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Determinants of Employee Retention in a Small-Scale Rubber Processing Firm: Evidence from Crescent Crumbs Pvt. Ltd., Kerala, India

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Abstract

Employee retention has become a central concern of human resource management because the cost of replacing an experienced worker frequently exceeds the cost of keeping one. Much of the Indian retention literature, however, is drawn from information technology, telecommunications and business process outsourcing, and comparatively little is known about retention in small and medium-sized manufacturing units. This study examines the factors associated with employee retention at Crescent Crumbs Pvt. Ltd., an ISO 9001:2008 certified crumb rubber (ISNR-20) processing firm employing approximately 150 people at Pengattussery, Aluva, Kerala. A descriptive cross-sectional design was adopted. Primary data were gathered from 50 employees selected through convenience sampling using a structured 25-item questionnaire administered during December 2013 and January 2014, and were analysed using percentage analysis supported by diagrammatic representation. The results indicate high levels of satisfaction with hygiene-type conditions: 100% of respondents reported receiving salary on the due date, 96% reported adequate rest room facilities, 94% reported that bonus payments influenced their motivation and performance, and 92% were satisfied with the corporate facilities provided. Weaknesses emerged in three areas: the absence of free transport (60%), limited use of informal and recreational engagement at work (56%), and reported obstruction by internal policies and procedures (80%). Only 18% of respondents linked a possible exit to career opportunities, while 70% cited personal reasons. The findings are broadly consistent with the two-factor account of motivation and with earlier evidence that supervisor support and the work environment are important determinants of retention. Practical recommendations are offered for the firm, and the methodological limits of a small convenience sample are acknowledged.

Keywords: - Employee Retention, Employee Turnover, Job Satisfaction, Supervisor Support, Rubber Processing Industry, Kerala.

I. INTRODUCTION

Human resource management rests on the premise that the people employed by an organisation are assets rather than costs, and that the systematic management of those assets contributes directly to organisational performance (Gupta & Joshi, 2012). Within this field, retention has moved from a peripheral administrative concern to a strategic priority. In the earlier post-independence Indian labour market, tenure was largely a function of the scarcity of alternatives; employees who performed adequately remained with a single employer for the greater part of a working life. The liberalisation of the Indian economy, the growth of organised industry in states such as Kerala, and the increased mobility of skilled and semi-skilled labour have together reversed that position. Employers can no longer assume loyalty, and the burden of retaining capable staff now falls on the organisation itself.

The economic case for retention is well documented. Direct replacement costs have been estimated at between 50% and 60% of the departing employee's annual salary, while total costs, once lost productivity, disrupted client relationships and diminished morale are included, may reach 90% to 200% of annual salary (Allen et al., 2010). Ramlall (2003) placed the total cost of turnover at approximately 150% of salary and demonstrated that location and the compensation package were the factors most often cited by employees who chose to stay, whereas compensation together with a lack of challenge and

opportunity were most often cited by those contemplating departure. Turnover is also corrosive in less visible ways: it removes accumulated tacit knowledge, interrupts succession planning and imposes repeated induction costs on supervisors.

Retention may be defined as a deliberate effort by an employer to create and sustain a working environment in which existing staff choose to remain, through policies and practices that address the diverse needs of the workforce and thereby reduce the substantial costs of recruiting and training replacements. Understood in this way, retention is a set of strategies rather than a single outcome, although it is conventionally measured by an outcome statistic such as the proportion of employees retained over a defined period. A distinction should also be drawn between functional and dysfunctional turnover: the objective is not the elimination of all separations but the preservation of employees whose contribution is valuable (Allen et al., 2010).

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Retention is often treated as a compensation problem, but the evidence suggests otherwise. Griffeth et al. (2000), in a meta-analysis of the turnover literature, found that pay and pay-related satisfaction are only modest predictors of the decision to leave. Employees more commonly withdraw because of the quality of supervision, the absence of a visible career path, a lack of recognition, or a mismatch between the job as described and the job as experienced. Managers therefore influence retention principally through the levels of security, belonging and esteem they are able to create at work, in the sense outlined by Maslow (1943).

Crescent Crumbs Pvt. Ltd. operates in a segment of the rubber industry that combines physically demanding shift-based process work with a relatively narrow internal promotion ladder. The organisation has established a formal human resource function covering manpower planning, recruitment, induction, training, appraisal, welfare and exit management, and it maintains statutory benefits including provident fund, gratuity, Employees' State Insurance coverage and a personal accident policy (Crescent Crumbs Pvt. Ltd., 2013). What has not been established is which of these provisions employees themselves regard as material to their decision to remain, and where the gaps lie. That is the problem this study addresses.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

- To identify the measures currently adopted by Crescent Crumbs Pvt. Ltd. to reduce employee turnover.
- To determine the principal reasons employees would give for leaving the organisation.
- To assess employee perceptions of the prevailing working environment and of the facilities and infrastructure provided.
- To examine whether job satisfaction and working conditions are associated with the intention to remain.
- To explore the influence of four determinants on employee retention: career opportunities, supervisor support, rewards, and work-life balance.
- To recommend practical measures for strengthening retention in the organisation.

1.3. Scope and Significance of the Study

The study is confined to the executive, supervisory and worker categories employed at the Pengattussery unit of Crescent Crumbs Pvt. Ltd. It describes the organisation's commitment to attracting and retaining talented and dedicated staff as that commitment is perceived by employees. The significance of the study lies in three areas: reducing the direct and indirect costs of turnover, protecting the goodwill of the firm in a labour market where employer reputation travels quickly, and preventing interruptions to customer service in a business whose principal buyers are large tyre manufacturers with exacting delivery schedules. There is a wider contribution as well. Indian retention research has concentrated heavily on the services sector (Thite, 2010), and small-scale process manufacturing remains comparatively under-examined.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Theoretical Foundations

Two motivation theories underpin most empirical retention work. Maslow (1943) proposed that human needs are arranged hierarchically, so that safety, belonging and esteem needs must be addressed in sequence. Applied to the workplace, safety corresponds to job security, career progression and health benefits; belonging corresponds to the sense of contributing to something larger than the individual task; and esteem corresponds to confidence, respect and recognition from peers and supervisors.

Herzberg et al. (1959) offered an alternative that overlaps with but differs fundamentally from Maslow's account. Where the hierarchy implies that adding or withdrawing the same stimulus will raise or lower satisfaction, the two-factor theory holds that the determinants of satisfaction are distinct from the determinants of dissatisfaction. Hygiene factors, such as sanitation, lighting, canteen provision, safety equipment and basic pay, do not motivate when present but generate dissatisfaction and withdrawal when absent. Motivators, namely achievement, recognition, responsibility and advancement, are the source of positive satisfaction. The practical implication is that an employer must maintain hygiene factors and add motivators; attending to only one category will not secure retention. This distinction proves directly relevant to the findings reported below.

More recent theory has moved beyond attitudes to the structural ties that bind an employee to an organisation. Mitchell et al. (2001) developed the construct of job embeddedness, comprising the fit between the employee and the job and community, the links formed with colleagues and the surrounding social network, and the sacrifice that leaving would entail. The more embedded an employee, the less likely departure becomes, irrespective of momentary satisfaction. Eisenberger et al. (1986) contributed the parallel construct of perceived organisational support, which holds that employees form a global belief about how far the organisation values their contribution and cares about their well-being, and reciprocate accordingly.

2.2. Empirical Evidence on the Determinants of Retention

Shoaib et al. (2009) surveyed 130 respondents in the Pakistani telecommunications sector and reported that career development opportunities, supervisor support, working environment, rewards and work-life policies were all positively related to retention. Their five-factor structure has been widely adopted and provides the framework used in the present study.

The role of compensation has been examined most directly by Hope and Mackin (2007), who used the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth to investigate whether turnover differences between small and large firms reflect differences in wages and benefits or self-selection by employees. Employees of larger establishments stayed longer, and the offer of benefits reduced the probability of an employee leaving in a given year by 26.2% while increasing the probability of staying an additional year by 13.9%. Ramlall (2003) similarly identified compensation as a leading reason for both staying and leaving, but coupled it with challenge and opportunity, indicating that pay operates alongside rather than instead of intrinsic factors. Griffith et al. (2000) reached the more cautious conclusion that pay explains less variance in turnover than practitioners generally assume.

Supervision and the immediate work climate have consistently emerged as stronger predictors. Mansell et al. (2006) conducted three organisation-wide surveys over three years in the New Zealand Customs Service and found that staff retention and employee satisfaction improved significantly over the period, with the improvement attributable to deliberate workplace changes. The stable predictors of job satisfaction were minor daily stressors, positive work experiences, job control and perceived supervisor support. Andrews et al. (2003), using data from 178 employees of a distribution services organisation, showed that perceptions of organisational politics were negatively related to manager-rated retention, although the relationship held only among employees with a moderate to strong exchange ideology, that is, those inclined to keep account of what they give and receive.

Work-life considerations form a fourth strand. Aryee et al. (1998) surveyed 228 employed parents in a Hong Kong human service authority and found that satisfaction with work schedule flexibility and supervisor work-family support were related to both organisational commitment and turnover intentions; contrary to their prediction, gender did not moderate these relationships.

Within India, Thite (2010) analysed retention in offshored information technology enabled services and identified pay satisfaction, work organisation, employment branding and longer-term career advancement as the critical issues, arguing that no single instrument is sufficient and that multi-pronged strategies are required in a fast-growing and highly competitive sector. Das and Baruah (2013), reviewing the literature, likewise concluded that compensation, reward and recognition, training and career development, supervisor support and the work environment recur across studies. Kossivi et al. (2016) confirmed the same clustering in a later systematic review, noting that management style and organisational support have received increasing attention relative to pay.

2.3. Research Gap

Three observations follow from this literature. First, the determinants of retention are consistent enough across studies to justify treating career opportunities, supervisor support, rewards, working environment and work-life balance as a stable framework. Second, the empirical base is drawn overwhelmingly from services, technology and public-sector settings; small-scale process manufacturing, where work is shift-based, physically demanding and offers a shallow promotion ladder, is largely absent. Third, almost no published work addresses the rubber processing segment, notwithstanding its economic weight in Kerala, which accounts for the overwhelming majority of India's natural rubber production (Rubber Board, 2013). The present study addresses this gap in a modest and exploratory way.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is the systematic procedure by which a research problem is solved, and it encompasses not only the techniques employed but the logic that justifies their selection (Kothari, 2004). The methodological choices made in this study are set out below.

3.1. Research Design

A descriptive cross-sectional design was adopted. Descriptive research is appropriate where the objective is to portray the characteristics of a defined group accurately at a given point in time rather than to establish causation, and it is the conventional choice for perception surveys of this kind. Exploratory design was rejected because the constructs of interest were already well specified in the literature, and experimental design was not feasible because the variables of interest, including supervision, facilities and rewards, could not be manipulated in a working factory.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The population comprised all employees of Crescent Crumbs Pvt. Ltd. at the Pengattussery unit, approximately 150 persons across the production, quality control, administration and marketing functions. A sample of 50 respondents was drawn, representing about one third of the workforce. The sampling unit was the individual employee.

Convenience sampling, a non-probability method in which units are selected on the basis of accessibility, was employed. The choice was dictated by operational constraints: production runs on three continuous shifts, and employees could be approached only when released from the line. The consequence is that the sample cannot be assumed to be statistically representative of the population, and the results should be read as indicative rather than generalisable. This limitation is revisited in Section 7.

3.3. Data Collection

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered in person. The instrument contained 25 items covering demographic particulars (qualification, designation, age, experience and department) and the five determinant categories drawn from Shoaib et al. (2009). Twenty-one items were closed-ended, using dichotomous, five-point rating and four-point agreement formats; two were open-ended, inviting recommendations for retaining employees and views on the principal causes of attrition. The full instrument is reproduced in the Appendix.

Secondary data were obtained from company records and internal publications, including the departmental profile of the human resource function, leave and advance policies, and the product and process documentation for ISNR-20 crumb rubber (Crescent Crumbs Pvt. Ltd., 2013), together with textbooks, journal articles and industry statistics. Fieldwork was carried out over a period of thirty days during December 2013 and January 2014.

3.4. Tools of Analysis

Responses were analysed using percentage analysis, in which the frequency of responses in each category is expressed as a proportion of the total number of respondents. Given the sample size and the categorical nature of most items, percentage analysis was judged appropriate; inferential testing was not undertaken because the non-probability sample would not satisfy its assumptions. Results were additionally represented through column, bar and pie diagrams to aid interpretation. Findings are organised below by construct rather than by questionnaire order, so that related items are read together.

IV. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

All percentages are computed on a base of 50 respondents. Results are grouped into five thematic tables corresponding to the determinant framework, followed by turnover intention.

4.1. Rewards, Recognition and Compensation

Table 1. Employee Responses on Rewards, Recognition and Compensation (n = 50)

Item	Response	f	%
Receives rewards and recognition for achievements	Yes	33	66
	No	17	34
Appreciation by co-workers and supervisors is important	Yes	42	84
	No	8	16
Retention bonus affects motivation and performance	Yes	47	94
	No	3	6
Salary is sufficient to meet personal requirements	Yes	38	76
	No	12	24
Salary is disbursed on the due date	Yes	50	100
	No	0	0

Note. The source report recorded the salary-timeliness item as 100 respondents; this has been corrected to 50 (100%) for consistency with the stated sample size.

Compensation administration emerges as the organisation's clearest strength. Every respondent confirmed that wages are paid on the due date, and 94% reported that the retention bonus influences motivation and performance. Three quarters considered their salary sufficient for their requirements. Recognition, by contrast, is the weakest item in this group: while 84% regard appreciation from colleagues and supervisors as important, only 66% report actually receiving rewards and recognition for their achievements. The 18-point gap between the value placed on recognition and its delivery is the single most actionable finding in this section.

4.2. Working Environment, Facilities and Infrastructure

Table 2. Employee Responses on Working Environment and Facilities (n = 50)

Item	Response	f	%
Corporate facilities provided by the organisation	Satisfactory	46	92
	Not satisfactory	4	8
Rating of infrastructure and equipment	Excellent	5	10
	Very good	30	60
	Good	15	30
	Poor / Worst	0	0
Rest room facilities available	Yes	48	96

	No	2	4
Free transport provided	Yes	20	40
	No	30	60
Management provides a conducive working environment	Strongly agree	12	24
	Agree	28	56
	Partially agree	8	16
	Disagree	2	4

Physical conditions are rated favourably. No respondent rated infrastructure and equipment as poor or worst, and 70% rated it very good or excellent. Facilities satisfaction stood at 92% and rest room provision at 96%. Eighty per cent agreed or strongly agreed that management provides a conducive working environment. The exception is transport: 60% reported that free conveyance is not provided. For a unit situated approximately seven kilometres from Aluva town and operating a shift beginning at midnight, this is a substantive gap rather than a peripheral amenity, and it is consistent with the emphasis Herzberg et al. (1959) placed on hygiene factors as sources of dissatisfaction.

4.3. Supervisor Support and Employee Voice

Table 3. Employee Responses on Supervisor Support and Voice (n = 50)

Item	Response	f	%
Relationship with supervisor is good	Strongly agree	10	20
	Agree	36	72
	Partially agree	4	8
	Disagree	0	0
Supervisor encourages the employee in the job	Strongly agree	30	60
	Agree	18	36
	Partially agree	2	4
	Disagree	0	0
Has an opportunity to share ideas at work	Yes	38	76
	No	12	24

Supervisory relationships are the organisation's strongest intangible asset. No respondent disagreed that the relationship with the supervisor is good, and 96% agreed or strongly agreed that their supervisor encourages them, with 60% at the strongest level. This is significant because supervisor support is among the most stable predictors of job satisfaction and retention identified in the literature (Mansell et al., 2006; Shoaib et al., 2009). Employee voice is somewhat weaker: 24% reported having no opportunity to share ideas at work, indicating that the informal quality of supervisory relationships has not been fully translated into a structured channel for participation.

4.4. Training, Growth and Job Design

Table 4. Employee Responses on Training, Growth and Job Design (n = 50)

Item	Response	f	%
Training programmes are conducted	Yes	47	94
	No	3	6
Company provides opportunities for growth and development	Yes	45	90
	No	5	10
Policies or procedures made the job more difficult	Yes	40	80
	No	10	20
Fun at work affects motivation levels	Yes	22	44
	No	28	56
Experiences boredom in routine work	Often	0	0
	Sometimes	20	40
	Rarely	28	56
	Never	2	4

Holidays granted as per government schedule	Yes	46	92
	No	4	8
Health condition is good	Yes	47	94
	No	3	6

Training provision and perceived growth opportunities are both rated highly, at 94% and 90% respectively, which accords with evidence that employees receiving more training are less likely to leave (Das & Baruah, 2013). Two results in this group warrant closer attention. First, 80% of respondents indicated that company policies or procedures made their job more difficult. This is the only item on which a large majority reported a negative experience, and it stands in tension with the generally favourable ratings elsewhere; the implication is that formal administrative process, rather than supervision or facilities, is the principal friction in daily work. Second, 40% reported that they sometimes experience boredom in routine work, which is unsurprising in a continuous process operation where the task cycle is fixed, and 56% considered that recreational activity at work would not affect their motivation. The latter finding suggests that engagement interventions imported from service-sector practice may not transfer directly to this workforce.

4.5. Turnover Intention

Table 5. Stated Reason for a Prospective Exit from the Organisation (n = 50)

Reason	f	%
Personal reasons	35	70
Career opportunities	9	18
Team fitment	6	12
Other	0	0
Total	50	100

Asked what would prompt them to leave, 70% of respondents cited personal reasons, 18% career opportunities and 12% team fitment. Two readings are possible. On the first, the dominance of personal reasons indicates that separations are driven largely by circumstances outside the employer's control, which would be a favourable result. On the second, personal reasons functions as a socially acceptable response that conceals dissatisfaction the respondent is reluctant to attribute to the employer while still in its employment. The literature supports caution here: employees are frequently guarded in exit contexts because they fear reprimand or the loss of a future reference, and the more common underlying causes are the relationship with the manager and the treatment of employees rather than compensation (Allen et al., 2010; Ramlall, 2003). Given that this item was administered by a researcher on company premises, the second reading cannot be dismissed.

V. DISCUSSION

The pattern across the five constructs is coherent and lends itself to interpretation through the two-factor framework. Hygiene factors are, with one exception, well managed. Wages are paid punctually, statutory benefits are in place, sanitation and rest facilities are provided, and equipment is rated favourably by the entire sample. Herzberg et al. (1959) would predict that this configuration prevents active dissatisfaction without in itself generating commitment, and the data are consistent with that prediction: satisfaction scores are high, yet a quarter of respondents feel unable to contribute ideas and two fifths experience periodic boredom.

The exception among hygiene factors is transport. Sixty per cent of respondents reported that free conveyance is not provided, in a unit operating a midnight-to-eight shift at a location some distance from the nearest town. Because hygiene factors generate dissatisfaction through their absence rather than satisfaction through their presence, this single deficiency may carry disproportionate weight in withdrawal decisions, particularly among workers on night shifts.

On the motivator side the position is mixed. Supervisor encouragement is strong, and the near-unanimous agreement on this item is the most encouraging result in the study given the weight the literature attaches to supervision (Andrews et al., 2003; Mansell et al., 2006). Training and growth opportunities are also perceived favourably. Recognition, however, lags the importance employees attach to it by 18 percentage points, and participation in decision-making reaches only three quarters of the sample. Ramlall (2003) found that a lack of challenge and opportunity ranked alongside compensation among reasons for contemplating exit, and the 18% of respondents here who identified career opportunities as a potential reason for leaving is consistent with that.

The finding on policies and procedures deserves separate comment because it is the study's clearest anomaly. Eighty per cent of respondents affirmed that policies or procedures had made their job more difficult, in an organisation otherwise rated positively on nearly every dimension. Three explanations are plausible. The procedural discipline required by ISO 9001:2008 certification and by the quality specifications of tyre manufacturers may impose documentation and inspection burdens that employees experience as obstruction. Alternatively, the item wording may have been read by some respondents as an invitation to identify any procedural difficulty rather than a systemic one. A third possibility is that the negatively worded item was misread in a questionnaire otherwise composed of positively worded items. The study cannot adjudicate between these, and the point is flagged as a priority for follow-up rather than as an established finding.

Read against the determinant framework of Shoaib et al. (2009), the organisation performs well on supervisor support, rewards and working environment; adequately on career opportunities; and least well on work-life provisions, of which

transport is the visible symptom. The overall picture is of a firm that has secured the foundations of retention and now faces the harder task of building motivators upon them.

VI. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- Compensation administration is reliable: 100% of respondents receive salary on the due date, 94% report that the retention bonus influences their motivation and performance, and 76% consider their salary adequate for their requirements.
- Physical working conditions are satisfactory: 92% are satisfied with corporate facilities, 96% with rest room provision, and no respondent rated infrastructure and equipment below good.
- Supervisory relationships are strong: 92% agree or strongly agree that their relationship with their supervisor is good, and 96% report receiving encouragement from their supervisor.
- Development provision is perceived positively: 94% confirm that training programmes are conducted and 90% perceive opportunities for growth and development.
- Recognition lags its perceived importance: 84% regard appreciation as important, but only 66% report receiving rewards and recognition for their achievements.
- Transport is the principal facilities gap: 60% report that free conveyance is not provided, in a unit operating three continuous shifts.
- Internal process is a source of friction: 80% indicated that company policies or procedures had made their job more difficult.
- Employee voice is incomplete: 24% report having no opportunity to share ideas at work.
- Recreational engagement has limited traction: 56% consider that fun at work does not affect motivation levels, although 40% report periodic boredom with routine work.
- Turnover intention is attributed principally to personal reasons (70%), followed by career opportunities (18%) and team fitment (12%).

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following measures follow from the findings and are ordered by the strength of the evidence supporting them.

- Formalise recognition. A structured scheme of shift-level or departmental awards, publicly announced and modest in monetary value, would close the gap between the importance employees attach to appreciation and their experience of receiving it. Recognition is inexpensive relative to its effect and is the clearest opportunity identified in this study.
- Review transport provision. A shared conveyance for the night shift, or a transport allowance where a vehicle is not practicable, would address the only hygiene factor on which a majority reported a deficiency.
- Audit policies and procedures. Given that four fifths of respondents identified procedural obstruction, a departmental review should establish which specific requirements are experienced as burdensome and whether they can be simplified without compromising ISO 9001:2008 compliance or customer quality specifications.
- Institutionalise employee voice. Weekly departmental meetings and a suggestion scheme with a defined response time would extend the strength of individual supervisory relationships into a systematic channel. The company's stated quality objective of collecting and applying employee suggestions provides an existing basis for this.
- Address routine monotony through job design rather than recreation. Since a majority did not regard recreational activity as motivating while two fifths report boredom, cross-training and planned rotation across process stages are likely to be more effective than social programmes, and carry the additional benefit of operational flexibility.
- Strengthen exit and stay interviews. Because personal reasons dominates the stated grounds for prospective exit, structured stay interviews with longer-serving employees and exit interviews conducted by a neutral party would yield more reliable diagnostic information than the present arrangement.
- Make career paths explicit. Communicating the criteria linking performance and experience to promotion would address the 18% who identified career opportunities as a potential reason for departure.

VIII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Several constraints qualify the findings. The sample of 50 was drawn by convenience rather than probability methods, so statistical generalisation to the workforce of 150 is not warranted and sampling error cannot be estimated. Data were collected at a single point in time over thirty days, which precludes any assessment of change or of causal ordering. All measures were self-reported and were collected on company premises, raising the possibility of social desirability bias, a concern that bears directly on the interpretation of the turnover intention item. The questionnaire was designed to capture the retention factors present in this particular organisation and was not validated against an established scale, and reliability statistics were not computed. Analysis was confined to percentages, so associations between determinants and retention are described rather than tested. Open-ended items yielded limited elaboration, a difficulty commonly encountered in shop-floor survey administration. Finally, the study concerns a single firm in one industry, and the findings should be read as a case description rather than as representative of small-scale manufacturing generally.

IX. CONCLUSION

This study examined employee retention at Crescent Crumbs Pvt. Ltd. through the perceptions of 50 employees. The organisation performs well on the foundations of retention: wages are paid reliably, statutory benefits and physical facilities

are in place, training is provided, and supervisory relationships are rated highly by almost the entire sample. These conditions explain why dissatisfaction is not widespread. They do not, on their own, explain commitment.

The opportunities lie elsewhere. Recognition is valued more than it is delivered, a quarter of employees lack a channel for their ideas, transport remains unaddressed for a workforce on continuous shifts, and internal procedure is experienced as an obstacle by a large majority. Each is amenable to managerial action, and none requires substantial expenditure. The wider implication, consistent with the two-factor account and with the empirical determinants identified by Shoaib et al. (2009), is that retention in this setting is unlikely to be advanced further through pay alone. Money can influence some employees in some circumstances, but the more durable instruments are the enrichment of work, the visibility of career progression, and the daily practice of acknowledging contribution. For a firm operating in a competitive segment of the Kerala rubber industry, with an experienced workforce whose accumulated process knowledge is difficult to replace, these are matters of commercial as much as human resource consequence.

Future research might extend this design longitudinally, employ probability sampling across several rubber processing units, and use validated multi-item scales so that the relative weight of each determinant can be tested rather than inferred.

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