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Abstract

This paper discusses the determinants of talent retention and its relationship with employer branding, career growth and recruitment practices within the context of education, science and technology and medical sectors of the Malaysian public sector. This is due to attrition which is considered as brain drain in the Malaysian public sector. Employer branding that includes the aspects of marketing and human resource management (HRM) in the public sector is less addressed currently so it is hoped that this research will contribute to the body of knowledge. The study uses quantitative method via self-administered questionnaires and to be filled by professionals in the three sectors mentioned. The study expects the outcome of the research to contribute understanding the daterminants of talent retention in Malaysian public sector. This paper culminates with suggested future research work.

Keywords: *Employer Branding, Talent, Retention, Career Growth, Public Sector, Recruitment, Employee*

Introduction

Human capital represents the human factor in the organization. They reflect the combined intelligence, skills and expertise that give the organization its distinctive character. The human element is capable of learning, changing, innovating and providing the creative thrust (Bontis, Dragonetti, Jacobsen & Roos, 1999). It is an element when properly motivated can ensure the long term survival of the organization. Developments in information technology, changing trends in governance, widespread globalization and the increasing importance of knowledge-based economy has impacted and influenced the public service sector directly. In this environment, the retention of valuable employees becomes a very important strategy for human resource managers and organizational leaders. In such a setup of increasing competition and changing environment, the public service sector is constantly striving to recruit, retain, reward and develop its employees. It faces tough competition against the higher paying private sector. In the same manner, when the

public service is unable to recruit and retain capable individuals, this adds to the vicious cycle of weak governance.

Ever since a group of McKinsey consultants coined the phrase 'the war for talent' in 1997 (see Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001), the topic on talent management has received remarkable degree of attention and interest from both academicians as well as the practitioners. The word 'talent' can be defined as 'the sum of a person's abilities…..his or her intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence, judgement, attitude, character and drive. It also includes his or her ability to learn and grow' (Michaels et al., 2001, p.12). Another scholar, Ulrich (2007) in his holistic view defines talent as a combination of competence, commitment, and contribution. 'Competence deals with the head (being able), commitment with the hands and feet (being there), and contribution with the heart (simply being)'.

In relation to talent management, the problem of brain drain had existed in Malaysia. Amongst the effort to bring back the talent overseas is by giving incentives to diaspora and benefits for professional expatriates. The task has been carried out earlier by Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI). However since 2011, the task is taken over by Talent Corporation Malaysia (Talentcorp). Talentcorp functions as a 'middleman' in terms of human capital, diaspora and expatriates between the government, private sector and international actors. In other words, they are the 'go-to agency' for leading employers to solve their critical talent needs (Malaysia, 2016). In the Talent Corporation 2014analysis, for every ten skilled Malaysians born in Malaysia, one of them will choose to leave the country for several reasons.

According to a report entitled "Malaysia Economic Monitor: Brain Drain" by World Bank (2011) highlights the main factors that inspire Malaysians to move abroad which include the differences in one's potential to earn, career projections, quality of education and quality of life. The people, particularly the non-Bumiputeras make up the majority of the diaspora who is discontent with Malaysia's inclusiveness policies and is considered as a key factor too. In addition, The New York Times article called "Loss of Young Talent Thwarts Malaysia's Growth" has highlighted the skilled workers or teenagers who believe that Singapore is better in terms of career advancement, higher salary offered and better education system (Gooch, 2010). On the same note, respondents have stated that they might return to Malaysia if there are better opportunities, huge possibilities in terms of career prospects, being married to Malaysians who want to live in his homeland. Presently, firms in Malaysia are already facing difficulties in employing accountants due to this phenomenon.

In the Malaysian public sector, the departments and agencies face difficulties in terms of talent retention. The brain drain problem is one of the imperative issues in a system of bureaucracy. The causes for resignation are numerous and empirical evidence from Public Service Department (PSD) showed that many talented employees leave the public sector. Their job is in critical sectors such as healthcare, academic as well as science and technology. Among the justifications for the resignations are related to the public sector working values, low motivation and high work burden (World Health Organization, 2014).

Employer branding is defined as a process, which includes planning and implementing a strategy, with the aim to influence the target's employee's perception of an attractive employer (Christiaans,

2013). Research has shown that there are many advantages of an employer branding strategy; firstly, it assists an organization to attract as well as retain current and potential employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004); and secondly, it can decrease costs, increase employee's performance and lead to competitive advantage (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Barrow & Mosley, 2005).

Employer branding (EB) in Malaysia has been practiced by large companies. For example Petroliam Nasional Berhad (PETRONAS), an oil and gas company in Malaysia, practice EB by promoting their employment value proposition (EVP) that is to attract young graduates to join the organization and 'be part of the growing oil and gas industry" (Leadernomics.com, 2014). However, this concept is yet to be explored in the Malaysian public sector. In the past three or four years, there has been growing interest on branding which includes branding on the nation. But it stops there and there had been no mention on it even in the Malaysian 11ᵗʰ Plan. Although most of the ministries and departments have their own corporate division/unit, this is still not enough as employer branding covers marketing, human resource management and communication (Barrow & Mosley, 2005). However, there is also the movement on EB is called 'engagement' in public sector. To be competitive, an employer should have their own unique "employer value proposition" to attract potential employee and differentiate it from other employers.

While 'career' is understood as the continuation of work experiences in an individual's lifetime (Arthur, 2008), 'career growth' is defined as 'one's views of the opportunity to grow and advanced in an organization' (Jans, 1989). There have been previous studies that had investigated aspects such as career self-management and graduates' early experiences in an organization (Guterman, 1991; Sturges, Guest, Conway & Davey, 2002). A survey conducted by Weng, McElroy, Morrow and Liu (2010) in 176 companies covering nine cities in China argued that not much emphasis has been paid for experienced employees to perceive their opportunities for promotion and advancement in an organization.

In order to retain talented employees, employers must ensure the talent can flourish and grow in the organization. This is called reciprocal matter between employer and employee. Infeld, Adams, Qi and Rosnah (2010) has conducted research and indicated that Malaysians prioritize good salary and career advancement for working in the public sector more on self-actualization and less about co-worker comradeship. In the report by World Health Organization (2014),medical officers or doctors leave for greener pastures as they can see their career growth either in the private sector or starting with their own firm.

In order to get talented employees, systematic recruitment have been practiced. In this case, Public Service Commission plays the biggest role as recruiter and facilitator to ministries and departments. However, despite the systematic recruitment practices, employees have the tendency to find 'greener pastures'. When the talent cannot get what they have been promised during the interview, they will look for other 'solutions' and slowly exit from the ministries and departments. In this millennial era, high salary not only is important but also intangible rewards such as career development and work life balance. According to a report by Pricewaterhouse Coopers (2011), the new millennial require work life balance, job satisfaction and personal career growth.

Recruitment in the Malaysian public service is being carried out at the central agency such Public Service Commission (including scientists, doctors, nurses, clerical, accountants, statisticians, researchers, attorneys) and Education Service Commission (for teachers). For academics, they are appointed by their respective universities. The police and army carry out recruitment through their own commission (Police Squad Commission and Malaysian Armed Forces). The issues pertaining PSC revolves on low representative of other races such as Chinese and Indians which makes up about 5% from the total civil servants. The table below shows the number of appointments in the public service according to races for 2011-2015.

Table 1: Numbers of appointments in public service according to races (2011-2015)

Race	Year				
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Malay	28,367	33,427	45,392	28,268	19,084
Chinese	3,686	2,630	2,901	2,545	1,184
Indians	2,316	2,354	2,018	1,963	963
Native (Sabah)	1,128	4,089	4,478	2,294	1,607
Native (Sarawak)	855	3,106	4,083	1,826	1,214
Orang Asli Peninsular	56	197	169	228	174
Others	402	1,532	1,018	583	380
Total	**36,810**	**47,335**	**60,059**	**37,707**	**24,606**

Sources: Public Service Commission (2016)

The increasing importance of talent in the modern and competitive business has initiated a need to focus on managing talent as an organizational competitive asset as well as a source of wealth (Gupta, Iyer & Aronson, 2000). Sustainable advantage comes from the internal qualities, rather than the firm's product-market positions, that are hard to imitate and talent provides such a resource for sustainable competitive advantage of an organization. A well implemented talent management programme may lead to reduced operating costs, a faster new product development cycle and better customer service, thus giving a firm the competitive advantage in a particular sector (Ordonez de Pablos, 2004). An effective talent management process incorporates, among others, generating new knowledge, accessing talent from external sources, representing talent in documents, database, software and so forth, embedding talent in processes, products or services, circulating existing knowledge within an organization, using accessible knowledge in decision making and measuring the value of knowledge assets and the impact of talent management (Galagan, 1997).

As in the case of Malaysia, the public service sector is currently facing tough competition for talent similar to most sectors experiencing a shortage of top talent, resulting in the level of intense competition for retention. For example, in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, seven (7) professional officers have resigned to join the academia or private sector which offer higher wages (MOSTI, 2014). According to Reichenberg (2002), these reasons include demographics, compensation

issues, diminishing public sector's image and out-dated human resource management practices. It is thus becomes ever more important for organizations to retain talented and skilled employees in order to maintain their competitive advantage Losing such employees means loss of investment as well. The organizations have to hire and train new employees. Moreover, employees take their know-how with them and thus the company risks a potential loss of confidential information to competitors (Frank, Finnegan & Taylor, 2004).

The main objective of this study is to collect the empirical evidence concerning employer branding in the Malaysian public sector. It is to test its relationship with talent retention and career growth, as well as to examine the mediating role of recruitment practices. The organisation of the paper is as follows: Section 2 presents a review of the relevant literature consisting of talent retention, employer branding, career growth and recruitment practices. Section 3 presents a development of the propose hypothesis and description of the methodology. Section 4 presents the proposed researched model and finally conclusion and future research are discussed.

Literature Review
Talent Retention
Employee Retention is defined as "the tendency to keep daily wager employees in service at a temporary housing facility beyond a one year period". Boles, Ross & Johnson (1995) and MacHatton, Dyke & Steiner (1997) reported that workers' personal characteristics and demographic background was related to the turnover rate. It was also related to job satisfaction, work environment, motivation, external environment, absenteeism and job performance. However, limited research has addressed issues on retention among talented employees in the public sector especially in the field of professions such as Medicine, Education and Science. Although Talentcorp Malaysia has been engaged to attract and persuade local professionals to contribute to the nation, many of them hold back and refused to return. The attraction and pride for being regarded as a public sector employee have shown decreasing trends over the years.

Retention is the outcome of mutual satisfaction between the employee and the employer. The employer offers the satisfactory worker stay to serve the organization's needs. At a similar pace, the employee attempts to stay in the organization that satisfies his or her needs. To increase the positive outcome, the companies must promote employee learning and development while maintaining the stance to satisfy other employee needs. This will keep the labour force satisfied and at the same time contribute to the advancement of organizational effectiveness (Kontoghiorghes & Frangou, 2009).

Employer Branding
The term employer brand appeared to have first been used in 1996 by Ambler and Barrow in 1986. It portrays the power of brand linking it with the employer of choice. It is an extension of brand management by which human resource thinking has been influenced by marketing function. In this case, employees act as a customer to the organization.

Why employer brand matters in most organizations? These leading points occur in a predictable environment that comprised the employee experience and provided the avenue for delivery of the employer brand attributes: "recruitment, on-boarding, employee communication, shared services (such as benefits, administration and facilities), rewards, measurement (i.e. employee engagement surveys), performance management and employee learning and development" (Mosley, 2007). What

constitutes an employer brand? A strong employer brand is thought to increase an organization's ability to not only attract, but also to retain and engage people (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Previous researches have studied Employer branding with regards to private companies as desirable workplace. However, similar research on employer branding in a public sector setting remains inadequate. Getting the best talent is critical as they hold the people's tax money and are expected to deliver excellent services to the public.

Table 2: Studies on the employer branding

Author and Year	Variables	Sample	Instrument
Schlager, Bodderas, Maas, and Cachelin (2011)	Perceived employer brand, employee response	2,189 managers and employees	Questionnaire
Yaqub and Khan (2011)	Employer branding, talent management, organizational attractiveness	100 university students	Questionnaire
Sokro (2012)	*Employee Branding,* retention, attraction	87 employees	Questionnaire
Wahba and Elmanadily (2015)	*Employer branding,* employee differentiation, loyalty, satisfaction, affinity	369 managers	Questionnaire
Raubenheimer (2013)	*Employer branding,* human resource management practices, corporate social responsibility	Purpose sampling of HRM and CSR divisions of large financial organizations in NZ and Australia.	Questionnaire and semi structured interview (mixed method)

The concept of employer branding as described by Sullivan (2004) is the process of creating an image of being a great place to work. Based on the marketing concept, branding is designed to create a lasting image in customers' perception. The objective of employer branding is to create an image designed to encourage people to want to work for the organization. It also is supported by developing a workplace that would have the ability to influence current employees. This would make them feel that they were working for a well-managed organization where they were continually developing and growing in their careers (Sullivan, 2004).

Generally, employers were looking to be successful in their recruitment marketing efforts, but in many cases they did not have a good understanding of prospective employees' needs and concerns. Thus, connections were not established with prospects. Those who viewed these marketing efforts, therefore, would not be provided with the means to evaluate whether or not the job available would qualify as their "dream job" (Ewing, Pitt, De Bussy & Berthon, 2002).

Career Growth

While career is understood as the succession of work experiences in an individual's lifetime (Arthur, 2008), 'Career growth' is defined as 'one's perceptions of the chances of development and advancement within an organization' (Jans, 1989). Previous research on career growth has investigated aspects such as career self-management and graduates' early experiences in an organization (Guterman, 1991; Sturges et al., 2002). A survey conducted by Weng et al. (2010) in 176 companies covering nine cities in China argued that not much emphasis has been made to the specific ways in which experienced employees perceive their opportunities for promotion and development in an organization.

According to Weng et al. (2010), there are four dimensions of career growth. His model suggests that career growth consists of four factors: meeting career goals, developing employees' professional abilities, accepting promotions, and compensation suited with those abilities. The definition by Jans (1989) of career growth as opposed to Bedeian, Kemery, and Pizzolatto (1991) who used the idea of the utility of one's present job for one's career. Weng et al. (2010) expanded on this idea of development and advancement by suggesting that employee organizational career growth could be captured by four factors: career goal progress, or the degree to which one's present job is relevant to and provides opportunities for one to realize their career goals; professional ability development, or the extent to which new skills and knowledge could be acquired during one's present job; promotion speed, a perceptions by employee of promotion rate and forecasting of that promotion; and remuneration growth, or perceptions by employee on how quick, how big and probability of increment in their salary. This multi-dimensional conceptualization denotes that organizational career growth is both employees' efforts in making advancement in their career goals. It also involved professional skills acquirement within the organization and last but not least, the organization's moves in contributing such efforts, through promotions and wages increment. This multi-dimensional view of organizational career growth is in line with both Porter and Steers (1973) that met expectations hypothesis and the psychological contract (Rousseau, 2004).

Table 3: Studies on the career growth

Author and Year	Variables	Sample	Instrument
Weng and McElroy (2012)	Organizational *career growth*, turnover intentions, affective commitment	396 managers	Questionnaire
Weng et al., (2010)	*Career growth* and organizational commitment	961 employees	Questionnaire
Ku Azizah Ku Daud, (2014)	*Slow career growth* and organizational commitment	112 male and 88 female secondary school teachers	Questionnaire
Okurame (2012)	*Career growth* prospect, formal mentoring support (FMS) and Organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB)	72 supervisors / 182 subordinates	Questionnaire

Author and Year	Variables	Sample	Instrument
Yoopetch, (2012)	Employee performance, job satisfaction and *Career growth*	350 employees	Questionnaire
Wang, Weng, Mcelroy, Ashkanasy, & Lievens (2014)	Organizational *Career growth*, employee voice behaviour and organizational commitment.	N/A328 employees	Questionnaire

Recruitment Practices

Recruitment and retention are inherently intertwined topics, often discussed in concert (for example, Ad Hoc Task Force on Recruitment and Retention Issues, 2002; Kaufman, 2002; Stevens & Streatfeild, 2003). Effective recruitment strategies can be seen as the initial solution to problems of accelerated retirements and increased competition for applicants, while retention strategies are the on-going one.

Adding to research on employment brand channels, Allen, Mahto and Otondo (2007) focused specifically on the recruitment websites used to attract worker interest in the early recruitment stages. The authors reported that workers' attitudes toward the website (using this website is a satisfying experience) drove their attitudes toward organizations (in your opinion, how does this organization compares with other organizations of the same type and size?).

Moreover, workers' attitudes toward organizations had a central role in moderating a series of antecedents and outcomes; it mediated workers' perception of organizational familiarity (have you ever heard of this organization?), organization image (rated by social responsibility), job information (how much employment or job opportunity-related information did the website provide compared with what you expected to find?), and organization information (how much information about the organization did the website provide compared with what you expected to find?) with the outcome of employment intention (what are the chances that you will pursue employment with this organization within the next 12 months?) (Gardner, Erhardt & Martin-Rios, 2015).

Table 4: Studies on the recruitment practices

Author and Year	Variables	Sample	Instrument
Rehman (2012)	*Recruitment*, job satisfaction, HRM practices, job performance and talent retention	568 managers	Questionnaire
Mir Mohammed Nurul Absar (2012)	*Recruitment*, selection	155 HR managers	Questionnaire
Gberevbie (2010)	Employee *Recruitment,* retention, performance	120 Civil servants	Questionnaire
Holm (2014)	*Recruitment,* environment	23 managers	Interviews

Greenidge, Alleyne, Parris, and Grant, (2012)	*Recruitment,* training practices, human resource management practices	49 employers	Questionnaire

Research Hypotheses

i.   Employer branding and talent retention

Several studies conveyed that there is a positive relationship between employer branding with the attraction and retention of talent (Crous, 2007; Minchington, 2006; Willock, 2005). There are also empirical studies carried out with a strong employer brand acting as an incentive for talent in the today's market (Rosethorn, 2009; Willock, 2005). Other than that, there are several studies that mentioned the relationship between talent retention and employer branding. The most notable were from Botha, Bussin & De Swardt (2011). They established that employer branding is affected by the needs of certain target groups, a distinguished employer value proposition (EVP) and people strategy. Besides that, they also found that brand consistency, communication of the employer brand and measurement of human resources (HR) employer branding efforts play a role in retaining employee. However, the key problem with this explanation is that this study is a collective of literatures and is based on secondary sources rather than an empirical study.

In another study conducted by Heilmann, Saarenketo and Liikkanen (2013), the results showed the benefits of employer branding and how it is targeted towards potential and current employees. The author also mentioned the importance of target group needs for future research. Furthermore, employer branding would be beneficial to measure how their employer image is perceived by their existing employees in order to improve employer branding.

A strong employer branding as claimed by Bhargava (2010) held a good image among employees. As the organizations get engaged with the employee, the retention will also increase. The study also argued that a positive relationship between employer branding and employee engagement existed which made organizations invest highly in employer branding in order to minimize the turnover rate of employees. These findings support observations by other researches including Cheese et al. (2007), Crous (2007), Minchington (2010) and Willock (2005), that positive development of research evidence uphold the relationship between employer brand and the talent attraction and retention. It was therefore suggested that a conducive work environment is needed by employees and employers will ensure the employees feel comfortable and retain in the organization.With that, a hypothesis is worth testing in the context of the Malaysian public sector is as follows:

H1: There is a significant relationship between employer branding and talent retention in selected three sectors of the Malaysian public sector.

ii.   Career growth and talent retention

A study by Weng and McElroy (2012) conferred to this as there is positive relationship between turnover intentions and career growth. However, the research focuses on managers only as they have the highest opportunity of career growth in the Republic of China. It should also be using samples among technicians, labourers and professionals with the opportunity for career growth for more meaningful results. Employees with met expectations and being fulfilled their psychological contracts, become more attached to their organizations, making them less likely to leave. For

example, career goal progress reveals the relationship between one's career goals and one's current job. If this relationship is strong, one becomes more attached to their employer which decreases their desire to look job at other places.

In the same vein, with respect to professional ability development, the degree that one can acquire new training and skills at a new workplace will be attractive. Furthermore, if the employing organization detect the uniqueness of the skills acquired, limited opportunities will be there to transfer those skills to another employee, making employment in one's current organization more prominent. This evidence confirmed the work of Bedeian, Kemery and Pizzolatto (1991) that one's present job was relevant to one's longer term professional growth and development depending on the concept of expected utility of one's present job. Thus, the hypothesis is formulated is as follows:

H2: There is a significant relationship between talent retention and career growth in selected three sectors of the Malaysian public sector.

iii.   Recruitment Practices And Talent Retention

Recruiting the right talent to apply and accept jobs with an organization is a foundation of organizational effectiveness. This is because recruiting determines whether these characteristics exist in a company and a key source of competitive advantage. Scholars even state that recruitment might be the "most critical human resource function for organizational success and survival" (Taylor & Collins, 2000: 304).

Few studies have been carried out on the relationship between recruitment practices and talent retention. Even if there is, it comes as isolation itself. To retain, recruitment policies should be aligned with organizations' goals, strategies, context and characteristics (Phillips, Gully, Mccarthy, Castellano & Kim, 2014). These practices and activities identify appropriate talent sources; bring job openings to the attention of candidates who fit the job, organization and work unit; influence whether high potential individuals apply for openings (Barber, 1998; Breaugh, 2008). With that, a hypothesis is worth testing in the context of the Malaysian public sector is as follows:

H3: There is a significant relationship between talent retention and recruitment practices in selected three sectors of the Malaysian public sector.

iv.   Employer Branding And Career Growth

Employer branding has been associated with career growth. This is also related to career development, training and development. The findings provide evidence that students are well aware of organizations recruitment methods and they prefer organizations which offer better career growth (Yaqub & Khan, 2011). The scale of instrumentations developed by Srivastava & Bhatnagar (2010) produced the factor analysis of dimensions of employer branding and career growth, depicting one of the highest important factors. However, little has been studied on the relationship between employer branding and career growth. With that, a hypothesis is worth testing in the context of the Malaysian public sector is as follows:

H4: There is a significant relationship between employer branding and career growth in selected three sectors of the Malaysian public sector.

v.   Employer Branding And Recruitment Practices

A considerable amount of literature have discussed on the relationship between employer branding and recruitment practices. According to Wilden, Gudergan and Lings (2010), they have interviewed potential employees, and they relate clear brand signals without having to invest more effort into

getting information about a potential employer, and more experienced respondents were more thoughtful and serious in their evaluations of potential employer brand signals stage. Therefore, an employer brand image that causes a mismatch between expectations and reality can lead to workers' frustration and ultimately reduced employee retention. It is imperative that companies set suitable brand statements that clearly communicate employment values and expectations to applicants. According to the respondents, clear brand signals lead to clearer brand images. It decreases the risk of joining an organization, which finally increases employer attractiveness. With that, a hypothesis is worth testing in the context of the Malaysian public sector is as follows:

H5: There is a significant relationship between employer branding and recruitment practices in selected three sectors of the Malaysian public sector.

vi. The Mediating Role Of Recruitment Practices

Many have studied that employer branding is positively related to retention. There was also a significant relationship between talent retention and career growth. Not many discussions had been derived from mediating variables. Also, studies on different cultural context are scarce. Many studies on HRM practices and performances are well documented by studying the mediating role of knowledge capital (Yang & Lin, 2009), knowledge (Lopez-Cabrales, Pérez-Luño & Cabrera, 2009), employee retention (Al-Damoe, Yazam & Kamal, 2011), perceived organizational support and perceived job influence (Snape & Redman, 2010) and organizational commitment (Juhdi, Pa'wan & Hansaram, 2013). However, the study on the mediating role of HRM practices specifically on recruitment practices is scarce. Attracting the right candidate with notable job description is very important to ensure the candidate understands and feel obliged to join an organization. With that, a hypothesis is worth testing in the context of the Malaysian public sector is as follows:

H6: The recruitment practices mediate the relationship between employer branding and talent retention in selected three sectors of the Malaysian public sector.

H7: The recruitment practices mediate the relationship between employer branding and career growth in selected three sectors of the Malaysian public sector.

Proposed Conceptual Framework

It has been widely viewed that Social Exchange Theory has become one of the most influential frameworks for understanding exchange behavior within organizations. It has also been used to explain a number of different interactions, including Psychological Contract Theory (PCT) and Perceived Organizational Support (POS) (Shore, Coyle-Shapiro, Chen & Tetrick, 2009) and more recently, employee engagement (Saks, 2006). Although there are different perspectives on social exchange, there is a consensus that the Theory of Social Exchange involves a series of social and economic interactions that generates obligations to reciprocate engendering 'feelings of personal

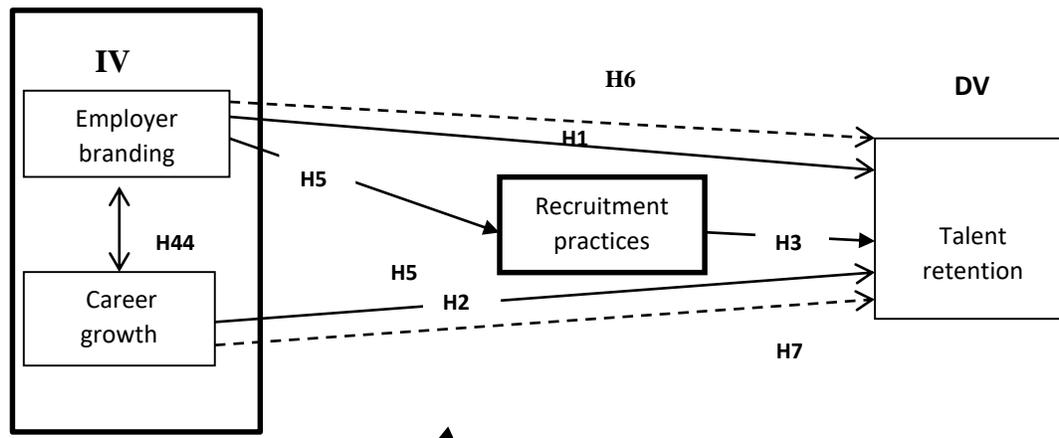obligations,   gratitude   and   trust'   (Blau,   1964:   20).

Figure 1   : Proposed conceptual framework: the relationship between employer branding,talent retention, career growth and recruitment practices.

Methodology

The target group identified for the current research is the professionals at the medical, science and technology, and education sectors of the Malaysian Public Service. These sectors have been chosen in the light of highest attrition and brain drain in the Malaysian public service sector (Wahab, 2014). For medical sectors, doctors will be the respondents. Doctors mean the general practitioners who are placed in government hospitals. The selection of doctors as respondents to this study is due to the need of importance to retain expertise in the government hospitals. In the Malaysian Eleventh Plan, "Achieving Universal Access to Quality Health Care" had been mentioned which meant that the Government will further develop human capital for health to ensure enough supply of competent and skilled healthcare workers. As for now, the ratio of doctor to patient is 1:581 (1 doctor for 581 patients).This is followed by scientists and researchers in the science and technology sector. The respondents for this part will be selected from the departments under the purview of Ministry of Science and Technology (MOSTI).

The respondents in education sector will be selected among academicians in the Higher Education Institution (HEIs). According to Jabatan Pengajian Tinggi (2011), public universities are divided into three groups, namely Research Universities (RU), Comprehensive Universities (CU) and Focus Universities (FU). So, the choice of the sample frame is based on these three important criteria. Probability sampling instead of non-probability sampling will be used in this study. This study will be using stratified random sampling technique. Hunt and Tyrell (2004) mentioned that in a stratified sample, one of the sampling frames is non-overlapping groups or strata. For this survey, a sample of doctors, scientists and academicians will be driven from the selected sectors to represent the entire Malaysian public sector. A questionnaire survey will be administered based on the proportion ten percent of total selected sectors listed on the public document by the three ministries. As the research will be using stratified sampling, random sampling will be employed. This study will employ self-administered questionnaires as the instrument for data collection. The

result will be processed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23.0. Analysis technique will be based on descriptive and inferential statistics. The correlation and regression analysis will be used to test the relationship and causal processes that generate observations on multiple variables (Bentler, 1990).

Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between employer branding, career growth, recruitment practices and talent retention in the context of Malaysian public sector. It is important to note that this study will bring importance to the field of learning in the context of employer branding in the public sector. It is very crucial towards a better understanding of the nature of work in public sector which will contribute to well-being of people and put greater emphasis on the very well-known phrase of "People First, Performance Now". Besides, there is limited empirical research on employer branding and predictors such as talent retention, career growth and recruitment practices in the public sectors. By putting the current research in higher relevance as previous researches in the area only discuss on what is done in practice.

At a policy level, this study is highly relevant to the initiative of 'Powering Ahead for Transformation' by the Malaysian Administrative Modernization and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU). The talent management is one of the factors of success towards Vision 2020. Strategies to call back the experts through 'brain gain' scheme must be carried out aggressively and should be systematically planned to ensure Malaysia benefit from them, otherwise resulting in the Malaysian public sector suffering from 'brain drain'.

With the gaps in knowledge, research on talent retention would be valuable to the employers and employees of the Malaysian public sector to understand the importance of branding and career growth. In order to achieve the success of 11th Malaysian Plan, human capital is the most crucial in the future public sector.

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