Hotel Employees’ Burnout and Turnover Intentions

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Abstract

This study was conducted to explore the employees’ burnout issues and the employees’ intention to leave in a selected hotel. A descriptive case study design was used to provide the framework for the research investigation and used as a guide in the data collection process, the development of instruments and scale, and the analysis of data or information. The findings indicated that there was a close association between employee burnout variable with the employee turnover intentions variable. Where appropriate, findings from previous research had been included to support or refute the results from this study. However, since the purpose of the study was to explore the employees’ situation at one hotel, the results had to be taken cautiously. Regardless, however, the study did highlight aspects that should be of concern to the hotel management since the condition of work, work scheduling and the matching of job with the employees’ capabilities had to be considered to minimize the burnout problems.

Keywords  
Employee Burnout, Acrimony, Employee Turnover, Inefficacy.

Introduction

Bowen and Ford (2004) indicated that there might be a relationship between employee turnover rate with employee compensation, employee engagement, employee motivation, job satisfaction, work environment, work stress, and workload. Karatepe, Arasli and Khan (2007) were of the opinion that the front-line employees in hotels were underpaid, they typically worked long hours, had irregular schedules and carried heavy workloads. General management literature had suggested that work and non-work related factors
could affect employee turnover rate especially with the influence of factors of job satisfaction level and level of organizational commitment. Employee turnover had become an urgent and important problem to be dealt with for the hospitality industry due mainly for its dependency on the ‘human factor’.

Employee turnover had posed a challenge for the hotel organizations for they had been concerned with the provision of quality service for their customers. Most organizations would begin to realize that the front-line employees who delivered the service, had provided assistance with respect, care, and honesty that could create true value-added service for the customers (Berry, 1995). The founder of Marriott Corporation stated that, ‘in the service business you cannot make guest happy with unhappy employees’ (Hostage, 1975).

Hotel is a service-oriented industry and the supervisors and employees had to confront, manage, and endure with the needs to meet the guests’ demands. Individuals in the supervisory positions would have to understand and overcome any stress through their own unique ways of coping.

Research Issues

High employee turnover rate, as stated by Hofhuis, Van der Zee and Otten (2014); and Lambert et al. (2012), besides being harmful to hotel industry’s performance and profitability, it could also lead to the loss of psychological resources and assets with higher employee compensation, shorter employee engagement, low employee motivation, low job satisfaction, unconducive work environment, higher work stress, and higher workload. Frank, Finnegan and Taylor (2004); and Hendrie (2004), added that the high turnover rate would increase the costs of the recruitment and training of additional staff, increase in overtime payments to existing staff to alleviate the shortages, and the cost of disrupted service. Added to those factors, the remaining staff would feel pressured and felt overworked that could reach an excessive proportion level. Thus, the research question addressed in this research is there a relationship between employee burnout and employee turnover intentions?

The Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study was to explore the extent of employees’ burnout level and their turnover intentions in the hotel organizations. The study proposed that there is a relationship between employee burnout level with Employee Turnover Intentions and it is
expected that the higher the employee burnout level, the higher would be the employees’ turnover intentions.

Theoretical Framework

The conceptual study framework for this study is shown below:

![Illustration 1 Conceptual Framework]

Literature Overview

Concept of Job Burnout

Burnout employees were considered as the “working wounded,” and, according to Stern (2012), these workers would “appear at work.” but they had lost motivation and would just try to survive the day unscathed.

Job burnout is a psychological problem, which had three key dimensions: exhaustion, acrimony, and inefficacy (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Employees would experience exhaustion when the emotional demands of work surpassed their ability to perform the service. Maslach and Leiter (2005) proposed a model that could determine the burnout sequence in three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal achievement. They suggested that the degree of burnout experience would appear in sequence. Emotional exhaustion would appear first which could be displayed by chronic excessive work requirements that would deplete a person’s emotional resources (Boles et al., 2000). Burnout researchers had investigated six areas of work-life behaviours that could lead to burnout and they were: workload, control, rewards and recognition, community and social support, and justice and values.

Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001) showed that employees would distance themselves emotionally and cognitively from work to cope with the workload. Acrimony represented the attempt by employees to distance themselves from customers by ignoring customers' needs and providing them with depersonalized services. Inefficacy meant a reduced personal achievement when feeling exhausted or less motivated. Job burnout meant a decrease of engagement (Maslach & Leiter, 2005). Thus, from their perspectives, engagement would be characterized by energy, involvement, and efficacy. In a later study
by Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001), they found out that when employees became lesser in engagement with the organization, their energy would turned into exhaustion, their involvement would turned into acrimony, and their efficacy would turned into ineffectiveness.

**Employee Turnover Intentions**

The turnover intentions could lead to the employees eventually leaving the organization. Robinson and Beesley (2010) contended that the intention to quit would usually start when an employee received an unfavourable situation and he/she would start thinking about looking for another job. The decision to leave the organization would usually be a much easier decision to make than the intention to leave (Blau, 2000). Voluntary or involuntary turnover would be the eventual decision of the employees.

Turnover intentions would be a vital stage before the actual turnover occurred. According to Bigliardi, Petroni and Ivo Dormio (2005), the employees that quit from their current job would take place after he/she started thinking of staying or to leave; though in the short term, the employee could have high intention to quit (Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979).

Hurley (2015) investigated the importance for organizations to consider their employees' well-being in the workplace such to decrease employee turnover rates. Hurley also investigated the original relationship between employee turnover and customer-satisfaction rates by investigating the relationships in 275 fast food and convenience stores. Through equating analysis, Hurley found that full-time and part-time employees showed distinct differences on the outcomes of customer satisfaction and employee turnover. An organization with high turnover rates for full-time employees was also rated poorly on customer satisfaction. Thus, the conclusion was that employee turnover could directly affect customer satisfaction (Hurley, 2015).

For hotel employees, the consistent customer contact and the social encounters requirement could cause stress and burnout. Studies of human service practitioners which provided day-to-day contact with others, had shown a high incidents of job burnout (Stevens & Higgins, 2002). According to an evaluation by Paoli and Merllie (2001), they found that 28% of European experienced stress, and another 23% had suffered burnout. The system and changing environment of the hotel industry presented pressures and demands that could become the cause of stress for front-line personnel.

High employee turnover would lead to unemployment and obstruct economic activity (Mehrnoosh & Jouzaryan, 2016). Organizations with high level of turnover rates of full-
time employees would likewise experience poor customer-satisfaction ratings (Hurley, 2015).

Reliable information on employee turnover would be very important because organization would need sufficient time to train their new employees to ascertain that they were ready to assume their new jobs, and it would be some time before the organization would get good result out of them. If an organization continued to train their employees or retained them, it would ensure that their productivity level would be maintain regardless of high turnover rate. But, the productivity level would be low if the organization ignored the risk and did not prepare itself well in high employee turnover situations. To keep employees motivated, the organization would need an open communication system whereby employees could approach the managers on work-related problems.

Krausz (2002); Macdonald (1999); Mclean Parks, Kidder and Gallagher (1999); and Rousseau (1995) examined all jobs in various types of organizations, and found out that there were more serious impact in the service sector. Nadiri and Tanova (2010) concurred that high turnover had caused a huge problem in the hospitality industry. Haven-Tang and Jones (2012) and Kusluvan et al. (2010) further contended that some of the factors that could lead to high turnover were weak management, small wages, poor quality working environment, and lack of job advancement opportunities. Involuntary turnover which was, at most time unavoidable would lead directly to negative result to those who remain for it could cause job insecurity, work difficulty, and status fluctuation. Involuntary turnover could lead to negative reaction for employees who had co-workers losing their jobs (Gowan & Gatewood, 1997).

Deery and Jago (2015) investigated many strategies that the hospitality industry could use to resolve the turnover crisis. They suggested talent management, work-life balance, and other retention strategies. Deery and Jago (2015) also stated the use of a combination of strategies which they analysed using a framework that demonstrated the possible interaction of organizational and industry attributes, such as personal employee dimensions, work-life conflicts, organizational strategies, job- satisfaction outcomes, organizational commitments, and employee retention. The finding suggested by Deery and Jago (2015) was to ensure work-life balance as one of the most effective methods to improve retention rates. Additionally, any change in work-life balance could directly affect factors such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, stress, and alcohol used (Deery & Jago, 2015).
Research Methodology

Research Design

A qualitative research technique was selected and deemed appropriate in responding to the research questions. A type of qualitative design used is the case study design where, in this study, only a single organization was selected as it would enable that the information and data derived would provide a comprehensive understanding and an in-depth information on the various factors that would have an association with the burnout and employees’ intention to leave variables. The study employed the cross-sectional approach where information were collected on-site for a 3-day period and there were 2-levels of analysis: operational level employees, and supervisory level analysis.

Types and Methods of Data Collection

Primary Data were collected via face-to-face, on-site interviews with structured and unstructured, open-ended questions directed at employees at the operation level in the organization. The interviews were conducted by 5 trained research assistants. Secondary data was gathered though published research reports and scanning of articles in the various academic journals and proceedings, and also from documents and reports from the organization. The secondary information collected would form the basis and framework for this investigation.

Research Instrument and Scale

1. Demographic Variables: - Categorical Scale
   - Gender
   - Age group
   - Years of Experience in Current Job

2. Variable 1: Employee Burnout
   *Dimensions:*
   - **Exhaustion:** Feeling of physically tired in doing the job.
   - **Acrimony:** There are few things that needed to be completed in the tasks.
   - **Inefficacy:** The requirements of the work matches the employees’ ability.

3. Variable 2: Employee Turnover Intentions
   *Dimensions:*
   - **Intentions to leave:** The number of employees that usually will not be satisfied.
Commitment level: The number of employees who have stayed longer than the average number of years.

Availability of jobs in other organizations: Employees leave during period there are ample job opportunities outside.

Scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Very High/Excellent</th>
<th>High/Good</th>
<th>Moderate/Average</th>
<th>Low/Poor</th>
<th>Very Low/Very Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00-1.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.81-2.60</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.61-3.40</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.41-4.20</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.21-5.00</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Decision Rule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Variation between the Scores on the Variables and the Employee Turnover Intentions</th>
<th>Results on Extent of Association</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 0.20</td>
<td>Very Close Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.21 – 0.40</td>
<td>Close Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.41 – 0.60</td>
<td>Slightly Close Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.61 – and above</td>
<td>No Association</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Study Findings

Reiterating the Research Proposition

The study proposition was the level of employee burnout is associated with employee turnover Intentions.

Findings and Discussions on Variables

Employee Burnout

There were 3 dimensions that were used to measure the extent of employee burnout level. They were level of exhaustion, acrimony, and inefficacy. For the level of exhaustion, the respondents were asked to response to the statement “I do not feel physically tired in doing my job”. The male respondents indicated that their level of exhaustion was only moderate, while the female respondents found their exhaustive. Thus, overall, in the gender category, the job was considered as exhaustive. In the age category, those under 25 years noted the work was never exhaustive, while those over 25 years indicated that job was only moderately tiring. Generally, the respondents indicated that the job was not
tiring at all in the age category. On the years of experience category. Both category indicated that the job was not tiring at all. Overall, the respondents thought that the job was not tiring.

The second dimension that was used to gauge the extent of acrimony and the question that was posed was “I had very few things to do in my job and I always had time to complete my work. On this aspect, the male respondents agreed that there were a moderate number of things to do and that they had enough time to complete them. The female respondents, however, felt that they had a lot of things to do and they could complete their work beyond the stipulated time. All the age group respondents indicated that they had only a few things to do and that they could complete their work within the given time. In the number of years of experience, those respondents with 3 or less years stated that there were many things to do within the allotted time. Those with over 3 years indicated that they felt that the number of things to do and the time allotted was moderately reasonable. Thus, overall the respondents also thought the number of things to do and the time given was sufficient.

The third dimension used to measure employee burnout was the level of inefficacy. The respondents were asked to response to the question “The requirements of my work match my ability”. On this, the male respondents felt that there was a match, but the female respondents indicated only a moderate level of match where some parts matched well while other parts were beyond their ability. Those of 25 years of age or less also indicated there was only a moderate level of match where some parts matched well while others parts were beyond their ability, while those of over 25 years felt that there was a match between the job requirement and their ability to do them. Those that had less than 1 year of experience indicated that there was only a moderate level of match, where some parts matched well while others parts were beyond their ability, but the other employees in the two groups in years of experience stated that there was a good match between job requirement and their ability to do them. Overall on this dimension, the respondents felt that there was a good match between the job requirement and the required ability to complete them.

The combination of the responses on the 3 dimensions indicated that the employee burnout level was only moderate or average, due to the mixed responses on the 3 dimensions. The following table showed the detailed responses on the 3 dimensions and the overall scores.
Employee Turnover Intentions

There were 3 variables that were used in measuring the extent of employee turnover intentions, and they were Intention to leave, commitment level, and job availability elsewhere.

The intention to leave dimension was gauged by the number of employees that usually were not satisfied with the some or overall aspects any of the personal management,
organizational, or workplace factors. On that, the male employees indicated that they were not satisfied, while the female employees noted they felt only moderately not satisfied. Those employees who were 25 years old or younger also indicated that they were only moderately satisfied, and those over 25 years old stated that they were not satisfied. On the years of experience category, those employees with 3 or less in years of experience showed that they were not satisfied, while those employees with over 3 years indicated that they were moderately satisfied. Overall, on the Intention to leave dimension, the employees generally were not satisfied with their current situation in the organization.

The second dimension used in detecting the extent of employee turnover intentions was the commitment level. This dimension was measured by the number of employees who stayed longer than the average number of years or their average longevity period. The male employees indicated that the numbers of years they stayed with the organization was similar to the average number of years, but the female employees showed that they tended to stay longer than the average number of years. All the employees in the two age groups also indicated that they tended to stay longer than the average number of years. Those in the years of experience category, the employees with 3 or less years of experience tended to leave earlier than the average number of years, while those with over 3 years indicated that the average numbers of years they stayed with the organization was similar to the average number of years that employees usually stayed. Overall, on the commitment level dimension, generally the number of years the employees stayed with the organization was similar to the average number of years that previous employees had stayed.

The third dimension that was used to gauge the employee turnover intentions was the extent to which jobs were available elsewhere. The measure of this was on the number of employees leaving the organization during the period where there were ample job opportunities outside the organization. On this, the male employees stated that they would only moderately considered leaving if there were ample job opportunities elsewhere. The female employees, on the other hand, would not leave even though jobs were readily available in other organizations. In the age group category, employees in both age groups indicated that they would only moderately considered leaving if there were ample job opportunities elsewhere. In the years of experience category, the employees with less than 1 year stated that would highly likely leave if there were ample job opportunities elsewhere. Those with 1 to 3 years of experience also indicated that they might considered leaving, but those over 3 years of experience indicated that they would only moderately considered leaving if there were ample job opportunities elsewhere.
## Employee Turnover Intentions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employee Profile</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Intention to Leave</th>
<th>Commitment Level</th>
<th>Job Availability Elsewhere</th>
<th>OVERALL SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Low 3.76</td>
<td>Average 3.11</td>
<td>Average 3.09</td>
<td>Average 3.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Average 2.98</td>
<td>High 2.19</td>
<td>Low 3.89</td>
<td>Average 3.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td>Average 3.37</td>
<td>Average 2.65</td>
<td>Low 3.49</td>
<td>Average 3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age Group</strong></td>
<td>25 and Less</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Average 2.78</td>
<td>High 2.34</td>
<td>Average 2.89</td>
<td>Average 2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Low 4.09</td>
<td>High 2.11</td>
<td>Average 2.63</td>
<td>Average 2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low 3.44</td>
<td>High 2.23</td>
<td>Average 2.76</td>
<td>Average 2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years of Experience</strong></td>
<td>Under 1 year</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Low 4.11</td>
<td>Low 3.97</td>
<td>Very High 1.76</td>
<td>Average 3.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 to 3 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Low 3.64</td>
<td>Low 3.83</td>
<td>High 2.32</td>
<td>Average 3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 3 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Average 2.98</td>
<td>Average 3.37</td>
<td>Average 3.18</td>
<td>Average 3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low 3.57</td>
<td>Low 3.72</td>
<td>High 2.42</td>
<td>Average 3.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OVERALL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low 3.46</td>
<td>Average 2.87</td>
<td>Average 2.89</td>
<td>AVERAGE 3.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SCALE:** 1.00 - 1.80 = Very High/Excellent; 1.81-2.60 = High/Good; 2.61-3.40 = Moderate/Average; 3.41- 4.20 = Low/Poor; 4.21-5.00 = Very Low/Very Poor

The combination of the responses on the 3 dimensions indicated that employee turnover intentions was moderate, which meant that they would likely stay with the organization. The employees’ intentions to leave was low since they noted that they were quite satisfied with their current situation in the organization. Their commitment level was average and that the employees length of stay with the organization was similar to the length of time other employees in the past had stayed; and that they would considered leaving the organization only if there were ample jobs opportunity elsewhere. The following table indicated the scores on each dimension by the various employee grouping and categories, and the overall scores.
Discussions and Conclusions

The study proposition contended that the level of employee burnout is associated with the level of employee turnover intentions. The following table illustrated the extent of association between employee burnout with employee turnover intentions. In comparing the averages of the two scores, the variance was 0.26. Thus, the finding indicated that there was a close association between employee burnout level and employee turnover intentions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Factor 2</th>
<th>Overall Score</th>
<th>Degree of Variation</th>
<th>Overall Score</th>
<th>Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employee Burnout</td>
<td>Average to Good</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CLOSE ASSOCIATION**

Based on the findings and supported by past research results, the hotel organizations major problems had to do with employee well-being due to the demand of the job, the competencies of the operational level employees, and the lack of career development opportunities. Buick and Thomas (2001) indicated that burnout was common among service workers and hospitality industry employees who would be in constant contact with people and had a high level of interaction with guests. One of the employees noted that, “It happened when I just joined this company. The work environment seemed strange, I could not handle things between my work and family, and at the end I got stressed. I took a long time to learn people around me as well as my job responsibilities”. An interview was conducted with a manager of a restaurant in Kuala Lumpur regarding strategies that could be used to reduce turnover among employees. A question was asked: “In your opinion, what are the strategies that could be used to reduce turnover in the restaurant?” The interviewee responded that it would be most important to offer an employee a job suitable for his/her qualification or experience and the management responsibilities would be to help reduce workload, stress and to have direct communication with the employees (Lewicki & Brinsfield, 2017). These would help to strengthen their level of commitment.

References


