

ABSTRACT

“Career” is a dynamic process of continuous development and change of directions during their working lives. Career change is often connected to job switch, both of which involve either a change of function or change of occupation when employees often hop from one job to another. External job switch, if occurs in a substantially large scale in a single organization or sector of the economy, may result in the problem of brain-drain. Hence, any theoretical explanation of job satisfaction leading to career attachment will be valuable to human resources professionals and scholars who are interested about employee retention and psychological attachment in a job setting. The study is particularly valuable in in Macau, with a labor force of merely 274,000 people, and an increasing rate of labor mobility in the recent years. For the past decades, it appears that there has been an ongoing trend of brain-drain from the private sector to the public sector that university graduates and the current population in general express interest in government careers. The drawing of working population, especially skilled and educated workers, into one sector of the economy will certainly create a shortage of manpower in other sectors (Macao Daily News, 2002; Macau Statistics and Census Service, 2005).

The objective of this study is to investigate factors contributing to the phenomenon of public sector career attachment among the Chinese population in Macau. Questions

to be answered in this study include: What are the socio-cultural forces and other environment forces unique in Macau which lead to Macau Chinese' career orientation towards government employment? Do Macau Chinese enter the public sector or the private sector with less commitment to their original career track than in the past such that career shifts are more common nowadays? How is public sector employment different from private sector in their perspectives? Answering these questions will not only help to understand Macau Chinese people's attitudes and career choice motivations, but will also reveal how these attitudes, motivations and career goals change and develop as Macau's social and cultural environment evolves from generation to generation.

Qualitative research method was used with a primarily in-depth, semi-structured ethnographic interview technique, supported by documentary analysis of various English and Chinese publications. In-depth interviewees have been carried out with young adults aged roughly between 18 to 49, who are believed to possess greater inclination to enter the public sector.

The results reveal the following findings which may help answering the aforesaid research questions:

- Macau Chinese have a stronger focus on the present and future, reflected by job seekers' desire to secure present financial status and to work on building wealth and career success in the future.

- They value intrinsic rewards and psychological satisfaction but are willing to discard some part of their intrinsic rewards for better financial rewards.
- They value interpersonal relationship but their job inclination shows no compliance with family expectations and peer influence. Rather, the childhood socialization process through parental teachings appears to be the most formative factor in the shaping of values in the Macau Chinese society.
- The Portuguese colonization has somehow shaped Macau Chinese's impression on the work norms of public service in Macau which nourish a less stressful working environment with competitive salary and benefits, stable and clear path for career advancement and more autonomy at work.
- The job decisions of Macau Chinese are bounded by job alternative and decision time availability. Thus, the localization of civil servants provides more opportunities to Macau Chinese in accessing government job vacancies, and leads to a large flow of Macau Chinese into the public sector.

The investigation has implications for managers in local private enterprises who are concerned about substantial turnover of the talented to work in the public sector and how they could respond to their own deficiencies in providing such motivations over the latter to nourish or sustain company success.