

Issues on Job Mobility in Restaurant Industry: Study on Salary, Work Environment and Promotions

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ABSTRACT

Employees are known as an asset to an organization where success or failure of an organization as determinant closely to them. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2017), there are 891,616 employees working in restaurants in the year 2015. The statistic also shows that staff mobility drastically increases every year and this scenario has been debated among hospitality players. The focus of this study is to discern about issues of job mobility that occur in the restaurant industry in related to salary, working environment and promotion. The objective are: a) to identify issues in job mobility among workers and b) to investigate whether salary, working environment and promotion become a factor of job mobility among employees. This study used a quantitative method and a distribution of 450 sets of the questionnaire to the target respondents of employees at casual dining restaurants around George Town, Pulau Pinang. Only 385 questionnaires we able to be used for this study, as the rest were not completed. Results showed that salaries, work environment and promotion were closely related to the intention of people to pursue their careers in the restaurant industry.

Keywords: Job Mobility, Salary, Work Environment, Promotion, Restaurant Industry

INTRODUCTION

The restaurant industry throughout the year rapidly continues to expand both in size volume and service concept offer in Malaysia. In the country, there are almost 5,000 hotels and 200,000 job vacancies in restaurants being offered all the time (Sri Kumar, 2018). However, this number was not significant to the industry itself. Mobility rates are extremely high in this sector. Workers could not stay longer in this industry because of certain issues and these issues have been debated among researchers for a long time. To date, employee mobility especially in the restaurant industry involves mobility rates of more than 40% (Zainol, et al., 2015a) and proportion mobility in Malaysia is listed at third place in the industry (Zainol, et al., 2015b).

Unfortunately, mobility rates are extremely high in the restaurant sector (Zainol, et al., 2015b). People perceived badly towards restaurant industry because of their beliefs that working in restaurant allied with low salary offer, need to work for extended hours, tedious work, less or without welfare scheme and stiff work (Ingram & Jones, 1998; Wildes, 2005; Zainol, et al., 2016). Moreover, hectic work schedules such as working late hours or overtime, understaffing with an increased workload and responsibility, badly designed shift work, tight deadlines, ineffective handling of bullying and harassment and underestimating or uninspiring job are a few of occupational stress that can contribute to high dissatisfaction among the employees in terms of job mobility (Mohamed, et al, 2018).

Job mobility is disquieting and continues to cause problems in the restaurant industry. If an employee ends up his work contract, the employer might face a lot of problems such as suffers a loss of consumer allegiance (in the service sector), loss of skill, increase operation and management cost (hiring, administrative and training) and disturbance in daily workflow, which may prove terrible for the organizations in the end (Brandt, Bielitz, & Georgi, 2016; Khalid & Nawab, 2018). This scenario of mobility employees continually happens every year but studies towards these issues are limited. On the other hand, tiny attention was given by researchers to the differences in gender on career issues. This study investigates the relative impact of salary, working environments and promotion perception differences to both males and females in the analysis. Therefore, in line with this notion, this study aims: (i) To identify issues in job mobility among employees (males and females), (ii) To investigate whether salary, work environment and promotion are causes of job mobility among employees.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Job Mobility

Malaysia experienced a high rate of employee mobility in the restaurant industry. These high proportion numbers are accepted as a distinctive feature of the hospitality industry (Nadiri & Tanova, 2010). Moncarz et al. (2008) stated that the number of interests in job mobility has been increasing since the mid-1990s. In line with the abovementioned, Ryan, et al., (2010) noted that the mobility rate of staff in the restaurant industry was 100 percent. The factor of poor work environment is the direct reason behind the increase in job mobility among employees (Munir & Rahman, 2016). Moreover, job satisfaction also influences employees' mobility intentions (Zulbahari & Alias, 2014).

Salary

Employees with low money ethic, the pattern of their mobility behavior tend to have the lowest actual turnover behavior. Particularly, the restaurant paid their workers with the minimum wage, even though the job requires workers to stand on their feet all day long. From the conversation and observations, some employees reported that with the low salary that they received monthly, sometimes it will be deducted by management for reasons such as breakage, damages to uniform and shortage of money by a cashier. Normally, employers like to hire fresh graduates for lower-paid works because they are capable, flexible and work without complaint under management control (Curtis & Lucas, 2000; Allan et al., 2006). Previous researchers also suggest that the responsibilities and opportunities gained by women employees in the restaurant workplace simply do not pay as well as men and this discrimination is also obvious for the management or senior position jobs which may be out of reach for women (Griffith, M, 2017).

Work Environment

A healthy working environment should be considered as the main priority by management because it closely relates and affects employees' job satisfaction as well as employees' stressed level (Devi & Rani, 2016). Razak, et. al., (2016) stated that firms have to provide a healthy work environment to ensure a positive working condition for employees, improve employees' job satisfaction (to make them perform with a better work quality), increase the productivity of the employees (Ikumi et al., 2019) and at the same time, sustain itself in the competitive market. As mentioned above, employees who are satisfied with their job tend to stay longer with the organization and will be highly productive. In contrast, employees with poor job satisfaction have poor productivity, and thus, causing workplace conflict, stress, reduced loyalty, increased absenteeism rate, higher intention to quit and reduced commitment to work. Moreover, major indicators of employee mobility are closely related to the low job satisfaction that employees experienced in their workplaces (Zainol, et. al., 2015a). Table 1 below shows a definition of the work environment.

Table 1: A definition of the work environment.

No	Researchers	Definition of Work Environment	Example
1	Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015)	Interrelationship of employees in their workplace	Elements of social, technical and economic
2	Salunke (2015)	The physical aspect of a workplace	Influential towards job satisfaction, health, concentration and productivity
3	Kohun (1992)	the bridge between the employees and the workplace	the setting, situation, condition, or circumstances where employees perform their job

The work environment consists of workplace safety, the security of a job, authorization in decision making, co-workers' relationship (Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015), recognition, work-life balance (Lazar et al., 2010), opportunity to involve in decision making (Spector, 1997) and motivation. Therefore, keeping a good work environment is the best application to lessen sick leaves, reduce turnover rates, boost efficiency of employees' activities, job satisfaction (Devi & Rani, 2016) and performance because employees might feel dissatisfied with a poor working environment.

Promotions

The aims of promotion and gaining job advancement can make an employee to work harder, as motivation in the workplace and for career activities. Promotion within a firm improved employee's responsibility denotes for status, reflects an employee's worth in the firm, better salaries and forms chances for further progression (David, 2014). If compared between employees' gender, men tend to be more inspired by promotion, somehow women form careers that are relationally based. The abovementioned was related to Miner (1974) and Rousell's (1974) findings which stated that women are less liable to be promoted than men. Women took at least 10 years to obtain the obscure ceiling on their careers (Landau & Amoss, 1986) but phase faster than males for a managerial post (Tsui & Gutek, 1984). Nayab Fatima et al. (2015) stated that female workers perceived difficulties to reach an administrative rank in the organization and get fewer opportunities for promotions. However, men are more pressured and willing to earn a salary which is enhanced by ranked promotion compared to women (Richter, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

This research examines existing data relating to issues on job mobility in the restaurant industry. This study used a descriptive and quantitative research design. This study comprises three variables which are salary, work environment and promotions which affect job mobility among employees. To identify issues on job mobility in the restaurant industry, a set of questionnaire survey (restaurant staff) was administered. The instrument was divided into three sections. Section A using a nominal scale focusing on the demographic profile while another two sections use five-point Likert scale ranging from (5) “Strongly Agree” to (1) “Strongly Disagree” to examine the issues on job mobility among employees and to investigate whether salary and work environment have any effects on job mobility among employees.

Overall, 450 sets of questionnaires were distributed among employees of casual dining restaurant around George Town, Penang, with the help from manager or supervisor in charge. The respondents were given several days to answer the questionnaires before the questionnaires were collected. Reliability analysis was measured by Cronbach’s alpha using SPSS 23. From the results, all the constructs reached Cronbach’s alpha 0.6 and above which is the acceptable level for reliability (Hair *et al.*, 2006). Hence, all of the constructs were included in the questionnaire for the actual data collection.

From the 450 sets of questionnaires, only 385 questionnaires were eligible for this study as the rest were not completely filled. The respondents for this study were 250 females and 135 males of a total of 385 respondents. Most of the staff aged 20 years and above who have not been able to build a stable career and their job can easily be switched to a more suitable job. They are actively seeking for better job offers even though they are currently employed.

ANALYSES AND RESULTS

Issues in Job Mobility Among Employees (Males and Females)

The first objective is to analyze issues on job mobility among workers (male and female). The independent sample t-test was used to identify significant differences between the gender groups. From the survey, it was found that most female respondents ($M=3.42$) believed that they are being well paid for working in the current restaurant rather than men ($M=3.02$). The responsibility of men to provide and paid most of the family living costs may closely be related to this result. Thus, both male ($M=3.73$) and female ($M=3.59$) employees need to work for extra hours and feel that they do not have enough time to socialize when working with this restaurant. However, surprisingly employees of both gender groups tend to spend the rest of their career with this organization (Male, $M=4.06$; females, $M=3.56$) and might feel guilty leaving this organization now (Male, $M=3.24$; female, $M=3.72$). Difficult opportunity to gain new work in fluctuated unstable economy perhaps could be considered as a reasonable factor. Both gender groups believed that the present job does give them enough time for family activities (Male, $M=3.80$; female, $M=3.39$) and their job schedule does not interfere with their family life (Male, $M=3.85$; females, $M=3.64$).

Table 2: Result of independent sample t-test between ‘genders’ were identified to analyse issues in Job Mobility among employees

No	Items	G	M	SD	t	Sig
1.	My job does give me enough time for family activities.	M	3.80	1.073	3.702	.001
		F	3.39	1.093		
2.	I feel not having enough time to socialize when working with this restaurant.	M	3.73	.726	1.591	.112
		F	3.59	.993		
3.	I think we’re well paid for working in a restaurant.	M	3.02	.713	3.185	.002
		F	3.42	.930		
4.	I am able to spend the rest of my career with this organization.	M	4.06	.779	5.923	.001
		F	3.56	.877		
5.	I might feel guilty if I left my organization now.	M	3.24	.490	3.135	.002
		F	3.72	.990		
6.	I would turn down a job offer from another company if I received it.	M	3.15	.916	4.550	.001
		F	3.52	.937		
7.	My job schedule does not interfere with my family life.	M	3.85	.555	2.814	.005
		F	3.64	.873		

Investigate Whether Salary, Working Environment and Training Become A Factor of Job Mobility Among Employees

Researchers have found positive relationships between salary, working environment and promotion as a factor of job mobility among employees. Job mobility among employees has generated problems for the organization and was negatively related to income and has a greater impact on men’s earnings than on women’s (Lyness & Thompson, 2000).

Table 3: Items from the data collection investigate whether salary, working environment and training become a factor of job mobility among employees

Salary							
No.	Items	N	Gender	Mean (M)	S.D	t-value	Sig 2-tail
1.	I work here because I am satisfied with the salary scheme that is offered to me.	385	M	3.58	.776	.439	.661
			F	3.54	1.031		
2.	The benefit given to me is excellent.	385	M	3.30	.665	.890	.374
			F	3.23	.982		
3.	My salary was deducted by the employer for certain issues.	385	M	3.32	1.010	.710	.478
			F	3.24	1.147		
4.	I think we’re well paid for working in a restaurant.	385	M	3.51	.804	1.374	.170
			F	3.37	1.003		
5.	Employer does not pay my overtime work.	385	M	3.90	.688	1.239	.216
			F	3.80	.854		
Work environment							
No.	Items	N	Gender	Mean (M)	S.D	t-value	Sig 2-tail
1.	This job allows me to meet new people.	385	M	3.42	.686	.429	.668
			F	3.40	1.021		
2.	I had authorization in decision making.	385	M	3.23	.675	.797	.375
			F	3.43	.968		
3.	My employer is not concerned about staff welfare.	385	M	3.72	1.110	.718	.475
			F	3.44	1.157		

4	I had an experience being abused in the workplace.	385	M F	3.81 3.47	.842 1.013	1.364	.176
5	Management does not prepare pantry and praying room for staff.	385	M F	3.76 3.68	.676 .855	1.439	.232
Promotion							
No.	Items	N	Gender	Mean (M)	S.D	t-value	Sig 2-tail
1.	Career advancement at my current job is very good.	385	M F	3.58 3.54	.776 1.031	.439	.661
2.	I feel difficult to be promoted for a better position.	385	M F	3.30 3.23	.665 .982	.890	.374
3	Management is very selective in staff career path improvement.	385	M F	3.32 3.24	1.010 1.147	.710	.478
4	I have been provided with excellent training since I started to work here.	385	M F	3.51 3.37	.804 1.003	1.374	.170
5	I would like to get a promotion in this company.	385	M F	3.90 3.80	.688 .854	1.239	.216

Referring to table 3 on the display of the salary items, “I work here because I am satisfied with the salary and benefits scheme being offered”, Male ($3.58=M$) agreed more rather than female ($3.54=M$) so was for the payment for working in a restaurant (Male, $3.51=M$) and (Female, $3.37=M$). Basically, in the short-term period, respondents agreed that the wages they got can afford them to survive although they recognized restaurant as a low-wage work. Besides that, some employees stated that their salaries were deducted due to problems caused at work such as breakages, damage to uniforms, etc. (Males, $M=3.32$; females, $M=3.24$) and being working extra hours without additional pay (Male, $3.90=M$; females, $M=3.80$). Desolately, it is a trend nowadays for employers to expect employees to work extra time without additional pay.

From the aspects of environment, respondents of both gender groups do not believe that their companies are concerned with their welfare (Males, $M=3.72$; females, $M=3.44$) such as preparing a pantry and a praying room for staff (Males, $3.76=M$ and females, $M=3.68$). Respondents also reported being verbally abused at work, including incidents such as threats and assaults (Males, $M=3.81$; females, $M=3.43$). However, respondents argued that the working environment in the restaurant allows them to meet new people (Males, $M=3.42$; females, $M=3.48$) and they had authorization in decision making in the workplace (Males, $M=3.23$; females, $M=3.43$). Employees will be happy to work in a friendly and suitable work environment and this leads to an increase of productivity and high commitment level among employees (Safiah, at al., 2018). Moreover, the physical working environment plays an important part in motivating employees to stay or leave the hospitality industry (Abdul, 2018).

Lastly, for the promotion aspect, respondents of both gender groups believed that their companies provided a good path for their career advancement (Males, $M=3.58$; females, $M=3.54$) and training (Males, $M=3.51$; females, $M=3.37$). However, respondents realized that when they start to work in the restaurant it was difficult to be promoted for a better position (Males, $M=3.30$; females, $M=3.23$) because the management is very selective in improving employees’ career path (Males, $M=3.32$; females, $M=3.24$). The reason of difficulty to be promoted in the restaurant sector had been discussed among researchers and most findings show that employees with higher levels of education and work experience take of more activities at workplaces and pay greater importance to promotion than their counterparts at lower levels (Brown et al., 2014; David, 2014).

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Issues of the employees' gender composition showed that women have increasingly gained to what were once solely male career paths (Blau *et al.*, 2002). From the analysis, job mobility is both swayed by gender with a certain factor. Men are more expected to experience job mobility rather than women because of a few reasons such as marital instability, the number of children and career priority affects rates of job mobility. However, Felmler (1982) found that women had more job mobility positively related to marriage. Ideally, studies revealed that females think that their current job does limit their time for family activities so they decided to work with companies that might give flexible time to them. Moreover, Brett and Stroh (1997) indicated that women left their working careers frequently than men for the sake of their husbands. For these studies, most of the men had continuous full-time employment and upward mobility compared to women.

The salary factor formed the major intent for job mobility crisis in the restaurant industry, due to the low pay scale. In 2014, the fortherakyat.com portal stated that they received 40% comment about saving lives costs and household economic problems from Malaysian. Household spending increased 6% in 2017 from 2014 and average family members spending around RM4033.00 monthly (Dr. Mohd. Uzir Mahidin, 2017). Through the observation and data finding, we can conclude that employee dissatisfaction is closely related to low paid salary, stresses with the working environment and difficulty to achieve management position. One out of the three respondents or 29 percent wanted more increment in paying systems (Azwar, 2018). Generally, job satisfaction would be affected if the salaries of employees are unsatisfactory (Sangaran & Jeetesh, 2015), they will not perform in their jobs and finally decided to quit. Luckily, in the restaurant sector, a minimum wage structure is being applied compared to the point system of salary currently practiced in the hotel industry. This minimum wage would provide employees a better quality of life. However, the implementation of minimum wage needs to be revised since household spending keeps increasing yearly resulting from the expensive price of household products.

From this study, it could be noticed that employees will be happy to work in a pleasant friendly staff and safe work environment. Importance of good work environment can lead to an increase of productivity, reduce stress level and conflict among employees (Safiah, et al., 2018), lessen sick leaves, reduce turnover rates, boost efficiency employees' activities and create good job satisfaction among staff (Devi & Rani, 2016). Moreover, employees who are satisfied with their job tend to stay with the organization longer (Bayarçelik & Findikli, 2016).

Malaysia is ranked fourth of the six Asian countries for happiness staff index in workplaces with scores of 4.65 from 10 scores. From the observation and interview on 10,143 respondents, half of them (58%) responded that they are happy with their daily work. Employees in Malaysia listed the three factors that influence their happiness index such as location of work, co-workers and company reputation. Surprisingly, according to Azwar (2018), most of the employees who are happy with their workplaces originated from the restaurant industry. Job mobility should offer good prospects in terms of skills and aligning careers for employees' values, thus potentially increasing success. Factors that influence unhappy employees at work include poor management, less plan for work improvement and promotion.

LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The present study has several limitations. First, only three aspects of job mobility were examined. Next, further study should focus on the workplace climate experienced by employees because it might produce

different results. Third, this sample size only focused on employees at casual dining restaurants, which respondents' results should be different compared to other types of restaurants. The questionnaires were not distributed to all types of restaurants in George Town, Penang. Hence, questions arise whether similar findings would be obtained if the study was conducted within several types of restaurants in Penang. Perhaps further study could provide in-depth understanding on these issues.

CONCLUSION

Job mobility within an organization increases salaries, but harm perceived success. Though a valid point, most of the respondents are joyful and satisfied being one of the restaurant's team member because it is exciting, interesting work, expands knowledge and allows success. However, the restaurant industry is well known as the place that has a lack of advancement, poor working conditions and offers low salaries for the workforce which might contribute to high mobility rates. This study notices that the restaurant itself may be at the root of the problem. For example such as work environment that pushes employees to work long hours with little recognition forces employees to change jobs. In reality, an employer cannot ask his employees to work more than 38 hours a week. Employees can refuse to work for additional hours because these extra hours may affect employees' health and disrupt their matters.

Employers should offer the industry with a positive image such as promotion opportunities and good working environments to encourage people to work in the industry. Regarding salary schemes and benefits, the higher the offer, the stronger the intention of people to pursue their career in the restaurant industry. This study could assist restaurant employers to better understand their employees' desires. Hopefully, this research is beneficial for the restaurant industry as it provides a further understanding of the importance of job satisfaction and direction on how the restaurant could improve the employees' job satisfaction by enhancing the work environment, scheme salaries and promotion path.

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