in Figure 22 and 23 (Taylor et al, 2008);
Figure 22: Simple Linear Model-Research Design

Figure 23: Cyclic Model-Research Design
The research design adopted for the study is reproduced in the Figure 24 below:

3.6 Sampling Design

This study encompasses both primary and secondary research sources. The inferences from the primary data and the secondary sources have also been examined. To control the variation in the composition of the employees the sample
was drawn from all the leading telecom service organizations in the State of Tamil Nadu, proportionately to the size and scale of operations and the manpower strength.

The population of the study had individual employees as the major component. This spectrum of choice to draw a sample that could be subjected to the study and analysis was adequate. This made a reasonably wide sample from providing meaningful insights into the approaches as well as considering that these organization and individual employees dwell on while participating in and precipitating employee job hopping. The sampling method used for the pilot study was a simple random method and for the final phase of the research the stratified random sampling method was adopted. The research was conducted in two phases:

3.6 (a) The Exploratory Phase

This phase involved the following steps:

- Study of the secondary data from various sources such as range of past studies from management journals, research papers, case studies, books, periodicals and also through internet
- Discussions with academicians, HR gurus, including senior members from the National HRD network (NHRD), National Institute of Personnel Management (NIPM), Indian Society for Training and Development (ISTD) based in Chennai
- Obtaining the response from HR managers and senior leaders from targeted organizations
- Seeking views from head hunters and recruitment consultants
- Exit interview feedback analysis
3.6 (b) The Validation Phase

The validation was done based on the inputs from the exploratory phase. This phase involved the following steps:

- Administering the questionnaire on 400 permanent employees resulting in 144 responses as part of the pilot study.
- Thereafter, administering the final revised questionnaire by circulating the same directly by an e-survey and also by email.

The primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire from the target universe applying the stratified sampling method.

3.6.1 Target Population and Sampling Units

Target population for the purpose of this study is defined as all the permanent employees working in the eight private sector telecom organizations in the State of Tamil Nadu. Individual employees from each of the organizations were drawn up based on the Age, Designation, and Function - role, Work experience, Education qualifications, Gender, Current location and Company to ensure the sample represents the total universe in most respects.

3.6.2 Selection of the Sample

Eight leading telecom players from the State had been sampled. The balance was left out purely on the grounds of size of the employee base, recently commenced operation and hence no trends on job hopping or employee turnover could be predicted or established. “For most purposes n=30 is sufficient, provided the universe is not exceedingly asymmetrical” (Boyd et. al., 2005). 100 is a medium sized sample and 300 is a larger sample. More than 5% sample size is an appreciable proportion of
the sample universe. Eight of the organizations were identified for drawing the sample, which by itself is representative of the universe of employees (Appendix 13). It was decided to sample all these organizations to have a normal distribution for the samples collected. A minimum sample size was decided for each organization based on its size of operations and the manpower strength. The final survey resulted in 430 responses of which 12 responses were rejected since they did not meet the response criteria, resulting in a total of 418 clean responses, which is a large sample. Each organization sampled had employees between 200-1100 employees (sampling frame) and a sample size of 418 employee represented 9.95% of the universe (37% of the target 1120 employees responded), which is an appreciable sample.

3.6.3 Reason for Considering Stratified Sampling

The stratified sampling method was followed as it would have lot more statistical efficiency. There were around 4200 direct employees (as on October’ 2011) in the telecom service industry in the State of Tamil Nadu. To carry out a stratified random sampling about 1120 employees were selected from the leading job portals and professional networking sites. The full resumes of these employees working in the industry were downloaded from these portals, to ascertain the demographic details of the employees seeking jobs and also delve deep to ascertain the various trends. Each of the selected employees was administered with the questionnaire, who were scattered across Chennai and the Rest of Tamil Nadu (in all major district headquarters).

This study considered stratified random sampling over simple random sampling owing to its improvisation and statistical efficiency. The population was divided into a specified set of strata such that the members within each stratum have similar attributes but the members between the strata had dissimilar attributes.
3.7 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was designed to ensure the following:

- **Maintaining focus:** It is important to refer to the research questions that defined the focus of the research
- **Gaining and retaining the respondent’s interest on the subject matter**
- **Stress Confidentiality:** To ensure the confidentiality of the responded is maintained owing to the stress it would create by releasing confidential personal views

3.7.1 **Contact Method:** Respondents were contacted in person, by a telephonic interview, e-survey and e-mail.

3.7.2 **Research tool** used for the analysis of data was SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

3.7.3 **Frequency Tables:** The study involved profiling the exits in terms of Gender, Age - Experience band wise, Qualification, Function/Role, Location-Company wise. For this profiling, frequency Tables, percentages, averages and charts (Bar chart) were used with the help of SPSS.

3.8 **Research Instrument**

The research instrument used in this study was developed by the researcher and involved questions seeking a variety of responses concerning job hopping, turnover intentions, satisfaction levels and with an effort to capture various responses associated with the intention of an employee to stay or exit an organization (Appendix 1).

A researcher cannot avoid having data contaminated by some form of bias. However, bias can be reduced and objectivity enhanced. Subjectivity refers to the extent to
which a judgment is based on individual personal impressions, feelings, assumptions, beliefs, values and opinions rather than external facts (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001). Without sacrificing the objectivity in this study, this research used a non-standardized instrument and also used the triangulation method of data collection by obtaining information using secondary sources to corroborate the questionnaire survey.

The instrument uses a Likert response scale to measure responses on an interval level using a 1 to 5 rating and that range from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Trochim, 2006). This research adopted the pragmatist view of treating Likert scale as an interval scale as it is being followed by most social researchers. Some questions did not follow the standard Likert scale and were close ended for soliciting responses. The design was to provide for uninhibited thinking and free flow of ideas and deliberations to generate honest feedback to understand the social phenomenon.

The questionnaire was designed covering all the major aspects that go into the decision for an employee to decide to stay or quit an organization. It was made easy to solicit quick but precise responses to aid the study appropriately.

The research instrument was designed to capture responses on seven main perspectives or eight key questions of the research which were validated and tested. These perspectives could be classified as job satisfaction, alternate job opportunities, HR policies and practices, training and innovation, pay and benefits, retention of HIPOs and critical resources and location preferences.

The instrument was designed and developed by the researcher based on his experience dealing with employees during exit interviews and also based on the literature available and sample questionnaires used in the past. The instrument was tested for its validity and reliability by administering the same across one hundred
and forty four respondents as part of the pilot survey and thereafter refined for final administration. The instrument was tested for validity and reliability with the help of the SPSS tool.

3.9 Pilot Study

A pilot study of the measurement instrument was necessary to validate the items as well as the scale for making the necessary changes. Moreover, constructing a valid instrument is an ongoing process. In this study, the questionnaire was pilot tested on 400 employees using a simple random method however after the desired follow up only 144 responses were collected. During the pilot phase the questionnaire had (Appendix 3):

- Seven questions in the demographic Section- A
- Thirty two questions - Section- B, with a total of 39 questions.

After the validation of the scale using the experience and learning from this study, the final survey questionnaire was developed.

During the pilot study the questionnaire was e-mailed to the participants by creating a link in the internet survey portals for them to respond. E-mails were also sent to seek responses through a soft copy. Despite a regular follow-up the number of responses received was very low and hence owing to time and other constraints such as geographical spread of the employees, it was decided to collect the majority of the responses through telephonic interview method. The feedback received from the pilot study enabled the researcher to modify the questionnaire to make it more consistent and relevant to test the hypotheses.


3.10 Final Survey

The research instrument was sent by e-mail to the target sample directly, by email and also through online survey portal to seek their responses. Despite a regular follow up only 1% of the employees responded back and hence the employees were contacted by e-mails, phone calls, SMS etc., for seeking their support for completing the questionnaire in a reasonable time. There was some need for privacy and hence employees of the target companies preferred the email, e-survey and telephone option rather than face to face interview at the work place, to ensure confidentiality and also the flexibility to take time and complete the questionnaire at one’s own convenience.

- The whole effort finally resulted in generating 418 clean responses (excluding 12 rejections) which were sufficient for data processing, analysis and at arriving at the conclusions (Appendix 9). Ten questions in Section - A
- Twenty four questions in Section – B, with a total of 34 questions. (Three questions were added in Section – A, and eight questions in Section - B were deleted part of the reliability and validity process of the instrument.)

3.10.1 Nature and Volume of Data Collected

The survey explored the relationship between particular variables to verify hypotheses using a structured questionnaire. This approach aided the researcher to conduct the study across the targeted geography, at a reasonable cost and time frame maintaining anonymity. The sources of the information are captured in Table 3.
Table 3: Nature and Volume of Data Collected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Primary Data</th>
<th>Secondary Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Internal to the Organization</td>
<td>1. Employee Questionnaire</td>
<td>1. Exit interview Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. HR Managers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Senior leaders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>External to Organizations</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Literature available on the Internet, Research Reports, Management Journals, Books and Periodicals</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Members of HR Professional Bodies</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Headhunters and Recruitment Consultants</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>4. HR Gurus and Academicians</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The volume of the data collected during the course of this study is as follows:

- Total Responses – 430 nos. (12 rejected) = 418 nos. (Includes Employees, HR Managers and Senior Leaders)
- Exit Interview analysis for the period 2009-2011 from one organization – 853 responses part of the secondary source

Since the purpose of the study was to generate as much primary data as possible within the scope, the time frame, financial resources of the researcher, the relevant inputs have been captured and tabulated for easy understanding and application.

3.11 Reason for Selection of the Telecom industry and the State of Tamil Nadu

The possible effects of specific industries, the size of workforce and the category of employees can affect the outcome in such studies. In order to control the industry-specific effects, the current study focuses on the private sector telecom organizations. It is appropriate for studying the phenomena since it is a buoyant-sunrise industry and having experienced considerable growth over the last one
decade and also contributing significantly to the gross domestic product (GDP). It is also playing a significant role in shaping the life-style of the youth in the country and is also important in terms of job creation in the knowledge and technology space. Telecom industry has been part of the growth story in India and continues to occupy the primary attention as regards job seekers and professionals for career advancement. In view of the nature and complexities, it was found desirable to choose this industry part of the study. The researcher has also spent more than a decade as a practicing HR professional from the industry and found it pertinent to study the trends and to understand the phenomena, suggest possible options for tackling the problem from a long term perspective. The State of Tamil Nadu was identified to confine the study to a manageable boundary to ensure the effectiveness, validity and reliability of the study.

3.12 Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

All observations are theory-laden and scientists (and everyone else, for that matter) are inherently biased by their cultural experiences, world views, and so on (Trochim, 2006). Thus, every research work has limitations. This study also is not an exception.

A few assumptions are listed below:

- The chosen sample size of 1120 employees and responses from 418 employees represents the organizations/industry in the State
- The sample includes the permanent employees and represents the universe of employees
- The data has been collected from genuine sources and the observations and conclusions are based on the first-hand information and analysis
• The study is assumed to benefit the organizations in understanding the reasons why critical resources and top performers exit, controlling and reducing the impact of job hopping

• The exit interview reports of a target organization for the period 2009-2011 was also analyzed and could be related with the findings of the study

• The study also includes a comparative analysis of the HR policies and practices of the target organizations

• The key questions defined as part of the study broadly covers the main challenge at this point in time

• The social phenomenon that has been probed has significant impact on the individuals, organizations and the society

The following are the **limitations** of the study:

This study is limited to the permanent employees of the eight leading private sector telecom organizations operating in the State of Tamil Nadu and does not consider the managed services operator employees, outsourced resources, consultants, trainees [Graduate Engineer Trainees (GET) or Management Trainees (MT)] or retainers. The lack of published literature on the topic of research was a challenge. The literature survey provided tremendous insights on the overall trends. However, most of the past studies have been undertaken overseas (USA and in Europe). The senior leaders and HR managers were a bit wary to share some of their thoughts and opinions to ensure confidentiality which was also an impediment in some ways.

Another handicap was that the organizations had multiple offices in Chennai and ROTN which made it impossible to cover the spread physically by travelling to all the places which hindered face to face administrating of the questionnaire. The other challenge faced by the researcher was that employees were hesitant to part with the
information pertaining to their organization, owing to sensitivities. Percentage of senior level and top management employees who participated in this study is not significant when compared to the junior and middle management employees. Please refer Appendix 5 for the experience profile of the respondents of the survey.

Involuntary turnover or attrition was not considered part of this study or its impact on voluntary turnover. Government operators, equipment manufacturers, managed service operators and other service operators not part of main stream have not been covered. Host of other variables and factors that go into the decision of a job hopper might not have been covered; owing to the magnitude of the social phenomenon may be considered part of the effort for future research. This study also does not cover the impact of non-work domain on job hopping.