# TALENT ABUSE: CHALLENGES TURNING TALENT MANAGEMENT INTO TALENT ABUSE

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## ABSTRACT

The term 'talent abuse' is conceptual in nature and has alternatively been used for talent mismanagement in this current study. The purpose of this study is to explore how the talent of contractual/ project based staff in the public sector provincial department of Pakistan, is mismanaged in terms of attraction, recruitment, selection, retention, succession planning, training and development when filtered through different challenges. Talent management has mostly been studied through western contextual lens, therefore, this research bridges the knowledge gap by exploring how "talent", a euphemism for people, gets abused by talent mismanagement within the public sector of Pakistan. The data has been collected through in-depth interviews from 15 contractual staff, hired on project basis, at managerial and non-managerial positions in a public department in Punjab. Purposive sampling technique has been used to approach these 15 project staff members. The findings show that the barriers/ challenges leading to talent abuse can be grouped as structural, cultural, managerial, behavioral and environmental. This research has practical implications for policy makers and practitioners to cogitate on the most neglected area i.e. talent management in the public sector of Pakistan. This research suggests that it's a high time to align the strategic objectives/goals with the need to nurture human capital by implementing talent management programs assiduously.

**Key Words:** Public sector, Pakistan, Talent, Talent Management.

## INTRODUCTION

The focus of the study is to identify different structural, cultural, behavioral and environmental factors which may impede the effective implementation of talent management practices in the public sector of Pakistan. It has been found out that talent management practices, when filtered through different challenges/barriers, result into talent abuse c.f. fig B: Conceptual Framework. In this way, people either do not intend to stay with the organization or do not perform well, resultantly the overall performance of the organization plummets. Other studies also reveal that the more the talented employees perceive TM as effective the more they commit towards leadership competence development (Khoreva, Vaiman, & Van zalk, 2017).

Defining "Talent" is in itself a conundrum, let alone defining Talent Abuse as there is no unanimity yet in defining it. Some define "Talent" as high performing or potential employees in the organizations, au contraire, organizations can also develop talented people through, training and development, succession planning and career management (Cappelli & Keller, 2014). There is an extant body of literature which has studied Talent Management through western lens and also in different developed economies but there is a dearth of literature specifically on talent abuse, therefore, this research paper lacks a theoretical base. Moreover, the literature on talent management has also been criticized for being sparse, one-dimensional and unitarist (Marian, Paul, & Ben, 2013) . Akin to the sparse concept of talent management, there is no specific definition of "talent abuse" rather it has been tried, in this research paper, to align it with talent management practices such as retention, succession planning and training & development. There are different themes in TM literature that focus on conceptualization of Talent Management (Vaiman & Collings, 2013), TM processes and practices, TM in different societal contexts (Celia & Ora-orn, 2013 ; Cooke, Saini, & Wang, 2014) and also in different industries and organizations.

The literature on Talent Management has criticized the way it has been vaguely defined. Albeit, this is a buzzword used as strategic human capital of twenty first century but it is mostly referred to as a limited set of traditional HR practices i.e. recruitment, selection, retention, succession planning and training & development. Organizations face pressures from both external and internal environments which necessitate to work on its "Talent", a euphemism for "People" (Lewis & Heckman, 2006), but sometimes the organizations from within make matters worse and they are dubbed as an enemy from within (Gutheridge, Kom, & Lawson, 2008). In the public sector of Pakistan HR practices and processes for contractual employees ( hired on the basis of project or other procedures) are not given high priority as much as it deserves to, let alone talent management schemes.

Talent management literature has been embedded in the context of US, Europe, multinational companies and private organizations (Collings & Scullion, 2011), which questions the applicability of its concepts and assumptions in other contexts e.g. public organizations, small and medium enterprises and organizations outside American & European contexts. This present research taps into this knowledge gap by taking into consideration the contextual influence more precisely the "the mindsets" existing in public sector organizations in Pakistan. It is also pertinent to mention here that talent doesn't only reside at the top echelon or not just top performers deserve a kind eye rather B players who make up the majority of workforce also serve as the valuable contributors (Thomas & Vijayaraghavan, 2003), so they must be given an

equal importance as much as the top performers are considered to be contributing strategically (Gutheridge, Kom, & Lawson, 2008).

This article at hand is an exploratory research that helps fill the knowledge gap and build a basic understanding by providing insight into how "Talent" if not managed well gets abused. The study identifies some cultural, behavioral, environmental (Cooke, Saini, & Wang, 2014)and structural challenges which may undermine the innate or acquired talent of the employees ( Meyers, Woerkom, & Dries, 2013), in the context of public sector. It is pertinent to mention here that these challenges are not exclusive and relevant to all the public sector provincial departments in Pakistan, as the definitions of "Talent" and Talent Management (TM) are peculiar and context specific to every organization.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Defining Talent & Talent Management

Talent has etymologically been differently defined through ages using philological analysis but there is no universal definition of "talent" in any one language, different organizational perspectives of talent management exist. Hence, according to Ulrich and Smallwood the concept of Talent is multidimensional and they provided a formula i.e. "Talent = competence × commitment × contribution." by examining in detail as to how talent can be developed (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2011). The most common notion of organizational talent refers to those who have potential to reach high level of achievement (Carole, 2011). A precise definition of talent is necessary because, if it is narrowly focused, it may impact the utilization of nation's talent at the social level and if seen from organizational perspective it may impact the training and development interventions.

Different authors have tried to conceptualize "Talent" using different typologies and approaches that offer greater conceptual clarity e.g. different theoretical approaches have also been grouped into subjective (talent as some or all people) and objective (talent as commitment, mastery and fit) within the specific context of world of work (Gallardo, Dries, & Gonzalez-Cruz, 2013) in contrast to the foregoing a more inclusive approach to talent management has also been offered, wherein, it has been established that talent is an absolute characteristic of individuals and needs to be looked into as more precise form of self-development (Swailes, Downs, & Orr, 2014).  This research paper is also tilted towards this inclusive approach to talent management underpinning the notion that all employees have the ability to potentially add value to organizations, it is up to the organizations as to how they effectively manage in order to retain the talent.

In Talent management, the emphasis lies on attraction, retention, deployment, development succession planning of talent as part of HR processes meaning by talent management includes all the elements of human resource management (Stewart & Harte, 2010), which are also the determinants of successful talent management (Poorhosseinzadeh & Subramaniam, 2013).Talent management has also been defined in ways like having right number of people at the right place and time with the right skill sets and levels of motivation (Iles, Preece, & Chuai, 2010).

### Challenges to Talent Management:

Much has been said in the literature that Talent Management is about focusing on attraction, retention, deployment and development of talented pool within the organization but this doesn't seem to be as easier because it may encompass some critical factors as far as its implementation is concerned. This study is based on a public sector organization where HR systems for contractual staff are not found as much integrated as they are in private sector. In the public sector more administrative processes are involved than HR development process and a serious lack of HR specialized professionals further aggravate the situation. There is a dearth of literature on talent management in the public sector especially in the context of Pakistan, nevertheless, many western authors have contributed into TM literature like Collings (2014) who has investigated challenges to talent management in the context of multinational enterprises and introduced social and human capital theories to be utilized in the field (Collings D. A., 2014). A number of factors such as "Silo "thinking among senior managers, lesser collaboration, non-alignment between talent management strategies and business strategies are found to be major barriers to effective implementation of talent management practices (Guthridge, Komm, & Lawson, 2006). Other barriers to talent management have also been identified such as the focus on "Shortermism" by senior managers, lack of commitment and willingness to develop talent (Guthridge, 2008) and making of decisions based on bounded rationality (Mellahi & Collings, 2010).

A similar study has been conducted in five Dutch universities by taking into account the organizational context and talented employees. It was found out that the needs of the talented employees were not addressed in actual and intended TM practices because of various influencing factors at institutional, organizational and individual level (Thunnissen , 2016). Similarly, another study found that improved employee recruitment and retention rate, and employee engagment are the benefits of effective implementation of TM strategy within hospitality organizations (Christensen & Rog, 2008). Furthermore, understanding of senior management and commitment are found to be  the major drivers or restraints for talent management (Christensen & Rog, 2008).

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Many studies have attributed, success, reform and renewal of public service delivery as well as employee performance, to attraction, recruitment and retention of highly trained people. However, the focus of these studies have been on the western contexts. The effective implementation of talent management programs and strategies remain alien to Pakistani context. Unfortunately, attraction and retention of qualified staff in the public sector of Pakistan is a matter of concern. What public sector provincial departments in Pakistan are doing to recruit and keep the talented/qualified people for successful service delivery and improve working condition? The answer to this question has rarely been addressed by the research studies conducted in the context of public sector of Pakistan. Though, some studies have been conducted in the area of talent management such as in the public sector oil and gas selling organizations in Pakistan (Sarmad , Ajmal , Shamim , Saleh , & Malik, 2016), Telecom sector in Pakistan (Hanif, Shao , Ziaullah, & Hanif, 2014), healthcare organization of Pakistan (Bibi, 2019) and academic institutions in Pakistan and China (Saddozai, Hui, Akram, Khan, & Memon, 2017). This research takes a step further towards specifically answering the aforesaid question and address the gap by identifying some key challenges, grouped as structural, cultural, behavioral and environmental, to talent management in the public sector provincial department.

This talent management approach integrates the core human resource functions such as attraction, recruitment and retention to get the right people in place. This research explores the state of talent management in the public sector of Pakistan and the failure of its implementation, what has been called as talent abuse in this study. The author has ascertained the perspective of contractual/ project based staff regarding their difficulties and needs within the public sector provincial department.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This research has used the core functions of human resource management such as attraction, recruitment, planning, training and development and performance management as part of Talent Management (TM) rather than any other above and beyond views of HRM (Gallardo-Gallardo, Sanne, Nicky, & Padro, 2015).

In the corporate world, the "war for talent" primarily focused on the HR function of recruitment, retention and development. In 2000's, three more functions, planning, performance management and transition, were added to talent management regimes. Here attraction is taken at the micro level, when organizations use traditional recruitment procedure to target specif talent. Similarly, retention has got great importance when the employees have more opportunities in the market and are likely to switch between jobs then TM organizations use strategies like rewards, recognition, developmental opportunities, employee engagement and job enrichment (Martin & Schmidt, 2010). Job performance is tracked in TM organizations and the top performers are valued for their pivotal roles. As far as performance management systems are concerned, the performance is measured using employee self assessments as well as supervisor reviews and managed using coaching, mentoring and rewarding. Training and development opportunities range from on the job and job-specific training to redesigning of job because of special tasks, projects or assignments. Planning is to develop a talent map and begins with workforce profiling, identification of critical positions and core competencies needed by the employees to succeed in those positions. Transition is a mix of succession planning and exit management processes. It is a process of planned movement of employees into new roles based performance appraisal, training and development in which exit management is integrated wherein instituional knowledge is retained after the employee exits.

The conceptual framework constructed below shows that different cultural, behavioral, enviornmental and structural challenges affect the execution of TM practices which may consequently result into talent abuse. The purpose of the study is to offer insight into these challenges to above mentioned talent management practices specific to the context in determining the way talent is managed or mismanaged within public sector departments.
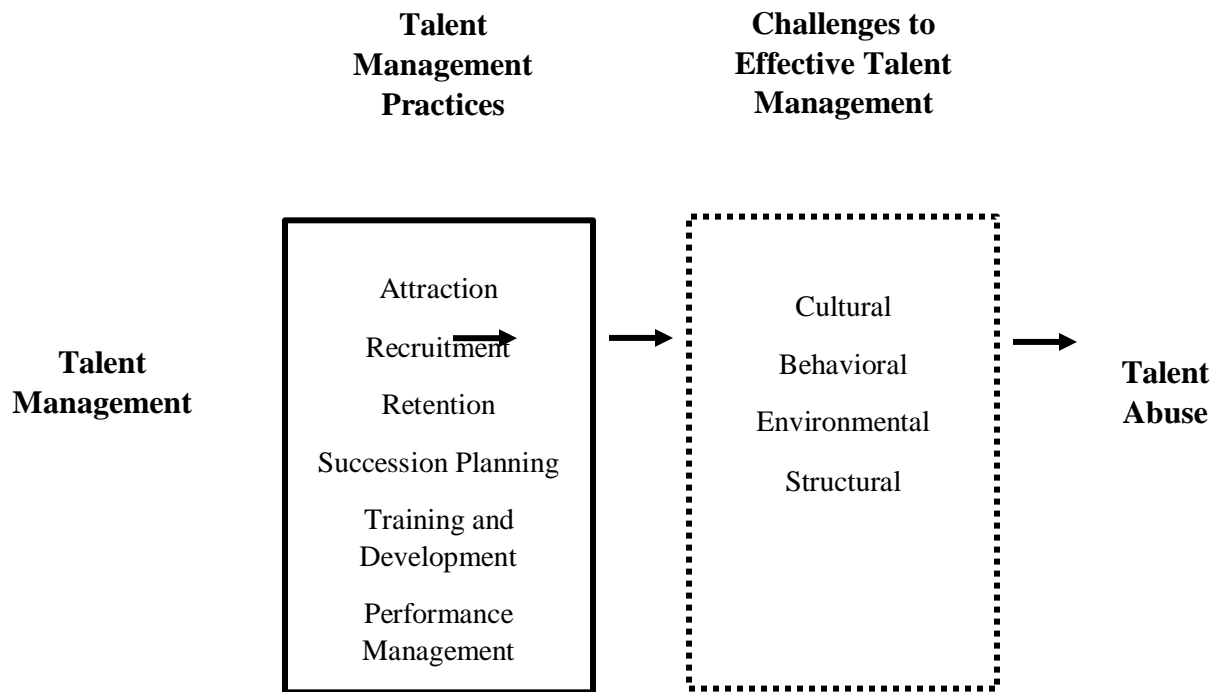
**Talent Management Practices**

**Challenges to Effective Talent Management**

**Talent Management**

Attraction

Recruitment

Retention

Succession Planning

Training and Development

Performance Management

Cultural

Behavioral

Environmental

Structural

**Talent Abuse**

**Fig A:** Talent Management practices filtered through different cultural, structural, environmental and

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions put across are:

1. How talent, if not managed well, results into talent abuse?
    i. What are the factors/ challenges resulting into talent abuse or talent mismanagement?
2. Does organizational context (public sector) matter in determining the way the talent is mismanaged?

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research has used qualitative research strategy due to the limited nature of extant literature and data on 'Talent Abuse' in the context of public sector of Pakistani. Regarding collection of data, unstructured interviews have been conducted as qualitative research method, with 15 project staff members holding managerial and non-managerial positions in a public office in Punjab. These 15 project staff members, designated as Financial Experts, IT Experts, Monitoring & Evaluation Experts, Research Associates and Assistants, have been approached by using purposive sampling technique. Reportedly, these staff members were hired to strengthen the capacity of the department efficiently and effectively. The interviews conducted were transcribed and sorted according to coding approach. The content analysis led to identification of

different environmental, managerial, structural and behavioral barriers and challenges as major themes.

The qualitative data was analyzed using NVIVO 10 as data manager. Different concepts/themes related to talent management were extracted as codes and nodes were identified from within the transcribed data which enabled the researcher to identify similarities and differences.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Most of the challenges or barriers that resulted into talent abuse can be categorized as behavioral and managerial, as public sector is mostly characterized by its rigidness and unwillingness to break the status quo. Hence, most of the people showed resentment as far as personal and professional development is concerned. Human capital of any organization is a cornerstone in achieving overall organizational goals and when this important linkage is made weaker and weaker with corrosive and abusive actions then the results are blatantly worse which is clearly borne out of the findings.

Interview questions were based on HRM dimensions such as attraction, recruitment, selection, succession planning, training and development, working environment. These are the factors which either impede effective implementation of Talent Management (TM) or show unwillingness of the public sector to implement TM in true sense:

### 1.       Lack of Visionary Leadership:

In the wake of New Public Management reforms, Pakistan also introduced private sector traits like flexibility, decentralization, managerial autonomy, flattening of structures of authority. Moreover, public personnel policies have also undergone a change as part of reforms but unfortunately for effective talent management, a change in culture, belief systems and values within organizations also need to be revisited. Such reforms cannot withstand the rigid mentality shown by the public sector unless the leadership within organizations does not resist change or celebrate employees' talent. Interviewees were also of the viewpoint that in order to nurture the talent the high authority needs to trust the employees, so the notion of "Silo" thinking holds true in this context.

*"Even if I want to contribute in a suggestive way and for greater good of my organization, the senior authority doesn't allow me to do so"*, said R1.

"*I think the authority is resistant to change they seem stuck in same old ways of doing things"*, said R3.

"*My immediate boss feels threatened, if we try to find a new way of doing a certain task, so we tend to move in circles*", said R1.

Change is difficult in the third world countries compared to developed countries because politico-administrative structure is dominated by political and bureaucratic domination, corruption and group interest (Chowdhary & Panday, 2018). A similar study in the context of UK public sector organizations reveals that post-bureaucratic claims are misleading and despite structural changes older functional lines continue to exist (Morris & Farrel, 2007). Many respondents agreed that the leadership at top doesn't pay interest in the development or professional growth of employees and take it as a survival threat.

## 2.       Job Insecurity or Everyday Fear:

The contractual employees showed a high level of fear associated with job insecurity and worry about their long term future in the organization.

"*The continuous threatening tone and tenor by high authority made me feel insecure in my job*", said R6.

"*I am afraid if I don't perform well, I will be laid off*", said R7.

"*One of our talented colleagues left this organization because he felt that he was being underutilized and threatened",* said R8.

*"Compared to my counterparts who are working on permanent basis, I feel more insecure and it destroys my mental ability to perform better than them",* said R11.

## 3.       Flawed Performance Appraisal Systems:

There is a huge impact of brown nosing and sycophancy as far as performance appraisals are concerned. A study in India shows that effective performance appraisal systems not only motivate employees to perform better but it also contributes to the overall performance of the organizations. However, Annual Confidential Reports (ACRs) as part of appraisal system do not contribute to employees learning and development (Purohit & Martineau, 2016). Same has been reported by the interviewees.

*"Apparently the Annual Confidential Reports (ACRs) are the objective way of measuring someone's performance but it's all what is called subjective, the more you indulge in sycophancy the more laudable is your performance, even if you are not competent enough".* Said R5.

*"As a contractual employee I find no linkage between my performance appraisal and training and development opportunities",* said R9.

"*It's an appraisal for the sake of appraisal*", said R10.

## 4.       Destructive Competition:
A healthy environment characterized by cooperation not competition yield better results. Such destructive competition was found to be more prevalent among female coworkers which sabotages the level of motivation to perform well. Dysfunctional behaviors negatively influence the productivity, performance and motivation level. Such behaviors may include jealousy, envy, and even bullying. Research shows that environments rather than personality trigger dysfunctional behaviors (Appelbaum, Deguier, & Lay, 2005). Developing strategies to control such behaviors may help organization retain its talent and prevent losing skilled or competent individuals. Proper HR systems should function with effective policies and regulations which again calls forth an effective role of leadership in this regard to address deviant and destructive behaviors (Maher & Youssef, 2016).
*"At several occasions I thought of quitting my job just because I was facing an irrational competition by my co-worker",* said R12.

## 5. Mansplaining:

Most of the female respondents also suffered from frequent mansplaining at workplace. Mansplaining is a systematic and more institutionalized form of domination used to silence and snub women and their opinions, not only men talk more but they also interrupt more (Hancock & Rubin, 2014). A surge of unnecessary explanation by a man in a more condescending manner may erode a woman's ability to do better than him.

*"My senior male counterpart didn't have trust in me that I can do the task, which was quite distressful and made me think twice about continuing my job",* said R14.

*"Once I asked my senior as to how to go about some assignment, after giving some unnecessary explanation he just smiled and said that he will do it by himself"*, said R10.

## 6. No one can serve Two Bosses:

There was a lot of resentment found among the interviewees when they faced two conflicting orders. When two competing priorities and deadlines arise within the public organizational setup and the chain of command is violated, it creates a lot of confusion among employees. The employees find themselves on crossroads as to who to please or accept the orders.

"*I was caught between the orders of my immediate boss and higher authority",* said R14.

*"The rivalry between my boss and her boss was expressed through me, and I was being treated as a pawn",* said R8.

The implication of such rivalry between super-ordinates and subordinates negatively influences the performance of employees and personal benefits override organizational goals.

## 7. Role Ambiguity/ Unclear Job Descriptions:

Respondents expressed their concern regarding how their roles were defined. Though the job responsibilities were stipulated but in practice the employees were doing any type of tasks assigned to them. Job rotation exposes one to the working in other areas and enhances one's ability to perform well. Right people were not found to be allocated suitably for short term assignments and cross-disciplinary projects, even if they were given special tasks there was no mentorship experienced by the respondents. Most of the respondents reported low levels of coaching and mentoring as part of weaker HRM-led systems.

*"Sometimes there was a replication of tasks between me and my co-worker which made it even redundant for me"*, said R15.

*"Everyone is doing everything and sometimes no one is doing anything"*, said R14.

## 8. Nepotism and Cronyism:

Nepotism is found to be a curse in the public sector. Incompetent individuals are reported to be selected/appointed and preferred over those who are knowledgeable and capable. Hiring decisions were found to be based on nepotism and cronyism. The most important part of HRM is to attract the most talented individuals within the organization by creating attractive employer brand, same holds true for public sector organizations. If the organization has high value and reputation more talented people will be attracted to it and offer their contribution but reverse was

the case found. Appointments were reported to be made on the basis of patronage, cronyism and at the whims of the authority by ignoring the merit and commitment to attract and retain the best in the organization. The notion of additional charge for a key position was found rampant and the key positions were reported to remain vacant on account of having no eligible/competent candidature.  In this regard a strategic HR thinking is highly required to recruit right people (Pruis, 2011).

## 9.     Maintenance of Status-quo:

A huge amount of energy vis-à-vis financial and physical resources is wasted if the ways of doing things are not redesigned. Here the question is about doing the tasks on the principles of efficiency and effectiveness by adopting robust technology replacing the old ways of doing things. It's high time for public sector organizations to step up and advance themselves through e-governance otherwise red-tapism creates frustration among employees. Most of the respondents who had expertise in their areas reported to feel underutilized and bound by hierarchical formalities to introduce innovations.

*"As an IT expert and having vast experience which I gained from abroad, I suggested many innovative ideas for monitoring and evaluation of our projects but all those ideas were simply put aside by my authorities"*, said R11.

*"I have got expertise in managing information systems but the authority is unwilling to reduce the file work and the official delays involved in it",* said R3.

## 10.     Improper Physical Environment/ Paraphernalia:

The workplace environment plays a huge role in employee's productivity and performance. The employees' interaction with their immediate environment determines retention, level of motivation, error rate, and collaboration with co-workers (Chandrasaker, 2011). Infrastructure of the work environment may include work stations, proper ventilation, lighting, ergonomically designed furniture, safety and protective equipment. The non-availability of such resources demotivates employees which ultimately determines that for how long the employees are going to stay in the organization.

*"It's not like that we don't have sufficient funds to procure equipment,  it's just about how much you want to invest in people",* said R13.

Female employees reported that they were not given a separate room for prayer and it caused a lot of frustration. Even the lavatory or rest room for females were reported to be not-so-pristine.  The administration shied away from its responsibility to provide for such basic needs.

## 11.     Discouragement of Knowledge Transfer:

Knowledge is considered the most significant and intangible asset of an organization and it resides in people's action and experience. Knowledge is not easy to be replicated and spread through the organization (Kiessling & Harvey, 2006). The principles of talent management can enhance knowledge management (Whelan & Carcary, 2011).One of the aspects is to recruit people with tacit knowledge, boost their skills, retain them and work on them through training and development. The other aspect is to share and disseminate the knowledge internally among other employees and it is the special component of talent management to ensure the transfer of

knowledge in the wake of impending retirement by the aging workforce (Thomas J. C., 2008). Aging workforce necessitates the knowledge transfer from one generation to another. In the public sector there are traditional careers and people tend to stay within the same organization. By the time they acquire ample knowledge, skills and competencies till they reach the age of retirement. It has been reported by the respondents that aging workforce showed unwillingness to pass on that knowledge to the younger generation because of that rigid mindset. It was suggested by the respondents that HR policies and practices should be institutionalized to facilitate the transfer of knowledge otherwise it may be regarded as the lost knowledge.

## 12.     Lack of in-house or on the Job Trainings:

Organizations must greatly invest in their people in order to enhance their skill set and for this on the job trainings are indispensable. The respondents reported sheer lack of attention on this aspect by the public sector organization under study rather it was reported that irrelevant individuals were being sent to relevant workshops or training sessions.

*"We learned to do the tasks all by ourselves there was no on the job training or mentorship being provided to us",* said R7.

### Contextual Implications

The analysis of the data shows a great deal of weakness in the HR systems, inter alia, talent management practices within the public sector organization under study for contractual/project staff. A lot of anomalies were found to be present which needs to be rectified to prevent the underutilization or the loss of talent in the public sector.  As said earlier, much of the research on Talent Management has been conducted in the context of private sector and multinational corporations and most of the scholars apply the same unfeasible findings to other organizational context ( Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016 ;Thunnissen, Boselie, & Fruytier, 2013). Organizational context has not been given due consideration in TM research (Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen, & Scullion, 2019). Therefore, this current study has taken into account the context of public sector organizations because context affects the occurrence, meaning and implementation of talent management practices (Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen, & Scullion, 2019).

The modus operandi of private and public sector organizations greatly differ. The former is entirely focused on gaining sustained competitive advantage and run business successfully but the later has to deliver public services which is why the private sector stresses on the need to invest in people whereas public sector is found reluctant in doing so. Moreover, the socio-environmental culture has a huge impact on organizational culture which in turn affects human resource and talent management practices. Pakistan is a country with high power distance and characterized by concentration of power at the top which impede the attraction, retention, planning and development of talented personnel and consequently fail to provide job enrichment and empowerment (Aycan, et al., 2000). Career success and intrinsic rewards indirectly reduce talent loss (Whelan & Carcary, 2011), which according to the findings are found rare in the public sector.

The factors identified in this exploratory study can be grouped into cultural, structural, environmental, behavioral and managerial challenges see Fig B. All these factors reveal a dwindled interest towards talent management in the public sector and calls for attention of the leadership and policy maker to prevent the loss of talent.
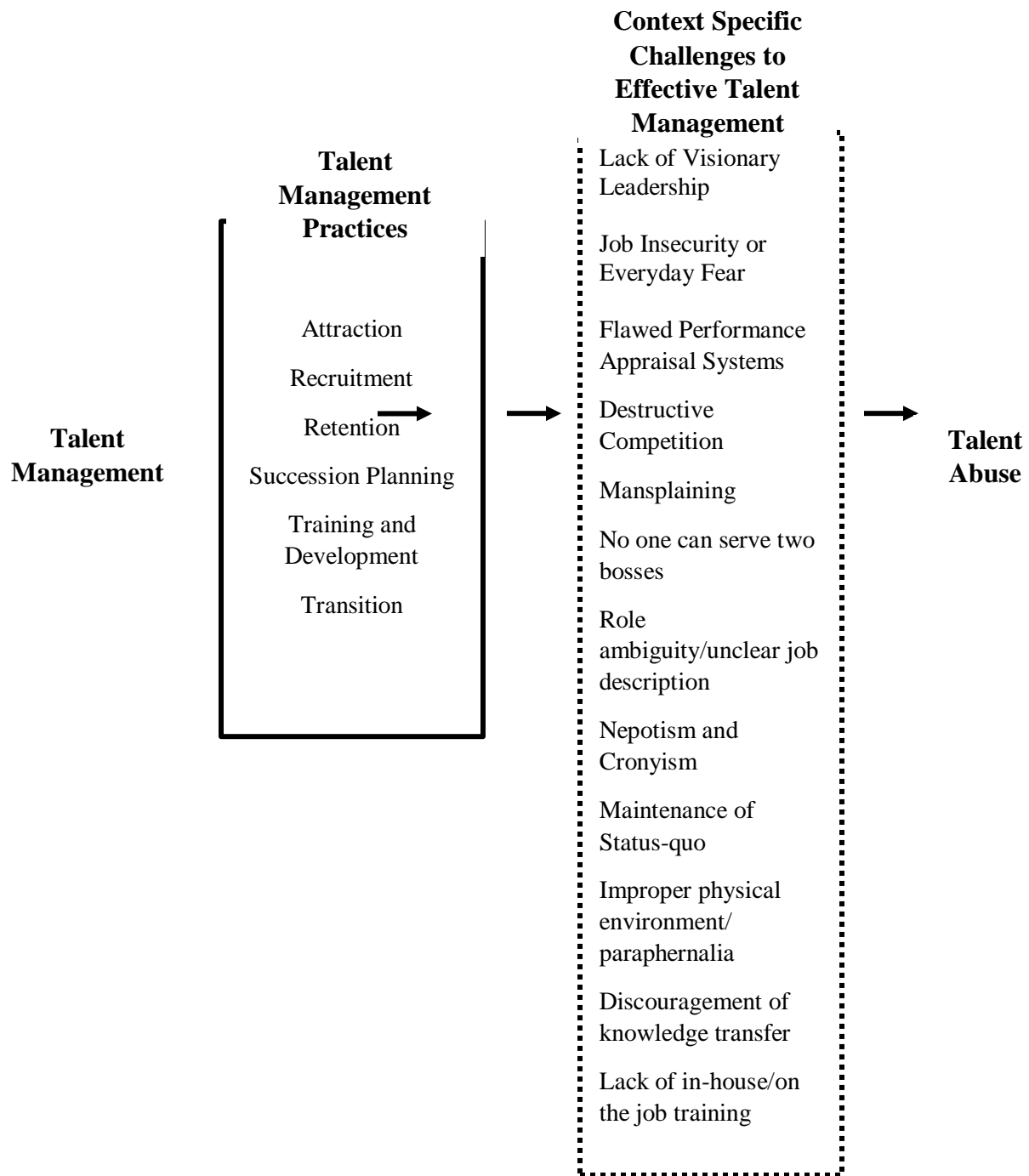
**Context Specific Challenges to Effective Talent Management**

**Talent Management Practices**

**Talent Management**

Attraction

Recruitment

Retention

Succession Planning

Training and Development

Transition

Lack of Visionary Leadership

Job Insecurity or Everyday Fear

Flawed Performance Appraisal Systems

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No one can serve two bosses

Role ambiguity/unclear job description

Nepotism and Cronyism

Maintenance of Status-quo

Improper physical environment/ paraphernalia

Discouragement of knowledge transfer

Lack of in-house/on the job training

**Talent Abuse**

**Fig B:** Talent Management practices filtered through different cultural, structural, environmental and behavioral challenges resulting into talent abuse in the context of public sector.

## DISCUSSION

This is an exploratory research attempting to dig deeper into how talent, if not managed well, can result into abuse. It is sometimes difficult to identify as to who is of value within the organization, moreover the literature review indicates that more exclusive approach has been part of HR practice (Stahl, et al., 2012), but rather than just focusing on the key players, this research has taken into account the inclusive approach to talent management in the public sector. Inclusive approach involves considering the workforce as a collection of talent segments that actively create or apply knowledge (Guthridge, 2008). All the players within the organizations put efforts in contributing to the attainment of strategic goals but unfortunately people don't own their organizations unless and until the organizations own them.

One more important aspect of this research is to consider the context in which HRM and talent management practices are executed. The inclusion of context rationalizes, and enriches our understanding of the phenomenon and also the people under study, or more precisely we can say that this paper helps address the anomalies within the public sector by situating it in an indigenous context. The aim of this paper is to reinforce the importance of context, thus in order to make sense of the phenomenon, this study has used in-depth qualitative approach to stir up the need for relevant solutions. Moreover, talent management has more been studied in the western context with focus on multinationals and private sector organizations. This study is one of its own kind that it has accounted for talent abuse in the context of public sector. Calls for the inclusion of context, emphasize the need to use different perspectives in order to understand the phenomenon as well as multidisciplinary approach can give a comprehensive picture of the reality (Cooke F. L, 2017).

From the interviews it has been found out that TM policies and practices are not in place to retain and help the talent to achieve their goals. The performance appraisal system for the project staff was found inconsistent, flawed and biased. The qualified female staff members reported to be rebuked on various occasions and were accused of playing a gender card which led them into thinking to quit the job. No bonuses, rewards medical insurances or any other promotional opportunities were reported to be offered to the best performers. No TM program was reported to be in place for improving employees' situation regarding job security. On the job training, formal trainings or workshops were not offered to the staff to sharpen their abilities. Respondents were found unhappy with their poor working environment, indulgence in politics and favoritism were on the rise. The physical environment or the condition of paraphernalia also affected the performance of the staff.

The study reveals that the public sector provincial departments in Pakistan should pay enough attention as to how to develop strategies in order to nurture people as human capital and most valuable resources of organizations. However, this is not the case all around the globe which means various contextual factors come into play and result into variations in talent management approaches. Comparative studies show that factors like incentives systems, performance appraisal systems, structures of authority and differing definitions of "talent" are responsible for variations (Celia & Ora-orn, 2013 ; Cooke, Saini, & Wang, 2014).

## CONCLUSION

The study helped us understood issues pertinent to TM within public departments and found out that talent management is the most neglected area in the public sector of Pakistan. The prevailing "mindset "within the public sector hinders its willingness to work on its talent and prevent it from losing. Organizations win the trust and loyalty of their employees, when employees perceive their organization to be fair in treatment. The study reveals that the support of high authority or top management in managing its talent, is the need of the hour as other studies also show that "Top-managers belief, commitment and support" can serve as managerial success factors in talent management (Schuler, Jackson, & Tarique, 2011). The policy makers should work towards improving the working condition of the employees and in turn employees will work for the organization more sincerely and stay for longer. If public sector organizations implement necessary TM policies successfully, it will create and nurture a healthy working environment.

## PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS & LIMITATIONS:

This research has major implications for policy makers to reconsider the need to nurture the human capital and design talent management programs to address the issues faced and identified in this study by the individuals hired on contract/ project basis. It is also pertinent to mention here that the data has been collected from one public sector organization so this research calls forth a need to conduct research in more than one organizations since by definition "talent" is idiosyncratic to the nature of work, thus talent management malpractices may or may not exist in other public sector provincial departments. Moreover, further empirical research may be conducted to validate the findings of this paper and to expand scholarly knowledge in the field. For the purpose of generalizations of the research findings future research must adopt quantitative approach to inquiry. Our study focused on only 15 project based staff members, future studies should take into account the perspective of administration and management regarding TM policies.

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