



WHY THEY ARE NOT STAYING? LOCAL FEMALE PRODUCTION OPERATORS IN MALAYSIA'S ELECTRONIC INDUSTRY

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Abstract- Escalating rate of job turnover among the production operators in electronics industry in Malaysia significantly interfering with organizational performance. The purpose of this paper to investigate factors that influence employee's intention of leaving and create effective retention program. This study adopts the quantitative research design. Research examined the selected electronics companies in Northern Region and Central Region of Malaysia. Total population of the research comprises 150 respondents. Self-developed questionnaire, measured on the likert scale was used to collect data from respondents. Pearson correlation test of association was used in testing the hypothesis of the research. In addition multiple regression analysis was also used in examine the relation between the overall variables.

Keywords- Turnover, Retention, Electronics Industry, Production Operators, Employer

Introduction

Employees' turnover gives sleepless nights to human resource managers in many countries in South East Asia especially in Malaysia where its economy continuing improves. Together with this we see more employees leaving organizations for better opportunity and higher pay elsewhere especially the local production operators. The voluntary turnover rate for Malaysia has increased from 10.1 percent in 2009 to 13 percent in 2010 [1]. Employee turnover is the rotation of workers around the labor market; between firms, jobs and occupations; and between the states of employment and unemployment [2]. Price [3] has defined "turnover" as the ratio of the number of organizational members who have left during the period being considered divided by the average number of people in that organization during the period. Furthermore, managers refer to turnover as the entire process associated with filling a vacancy in which each time a position is vacated, either voluntarily or involuntarily, a new employee must be hired and trained.

Organizations invest a lot on their employees in terms of induction and training, developing, maintaining and retaining them in their organization. Therefore, managers at all costs must minimize employee's turnover. Moreover, managers must recognize that employees as major contributors to the efficient achievement of the organization's success [2]. In addition, managers should control employee turnover for the benefit of the organization success.

Our research is to determine the factors that most significantly influence employees' decision to remain employed at a particular organization. Indeed, we sought to develop strategies to enhance employee retention practices. This chapter provides the readers with an insight to the research area. Besides, this chapter can be divided into few sessions; they are included problem statement, research background, and hypothesis.

Problem Statement

In a society with a very strong gendered division of labour, the work

on the assembly line, considered repetitive, tedious and poorly paid, is often considered suitable work for women-daughters and wives contributing to the male's income for the family [4]. Most of the operators in organization are facing toughest life in their work which harms their health condition. The task or job given is extremely exhausting due to workforce and employment conditions which require them to stand for long hours and eye problems are very common. These conditions result in a high annual employee turnover rate of at least 30 to 40 percent [5] and lack of local workers. Indonesians constitute the largest group of migrant workers in both the electronics sector and the overall migrant workforce which is more than 65 percent in 2004 [6]. Other electronics employees imported from Nepal, Bangladesh, Burma, Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia and India. This can show that local employees are not interested in production operators due to different factors. Thus, the main problem statement of this research study is to examine which dimensions will determine the effectiveness of retention program for production operators implemented by electronic industry.

Research Background

The electronics industry is the leading sector in Malaysia's manufacturing sector, contributing significantly to the country's manufacturing output, exports and employment. The expansion in manufacturing sectors along with the high competition, the shortage of labor and the increasing in labor turnover makes the firms in electronic manufacturing industry extremely compete for skillful employees [7]. Therefore, it is very important to determine the causes of high turnover in electronic industry and thus to identify retention strategies to retain the capable and talented employees. Two main electronics organization were identified in this research located in Central region and Northern region of Malaysia. Our studies are mainly focus on the turnover of production operators in the selected organizations. This study will try to identify the possible reasons of production operators' intent to leave their current employment in the organizations and also to determine the most effective retention programs

for the organizations. There are five variables have been used to measure and develop an effective retention programs for the organizations, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, fairness of rewards, interpersonal relationship and career advancement opportunity.

Hypotheses of the Study

H₁: There is a significance relationship between retention program and job satisfaction.

H₂: There is a significant relationship between retention program and organizational commitment.

H₃: There is a significance relationship between retention program and fairness of reward.

H₄: There is a significance relationship between retention program and interpersonal relationship.

H₅: There is a significance relationship between retention program and career advancement opportunity.

Literature Review

Dependent Variable

Employee Retention

Retention is a voluntary move by an organization to create an environment which engages employees for long term. Effective employee retention programs are systematic efforts to create and foster an environment that encourages employees to remain employed by having policies and practices in place that address their diverse needs [8].

It is very hard to retain the employees in an organization due to different people has different needs. Organizations need to think of the most effective retention program to retain the employees from leaving the organization.

Independent Variables

Job Satisfaction

The most-used research definition of job satisfaction is by Locke [9] who defined it as "... a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from appraisal of one's job or job experience". Implicit in Locke's definition is the importance of both affect, or feeling, and cognition, or thinking. In general, greater job satisfaction resulted from high job rewards and low job costs [10]. Two additional issues relating to employee attitudes have been extensively studied over the past. First, measures of job satisfaction can be faceted (such as the JDI)-whereby they measure various dimensions of the job while others are global or measure a single, overall feeling toward the job. If a measure is facet-based, overall job satisfaction is typically defined as a sum of the facets. However, if one uses job satisfaction facet scores-based on groups of questions on the same facet or dimension rather than individual questions—to predict an independent measure of overall job satisfaction, the relationship is considerably higher.

Organizational Commitment

Organizations need highly committed individuals in order to elevate the company to higher levels. Commitment is a force that binds employees to courses of relevant to one or more targets e.g. organization, work-team, occupation or career [11]. Organizational commitment is an important issue to organizations as well as to their employees. Mowday [12] defines organizational commitment as the

attachment an individual has for his or her organization, and it arises from the person's identification with and participation in the organization also state that organizational commitment represents an employee's orientation toward the organization in terms of his or her loyalty to, Identification with and involvement in the organization. Such organizational commitment can be described as a set of behaviors or attitudes that manifest the loyalty and retention of employees, whereas organizational commitment reflects "the strong belief in and acceptance of the organizational goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization and the desire to remain in the organization."

Fairness of Reward

Expenditure in setting up financial reward schemes in attracting employees is huge and usually the first option as well [13]. Further supported by Lochhead and Aprial [14] the sources consulted in the study stress the prominence of compensation in attracting and keeping good employees, particularly for employees who has unique talent and skills. Reward can be classified into 2 groups, which are monetary and non-monetary reward. Example of monetary reward are bonuses, company paid trips for workers, gifts or services such as monthly utilities. According to Karl [5] monetary reward have helped maintain a positive motivational environment for associates and this will reduce the turnover intention among the operators whereas non-monetary incentives include training, transportation to company, flexible work hours and premium contributions can retain the employee from quitting the job. There are mostly female operators in electronics sector. Conversely, there are less male operators. Operational level is often considered suitable work for women-daughters and wives contributing to the male's income for the family [4]. This is due to the female are more patient than men. Research done by Bauer and Chytilova [15] they found that women make more patient choices than men. In semiconductor companies, the workers in operational level need to wake up early in the morning and focus on the assemble work of the conductor for the whole day, and when they get home, they have to take care of their children.

Interpersonal Relationship

Interpersonal relations in workplace serve as an important role in the development and preservation of trust and positive feelings of in an organization. Interpersonal relationships in workplace directly related to network centrality, perceived coworker support, feel obligation towards coworkers and interpersonal citizenship behavior [16]. Interaction patterns among individuals in organizations define as network centrality. Networking and connectivity expedite shared meaning about goals and values and act as important identity referents for individuals learning what it means to be part of an organization.

Bolino, et al. [17] suggested that when task in organization became demanding coworker support would reduce turnover because employees could rely on coworkers. This definition suggests that lack of social support is the strongest predictors of intention to leave a workplace. Feeling of obligation towards colleagues viewed as a prescriptive belief that one should concern about another's welfare. Felt compulsions toward colleagues could produce longer-term mutuality in interpersonal exchanges, which would encourage closer connections and greater interpersonal embeddedness [18]. Also, Sherony and Green [19] noted that high-quality exchanges among peers and coworkers generate feelings of mutual obligation and

expectations of reciprocity and supportiveness. According to Friedman and Holtom [20] recent research on turnover shows that social connections within organizations such as inherent benefits to employees, as well as resources that reduce political risk and enhance support and career development has contributed towards turnover besides attitudes toward one's job or availability of alternatives.

Career Development

Career defined as ladder planted invisibly by organization for employees to climb and development categorized as improvement individually by employees within the organization to achieve the self-fulfillment and organization requirements. In the research process, we find out that career development is one of the most influential factors that will affect employee retention in an organization.

Proposal Framework

The proposed theoretical framework of this study leads the research study to determine the variables that will be the measured and statistical relationships between the variables. It also will establish the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. In addition, it demonstrate whether the effectiveness of the maintenance program (dependent variable) will be influenced by the independent variable in career advancement opportunities, interpersonal relationships, organizational commitment, job satisfaction and fairness of reward. The purpose of the proposed framework is to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the five independent variables and the dependent variables. The result will indicate whether the relationship is positive or negative.

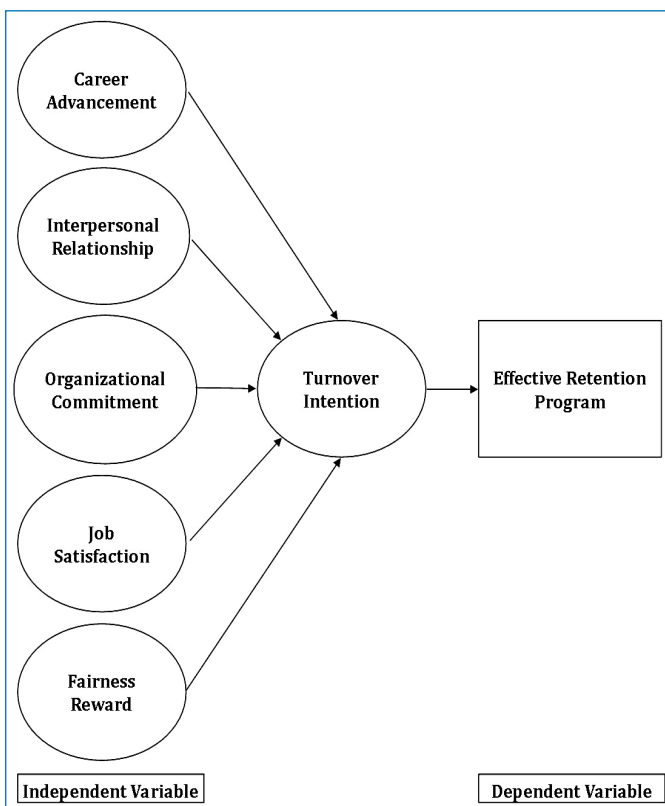


Fig. 1- Proposal Framework

Hypotheses Development

In order to identify the relationship between the independent variables and employees retention, the following hypotheses are formed:

Hypothesis 1: Job Satisfaction

H₀: Job satisfaction has no significant relationship on employee retention.

H₁: Job satisfaction has significant relationship on employee retention.

Many studies have revealed that unsatisfied employees are more likely to leave their jobs or frequently absent from work than those employees who have satisfaction in their job [21]. Past studies on job satisfaction have indicated the correlations between with turnover and absenteeism in the range of -2.5. Many other studies have examined the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions of public employees [22]. Notably, employees who choose to quit [23-25] or absent from work [26,27] have low job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: Organizational Commitment

H₀: Organizational Commitment has no significant relationship on employee retention.

H₁: Organizational Commitment has significant relationship on employee retention.

Organizational commitment is arguably one of the most significant issues in organizational studies for the last several decades. Organizational commitment proven to be the most important commitment in terms of its influence on job performance and the desire of workers to remain in the organization [28]. In addition, a plentiful literature [29-32] indicate that employee turnover intentions are influenced by organizational commitment. In addition, organizational commitment is a more direct predictor of turnover intentions than the job satisfaction [33]. Current studies have also evidenced that organizational commitment is a direct determinant of turnover intentions, while job satisfaction has been proposed as a predictor of organizational commitment [34-36]. It was established that organizational commitment was negatively correlated with turnover intentions [37]. In addition, Meyer, et al. [38] indicated that organizational commitment has a negative association with the intended and actual turnover. Also, many previous studies have reported that organizational commitment is a significant predictor of turnover intentions [33,35].

Hypothesis 3: Fairness of Reward

H₀: There is no significant relationship between employee retention and fairness of reward.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between employee retention and fairness of reward.

The reward system of any organization influences the employees' performance and employees' aspirations for eternal work or remains longer in their employment [39,40]. The reward is an important element and motivation for workers to remain put in an organization. Since the employees comfort leaving is determine by the rewards they received from their employer. A group of students from Army Public College of Management Sciences had conducted a study on the determinants of employee retentions in the Telecom sector. The results of their study revealed that there is a positive relationship between reward and retention. The correlation value of reward 0.642 and the beta value 0.252 demonstrate that the impact of reward on employees is very much. It acts as a reminder to the employees about the achievements and the joy or satisfaction in those feelings a little longer which perhaps serve as encouragement to repeat the effort in future [41].

Unfavorably, the above statement is argued that a non-significant association has been found between rewards or salary and retention. Meanwhile the gamma value shows a negative relationship between the variables [42].

Hypothesis 4: Interpersonal Relationship

H₀: Interpersonal Relationship has no significant relationship on employee retention.

H₁: Interpersonal Relationship has significant relationship on employee retention.

The theoretical relevance of a relational perspective on turnover has begun to receive greater attention [43,44] establishing an impetus to investigate turnover through a relational lens. Study conducted by Uhl-Bien, et al. [44] found low-quality relationships can have large costs for organizations, among them higher turnover. As Maertz and Campion [45] noted, positive interpersonal relationships can influence individuals to remain with an organization despite their disliking various features of it.

Hypothesis 5: Career Advancement

H₀: Career advancement has no significant relationship on employee retention.

H₁: Career advancement has significant relationship on employee retention.

Career advancement is always related to training and development in an organization. Ongoing training of the workforce is necessary to ensure that workers are constantly updating their skills. Fitz-enz [46] argues that human capital is unique because it is the only asset that can be developed. Career advancement is shaped by the structure of the career path, composed of graded positions along often segmented job ladders [47,48]. Empirical studies also confirmed that promotion opportunities affect voluntary turnover [47,48]. Past studies shows that career development has a positive relationship with employee retention.

Discussion and Conclusion

Total 150 questionnaires had been distributed to respondents in the electronic industry. From the result all of the respondents were female and most of the respondents are from age between 31-40 years old (38.7%). The greatest numbers of respondents are Malay Ethnic with 108 respondents (72%), following by 42 Indian Ethnic respondents (28%). Majority respondents work for 1 to 5 years (56%), lower secondary holder with income level of RM500 - RM100 (72%). 53% of out of total respondent are married and the remaining 47% are single.

Table 1- Summary of Scale Measurements: Summary of Pearson's Correlation Analysis

	Pearson Correlation	Direction	Strength	Significant
Job Satisfaction	0.205	Positive	Small but definite relationship	0.012 Yes
Organization Commitment	0.198	Positive	Slightly and almost negligible	0.015 Yes
Fairness of Reward	0.252	Positive	Small but definite relationship	0.002 Yes
Interpersonal Relationship	0.334	Positive	Small but definite relationship	0.000 Yes
Career Development	0.3	Positive	Small but definite relationship	0.000 Yes

Table 2- Summary of Scale Measurements: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis

	R-value	Correlation	R Square	P-value	Significant
Job Satisfaction	0.384	Positive and Moderate	14.80%	0.903	No
Organization Commitment	0.384	Positive and Moderate	14.80%	0.848	No
Fairness of Reward	0.384	Positive and Moderate	14.80%	0.57	No
Interpersonal Relationship	0.384	Positive and Moderate	14.80%	0.012	Yes
Career Development	0.384	Positive and Moderate	14.80%	0.045	Yes

Table 3- ANOVA^b Multiple Regression

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	6.628	5	1.326	4.987	0.000a
Residual	38.279	144	0.266		
Total	44.907	149			

From [Table-3], p-value (Sig. 0.000) is less than alpha value 0.05. The F-statistic is significant. The model for this study is a good descriptor of the relation between the dependent and predictor variables. Therefore, the independent variables (Job satisfaction, Organization Commitment, Fairness of Reward, Interpersonal Relationship and Career Development) are significant explain the variance of retention programs. The alternate hypothesis is supported by the data.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the five independent variables (Job Satisfaction, Organization Commitment, Fairness of Reward, Interpersonal Relationship and Career Development) and retention program in electronic manufacturing industry among the local operators.

H₁: There is significant relationship between the five independent variables (Job satisfaction, Organization Commitment, Fairness of Reward, Interpersonal Relationship and Career Development) and retention program in electronic manufacturing industry among the local operators.

Discussion of Major Findings

Job Satisfaction

In the Pearson's correlation, the result shows small but definite correlation between job satisfaction and employee retention which are $r = 0.205$. This indicate that high job satisfaction tend to have positive impact on employee retention in the workplace and the results are consistent with [49] findings that the strength of job satisfaction change plays an important role in shaping high in employee retention further supported by [50] that negative relationship between job satisfaction and intension to leave. Researchers conclude that job satisfaction was positive related to the retention because retention opposed to the leaving intention. However, the Multiple regression result shows that job satisfaction and retention does not have significant relationship with $p = 0.90$ which researchers conclude that job satisfaction is not the most effective retention program for the operators in the electronic industries.

Organizational Commitment

There is a positive correlation between organizational commitment and employee retention in the Pearson's correlation test that represent by $p = 0.198$ indicating high organizational commitment have

positive impact on employee retention. Analysis have identified that two variables are moving in the same direction, confirming that organizational commitment will boost employee retention among the operators in the electronic industries. Moody [51], have indicated that baby boomers have higher level of organizational commitment compare to generation-Y. In addition Costa [52] added that higher level of commitment lead to increased satisfaction with the job. Researchers conclude that contribution benefits job satisfaction indirectly, through sense of community and commitment to the organization. Therefore, evidence that positive relationship between organizational commitment and employee retention although there is a small but definite relationship. However, the multiple regression result shows that organizational commitment does not have significant relationship with employee retention. The findings indicated that 2 was not supported at $p = 0.848$ significant level with ($p < 0.50$) and it is consistence by most of researchers in which Grigg [50] concluded in their study that organizational commitment has relatively little direct influence on employee retention in most instances and sometimes the employee stayed because they wanted to stay. The little influence further supported by Agarwal [53] that found there is no relationship between these two variables.

Fairness of Reward

Pearson's correlation shows a significant relationship between this two variables with $p = 0.252$. These two variables were in the positive direction. Studies have shown a positive relationship between fairness of rewards and employee retention. Moore [54] mentioned there is a significant relationship between this two variables among employees. Further conclude that reward system of any organization affects the employee performance and their aspiration to stay employed [39]. Adversely, the multiple regression tests indicated there is no significant relationship between fairness of rewards and employee retention with the $p = 0.570$. This means that, fairness of reward in an organization would not influence the employee's intention to leave, supported by Khan, et al. [42], there is a non-significant association has been found between reward or salary and employee retention as local operators has their expectation on the salary is significant but factors such as working environment, job commitment, and job satisfaction will influence the employees.

Interpersonal Relationships

Pearson's correlation shows $p = 0.334$ between this two variables. Besides, the multiple regression analysis also shows $p = 0.012$ indicated a significant relationship between interpersonal relationships and employee retention. There are various studies shows there is a positive relationship within these two variables. Mossholder, et al. [55] in their research has indicated that work-based social support is usually extended by proximal individuals and thus exchanges of support should reverberate among co-workers, strengthening interpersonal bonds and attenuating shocks that encourage withdrawal behavior and consistence with Friedman [56] employee network groups can be useful tools for helping companies retain employees. In addition Friedman [56] found that the presence of mentors will influenced job attitudes among protégés subject with a high-quality relationship with a mentor had higher probability of employee retention. Samuel and Chay [57] further support the statement showed that citizenship behavior oriented toward helping individuals negatively correlated with turnover intentions in a union context. In conclusion, there are many scholars that agreed interpersonal relationships have significant relationship with effective employee retention.

Career Development

Pearson's Correlation shows that there is a positive correlation between career development and employee retention which is $p = 0.300$ this means, high career development will lead to high employee retention successfully. Moreover, the multiple regression result shows career development has positive but moderate correlation with employee retention indicated by $p = 0.045$, but it stills a significant relationship between the two variables. Career development will always related to the promotions and training in an organization. Moreover, there is correlation between organization success and investment in career development. This supported by Dwyer [58] findings the importance of training and development can be brought to employee and organization. Smith [59] also mentions the positive relationship between the two variables. Researchers prove training and development can made a huge difference to employees' confidence, enthusiasm skills and knowledge in accomplishing daily tasks. As such, employee with more skillful, committed and motivated after being trained, which will eventually boost their performance and lower the intention to leave the organization?

Implication of Study

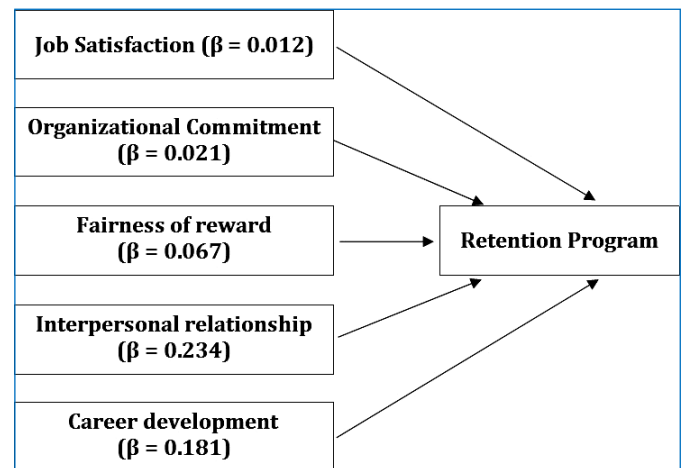


Fig. 2- Managerial Implications

Result of the study shows that interpersonal relationship and career development have significant impact toward the effectiveness of retention program for the local production operators in electronic industry in which job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and fairness of reward have no significant impact toward the effectiveness of retention for the local production operators in electronic industry. The study is particularly useful to human resource department, to gain expertise about interpersonal relationship and career development, which can be used into the retention program. As the result show that interpersonal relationship and career development have significant impact toward the effectiveness of retention program for local production operators, the implication here is that the management to focus on this two variables to reduce turnover problem by developing effective retention program and achieve a better retention rate. To improve local production operators' retention rate, the management could enhance the interpersonal relationship ($\beta = 0.234$,) has shown to be the most significant drive in the effectiveness of retention program for local production operators in electronic industry. Result show that job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and fairness of reward have no significant impact toward the effectiveness of retention program for local production operators in

the electronic industry. With $\beta = 0.181$, career development is shown to have a significant impact on the effectiveness of retention program, in which management should take it into consideration in the retention program. Lastly, based on the finding, it is found that job satisfaction ($p = 0.903$, $\beta = 0.012$), organizational commitment ($p = 0.848$, $\beta = 0.021$), and fairness of reward ($p = 0.570$, $\beta = 0.067$), have no significant impact to the effectiveness of retention program. This is because; all the p-value is less than alpha value of 0.05. Thus, these three factors are no impact to the effectiveness of retention program.

Conclusion

In conclusion, all the five hypotheses have been tested in the study and the research objectives has been achieved. Nevertheless this study also has its limitations. Future researches may take this research as their reference or guideline for their future research that investigates the most effective retention for the local operator in electronic industry.

Conflicts of Interest: None declared.

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