

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT, EMPLOYEE
ATTITUDES AND TURNOVER INTENTIONS: A CRITICAL
REVIEW OF THE STAFF EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP
POLICY AT AUB/AUBMC

by
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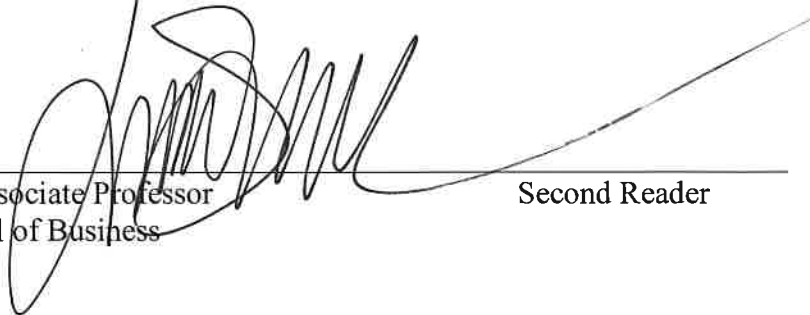
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROJECT OF

Meghri Krikor Hassakorsian for Master of Human Resources Management
Major: Human Resources Management

Title: Perceived Organizational Support, Employee Attitudes and Turnover Intentions:
A Critical Review of the Staff Educational Scholarship Policy at AUB/AUBMC.

Purpose – The purpose of this research paper is to explore the level of perceived organizational support (POS) that employees at AUB and AUBMC enrolled in the Staff Educational Scholarship program feel, in addition to their commitment to the organization and their intentions to quit, specifically when not paired with jobs that match the education they received. Moreover, insight from senior human resources department officials and employee opinions will be solicited to understand the purpose of administering the educational benefit and recommend ways to improve the human resources practices to accomplish organizational and individual employee goals.

Design/methodology/approach – A sample of staff members both in managerial (in Grades 13 and above) and non-supervisory staff grades (Grades 1-12) was drawn from the American University of Beirut faculties and administrative departments. Their opinions were solicited on the current staff educational scholarship policy and the level of support they feel. In addition, their views were addressed regarding the implications of their development on their career, and their commitment to AUB/AUBMC. Senior HR staff at AUB will also be solicited for an interview to have an understanding of current practice regarding the educational scholarship benefit.

Findings – Results suggest that although staff report a great level of POS and affective commitment, they report that a decrease in match between: education, job and salary increases turnover intentions. In addition, there exists a clear divide between staff desired outcomes and the purpose the scholarship serves by senior HR administrators. The staff educational scholarship application process and tools adopted at AUB need to be revisited, as it does not link to any organizational and human resource strategy.

Research limitations– The findings are based on a small sample in view of the current number of staff who have actually benefitted from the staff educational scholarship. The sources of information were limited to English language peer-reviewed articles and books.

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To
My Dear Colleagues

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Importance of Human Resource Practices

Human resources practices are one of the most crucial factors for employee satisfaction and retention. Human Resources as a function has made incredible progress in Western European and North American since the mid-1990s, becoming strategic partners and essential contributors to effective and efficient business management, improvement of organizational competitiveness and operations (Brewster, Holt Larsen & Trompenaars, 1992; Huselid, Jackson & Schuler 1997; Barney & Wright 1998; Boxall & Steeneveld 1999; Wright, Gardner & Moynihan 2003; Lepak & Shaw 2008).

In a competitive and unpredictable global economy like ours, guaranteeing employee retention and satisfaction has become a major struggle for organizations. Technological advancements, flexible working arrangements, the importance of work-life balance, and the rise of entrepreneurialism are some of the many new facets of the changing nature of work. Employee expectations have changed, as well as notions of commitment and loyalty. Employees are on a constant lookout for increased earnings, new challenges or a change in their career causing organizations to deal with the problem of turnover. It is not surprising then, that organizations are devising plans to enhance employee satisfaction and efficiently manage expectations (Drucker, 2002).

To that end, most organizations develop initiatives and policies to train and nurture their human capital to become more competitive and productive, but

also to enhance employee satisfaction and ultimately commitment.

Retention has been linked to many factors such as employee motivation, benefits systems, reward systems, promotion opportunities and many other organizational concepts. And although researchers (Bartel, 2000; Costa & Giannechini, 2005) pose questions on whether employees are even worth investing in and if satisfaction is truly linked to retention and commitment? Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa (1986) found that one of the many ways organizations can enhance employee satisfaction is by offering benefits that positively affect their perceptions of organizational support.

Perceived organizational support (POS) is defined as the employees' "beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being" (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986). Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vanderberghe, Sucharski & Rhoades (2002) found that POS results in positive outcomes for both the organization and individual through just organizational practices, supportive leadership, encouraging rewards and benefits and satisfactory job conditions.

Learning and development initiatives adopted within an organization are major tools to enhance productivity and commitment of individuals to their organizations through improved performance and specialization; leading to business advancement and increased competitive advantage. "In a knowledge economy, organizations rely heavily on their intangible assets to build value." (Marr, 2006, p.71) These intangible assets come in the form of capable, knowledgeable employees. Employees value the financial assistance provided, but the ultimate goal of the time and effort placed in attending trainings, pursuing educational enhancement through courses and certifications or enrolling in a

degree program is career advancement coupled with a financial return on investment. Consequently, focusing on developing employees through learning opportunities is a way of building value to advance businesses.

Unfortunately, many organizations do not see the importance of recognizing the investments made in staff members and following through with proper career management policies during and after employees have finished these programs, often viewing these initiatives as a form of good CSR, and leaving employees disappointed. Career planning and mentoring strategies are essential components of the Human Resources Management cycle and are necessary for the realization of investments made. But career planning and mentoring is not only a responsibility that falls upon senior staff and specialists in the Human Resources Department, but also on direct supervisors who play a pivotal role in ensuring that the employees are on the right path, are evaluated appropriately, and training outcomes are met (Mabey, Salaman & Storey, 1998).

Of particular interest to this study are organizations that offer educational sponsorship to employees and use this benefit as a retention tool (Hannay & Northam, 2000). Employees enroll in these programs to keep up with emerging organizational and technological changes, the need for specialization and prospects of new and more interesting assignments. These programs represent advancement opportunities and impact an employee's perceived expectations and career outlook, more directly so when related to their current positions.

If not managed and mentored carefully, through sound application procedures and Human resource planning strategies, these initiatives intended to elevate the commitment employees feel towards their organization can backfire costing organizations both time and money, and potentially drive these highly

qualified individuals towards competitors (Baruch, 2001). Which is why understanding how educational investments in employees - sometimes referred to as tuition reimbursement scholarships or tuition assistantships - affect perceived organizational support, organizational commitment and employee retention is crucial to harness the return on investment and avoid losing such valuable assets.

The Lebanese Context

Due to the superior quality of education of the Lebanese workforce in comparison to other middle eastern countries on one hand, and the lack of career prospects and salaries that match the level of qualifications on the other, thousands of capable young and determined individuals emigrate regionally and internationally seeking a better future, resulting in the “brain drain” of skilled talents, rendering local companies less competitive. Which is why understanding the importance of, and ultimately having a clear development and career planning strategy in organizations, is crucial to fill gaps in the workforce and enhance competitive edge.

Within the Lebanese context, many banking and financial organizations, consultancy firms, and educational and medical institutions offer employer-sponsored development opportunities to staff to develop their knowledge in addition to in-house trainings. Employees are partially or fully covered during the course of their studies towards a certification such as CPA degrees, Marketing Management certificates, and even graduate degrees. Within the banking institutions, a formal application process takes place, where applicants are evaluated based on their current roles and future potential in the organization, and once applications are approved they are required to sign contracts in order to

ensure they remain with the organization for a number of years, in return with guaranteed career growth and promotions. But not all organizations and institutions clearly communicate this promise. To date, there has only been one study measuring the correlation of organizational commitment and the learning culture in organizations in Lebanon, proving a positive relation between the two variables (Dirani, 2009) which was concentrated specifically on trainings performed in banking institutions. No studies have been conducted to review the effectiveness of policies in the educational sector and specifically in higher education institutions in Lebanon, and research has only dealt with trainings and not employee sponsored educational programs.

Of particular interest to this study are the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC). Institutions that offer the benefit of employer-sponsored development or staff educational scholarship. The degree can be considered a highly marketable asset for an employee and a risky investment for AUB/AUBMC if not managed properly and if employees do not receive satisfactory mentorship towards a drawn out career path.

Objective

From a managerial standpoint, the objective is to discover the purpose of the tuition reimbursement scholarship and how it feeds into the human resource planning strategies.

As it relates to staff, the purpose of this study is to discover for staff who have benefitted from the educational scholarship in the past 5 years- both currently enrolled and previously enrolled- the (1) relationship between Perceived

Organizational Support (POS) and (2) the Affective Commitment they feel towards the organization and (3) their intentions to quit.

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between POS and Affective Commitment.

Hypothesis 2a: There is a negative relationship between POS and Intentions to quit when there is no match between education and job.

Hypothesis 2b: There is a negative relationship between POS and Intentions to quit when there is no match between education and salary.

Hypothesis 3a: There is a negative relationship between AC and Turnover Intentions when there is no match between education and job.

Hypothesis 3b: There is a negative relationship between AC and Turnover Intention when there is no match between education and salary.

Ultimately the aim of the study is to gain a better understanding on the HR strategy underlining the availability of the scholarship, the opinions of employees enrolled currently and in the near past to critically assess the process in order to recommend ways of improvement of the career planning and performance management initiatives, to achieve the goals of employees and more importantly, organizational goals. Hopefully, this project can be one of many tackled to improve HR practices in AUB/AUBMC, and can benefit other educational, medical and financial institutions in Lebanon in assessing their developmental initiatives.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

HR Practices and Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

Organizational support theory has been the focus of many researchers as early as the 1950's, who suggested that employees form global perceptions of support and that these perceptions are related to a variety of positive work outcomes (March & Simon, 1958; Etzioni, 1961; Kelman, 1961; Levinson, 1965).

Shore & Shore (1995) maintained that organizational support encourages perceptions of a secure, positive environment, which would also be indicative of a caring workplace. These beliefs are supported when employees evaluate the rewards and benefits offered to them by the organization (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986) and the fairness of procedures (Fasolo, 1995). And in response to such encouraging circumstances, employees may compensate with increased effort, feelings of obligation, and citizenship behaviors, in addition to enhanced loyalty and commitment (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986; Eisenberger, Fasolo & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Shore & Wayne, 1993; Fasolo, 1995).

Building on organizational support theory, Eisenberger *et al.* (1986) found that when employees assign human like characteristics to organizations and personify them, it leads to the development of POS. This tendency results in employees taking into account the unfavorable or supportive measures in developing favorable or unfavorable views towards their organization. When employees are acknowledged and rewarded for their achievements and performance, it raises a felt obligation to in turn work towards the welfare and

achievement of objectives of the organization (Shore & Wayne, 1993) and repay in some sorts for the benefits and opportunities offered by the organization.

Research has shown that POS is related to affective organizational commitment (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1990; Settoon, Bennett & Liden, 1996; Rhoades, Eisenberger & Armeli, 2001; Shore & Tetrick, 1991) and effort-reward expectancies (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1990. Where Shore & Shore (1995) have shown a positive relationship between HR practices and POS, linking recognition of employee contributions such as training, promotions, autonomy, pay and other job conditions to have favorable outcomes for the employee such as increased job satisfaction and for the organization such as increased retention.

In answering the question: Should organizations expect POS to affect retention? Eisenberger *et al.* (1990) suggested that employees will be less likely to search for jobs at other organizations when their level of POS is high. Wayne *et al.* (1997) also found evidence that POS is negatively related to intentions to quit (Wayne *et al.*, 1997). As research and theory emphasize that constructs of organizational commitment and job satisfaction are strongly related to POS, with Hom & Griffeth (1995) clearly documenting the relationships among commitment, satisfaction, and turnover intentions. Beliefs and perceptions are the building blocks of expected employee attitude, and employees seek to have a balance between the degree at which organizations show commitment to them as individuals and the commitment they return.

Staff Educational Scholarships: An Investment Strategy

In achieving organizational success, training and development of human resources is key. Organizations wishing to meet the developmental needs of employees,

to provide them with opportunities for career growth, to ensure the availability of skills to meet current and future needs have to implement policies and strategies that are aligned with the organizations overall goals, strategy and operational requirements and ultimately improve human resource planning.

Research has shown that employees who perceive their organizations as being supportive tend to be better performers, show positive attitudes and to be less inclined to quit (Riggle, Edmondson & Hansen, 2009). Tuition reimbursement support ensures continuous improvement of skills that are later transferrable to the organization and also reinforce feelings of self-actualization and achievement in the employee, thus solidifying retention (Cappelli, 2001; Craig *et al.*, 2002). The way employees feel about their current jobs, their employers and prospects of alternative, more attractive and compatible positions impact their decisions to leave (Griffeth, Steel, Allen, Bryan, 2005; Lee & Maurer, 1997).

Employees see company-financed development as a benefit in itself, and an opportunity to catapult their careers (Maurer & Tarulli, 1994). The voluntary, cost efficient nature of the benefit, combined with the freedom to pursue a degree/certification/course of choice makes the commitment both worthwhile and indispensable (Nordhaug, 1989; Maurer, Pierce & Shore, 2001). In addition, employers win by gaining the trust and commitment of these skilled employees through the capacity building initiatives.

Increased education leads to increased expectations for advancement and earning potential within the organization, and receiving tuition reimbursement has a positive relationship with POS, in addition to retention efforts. Some employees feel obligated to give back to an organization that has made an investment of time and money in them.

Tuition reimbursement (TR) is a means of assisting employees in obtaining higher education and possibly a degree outside of the workplace. Studies have shown that rewards and recognition (whether by public notoriety or increased pay) will increase employee satisfaction. When an employee is recognized for increasing his or her education and adding value to the organization, increased job satisfaction and productivity may follow (Nelson, 2003). At the organizational level, properly implemented allocation strategies lead to a better return on investment, planning accuracy, elevated levels of productivity, better business performance, improved communication and retention of good talents.

Staff Educational Scholarships: The Crux of the Problem

These enabling and supportive initiatives have to be coupled with managerial action. Lee & Maurer (1997) stressed the importance of subsequent changes in the employee's status such as reassessing job descriptions and assignments, an increase in salary, as well as a promotion keeping wages controlled. Ensuring that employees' goals and capacities are compatible to their immediate jobs is a leadership task.

Benson, Finegold & Mohrman (2004) found that voluntary turnover increases when individuals earn graduate degrees but is significantly reduced if a promotion follows. When employees are promoted, it communicates a message that they are valued and appreciated members of the team and that their efforts towards development have been acknowledged and rewarded. Without a subsequent promotion to a fitting role, the shock of disappointment combined with the reduced fit will lead employees to re-evaluate their current jobs and look for alternatives.

Ultimately employers are taking a risk by offering such an expensive and portable benefit. By recognizing the potential for turnover, employers should engage and devise supportive management practices by managing expectations and careers, to maximize on their investment and guard against losing valuable employees (Noe, 1996).

Human capital theory supports the notion that individuals decide whether to stay with a firm in part on the basis of whether their jobs provide the best fit with and returns on their skills (Bishop, 1997; Liu, 1984). A decrease in fit, combined with the marketability of a graduate degree, is likely to increase turnover intention (Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, McDaneil & Hill, 1999). That is why the HR efforts of a firm need to strategically address the needs of such employees and place them in jobs that allow them to use the skills they have gained. Benson *et al.* (2004) stresses on the importance of HRD practitioners ensuring a change in the employee's job the closer an employee comes to completing the degree, otherwise a firm may be paying to facilitate the exit of some of its most skilled and highly motivated employees.

Employees perceive that pay increases or promotions should be an added benefit once a degree has been obtained (Benson *et al.*, 2004). But, these employers may not have plans for the employee once the degree has been obtained. This is the crux of the problem with offering the benefit. If employees are expecting some reward for obtaining a higher degree and it is not offered by the company, the employee may seek employment elsewhere. On the other hand, the company may believe that by offering the benefit to employees, they are not obligated, nor should they be, to offer increased pay or benefits once a degree has been conferred. Is it worthwhile for the company to have the knowledge, they paid for, be used by another firm? After the degree has been

obtained the organization has a choice to increase responsibilities for this employee or continue with the current employment status. Depending on which avenue the organization chooses and what the employee expects will determine if tuition reimbursement is still a viable retention or recruitment tool.

CHAPTER III

THE CASE OF THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

About the American University of Beirut

The American University of Beirut and the Medical Center are one of the most attractive educational and research institutions in the country and region, attracting students, academics, researchers from around the world. It has also been a magnet for people seeking employment, because of the many financial and occupational benefits it offers to employees. During the past years, with the economic, environmental and political challenges facing Lebanon, the growing turmoil in the region and the world, AUB has maintained its stance as one of the leading institutions to contribute to the betterment of life in the region through many local initiatives and campaigns. Its mission states that “the American University of Beirut (AUB) is an institution of higher learning founded to provide excellence in education, to participate in the advancement of knowledge through research and to serve the peoples of the Middle East and beyond.” The university practices an American liberal arts model of higher education, and is has been chartered in the New York State since 1863. The university website states within its vision and mission, five core values that are adopted by the institution, which are:

- Personal Integrity
- Accountability
- Respect for Diversity
- Continuous Learning and Development
- Freedom of Thought and Expression

AUB and AUBMC strive to be leaders respectively in the domains of higher learning and medical advancement and care by providing quality education and service, excelling in research and commitment to leadership with integrity, enhancing their stance as major academic and policy making leaders in the Middle East. In effect, five core competencies were set as pillars to direct AUB towards achieving its vision, all accessible on its website:

- *Client Focus*: Providing service excellence to both internal and external clients.
- *Communication*: Clearly conveying and receiving messages to meet the needs of all. This may involve listening, interpreting, formulating and delivering information.
- *Initiative*: Identifying and dealing with issues proactively and persistently seizing opportunities that arise.
- *Organizational Awareness*: Understanding the structure and culture of the organization.
- *Teamwork*: Working co-operatively and productively with others to achieve results.

The Staff Educational Scholarship at AUB/AUBMC

An attractive benefit that is offered to non-academic staff, currently AUB/MC permits them to attend 6 credit hours per fall/ winter/spring semester and 3 credit hours for summer towards a degree at 40% of the cost. With 60% coverage, the degree can be considered an affordable and highly marketable asset for the employee.

The process of applying for this scholarship is by applying to the degree

and after acceptance, getting approval from Director/ Supervisor of the Unit/ Department. Staff can also opt to pursue individual courses without enrolling in a program and completion of a degree. An email is sent by Human Resources Department announcing the opening of applications for the scholarship in a given semester, mentioning the amount of scholarship received and employee obligations in relation to overtime to be compensated should course hours fall within working hours (See Appendix I). In the past, a written application existed for employees willing to apply, currently the application process is an online one through the new Employee Self-Service Portal on Oracle EBS.

No formal discussion that takes place with a professional from the Human Resources department to discover the goals of the employee, or towards what position they would like to hold post-graduation or completion as a means of succession or human resource planning, questions that are not inquired about in the application either.

The main aim behind applying such a benefit should be for developmental purposes, linking it to career development planning in order for employees to improve their prospects while they pursue programs intended to enhance their work abilities and knowledge.

And while the application process at AUB is assumed to be well managed by sound policies, and deadlines, there are no clear indications of a career planning mechanism that would align with organizational human resources strategies in order to harness the motivation and eagerness of employees to invest in themselves and in turn benefit the organization through placing them in positions suitable for the education they have chosen, or identify gaps in staffing in the organization and guide willing candidates to pursue degrees that would fill this gap. Ultimately as an institution, AUB

should deliver on the core value of Continuous Learning and Development and core competencies of Client Focus, Communication and Initiative.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

Research Objective

The study was carried out amongst the Non-Academic Non-Supervisory and Management employees at the American University of Beirut and the AUBMC. The objective of the project is to explore the perception of the university administrative staff concerning the process of the staff educational scholarship as it is in their institution, in particular, why they desired to enroll in the degrees and courses, the level of Perceived Organizational Support, commitment they feel. In addition to retrieving management input on the aim behind offering such a benefit, and how the organization administers the scholarship to meet their strategic demands, in order to critically assess and recommend future improvements to the policy, as a means to align it with the human resource planning strategies and goals of the AUB/AUBMC.

To optimize the findings, both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis were exploited. Data was collected through literature review, a survey with employees who are currently enrolled in or were enrolled in the staff educational scholarship program during the past four years, in addition to individual “semi-structured interview” with senior management officials at the Human Resources Department at AUB.

Such a model would be beneficial to gain insight regarding the management of the scholarship and the existing HR practice. Consequently, the data should feed into career, succession planning and human resources management processes in order to achieve both organizational and employee success.

Recruitment & Sample Selection

In abiding to Institutional Review Board guidelines and regulations, participant emails were solicited through the IRB office at AUB to ensure full anonymity and confidentiality.

The participants consist of 185 members from the American University of Beirut and Medical Center operational, professional and managerial staff. The American University of Beirut (AUB) and Medical Center distinctly separates between the faculty members, clinical faculty and administrative employees who are engaged in supportive tasks such as Finance, Information Technology, Human Resources, Auxiliary Services, Communications, Registrar, Admissions, Medical staff and Charles Hostler Sports Center as opposed to academics who are engaged in teaching and research.

A distinction is also made within the ranks of Non-Academic and Management staff who either assume “Non-Supervisory” roles/staff (grades 1 to 12) or are engaged in managerial “Supervisory” roles (mostly grades 13 and above). Senior management officials at the Human Resources Department at AUB and AUBMC were invited to take part in the semi-structured interviews personally by the researcher, their contact information was retrieved from the company’s Address Book that is internally accessible by all AUB website visitors. An interview was scheduled in AUB Human Resources Headquarters at their convenience. Confidentiality and anonymity were reinforced through the informed consent document form that was reviewed, explained and approved.

Survey Design

The survey was administered through Lime Survey at the American University

of Beirut. The online survey was comprised of a majority of close-ended questions, with one open-ended question requesting feedback and any recommendations from staff. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, tokens were generated for each participant who received an email invite with an attached consent document.

The survey is comprised of six sections. The first section is concerned with employment data, such as tenure at AUB/AUBMC and current position, salary, and position grade and categorizes staff into two categories: past or present recipient of the scholarship. The third section intends to measure POS, Affective Commitment, Job-Education Fit and Turnover Intentions.

The final section includes questions related to the organizational practices, whether staff received any form of counselling and guidance prior to and after receiving the scholarship from staff members in the Human Resources Department or their supervisors.

Measures

Perceived organizational support: The 8-item Survey of Perceived Organizational Support by Eisenberger *et al.* (1986) was used. Because of the length of the SPOS thirty-six item scale, it is common for researchers to use a shorter three to eight item scale (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2002).

Affective Commitment: The eight-item Meyer & Allen Affective Commitment Scale was used to measure affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

Currently the number of staff members from both institutions is around 5000 employees. Out of 195 online surveys sent to staff members, 65 staff members fully completed the survey, a 35% response rate.

Out of the 65 respondents, 35 are currently recipients of the staff educational scholarship while 30 have benefitted within the past 5 years. 44 are currently in a non-managerial grade (Grade 3-12) and 21 hold managerial positions (Grade 13 and above). 40 staff members mentioned that they applied to the educational benefit with the ultimate aim of being promoted and given job advancement opportunities after graduating, while 25 mentioned that they enrolled in order to develop new skills and apply them to their current roles.

Tenure

Table 1 indicates that applicants to the staff educational scholarship are both seasoned employees and are familiar with the structure and culture of AUB with the largest percentage of staff (31%) having tenure of 6-8 years. In addition, they are also experienced in their current positions with 26 (40%) having been in their current roles between 3-5 years.

Table 1

Summary Table of Employee Employment Characteristics

	Total Tenure at AUB/AUBMC			Tenure in Current Position	
	f	%		f	%
0-2 years	2	3	0-2 years	13	20
3-5 years	19	29	3-5 years	26	40
6-8 years	20	31	6-8 years	17	26
9-12 years	10	15	9-12 years	4	6
12+ years	14	22	12+ years	5	7
Total	65	100	Total	65	100

Salary Data, Tuition and Scholarship Assistance

Salary data was solicited to indicate the investment these staff members are willing to invest in their education. The majority of staff members earn a gross annual salary ranging between 9600\$-13000\$. The below figures indicate the per credit hour fees of a graduate course at the relative faculties at AUB.

Table 2

Staff Salary Data

Salary Per Month (\$)	f	%
Less than and 800-1100	23	35
1101- 1500	14	22
1501- 2000	11	17
2000+	17	26
Total	65	100

Table 3

Credit Hours/Graduate course in different faculties

Tuition Fees 2019-2020 Registrar's Office Website	
Faculty/School	Credit Hour fees (\$) for Graduate Course
Faculty of Arts and Sciences	939
Suliman S. Olayan School of Business	1063
Rafic Hariri School of Nursing	850

The level of investment made for completing graduate program or enrolling in a graduate course would be the following:

Table 4

Tuition Scholarship

Faculty/School	Course Fees (3 Credit)	Assuming 6 credits are taken per semester	Academic Year	Investment made by staff member on a yearly basis (40%)	Investment made by AUB/AUBMC (60%) per staff member	Assuming 35 currently enrolled
FAS	2817 \$	5634 \$	11268 \$	5076 \$	6192 \$	216,720 \$
OSB	3189 \$	6378 \$	12756 \$	5102.4 \$	7653.6 \$	267,876 \$
HSON	2580 \$	5160 \$	10320 \$	3559.2 \$	6760.8 \$	236,600 \$

The above table indicates the level of investment made by staff members to enroll in courses or a program on a yearly basis. Taking into consideration the majority annual salary that ranges roughly between 9500-13000\$, when calculating for salaries mentioned in Table 2, the investment made in their education amounts to nearly half

their annual gross income. On the other hand, assuming all 35 currently enrolled are in any of the above programs, AUB is investing 200,000\$ annually in their education. And although AUB is a private, non-profit institution, it is still accountable to stakeholders to be accountable for the funds spent.

Grade Classification

There majority of the staff members, 44 out of 65 both currently and previously enrolled are in non-managerial grade (Grade 3-12) at the time of the survey compared to 21 who are in a managerial grade. There is a clear distinction of benefits and compensation between both grades as it relates to wages, overtime policies, and dependent education coverage.

Table 5

Grade Classification

	Currently Enrolled		Previously Enrolled		Total
	f	%	f	%	
Managerial Grade (13 & Above)	9	26	12	40	21
Non Managerial Grade (3-12)	26	74	18	60	44
Total	35	100	30	100	65

Job Categories

This was a surprising discovery, the majority of staff who have benefitted from the scholarship are currently working in the nursing field, judging by the unpredictable and highly stressful and strenuous nature of their careers this is an indication of the level

of investment and motivation that they have to pursue higher education and advancement opportunities, finding time out of their irregular and draining schedules to attend classes and study. The second major job category was reported to be in administrative and support roles.

Table 6

Job Categories

Job Category	f	%
Finance	8	12
Human Resources	2	3
Lab Instruction	3	5
Student Services	2	3
Administration & Support Services	12	19
Nursing	22	32
Information Technology	5	8
Other: Research Coordinator, Events & PR, Safety, Education, Health Administration	11	19
Total	65	100

Perceived Organizational Support

Results from the 8-item scale of the Perceived Organizational Support show varying opinions regarding how valued, appreciated and supported they feel by the organization. Although they perceive that their organization values their contributions to its advancement and good performance, and is attentive to complaints, they reported that extra effort goes unnoticed and little concern is shown to their general satisfaction at work. In addition, they showed a neutral stance to notions of reciprocation of concern and gratitude.

Table 7

Perceived Organizational Support

8-item POS Scale (%)	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
My organization values my contribution to its well-being	50		
My organization fails to appreciate any extra effort from me ®	48		
My organization would ignore any complaint from me ®			45
My organization really cares about my well-being		36	
Even if I did the best job possible, my organization would fail to notice®		32	
My organization cares about my general satisfaction at work			50
My organization shows very little concern for me ®		36	
My organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work		38	

Affective Commitment

Results from the 8-item scale of the Affective Commitment that tackles how much employees WANT to stay at AUB/AUBMC showed positive affective notions of commitment. Unlike the varying reviews of Perceived Organizational Support, the majority of respondents reported a strong sense of attachment to the organization, that it has a great deal of personal meaning to them and they feel a strong sense of belonging and emotional bond to the institution. They reported that they do not think they could easily be attached to another organization.

But what outcome would poor education-job match and compensation have on

these positive responses of affective commitment and perceptions of support?

Table 8

Affective Commitment

Affective Commitment Scale (%)	Agree	Disagree
I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization	52	
I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it	60	
I really feel as if the organization's problems are my own	58	
I think that I could easily become as attached to another organization ®		43
I do not feel like part of the family in this organization ®		57
I do not feel emotionally attached ®		62
This organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me	74	
I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization®		66

Education/Salary- Job Match vs. Intentions to Quit

For staff currently enrolled in the staff education scholarship, to identify turnover intentions as it relates to Education-Job Match, respondents were asked: "How likely are you to quit if there is no fit between the job & education pursued?" Out of 35 respondents, 13 responded that they would definitely and most probably quit. 13 were neutral while 9 responded that they would probably and definitely not quit. Regarding salary, 31 mentioned that they would quit if there was no match, 3 were neutral and one was totally committed.

For staff who had previously been enrolled in the scholarship, out of 30 respondents, a staggering 22 believe that their current position does not match the education they received with only 8 reporting a match. To identify their turnover intentions, they were asked “How often do you search for a job that will better fit the education you received?” to which 20 of the original 30 responded to be actively searching for jobs.

Education- Job mismatch is generally associated with lower job satisfaction (Stenard *et al.*, 2016) and less productivity due to staff not utilizing their full potential and imposes limits on their human capital (Green & Zhu, 2010). And over education is known to affect labor turnover (Hersch, 1991). According to Allen (2011) most graduates aspire for and strive to be in position that will make the best use of the education they received, it would only be expected from employers to influence an employee’s education-job match through appropriate job designs and assignments.

Table 9

Education- Job Match/Salary vs. Intentions to Quit

Currently Enrolled Staff	Yes	Neutral	No
Are you likely to quit if there is poor fit between the job & education pursued?	13	13	9
Between job and salary?	31	3	1
Previously Enrolled Staff			
Are you currently in a position that matches the education you received?	8	0	22
What about salary?	5	0	25
Do you actively search for a job that will better fit the education you received?	20	0	10

Statistical Analysis- Correlations

The results of the SPSS analysis for recipients of the staff educational scholarships: previously enrolled and currently enrolled confirmed a significant positive relationship between POS and Affective Commitment (0.54, 0.52) respectively, and a negative relationship between POS and Intentions to quit when Education-Job match (-0.58, -0.45) and Salary-Job match is present (-0.40, -0.38) respectively.

In addition, for both groups – previously and currently enrolled- there exists a negative relationship between Affective Commitment Intentions to quit when Education-Job match (-0.36, -0.32) and Salary-Job match is present (-0.35, -0.30) respectively.

Meaning that for all respondents, although they perceive organizational support and are committed to the organization, salary and job match play an important role. As match decreases, intentions to quit increases and POS and affective commitment increase- and vice versa. We can only assume that the variation of the percentages can be attributed to the fact that currently enrolled staff members are hopeful, that by the end of their studies, some form of change may happen to their status, while on the other hand, previously enrolled staff members have graduated from their degrees and have gone through the educational process without mentorship, guidance, or an appropriate change in their career and salaries.

Table 10

Statistical Analysis

For Previously Enrolled	POS	AC	IQ-EdJob Match	IQ-SalaryMatch
POS	1			
AC	0.54*	1		
IQ-EdJobMatch	-0.58*	-.40**	1	
IQ-SalaryMatch	-0.45*	-.38**	0.28*	1
For Currently Enrolled				
POS	1			
AC	0.52*	1		
IQ-EdJobMatch	-0.36**	-0.35**	1	
IQ-SalaryMatch	-0.32**	-0.30**	0.34*	1

*p < 0.01 and ** p < 0.05

Mentoring Pre and Post Application

65 respondents were asked if they had received any form of mentoring or guidance to enroll in a certain course or pursue a certain. Out of 65 respondents, only 12 staff members reported that they received a form of mentoring while 50 stated that they had not received any form of mentoring prior to the application process to direct them or guide towards specific routes of study in line with organizational needs.

51 respondents then added that no career prospects were discussed prior to enrolling in a program of study. And out of 30 staff members who have graduated from the staff education scholarship program 25 added that a career plan was not drawn out for them even after they completed their degrees.

Career mentoring should be employed by the employee, manager, HR official to draw the path towards an employee's future destination, through well designed steps, experience, and the developmental plan needed to get there.

Table 11

Mentorship

	Yes	No	No answer
Mentoring Pre-Application	12	50	3
Career Planning Prior to Application	14	51	0
For Previously Enrolled Mentoring Post-Graduation	5	25	0

Staff Recommendations and Feedback

In the final section of the survey, an open ended question was asked to staff willing to give feedback and recommendations on the Staff Educational Scholarship Policy. 20 staff members took the initiative and responded to the question “Please mention any recommendations you may have to improving on the Staff Educational Reimbursement Policy.”

Throughout the survey, four categories were evident from the responses that dealt with their experience applying to the scholarship, administration and mentoring discrepancies, in addition to financial issues.

Changing the Assistance Scheme

Respondents stated that they believe that as they are employees in service of this educational institution, they should be entitled to pursue their education for free. Some mentioned an increase in the percentage of the scholarship.

“Staff education is an investment by AUB and I would recommend that it be given entirely for free rather than the way it is given today. AUB staff are the back bone of this institution and they are the institution's competitive advantage - no exceptions. All staff members should have the opportunity to learn here for free since they can enhance their professional skills and benefit the organization even more.”

“I feel staff should pay less than 40% for their tuition and be encouraged by management to pursue a degree since this would enrich

their knowledge and help serve their clients better.”

“Either increase salaries to be able to cover AUB tuition fees, or increase the percentage of scholarship provided to the staff.”

“I would like to recommend to cover the full tuition of the staff as 100% instead of covering 60% ONLY because by doing so the university will be a great support.”

Unfair Administration of the Benefit

One staff member mentioned that during the course of the studies, he/she realized that there were discrepancies in the administration of the benefit. Such differential treatment can give rise to feelings of resentment and distrust towards the organization and demotivation since benefits should be administered in a way that is fair to all employees who are entitled to receiving them, especially with increasing costs of education.

“As you know as a staff, we benefit from a 60% scholarship. Later I noticed that more than 3 students in my class are getting 100% from their department. So I was frustrated since we are all AUB staff. It is really not fair to have different benefits in the same company/organization.”

Deloitte Talent 2020 (2012) report emphasizes authentic and fair leadership which translates into a more satisfied, committed, and engaged workforce, highlighting that leaders who do not build trust by demonstrating a commitment to executing strategy and policies in a consistent manner may not be building an organization that is an employer of choice.

Improve Counseling and Career Planning Practices

Throughout their feedback, respondents perceived the practices of the human resources department to be lacking. It is evident through the responses of staff members that the majority of recipients have not received any guidance or counselling regarding their career path prior to enrolling in their courses. It is crucial for employee

expectations to be managed clearly and honestly, where a clear career path can be agreed upon with relative raise and promotion criteria being set for each and every recipient of the scholarship.

“Have someone meet with us prior to enrolling in the graduate program as a part of career counselling (from the HR)”.

“Staff that have completed their graduate studies should be given financial incentives and their career plan must be discussed and planned accordingly. Educational scholarships are mostly offered to retain staff, while it is making staff leave after finishing due to lack of promotions and guidance”.

“When I applied to my graduate degree in Education I was mentored from within the departments where I work. Everyone helped... I think I was one lucky person with my super awesome colleagues but I doubt everyone here is lucky as I am. I think proper mentoring or guidance should be available whenever a staff apply to graduate or PhD degree.”

According to SHRM (2017) employees usually feel more engaged when they believe that their employer is concerned about their growth and provides avenues to reach individual career goals while fulfilling the company's mission. A career development path provides employees with an ongoing mechanism to enhance their skills and knowledge that can lead to promotions and transfers to new or different positions. Providing identifiable career paths is an important aspect of retention plans, along with coaching and mentoring employees with high potential and moving proven performers into new roles that fit skills developed over time.

Feelings of Resentment

As a result of poor guidance and career counselling, one respondent reflected on his/her unfortunate experience with Human Resources personnel after receiving his/her degree.

“After receiving my degree, I was told that I could not use my degree to benefit my current career path. I was also told that AUB career paths are not designed dynamically in ways that would allow

me to benefit from my degree, and that said degree should be used as a form of "personal advancement" rather than as a means to benefit my career or workplace. All in all, I felt that I would've been more satisfied had I not pursued an MBA, mainly because currently feel overqualified for my position.”

Indeed, the Deloitte Talent 2020 (2012) report findings support that employees need to be engaged with meaningful where companies use their skills effectively are more likely to report they plan to stay with their current employer. Effective retention strategies should be aligned with the needs and desires of critical talent, especially when they belong to groups with a high risk of turnover.

Table 12

Thematic Table of Staff Responses

Themes	Categories	Codes	Quotation
Staff Recommendations	Changing the Assistance Scheme	Increase percent covered by AUB	“I feel staff should pay less than 40% for their tuition..”
		Cover 100% of the tuition	“I would recommend that it be given entirely for free ..” “All staff members should have the opportunity to learn here for free”
	Improve Mentoring Practices	Need for professional guidance	“Have someone meet with us as a part of career counseling (from the HR)” “Staff career plan must be discussed and planned” “ Proper mentoring or guidance should be available whenever staff apply to graduate degree”
Staff Negative Sentiments	Feelings of Resentment	Education of no value to organization	“I was told that I could not use my degree to benefit my current career

		path”
	Regrets towards pursuing the degree	“I felt that I would've been more satisfied had I not pursued an MBA”
		“Currently I feel overqualified for my position.”
Unfair Treatment	Varying administration of the benefit	“It is really not fair to have different benefits schemes in the same company/organization”
		“I noticed that more than 3 students in my class are getting 100% from their department”

CHAPTER VI

MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

In an interview with the directors of Human Resources and Benefits at AUB, both confirmed that the purpose of the staff educational scholarship is to develop staff and to provide them with the tools to improve their careers in the organization, which is why enrolling in programs and courses that are in line with the staff members' responsibilities and duties are encouraged. Adding that the benefit has been available for more than 20 years, allowing employees to grow on a personal level in addition to adding value to their departments and organization as a whole.

When asked about the approval/rejection criteria of staff educational scholarship applications both responded mentioning the "expectations" of the institution, stating that when the institution is investing 60% in a staff member, they expect the staff member to be gaining knowledge and skills that would be beneficial to their current role.

When asked about the expectations of employees after graduation or completion of courses, both mentioned that in the majority of cases there is no direct link to a promotion or a raise unless there is an available vacancy in the organization, stating that the benefit should be taken as an opportunity for "self-improvement" rather than a means for a promotion. In the course of the interview, it was acknowledged that due to the lack of mentoring and linking between developmental and human resource planning efforts, several staff members have resigned from their positions after the completion of their degrees and sought

employment elsewhere for better job fit and salary, unfortunately wasting the investment made by the institution especially since the employee is not obliged under any circumstance to remain in the organization for receiving the 60% scholarship although they reflected on the possible need to have such limitations in the future.

They mentioned an improvement in the application process, integrating the course application system on the Oracle EBS System where it follows the workflow of approvals after the submission of the staff member to the director/supervisor of the unit which is then processed by a staff member in the HR department. Adding that the limit of the 6 clock hours per week during a regular shift has been reinforced in an effort to allow the staff member to pursue the courses necessary and still have a productive presence at work.

Finally, when the issue of career and human resource planning was tackled, both directors mentioned that the decision to allow a staff member to enroll in a program and a course is in the hands of their direct supervisor in the departmental level and HR does not play a critical role in career development counselling of the staff member. There is no central projection or human resource planning strategy or function that is in place to assign the staff members enrolled in these programs into positions that are fitting of their newly attained education, and as Human Resources they do not feel that it is feasible given the structure of AUB/AUBMC and the large number of employees.

SHRM reports (2019) that simply offering a tuition-reimbursement program is not enough, a tuition program should be structured to support both the organization's strategic plan for professional development and its financial strategy. HR should track whether the organization is filling higher-level openings

with employees who have used the program as another way to measure the ROI. They also note having a payback provision is an essential element of the program's success, unless they are let go due to a reduction in force, in which case the service commitment is waived. Approving courses with a clear tie-in to employees' career-advancement prospects helps keep them on board.

There is a clear divide between staff expectations and motivations in applying and receiving the benefit and management opinion regarding its purpose and goals. On one hand, staff report to have applied to and received the benefit in hopes of growth opportunities and a satisfactory career path, with education-job match and a relative increase in salary. On the other hand, management views the application to the benefit as a personal initiative and challenge on behalf of the staff member for self-improvement that is not related to any form of concrete workforce forecasting, career or succession planning function that serves organizational needs and a strategic goal. In fact, management sees the benefit through a departmental or unit-related lens as opposed to an organizational one. And does not communicate a concrete career ladder, not interfering, counseling or coaching employees during the application process.

Table 13

Summary Table of Management Responses

Policy not aligned with HR staffing strategy	Considered for the benefit of department and not the organization as a whole. Not aligned with future staffing needs and projections.
HR does not have mentorship role	Approval in the hands of department/unit/faculty director. HR processes scholarship through online system
Policy considered risky investment	No provisions to stay, allowing staff to quit without penalty enforced.

Policy not aligned with career advancement opportunities.	Offered as a means of “Self-Improvement”. Promotion or raise not guaranteed. Scholarship approved if linked with current role, not future aspirations.
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CHAPTER VII

RECOMMENDATIONS

As an institution, AUB/AUBMC offers the staff educational scholarship as a benefit to all willing and eager staff members. To achieve a return on investment, the institution should be aware that the satisfaction and commitment employees feel is largely based on expectations once coursework and degrees are completed. In addition, retention of these employees is based on the role the HR department plays in aligning employee ambitions and goals to organizational needs by assigning added responsibilities to the employee in an effort to recognize their achievement and providing them with financial incentives.

The Human Resources department should reevaluate its role in the learning and developmental efforts of the employees and align it with the organizational values and competencies previously mentioned. In addition, they should reassess the staff educational scholarship benefit that has been administered in an ad hoc way in order to enhance productivity and organizational effectiveness, offering employees opportunities for advancement and growth.

Being one of the largest private sector employers in Lebanon, importance should be given to nurturing human talent in all its forms, whether they are students, researchers and academics or non-academic employees. Ultimately AUB

as an institution should be able to claim its place as a leading employer not only by the financial and healthcare benefits it provides, but also through learning and development initiatives - in addition to being an academic and research pioneer.

Implement a Workforce Planning Function

It was evident in the interviews with the directors of Human Resources and Benefits, that there is no workforce planning function currently being exercised in the institution. Due to the uncertainty that is looming in the country, in addition to the increasing unemployment rate, and the bundle of benefits that are offered by the university, most employees prefer to stay in their current positions at any wage and grade in avoiding unemployment.

All these factors make new vacancies mostly available due to a change in the structure of the department or unit, a change in leadership vision and mission, an initiatives being launched temporarily.

But the environment of higher education is always in a world of change with emerging fields of distance learning, new technologies and artificial intelligence to name a few. In addition, some roles have become redundant due to changing technologies and the need for specialized subject matter experts has become evident.

AUB/AUBMC as an institution should remain competitive against its regional, local and international counterparts and forecast the need for new talents in these emerging fields, and this is where the Staff Educational Scholarship can come into play.

Deloitte (2017) Talent Matters report emphasizes the importance of a talent strategy, where organizations develop an integrated, business-aligned, data-driven

strategy that is widely understood throughout the organization. In fact, a clear talent strategy that highlights organizational needs and captures information on employees' skills and suggests new job opportunities personalized for them through a career management/talent acquisition system would develop a deeper relationship with talent that is ideally personalized to each employee and connected to development opportunities. Once a workforce gap analysis has been conducted to forecast future growth and staffing projections, then specific openings for scholarships can be given for willing staff members, which will be discussed in a later point.

Establish a Learning and Development Unit

The Human Resources Department at AUB currently has one learning and development specialist, the Director of Learning and Development. In comparison, the learning and development unit at AUBMC houses a learning and development manager and two specialists. Currently the learning and development staff are in charge of trainings related to onboarding new employees and familiarizing them with institutional policies and procedures, soft skills and technical skills training.

In establishing a Learning and Development Unit, the purpose would be to cultivate human talent. The role of the unit would be to identify, manage and sustain the aspirations of employees and align them with organizational needs and strategy.

Establishment of the Learning and Development Unit can be led by seasoned academics and industry experts that are currently employed by AUB, which has no shortage of brilliant researchers and consultants currently in the Olayan School of Business. In addition, the MHRM program at AUB graduates a number of staff members from its ranks every year, who would be ideal candidates

to be promoted to roles in the Human Resources department.

The Learning and Development Unit would then be in charge of all things related to the education, training and advancement of the staff members by taking leadership in managing the staff educational scholarship and evaluating applications thus being the primary point of approval, and assessment of the progress of the employee. As the respondents to the survey mentioned, almost all with the exception of few did not receive any career counselling and mentoring during the application process or after completing courses.

The rationale behind such a change would be the following: The applications would be submitted to experienced Human Resources professionals who would evaluate the profiles of the applicants, the courses or degrees they wish to enroll in and their aspiration for advancement would be discussed. In light of the workforce planning function, the learning and development unit would have data of the gap that is needed to be filled and can carefully assess and designate individual career plans clearly. Once applications have been reviewed and a case has been accepted, the respective Human Resources staff member will be responsible for communicating the decision to the supervisor or director of the employee and the general provisions of his absence during shift times (if any) and substitution and over time arrangements be made accordingly - thus relieving the power distance between employee and supervisor.

By the establishing a Learning and Development Unit, a culture of leadership and learning committed to making targeted investments in employees, as well as creating an environment that is personally engaging and stimulating would be communicated (Deloitte, 2017) that ensures high-quality conversations with employees regarding career and succession planning. As recommended by the report, HR managers

and L&D specialists can reinforce the ROI of such a benefit through:

Career Mapping: Where employees and specialists strategically think about the career paths and how to meet the career goals within the organization rather than leave it to move ahead, by identifying positions within the organization that meet the employee's interests.

Job Redesign: Where increased challenges and opportunities are given to employees to get more out of their jobs while staying on the same ladders. The scope of the job can be broadened by developing different tasks with increased responsibility and accountability for planning, organizing and controlling tasks of the job.

Developing a Sound Application Process where Expectations are Communicated and Managed Clearly

Although some employees may choose to enroll in courses for “self-improvement” or the mere attainment of knowledge as Senior HR administrators mentioned. Results of the survey and comments from staff highlighted, that most enroll in educational program to receive a higher degree with intentions to improve their current job position. Instead of leaving the decision about whether to pursue a degree solely up to the employee, findings by SHRM (2019) encourage HR managers to be open and sincere with employees about whether the degree they're seeking will help meet the objectives of the organization, while also nurturing employee career growth. Deloitte Talent 2020 (2012) has found that almost two out of every three employees who plan to stay report their employers communicate effectively and have greater trust in corporate leaders when their talents and abilities are effectively utilized.

A major issue with the administration of the staff educational scholarship is that expectations and reality are at a clear divide, which ultimately leads to feelings of

disappointment for an overqualified employee who is not satisfied with the compensation he/she is receiving. When a clear application process is developed, with letters of intent, and clear career path, salary increase, and promotion criteria based on the staff members level of education and the years of experience are communicated and agreed upon, feelings of organizational commitment can be reinforced by a transparent, concrete and fair process.

Changing The Staff Educational Scholarship to Truly Satisfy Organizational Needs

As mentioned in my first recommendation, the staff educational scholarship benefit needs to feed into workforce planning efforts. As such when staffing needs are identified, only a specific number of vacancies for the scholarship can be opened covering specific programs.

In an effort to motivate willing employees, the scholarship could be given at 100% coverage which would make it fair across the board, since currently department supervisors have the power to add to the 60% coverage from their own unit/ department or faculty budget.

Once a career path and a promotion criteria are discussed and agreed upon by the employee and Human Resources Department staff. The 100% coverage would then become conditional with a minimum tenure they would have to complete at AUB before resigning or a penalty would be adopted.

This agreement and change in the staff educational policy contract would be mutually beneficial to the employee and the organization, as is largely applied in banking institutions in Lebanon, by investing in motivated employees who will be knowledgeable assets on rotation and in positions where their expectations and

aspirations have been met.

CHAPTER VIII

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH PROSPECTS

It is important to share the limitations and future research prospects related to this study. First, the data was specific to turnover intentions, it would be beneficial to see whether the self-reporting intentions of staff members holds true by performing a longitudinal study and observing if staff reporting turnover intentions actually do voluntarily quit. Conversely, longitudinal research would also be beneficial to uncover reasons for staff who reported turnover intentions but did not. Second, it would be beneficial to retrieve data from Human Resources Department on staff members who had received the staff educational scholarship and resigned, to uncover the reasons for their actual voluntary turnover.

In addition, the sample size of staff members within the past 5 years who have benefitted from or are currently benefitting from the staff educational scholarship yielded only 195 staff members, which compared to the staff at AUB/AUBMC that amount to circa 5000 employees is less than 1%. It would be interesting to uncover the reasons why staff members are not opting to benefit from such a scholarship.

This study was developed from literature review pertaining to human capital theory (Becker, 1965) and perceived-organizational support theory (Eisenberger, 1986) which are theories developed with a Western perspective, their transferability may be difficult in a Middle-Eastern context as Lebanon's, future studies should consider Middle Eastern-based theories as a more appropriate lens where political, economic and sociological factors play an important role in determining individual occupational decisions. Last, the study used a sample from one educational institution in Lebanon,

which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other institutions offering the same benefit. Future research can investigate and compare HR processes, POS, commitment and turnover intentions of employees who receive a similar benefit in different private sector organizations.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSIONS

Human resources should control employee turnover intentions and dissatisfaction for the benefit of the organization, and staff need to be informed through strong communication systems about their opportunities for advancement. It is important to be realistic about career goals and helping employees understand the current opportunities and limitations on campus and addressing the feasibility of various career options in order to optimize the performance and enhance commitment through job enrichment and growth opportunities.

Managers should be aware that benefits and HR practices serve as signals to employees about the extent to which the organization values and cares about them as individuals (Wayne *et al.*, 1997). Employees are the backbone of any organization, and they need to be motivated and retained especially if a return on investment is what AUB would like to achieve. Effort must be put in strategically training, developing, and retaining staff to the benefit of the institution as consistently as the effort being put in nurturing students and the resources being provided to non-academic staff. When a conscience and active role is played, it diminishes the divide between non-academic and academic staff and creates a feeling of appreciation and self-worth.

In conclusion, the staff education scholarship needs to be revisited to improve the process and link it to institutional needs and staff expectations and goals as currently it lacks the basic requirements to serve its true purpose. The deficiencies in the application, mentoring and career planning process in specific need to be addressed, and

solid grounds for evaluation need to be put in place for proper implementation of the process as whole.

APPENDIX I

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION EMAIL & FORM

The following is an example of the email announcement sent to staff by the Director of Human Resources at AUB announcing the opening of the scholarship application-currently online.

Dear All,

The enrollment for Staff Education for the **XX SEMESTER OF ACADEMIC YEAR 20XX-20XX** is now open through **XX**. Registration for courses is available through the AUB Employee Self Service portal on Oracle. Full-time Academic and Non-Academic Personnel who plan to enroll in courses at the University during the **XX Semester of AYXX-XX** should submit their request online not later than **XX at 5:00pm**. *The online system will not accept any submissions after XX.*

Please read the email in its entirety for information regarding the Staff Education Scholarship regulations for full-time personnel. Attached are instructions on how to sign up for classes through the system.

STAFF EDUCATION: https://ebs.aub.edu.lb/OA_HTML/AppsLocalLogin.jsp

1. Full-Time personnel will be allowed to take, subject to the approval of the concerned Dean and/or Director, a maximum of **six clock hours** (*not credits*) per week during the Academic Year of which not more than three clock hours can be during regular office hours. Such personnel will be required to work an equal amount of time outside the regular working hours;
2. During the Summer Session, full-time personnel in departments that do not follow the summer schedule will be entitled to the same arrangements followed during the Academic Year as in (1) above;
3. Full-Time personnel in departments that follow the summer schedule will be allowed a **maximum of five clock-hours** (*not credits*) per week provided all these hours fall outside the regular office hours;
4. Approval in writing must be submitted by the responsible Dean or Administrative Department Head before a full-time employee is allowed to take courses for credit or to audit courses;
5. Full-Time personnel will be charged **40%** for courses taken for credit;
6. It is understood that the request for Staff Educational Scholarship will be subject to consideration and that the submission of a request would not necessarily result in granting an educational scholarship;

The responsibility for ensuring that the request is submitted not later than **JANUARY 15, 2019** rests with the individual concerned rather than the Dean or Administrative Department Head. **ANY PERSON WHO SUBMITS HIS/HER REQUEST LATER THAN JANUARY 15, 2019 WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED FOR REDUCTION IN THE TUITION FEES.**

The following is the Staff Educational Scholarship used in the past:

**AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT**

**STAFF EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION
FALL SEMESTER 2017 – 2018**

To: Human Resources Department

I would like to apply for an educational scholarship at AUB in respect of the following courses offered in the Fall Semester 2017 – 2018 to which I intend to register.

Name: Meghri Erikor Hassatorian
 Payroll Number: HA 62544
 Student Number: 201821090
 Department: FEA, Dean's Office

Course #	Course Name	Day/Time	Credits
MHRM 309	Organizational Research Design	attached document	3
MHRM 306	Strategic HRM	attached document	3
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I also declare that I fully understand that my request will be subject to consideration and that the submission of this application would not necessarily result in granting me an educational scholarship.

In case my application is approved, I authorize the Comptroller's Office to deduct any amount due to or charged by the University.

Name: M. Hassatorian

Date: 4/8/2017
(dd/mm/yyyy)

Signature: 

Center to be charged (filled by Supervisor / Department Head): _____

Signature of Supervisor / Department Head: _____

APPENDIX II

SAMPLE SURVEY QUESTIONS

A. Interview Protocol for Senior HR Administrators

This interview will be conducted with a representative from HR at AUB who is engaged in the Staff Educational Scholarship administration process in order to get a general view regarding the application, administration and decision making process as well as discovering areas for improvement.

1. What is Staff Educational Scholarship policy used for in your organization?
2. Can you describe in detail how the Staff Educational Scholarship form and policy can be modified in order to align with its main objectives and fit the institution's mission and values?
 - a. What additional pieces of information should be included in the Staff Educational Scholarship application form?
 - b. From a process standpoint, what might be improved?
3. In your opinion why do staff members apply to the staff educational scholarship?
4. Can you describe the application process?
 - a. What are the selection criteria for approving SECs?
 - b. What are the key factors that lead to a rejection of an application?
5. How do you follow up with employees on their progress in their chosen programs? Post program?
 - a. What career planning measure are in place to ensure that staff move onto roles fitting their degrees/ course? (*Probe: do they automatically get a raise? Change in title/department? Change in grade?*)
 - b. Relationship with performance appraisal? Compensation scheme?
6. In your point of view what are the major benefits/advantages of the current Staff Educational Scholarship for AUB at large? For departments? How would you expand on those benefits/advantages?
7. In your point of view what are the major drawbacks of the current Staff Educational Scholarship at AUB? How would you improve it?
8. What would you like Staff Educational Scholarship to accomplish ideally for your organization?

B. For Staff:

Thank you for taking part in this survey that will indicate the level POS (perceived organizational behavior), and commitment that you as staff who have benefitted from the Staff Educational Scholarship at AUB/AUBMC feel. This survey will take around 30 minutes, be assured that your responses will remain confidential and the information anonymous. Kindly answer the below questions:

Part One: Demographic Information

1. You have been an employee at AUB/ AUBMC for:
 - a. 0 - 2 years (1)
 - b. 3 - 5 years
 - c. 6- 8 years
 - d. 9- 12 years
 - e. 12+ (5)

2. You have been employed in your current position for :
 - a. 0 - 2 years (1)
 - b. 3 - 5 years
 - c. 6 -8 years
 - d. 9- 11 years
 - e. 12+ (5)

3. Your current salary/month is:
 - a. Less than \$800 (1)
 - b. \$800 – \$1100
 - c. \$1101 – \$1500
 - d. \$1501- \$2000
 - e. More than \$2000 (5)

4. Your current position is concentrated in the field of: (roll down menu will include all relevant fields)
 - a. Human Resources (1)
 - b. Finance
 - c. General Administration
 - d. Project Management
 - e. Education
 - f. Medicine
 - g. Media and Communication
 - h. Health Administration
 - i. Facilities Management/Operations (9)
 - j. Other, please specify: _____

5. Your current position is:
 - a. Non- Managerial (Grade 3-12) (1)
 - b. Managerial (Grade 13 and above) (2)

If you are a staff member previously enrolled in the tuition scholarship, please move on to question 14.

For Staff members currently on the tuition reimbursement benefit:

6. How important is a salary raise to you after graduation/ completing courses?
 - a. Very Important (1)
 - b. Important
 - c. Moderately Important
 - d. Slightly Important
 - e. Not Important (5)

7. How important is a matching of the job & degree important for you after graduation graduation/ completing courses?
 - a. Very Important (1)
 - b. Important
 - c. Moderately Important
 - d. Slightly Important
 - e. Not Important (5)

8. What are the chances you will quit your job if your salary and job do not match?
 - a. Definitely (1)
 - b. Most Probably
 - c. Probably
 - d. Probably Not
 - e. Definitely Not (5)

9. What are the chances you will quit your job if your job & degree do not match?
 - a. Definitely (1)
 - b. Most Probably
 - c. Probably
 - d. Probably Not
 - e. Definitely Not (1)

For Staff members previously on the tuition reimbursement benefit:

10. Are you currently in a position fitting your degree/courses taken after your graduation/completing courses? What about salary?
 - a. No (1)
 - b. Yes (2)

11. Do you think actively search for another job that will better fit the education you received?
 - a. Always (1)
 - b. Very Often
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Rarely
 - e. Never (5)

12. What are the chances you will quit your job do to an education job mis-match?
 - a. Definitely (1)
 - b. Most Probably
 - c. Probably
 - d. Probably Not
 - e. Definitely Not (1)

13. What are the chances you will quit your job do to an education salary mis-match?
 - a. Definitely (1)
 - b. Most Probably
 - c. Probably
 - d. Probably Not
 - e. Definitely Not (1)

Part Three: Perceived Organizational Support

Instructions: Listed below are statements that represent possible opinions that YOU may have about working at AUB/AUBMC. Please indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by filling in the circle on your answer sheet that best represents your point of view about your organization (organization = department/ unit/ faculty). Please choose from the following answers:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

14. My organization values my contribution to its well-being
15. My organization fails to appreciate any extra effort from me. (R)
16. My organization would ignore any complaint from me. (R)
17. My organization really cares about my well-being.
18. Even if I did the best job possible, my organization would fail to notice. (R)
19. My organization cares about my general satisfaction at work.
20. My organization shows very little concern for me. (R)
21. My organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work.

Part Four: Organizational Commitment

Instructions: With respect to your own feelings about the particular organization (organization= department/ unit/ faculty) for which you are now working, please indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by circling a number from 1 to 5 using the scale below.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Affective Commitment Scale:

22. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.
23. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
24. I do not feel a strong sense of "belonging" to my organization. (R)
25. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization. (R)
26. I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization. (R)
27. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.

Part Five: Satisfaction with Staff Educational Scholarship Application Process

28. Did you receive any guidance/mentoring during the course of your studies about the future of your career?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
29. Was a clear career path/ future job placement/ promotion communicated during the application process?
30. Was a clear career path/ future job placement/ promotion communicated after completing the degree?
31. Do you have any recommendations regarding the staff educational scholarship in general?

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