

Reversing The Brain Drain: Investigating Causes and Strategic HR Interventions for Retaining and Repatriating Young Skilled Greek Professionals

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Abstract— The brain drain has significant implications for Greek organisations, including a shortage of talent, increased recruitment costs, and challenges in maintaining a competitive edge. Furthermore, the dearth of skilled professionals impedes the mentorship and development of younger employees, which in turn affects long-term organisational growth and sustainability. This paper concentrates on the organisational factors that contribute to the phenomenon of the 'brain drain', with a particular focus on the role of human resources (HR) in this process. Notwithstanding the extensive research conducted on the role of the economic crisis in the phenomenon of brain drain, there remain notable gaps in the understanding of the organisational components of this issue. It is of the utmost importance that effective HR interventions are implemented in order to attract and retain Greek employees.

Keywords— HR Management; Brain drain; HR Interventions; Repatriation; Retention

I. INTRODUCTION

The term 'brain drain', also known as 'human capital flight', refers to the emigration of highly trained or qualified individuals from a particular country. This phenomenon is typically the result of a number of factors, including a lack of opportunities, political instability and other economic hardships, which collectively result in a significant loss of skilled and educated people (Sidiropoulos et al., 2017). In recent years, Greece has experienced a notable brain drain, with a particularly pronounced impact on young, skilled professionals. It is estimated that between 2008 and 2013, nearly 223,000 Greeks aged 25–39 left the country, a demographic that is critical for the nation's future (Lazaretou, 2016). This trend has had a significant impact on Greek organisations, reducing their capacity for innovation, competitiveness and overall economic growth (Ifanti et al., 2014).

The principal factors motivating the relocation of young Greek professionals are elevated unemployment rates, diminished remuneration, and constrained job stability. These circumstances have been intensified by the financial crisis that originated in

2008 (Bazoukis et al., 2020). Furthermore, the prevalence of political instability and pervasive corruption has contributed to a decline in confidence in the government's capacity to foster a stable and prosperous environment (Panagiotakopoulos, 2020). Furthermore, social factors, including a crisis of social values and cultural attitudes, have also played a role in discouraging talented individuals from remaining in the country (Tsertekidis, 2023). These circumstances have prompted numerous young professionals to pursue more promising prospects abroad, resulting in a notable outmigration of talent. The dearth of suitable employment opportunities and the paucity of avenues for professional advancement within the country have constituted significant deterrents for skilled professionals seeking more promising prospects abroad (Petras & Kousis, 1988). Moreover, the uneven regional development and stunted industrial growth, which initially prompted these workers to seek employment abroad, continue to constrain their employment prospects upon their return (Labrianidis, 2014).

Although these factors are crucial for comprehending the broader context of the Greek brain drain, this study will concentrate on the organisational reasons contributing to this phenomenon, with a particular focus on the human resources (HR) perspective. While research on brain drain in Greece has yielded valuable insights, there remain notable gaps in our understanding and areas where our knowledge is inadequate. The academic literature on Greek brain drain has primarily focused on the role of the economic crisis. This has resulted in a significant research gap that, if properly addressed, might assist human resources (HR) professionals in enhancing their capacity to attract and retain Greek employees.

The phenomenon of the brain drain has significant implications for organisations in Greece. The loss of highly skilled professionals results in a shortage of talent, which in turn impedes innovation and productivity. Organisations are confronted with elevated recruitment expenses and challenges in maintaining a competitive advantage due to the persistent turnover of key personnel (Anastasiou et al., 2020). Furthermore, the dearth of skilled professionals impedes the mentorship and development of younger

employees, thereby creating a long-term impact on organisational growth and sustainability (Wanniarachchi et al., 2020).

The issue of brain drain is of paramount importance for those engaged in human resources and organisational practice, as it has a direct impact on the capacity to attract, develop and retain talent. It can be argued that HR interventions can play a pivotal role in mitigating the effects of brain drain by creating a conducive work environment that fosters employee engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty (Premalatha, 2016). By grasping the organisational factors contributing to brain drain and implementing strategic HR practices, organisations can not only retain their existing workforce but also attract expatriates back to Greece. This would enable them to leverage their skills and experiences to drive national growth and development (Anastasiou et al., 2020).

It is of the utmost importance for Greek organisations to gain an understanding of the dynamics of brain drain and to develop effective interventions to mitigate its impact in order to ensure their future viability. The extant literature indicates that organisational support and HR practices play a crucial role in addressing the challenges associated with retaining talent. To illustrate, organisations that offer comprehensive career development plans and address career development issues for their employees can markedly influence their retention rates (Stroh, 1995). It is imperative that organisations implement effective HR practices to guarantee that their employees perceive their career prospects to be promising and feel a sense of value within the organisation. Job dissatisfaction and a lack of career advancement opportunities have been identified as significant determinants of employee turnover (Vidal, Valle, & Aragón, 2007).

In the contemporary globalised context, organisations in Greece are engaged in a competitive process at both the local and the global level for the recruitment of competent professionals (Christianopoulos et al., 2014). In order to attract and retain personnel in the context of global competition, human resources procedures must be adaptable and inventive. Ultimately, the manner in which organisations respond to the challenges of brain drain can influence their reputation and the perception of their employer brand. The role of HR in developing and sustaining an employer brand that promotes the organisation as a desirable and supportive place to work is of critical importance. In conclusion, addressing the issue of brain drain in Greece is of paramount importance for human resource and organisational practices, as it has a direct impact on talent management, economic stability, labour productivity, and overall organisational success in a competitive global market (Labrianidis and Vogiatzis, 2013).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite extensive research into the economic and social parameters that contribute to brain drain, there is a significant gap in the literature concerning the organisational components of this problem, particularly from an HR standpoint. It is of the utmost importance for human resources professionals to address this gap in order to establish effective talent attraction and retention strategies. This literature review will examine the organisational factors contributing to brain drain in Greece and identify strategic human resources (HR) actions to mitigate its impact. The objective of this review is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which HR strategies can play a pivotal role in reversing brain drain and promoting the long-term growth and development of Greek organisations. To this end, existing research will be evaluated and best practices identified.

The relatively low salaries offered in Greece are a significant factor driving professionals from the country to seek employment opportunities abroad. The economic crisis has served to exacerbate this issue, resulting in widespread salary reductions and a heightened sense of financial instability. To illustrate, the healthcare sector, which has witnessed a notable departure of professionals, offers remuneration that is not commensurate with the qualifications and cost of living for medical practitioners. A significant number of physicians have been observed to leave Greece as a consequence of inadequate remuneration, in pursuit of more lucrative financial opportunities abroad (Ifanti et al., 2014). Furthermore, the reduction in salaries and the imposition of austerity measures have significantly affected the purchasing power and overall economic security of Greek professionals, thereby rendering emigration an attractive option (Mihail & Kloutsiniotis, 2014).

The financial instability experienced by professionals in Greece has resulted in a decline in the standard of living and an intensification of financial pressures on families. The economic pressures have prompted many highly skilled individuals to seek employment in countries where they can achieve financial stability and a higher standard of living. The discrepancy between the cost of living and salaries in Greece has become a significant challenge, with many professionals facing difficulties in maintaining a comfortable standard of living, prompting them to seek opportunities abroad (Panagiotakopoulos, 2020).

The issue of job security represents a significant factor influencing the decision to emigrate. The Greek labour market, particularly within the public sector, is distinguished by elevated levels of job insecurity. A considerable number of professionals are uncertain about their future employment prospects, which motivates them to seek stable and secure employment opportunities abroad. A study by Panagiotakopoulos (2020) indicated that job insecurity is a significant factor influencing the decision of Greek professionals to emigrate, with the objective of securing stable

employment in countries with more robust job markets (Panagiotakopoulos, 2020).

The precarious nature of employment in Greece, compounded by the prevalence of layoffs and short-term contracts, has instilled a pervasive sense of instability among the workforce. A further consequence of the aforementioned factors is that professionals frequently face the risk of unemployment, which has the effect of undermining their confidence in the job market and their future career prospects (Lazaretou, 2016). This uncertainty constitutes a significant push factor, prompting many to seek job security and stability in other countries. The dearth of long-term employment prospects and the pervasive apprehension of job insecurity have rendered the Greek labour market an unwelcoming environment for highly skilled individuals, thereby contributing to the phenomenon of brain drain (Georgalou et al., 2019).

The prevalence of unpaid overtime represents a further critical factor contributing to the phenomenon of the brain drain. Greek professionals, particularly those employed in sectors such as healthcare and academia, frequently work extended hours without commensurate remuneration. This practice results in increased stress and job dissatisfaction, which in turn drives many to seek superior working conditions abroad. As Panagiotakopoulos (2020) observed, the prevalence of unpaid overtime and poor working conditions represent significant factors driving the emigration of Greek professionals.

The practice of unpaid overtime has been identified as a significant source of stress and burnout, in addition to representing a considerable financial burden. The expectation to work beyond regular hours without appropriate compensation has a detrimental impact on job satisfaction and overall well-being. This results in a perception of exploitation and undervaluation, which in turn motivates professionals to seek employment in countries where their work-life balance and labour rights are better respected (Ifanti et al., 2014). The chronic issue of unpaid overtime in Greece has significantly contributed to the dissatisfaction among professionals, prompting many to leave the country in search of better working conditions (Lazaretou, 2016).

The absence of EDI in the workplace is becoming an increasingly significant concern among Greek professionals. Discrimination based on factors such as gender and ethnicity can result in the creation of a hostile work environment, which may ultimately prompt talented individuals to seek opportunities elsewhere where they feel more valued and included. A paucity of EDI in the workplace has been demonstrated to impede the full realisation of the workforce's potential, resulting in diminished job satisfaction and elevated turnover rates (Sidiropoulos et al., 2017). For example, the dearth of gender equality and opportunities for women in the Greek labour market has been identified as a significant issue, contributing to the emigration of

highly skilled female professionals (Sidiropoulos et al., 2017).

The absence of EDI initiatives in Greek workplaces provides an environment conducive to the proliferation of discriminatory practices and biases. The absence of inclusivity acts as a deterrent for diverse talents, who seek environments where they can flourish without encountering systemic barriers. Gender discrimination has been a significant issue, with women often facing limited opportunities for advancement and unequal pay compared to their male counterparts. This pervasive inequality motivates numerous accomplished women to pursue careers abroad, where they can advance professionally and gain recognition (Georgalou et al., 2019).

Extended working hours without adequate compensation or rest periods have been identified as a significant contributing factor to burnout and job dissatisfaction. This issue is particularly prevalent in sectors such as healthcare, where professionals frequently work extended hours under considerable pressure. For example, research indicates that Greek doctors report working excessively long hours without sufficient rest, which can result in burnout and a desire to seek more balanced work environments abroad (Ifanti et al., 2014).

The challenging nature of certain professions in Greece, when considered alongside the lack of adequate compensation for additional hours worked, has resulted in a significant prevalence of burnout among professionals. The healthcare sector has been particularly affected, with numerous doctors and nurses engaged in lengthy shifts without sufficient rest periods. This chronic overwork results in physical and mental exhaustion, prompting professionals to seek more balanced and supportive work environments abroad. The absence of regulations that guarantee reasonable working hours and sufficient rest periods has contributed to the exacerbation of this issue, rendering the Greek labour market less appealing to highly skilled individuals (Bazoukis et al., 2020).

A lack of work-life balance is a significant factor in the decision to emigrate. The work-life balance of Greek professionals is frequently compromised as a result of the demanding nature of their roles and the lack of flexibility afforded to them. It has been demonstrated that the implementation of measures designed to enhance work-life balance can have a marked effect on job satisfaction and retention. Byrne (2005) posited that an enhanced work-life balance is associated with elevated job satisfaction, diminished stress, and reduced turnover rates among employees.

The challenge of achieving a healthy work-life balance is a significant factor driving professionals to emigrate. In Greece, a considerable number of positions entail an excess of working hours and a paucity of flexibility, which collectively impede employees from effectively managing their personal

and professional lives. This imbalance results in increased stress and job dissatisfaction, prompting professionals to seek employment in countries where work-life balance is a priority. The aspiration for an enhanced quality of life and the capacity to dedicate more time to family and personal pursuits serve as compelling motivations for emigration (Theodoropoulos et al., 2014).

A discrepancy between the skills of the workforce and the available job opportunities in Greece results in underemployment and frustration among highly skilled professionals. A significant proportion of the population encounters difficulties in having their qualifications duly acknowledged and utilised within the domestic labour market. To illustrate, Labrianidis and Vogiatzis (2013) discovered that the abilities of highly educated Greek professionals are frequently not aligned with the available job openings, prompting their decision to pursue employment opportunities abroad.

The discrepancy between the skills of the workforce and the available job opportunities in Greece represents a significant challenge. Many highly educated professionals find themselves in roles that do not utilise their qualifications or expertise. This underemployment gives rise to feelings of frustration and a sense of unrealised potential, prompting many to seek opportunities abroad where their skills are in demand. Furthermore, the lack of alignment between the education system and the labour market serves to exacerbate this issue, with many graduates finding that their degrees do not align with the available job opportunities. This discrepancy between the education system and the labour market is a significant factor driving the emigration of highly skilled individuals who seek to utilise their talents and qualifications effectively (Panagiotakopoulos, 2020).

The limited opportunities for career advancement in Greece result in many professionals seeking more promising prospects abroad. The absence of transparent career pathways and professional development prospects across a range of sectors represents a significant challenge. To illustrate, a study conducted by Bazoukis et al. (2020) revealed that medical professionals in Greece are compelled to seek opportunities abroad due to the dearth of professional development and career advancement prospects within the Greek healthcare system.

The paucity of opportunities for career growth and development in Greece represents a significant factor driving emigration. A considerable number of professionals perceive a dearth of prospects for advancement, with their career progression being constrained by a paucity of investment in professional development. This lack of advancement results in dissatisfaction and a desire to pursue opportunities abroad where career goals can be achieved. Furthermore, the absence of mentorship, training programs and transparent career pathways intensifies this predicament, rendering it challenging for

professionals to envisage a future for themselves in Greece (Lazaretou, 2016).

The practice of nepotism and the absence of a meritocratic culture in Greek organisations act as significant deterrents for talented individuals, who perceive a lack of appropriate recognition and reward for their efforts and achievements. This results in demotivation and a desire to seek out work environments that are based on merit abroad. The absence of a meritocratic system has been identified as a key factor influencing the emigration of Greek professionals, who seek fair and transparent career progression opportunities in other countries (Anastasiou et al., 2020).

The absence of a meritocratic system in the Greek labour market represents a significant challenge, with numerous professionals expressing discontent over the perceived lack of recognition and reward for their efforts and achievements. The prevalence of nepotism and favouritism gives rise to a sense of unfairness and frustration among highly skilled individuals. This absence of meritocracy motivates numerous professionals to pursue employment opportunities in countries where their abilities and efforts are duly acknowledged and rewarded in accordance with their merits. The aspiration for a fair and transparent career progression system represents a powerful motivating factor for emigration (Theodoropoulos et al., 2014).

The extensive bureaucratic apparatus in Greece presents significant obstacles to the implementation of efficient work processes and professional growth. The slow and cumbersome administrative procedures can be a source of frustration and demotivation for professionals, leading them to seek more streamlined and supportive environments in other countries. As Panagiotakopoulos (2020) observed, bureaucratic inefficiencies represent a significant factor contributing to the brain drain in Greece.

The pervasive bureaucracy in Greece has an adverse effect on professional growth and efficiency, leading to frustration among the workforce. The slow and inefficient administrative processes create unnecessary obstacles, impeding the effective completion of professional tasks. This bureaucratic inefficiency is a significant factor driving many to seek employment in countries with more streamlined and supportive work environments. The aspiration for a more efficient and supportive work environment represents a significant factor driving emigration, as professionals seek to circumvent the frustrations and delays associated with bureaucratic procedures in Greece (Georgalou et al., 2019).

The phenomenon of the Greek brain drain is a complex issue, with a multitude of organisational factors contributing to it. By addressing these causes through targeted human resources (HR) interventions, Greece can mitigate the adverse effects of brain drain and foster sustainable economic and social

development. In order to address this issue, it would be beneficial for Greek organisations to implement a variety of human resource (HR) interventions with the intention of incentivising the workforce to repatriate.

It is evident that competitive salaries are a significant factor in attracting skilled professionals back to Greece. The decision of expatriates to return to their country of origin can be significantly influenced by the level of remuneration offered, which should be comparable to that received in countries where they have relocated. The available evidence suggests that competitive salaries can enhance job satisfaction and reduce turnover rates (Labrianidis, 2014). It is of the utmost importance to ensure that salaries are sufficient to cover living costs and provide financial stability in order to attract expatriates back to Greece.

During the economic crisis, a considerable number of professionals chose to leave Greece, primarily due to the reduction in remuneration and the overall decline in living standards (Sidiropoulos et al., 2017). By offering competitive salaries, Greek organisations can effectively address this trend. Competitive remuneration not only attracts talent but also serves to retain it, as employees feel valued and fairly compensated for their work. In order to ensure that their remuneration packages remain competitive, organisations should undertake a benchmarking exercise, comparing their salaries against those offered in other countries and industries. Moreover, adjusting salaries to reflect inflation and cost of living changes can also assist in maintaining the appeal of positions in Greece (Haliassos, 2016).

The availability of career advancement opportunities is a crucial factor in the retention and attraction of talent. It would be beneficial for Greek organisations to consider implementing transparent career progression pathways, as this could serve as an effective motivational factor for professionals considering a return to the country. The establishment of transparent and merit-based promotion criteria can encourage professionals to repatriate, as it offers them a clear vision of their future within the organisation.

The absence of career advancement opportunities has been identified as a significant contributing factor to the phenomenon of the brain drain. A significant number of skilled professionals have departed from Greece due to the perception that there are limited opportunities for professional growth and development within their respective fields (Drydakis, 2015). The issue must be addressed by the creation of structured career paths that include opportunities for promotion and development. Organisations may wish to consider the development of succession planning programs, which would facilitate the identification and nurturing of future leaders from within their own ranks. This would serve to demonstrate to employees that there is a clear and attainable path to career advancement (Petridou & Glaveli, 2003).

Furthermore, the implementation of regular performance reviews and feedback sessions can assist employees in comprehending the expectations placed upon them and the avenues through which they may advance in their careers. The provision of transparent criteria for promotion and the implementation of a transparent promotion process can serve to mitigate perceptions of favouritism and enhance employee motivation and satisfaction (Myloni, Harzing, & Mirza, 2004).

The implementation of comprehensive training and development programs can facilitate the enhancement of employee skills and advancement of their careers, thereby rendering repatriation a more attractive proposition. As demonstrated by Petridou and Glaveli (2003), training interventions have the potential to enhance organisational performance and employee satisfaction. It is imperative that organisations implement systematic human resources development initiatives, including training programs, in order to equip their employees with the requisite skills to flourish in their roles.

Professional development represents a crucial element in the retention and attraction of employees. The provision of opportunities for continuous learning and development can assist in fostering a sense of value and investment among employees. Organisations may provide a range of training programs, including those focused on technical skills, leadership development, and soft skills. Such programs may be delivered via workshops, seminars, online courses, or on-the-job training (Labrianidis, 2014).

By investing in the professional development of their employees, organisations not only enhance the skills and capabilities of their workforce but also demonstrate a commitment to employee growth and career advancement. This can markedly enhance job satisfaction and loyalty, thereby increasing the likelihood of expatriates considering a return to Greece (Vlachos, 2009).

The implementation of efficacious policies for the management of working hours has the potential to mitigate the occurrence of burnout and to enhance the work-life balance of employees. The implementation of flexible working hours enables employees to achieve a more optimal equilibrium between their personal and professional lives, which can markedly enhance their job satisfaction (Ifanti et al., 2013). The provision of flexible work schedules may serve to enhance the appeal of a return to Greece for professionals who prioritise a work-life balance.

The term "flexible working hours" encompasses a range of options, including flextime, compressed workweeks, and part-time schedules. Such arrangements assist employees in managing their work responsibilities while also attending to their personal and familial obligations. For professionals who have previously benefited from flexible working arrangements in another country, the availability of

similar options in Greece can be a significant factor influencing their decision to return (Papadeli et al., 2022).

Furthermore, flexible working hours have the potential to enhance employee productivity and reduce absenteeism, as they facilitate more effective time management and the ability to balance responsibilities. Organisations may implement policies that permit flexible working hours while ensuring that business needs are met and that employees remain accountable for their work (Simou & Koutsogeorgou, 2014).

The option of remote working can prove an attractive proposition for professionals who place a high value on flexibility and the capacity to work from any location. The ongoing pandemic has demonstrated the feasibility of remote work, and offering this option can make repatriation more attractive for professionals who have experienced the benefits of remote work abroad (Panayotopoulou et al., 2007). The provision of remote working options can assist organisations in accessing a more diverse talent pool and in retaining employees who might otherwise seek opportunities elsewhere.

Remote working options may encompass full-time remote work, hybrid models that integrate remote and in-office work, and flexible remote work arrangements. The provision of remote working options by organisations can result in a reduction in the necessity for employees to relocate, thereby facilitating the possibility of expatriates returning to Greece (Haliassos, 2016).

Furthermore, remote work enables organisations to tap into a global talent pool, attracting professionals who may be more inclined to work remotely from a variety of locations. This can assist organisations in assembling diverse and highly skilled teams, thereby enhancing their competitiveness and innovation (Osman-Gani & Hyder, 2008).

The implementation of recognition and reward systems that acknowledge employees' contributions and achievements has the potential to enhance employee morale and job satisfaction. Such programs may comprise financial bonuses, public acknowledgement and other incentives designed to reward exemplary performance. Vlachos (2009) identified selective hiring and compensation policies as significant predictors of firm performance and employee satisfaction, thereby emphasising the importance of effective rewards programs.

It is possible to construct rewards programs that acknowledge both individual and team achievements. Financial incentives, such as bonuses and profit-sharing plans, can provide an immediate motivating factor for high performance. Additionally, non-financial rewards, such as public recognition, awards, and additional time off, have been demonstrated to be effective in boosting morale and motivation (Panayotopoulou et al., 2007).

It is possible for organisations to develop comprehensive rewards programs that are aligned with their strategic goals and values. It is essential that these programs are communicated in a clear manner to employees, and that the criteria for earning rewards are transparent and fair. The recognition and reward of employee achievements can facilitate the creation of a positive work environment, thereby attracting and retaining talent (Grammatikopoulos et al., 2011).

The establishment of transparent promotion criteria has the potential to motivate employees by providing a clear and defined path for career advancement. Transparent promotion policies guarantee that employees are aware of the prerequisites for advancement and perceive promotions as being based on merit rather than personal connections. Myloni, Harzing, and Mirza (2004) highlight the significance of HR practices that align with national culture and offer a transparent trajectory for career advancement.

Transparent promotion criteria may include clearly defined job roles and responsibilities, performance metrics, and the competencies required for each level of advancement. Competency frameworks can be utilised by organisations to delineate the requisite skills and behaviours at varying career stages. By disseminating this information to employees, organisations can assist them in comprehending the prerequisites for advancement and the means of attaining their career objectives (Petridou & Glaveli, 2003).

Furthermore, regular performance reviews and feedback sessions can facilitate transparent promotion processes. Such reviews afford employees the chance to discuss their career aspirations, receive constructive feedback, and set goals for development. The involvement of employees in the promotion process and the provision of transparency can facilitate the development of trust and enhance employee engagement (Osman-Gani & Hyder, 2008).

Mentorship and coaching programs can provide invaluable assistance to employees, facilitating their navigation of their careers and professional development. Such programs facilitate connections between returning professionals and experienced mentors, who can provide guidance, support and insights into the organisation and industry. Osman-Gani and Hyder (2008) emphasise the significance of repatriation training programs that encompass mentorship and coaching, with the objective of facilitating cultural readjustment and professional development.

Mentorship programs may be either formal or informal, with mentors and mentees matched according to their respective interests, career goals and experiences. Mentors can provide support in a number of areas, including career planning, skill development and navigating organisational culture. In contrast, coaching programs typically comprise one-to-one sessions with trained coaches, during which

employees are assisted in setting and achieving specific goals (Panayotopoulou et al., 2007).

Such programs can be especially advantageous for returning expatriates, who may require assistance in readjusting to the local work environment and re-establishing connections with their professional networks. The implementation of mentorship and coaching programs can facilitate a greater sense of connection and support for returning professionals, thereby enhancing their likelihood of successful repatriation (Simou & Koutsogeorgou, 2014).

III. METHODS, DATA COLLECTION & DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter outlines the methodological framework used to examine the phenomenon of Greek brain drain and identify the primary causes and the most effective strategic human resources (HR) interventions that could potentially facilitate the repatriation of Greek professionals from an organisational perspective. The research employed a quantitative methodology to gather primary data, utilising a structured online questionnaire to collect the data. The objective was to conduct a quantitative data analysis in order to extract statistical patterns, establish correlations and quantify relationships between variables. In the context of the research topic on brain drain in Greece, quantitative data analysis was employed to investigate key elements such as demographic profiles, economic indicators, and organisational metrics. The quantitative technique enhanced the rigour and objectivity of the study, facilitating an objective analysis of the sample sizes required to conduct this research. It provided empirical evidence to support the research findings, thereby contributing to evidence-based decision-making.

The construction of the questionnaire was informed by a comprehensive literature review, which provided insights into the formulation of pertinent questions. The objective of these questions was to ascertain which of the brain drain causes identified in the literature are most responsible for the exacerbation of the problem and which incentives are the most compelling for repatriation, based on the participants' responses. The questionnaire was divided into four principal sections, as follows: demographic information; employment details; factors influencing migration; and potential human resources interventions for repatriation. The questionnaire comprised a variety of question formats, including multiple-choice, Likert scale, and open-ended items. To guarantee the veracity and consistency of the data, all questions in the questionnaire were mandatory. Nevertheless, participants were at liberty to withdraw from the study at any point during the data collection phase.

The initial section of the study was designed to gather essential demographic data, including information on age, gender, and educational attainment. This information was crucial for elucidating the socio-demographic profile of the respondents and

for conducting subgroup analyses. The collection of demographic data enabled the research to investigate whether specific demographic factors were associated with particular motivations for emigration or with specific HR interventions that might encourage repatriation. The results of this analysis could inform the development of more targeted strategies for different demographic groups.

The second section of the questionnaire concentrated on the respondents' employment history and details. The questions in this section pertained to the respondents' current job title, industry, years of professional experience, and level of job satisfaction. The objective of this section was to ascertain the professional context and career trajectories of the respondents, which are essential for the analysis of the impact of employment factors on their decision to work abroad. An analysis of the respondents' employment details facilitated the identification of common patterns among those who had left Greece to work abroad. This, in turn, enabled a comparison to be made between their job satisfaction and career opportunities abroad and those available to them in Greece. These insights are of paramount importance for the development of efficacious human resources interventions.

The third section of the study examined the motivational factors that influenced respondents' decisions to seek employment opportunities outside of Greece. This section comprised questions pertaining to push factors, including remuneration, job security, work-life balance, skills mismatch, and the absence of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). The responses were provided on a Likert scale, as the objective was to ascertain the principal factors driving the phenomenon of brain drain. By quantifying these motivational factors, the study was able to identify the most significant issues that need to be addressed in order to reduce the phenomenon of brain drain.

The concluding section examined a range of potential HR strategies that, if implemented, could serve to encourage the return of Greek professionals. The questions were designed to assess the respondents' perceptions of the efficacy of various interventions, including competitive salaries, flexible working hours, remote working options, career development opportunities, improved work-life balance, and enhanced working conditions within Greek organisations. The responses were provided on a Likert scale, which was used to evaluate the efficacy of each incentive in addressing the issue of Greek brain drain. The objective of this section was to furnish policymakers and organisational leaders with actionable insights regarding the most efficacious strategies for attracting skilled professionals back to Greece.

The questionnaire was administered via Google Forms, a widely used online survey platform that is renowned for its accessibility and ease of use. The survey link was distributed via multiple online channels, including social media platforms,

professional networks, and expatriate communities. This distribution strategy aimed to reach a diverse and representative sample of Greek professionals currently residing and working abroad. Participants were then encouraged to disseminate the survey to acquaintances who met the criteria for inclusion in the research, thus facilitating broader data collection. The online format ensured efficient data collection and a higher response rate, as well as diverse participation.

The target group for this study comprised Greek professionals currently working abroad and forming part of the active workforce, specifically individuals aged 22–40 years. This age range represents the productive workforce that Greek organisations are most interested in attracting back to Greece. The focus on this demographic ensures that the study captures the perspectives of those who are likely to have significant career trajectories, are highly skilled, and are in their prime working years. The selection criteria were designed with the objective of focusing on professionals whose repatriation would be most beneficial for the Greek economy.

The data collected through Google Forms was exported in a systematic manner into SPSS for detailed statistical analysis. To perform this analysis, the entire dataset was subjected to a thorough examination for any instances of missing or invalid values. The variables were recoded and transformed from string type to numeric where necessary, and each variable was labelled accordingly. The variables that were measured on a Likert scale were transformed into an ordinal scale. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarise the demographic and employment characteristics of the respondents. Inferential statistical techniques, including correlation and regression analyses, were employed to examine the relationships between the various factors influencing migration and the respondents' demographic and employment characteristics.

The application of descriptive statistics facilitated the provision of a comprehensive overview of the demographic profile and employment context of the respondents. In order to summarise the data, measures such as the mean, median, mode, frequency distributions and standard deviations were employed. The descriptive analysis facilitated the presentation of a clear and concise summary of the main characteristics of the sample population, thereby enabling a more profound comprehension of the participants' backgrounds and professional contexts.

The descriptive statistics analysis commenced with an investigation of the demographic characteristics of the respondents, encompassing age, gender, educational attainment, and other pertinent socio-demographic variables. Subsequently, the employment information was summarised, delineating the distribution of job titles, industries, years of professional experience, and levels of job satisfaction among the respondents.

The data indicated that a significant proportion of the respondents were young professionals in their late twenties to early thirties, with a balanced representation of genders. The majority of respondents had attained a high level of education, with the majority holding at least a bachelor's degree and many possessing advanced degrees. The employment information revealed a diverse range of industries and job titles, indicative of the varied professional backgrounds of the respondents.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 83 individuals participated in the survey, with a fairly balanced gender distribution (54.2% female and 45.8% male) and an average age of 29. The absence of extreme age values indicates that the sample is relatively young and homogeneous. In terms of educational attainment, 48.2% of the sample have obtained a Master's degree, while 31.3% hold a Bachelor's degree. This reflects a cohort with a high level of educational achievement. The majority of respondents (56.6%) obtained their degrees in Greece.

The gender distribution and age statistics indicate that the respondents are representative of the young professional workforce. The educational attainment of the respondents serves to illustrate the considerable loss of human capital that Greece is experiencing as a result of emigration. The majority of respondents obtained their degrees in Greece, which serves to illustrate the efficacy of the country's education system in producing highly qualified professionals. Nevertheless, the challenge persists in retaining this talent.

A more detailed examination of the demographic data provides further insights. For example, the balanced gender distribution indicates that the phenomenon of brain drain affects both male and female professionals in a similar manner. This indicates the existence of systemic issues within the Greek labour market that are not gender-specific. Furthermore, the relatively young average age of respondents indicates that the phenomenon of brain drain predominantly affects individuals at the early to mid-stages of their careers. This is a crucial phase for the advancement of professional skills, resulting in the loss of individuals who have the potential to make substantial long-term contributions to the Greek economy.

The high level of educational attainment among respondents serves to highlight the gravity of the brain drain issue. With nearly half holding a Master's degree, these individuals represent a highly skilled segment of the workforce, comprising a significant reservoir of expertise and potential for innovation. Their departure represents a significant loss of expertise and potential for innovation in Greece. The majority of respondents obtained their degrees in Greece but subsequently sought opportunities abroad, which suggests that the

issue may lie not in the quality of education but in the economic and professional environment within the country.

The data reveals that 38.6% of respondents are employed in the business and finance sector. The majority of respondents (84.3%) are currently engaged in their area of expertise, with 77.1% employed on a full-time basis. It is noteworthy that 73.5% of respondents indicated a high level of satisfaction with their current position. This high level of employment and job satisfaction suggests that these individuals have successfully integrated into their professional environments abroad.

The sectors in which these individuals are employed provide insights into the types of skills and expertise that are in demand internationally. The high employment rate in their fields of expertise indicates that these Greek professionals possess the requisite skills and qualifications to compete effectively in the global job market. Moreover, levels of job satisfaction are of considerable significance, as high levels of satisfaction can act as a deterrent to repatriation unless equally fulfilling opportunities are available in Greece.

A more detailed examination of the employment data reveals a number of significant trends. The prominence of the business and finance sector among respondents indicates that this field is particularly attractive to Greek expatriates. This may be attributed to the sector's global nature and the high demand for financial and business expertise on a worldwide scale. The successful integration of these professionals into their respective industries abroad serves to demonstrate their adaptability and competence, thereby further emphasising the high quality of the Greek education system.

The high level of job satisfaction among respondents presents a duality of implications. While it is encouraging that these individuals have secured fulfilling careers, it also presents a significant barrier to repatriation. In order for Greece to attract these professionals back, it must offer job opportunities that are not only comparable in terms of remuneration, but also provide similar levels of job satisfaction. This includes aspects such as career advancement opportunities, work-life balance, and a positive working environment.

The primary motivation for pursuing employment opportunities abroad is the remuneration offered, as indicated by 81.9% of respondents. Furthermore, 67.5% of respondents indicated that this factor exerts a considerable influence. Other critical factors include the practice of requiring employees to work unpaid overtime (60.2%), the existence of a skills mismatch (59%), and the lack of a work-life balance (50.6%). Moreover, respondents identified a dearth of equity, diversity, and inclusion in Greek organisations, as well as the expectation of perpetual on-call status, as additional concerns.

These factors demonstrate the presence of systemic issues within the Greek labour market. The importance of remuneration as a motivating factor highlights the significant economic disparities between Greece and more developed countries. The prevalence of unpaid overtime and skills mismatches indicates inefficiencies and inequities within the Greek workplace, which prompt professionals to seek more effectively managed environments. The lack of work-life balance and inclusivity serves to exacerbate dissatisfaction, thereby rendering emigration a more attractive option.

A comprehensive analysis of these motivating factors offers a more nuanced understanding of the challenges confronting the Greek labour market. The paramount significance of remuneration underscores a pivotal economic challenge: the inability of Greek salaries to compete with those offered in more developed countries. This economic disparity is a significant factor contributing to the phenomenon of brain drain, as professionals seek to maximise their earning potential and secure more favourable financial futures for themselves and their families.

The issue of unpaid overtime and skills mismatches indicates the presence of underlying structural issues within the Greek workplace. The expectation of unpaid overtime is indicative of a lack of respect for employees' time and contributions, which may lead to feelings of dissatisfaction and burnout. Similarly, the existence of skills mismatches indicates that a significant proportion of professionals feel that their talents are not being fully utilised, which in turn gives rise to feelings of frustration and a desire to find roles where they can apply their expertise more effectively.

Furthermore, the lack of work-life balance and inclusivity in Greek organisations serves to exacerbate these issues. A lack of work-life balance can result in stress and burnout, which may in turn make the prospect of working abroad more appealing. Furthermore, the absence of equity, diversity, and inclusion indicates that Greek workplaces may not be providing a supportive and welcoming environment for all employees, particularly those from minority groups. It is of the utmost importance to address these issues in order to create a more attractive and equitable labour market in Greece.

When asked about their likelihood of returning to Greece to work, 38.6% of respondents indicated a moderate probability, while 33.7% reported a low probability. Only 15.7% expressed a high likelihood of returning. These figures suggest a general reluctance among expatriates to consider repatriation under current conditions.

The moderate-to-low probability of repatriation reported by the majority of respondents underscores the need for significant changes in Greece's organisational and economic environment. The fact that a substantial portion of respondents is at least somewhat open to the idea of returning suggests that, under the right conditions, repatriation could be

feasible. However, it also indicates that the current state of the Greek labour market is not sufficiently appealing to motivate a large-scale return of skilled professionals.

This reluctance to repatriate may stem from a combination of factors discussed earlier—such as inadequate salaries, lack of career advancement opportunities, and limited work-life balance. The high satisfaction levels reported in respondents' current roles abroad further reinforce the need for Greek organisations to offer not just competitive salaries but holistic employment packages that can rival those found in other countries.

In terms of incentives that could motivate a return to Greece, 85.5% of respondents rated a competitive salary as the most significant factor. Flexible working hours (66.3%) and opportunities for career advancement (62.7%) followed. Remote working options (54.2%) and improved work-life balance (43.4%) were also considered important. Interestingly, the presence of mentorship programs and improved organisational culture were not rated as highly, although they still held some influence.

These findings clearly demonstrate that financial incentives alone are not enough. Flexibility, career growth, and balance are just as important to today's professionals. The global workforce, particularly younger generations, place significant value on their time, well-being, and professional development. For Greek organisations to successfully repatriate talent, they must offer packages that integrate these elements holistically.

The strong emphasis on flexible working hours and remote work reflects the ongoing shift in workplace expectations, particularly post-COVID-19. Professionals are increasingly valuing autonomy over where and when they work. Therefore, Greek organisations must modernise their policies to align with global standards. This includes integrating hybrid working models, investing in digital infrastructure, and cultivating management styles that support flexibility.

Career advancement remains a cornerstone for retaining top talent. Transparent promotion pathways, regular feedback, and ongoing development opportunities are essential to motivate expatriates to return. Simply offering a job in Greece is not enough—returning professionals must feel that they will have equal or greater opportunities to grow and succeed.

The lower prioritisation of mentorship programs may suggest that returning professionals already feel confident in their skill sets, or it may reflect a cultural context in which mentoring is underdeveloped or underappreciated. However, for long-term retention and integration, supportive onboarding and career guidance structures could still play a critical role.

V. CONCLUSIONS

This research set out to explore the organisational causes of the Greek brain drain and to identify strategic human resources (HR) interventions that could potentially reverse the trend by facilitating the repatriation of skilled professionals. Through an extensive review of the literature and the analysis of primary quantitative data, the study has revealed that the emigration of highly educated and capable individuals is driven largely by systemic issues within Greek organisations and the broader labour market.

Key factors such as low remuneration, lack of job security, unpaid overtime, skills mismatches, long working hours, and limited career advancement opportunities emerged as primary drivers of dissatisfaction. Additionally, bureaucratic inefficiencies and a widespread lack of meritocracy and inclusivity further reinforce the desire among Greek professionals to pursue careers abroad. These conditions not only discourage the retention of talent but also actively push it away, undermining national efforts toward economic development and innovation.

Nevertheless, the findings also revealed that a significant proportion of Greek professionals abroad remain open to the idea of repatriation—provided that the right incentives and working conditions are in place. While competitive salary was identified as the most decisive factor in motivating a return, it became clear that financial compensation alone is not sufficient. Flexibility, opportunities for career growth, and a supportive organisational culture are equally critical in making Greece an attractive environment for both returning and resident professionals.

Given these insights, several recommendations can be made. First and foremost, Greek organisations must revisit their compensation frameworks to ensure salaries are aligned with global standards. Pay must reflect not only qualifications and responsibilities but also the rising cost of living, in order to offer a financially sustainable future to returning professionals.

Equally important is the creation of structured and transparent career advancement pathways. Organisations must demonstrate that talent and performance are rewarded through merit-based promotions and visible leadership development opportunities. The absence of such pathways has been shown to drive high-potential individuals abroad, where their growth is more readily supported.

Flexible working arrangements also emerged as a central concern among participants. As remote and hybrid work become increasingly common worldwide, Greek organisations must modernise by adopting flexible scheduling and remote-friendly roles. These changes are particularly important in attracting professionals who have grown accustomed to autonomy and work-life balance in foreign work environments.

Investing in professional development is another vital recommendation. Ongoing training, certifications, and learning opportunities should be embedded in HR strategies to signal long-term commitment to employee growth. For Greek professionals considering repatriation, the opportunity to continuously build their skill set is not just a benefit—it is a baseline expectation.

Furthermore, cultural transformation within the workplace must be addressed. A shift toward inclusive, equitable, and meritocratic organisational practices is essential. When employees believe their contributions are valued and their opportunities for advancement are not limited by bias or nepotism, they are more likely to commit to a long-term future within an organisation.

Finally, streamlining internal bureaucracy is critical. Greek organisations must embrace digital solutions and adopt more agile administrative structures to reduce inefficiencies and improve the employee experience. Excessive red tape and outdated processes not only hinder productivity but also erode morale—particularly for professionals returning from more efficient systems abroad.

In summary, reversing brain drain requires a fundamental rethinking of how Greek organisations attract, retain, and engage talent. Strategic HR interventions—rooted in competitive compensation, career development, flexibility, inclusivity, and operational efficiency—are not merely optional upgrades but essential components for building a thriving, future-ready workforce. If implemented thoughtfully and consistently, these changes can help turn the tide of emigration and position Greece as a compelling destination not only for those who left, but for those yet to come.

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Conflict of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest.