

## Employee Retention: A Literature Review

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### Introduction

According to Robbins and Coulter, the issues surrounding managing people are leading employees towards achieving the overall objectives, providing proper supervision on job, motivating subordinates and providing effective performance measurement based on merit [1]. The authors also state that an individual needs to delegate jobs and responsibilities to subordinates equally. In addition, the individual should have a good communication skill to communicate well with the subordinates. Other authors such as George and Jones agree that there are many issues concerning managing employees at work for example, managing employees' performance, involvement, development, conflicts and organizational change [2]. In managing conflicts, employees usually feel manager is biased towards other employees that were involved in the conflicts as such this situation raises some dissatisfaction in the organization [3]. In term of managing organizational change, there are would be some employees who were reluctant to change or accept changes. They prefer status quo thus refusing any changes and to avoid learning new things such as new ways of doing work, new systems or new technologies [2,4]. Hence, such this dissatisfaction over these issues would affect the overall employees' performance at work and organizational [1,2].

Employees' retention is one of the issues in managing people at work. Employees' retention problems occur when organization face difficulties in retaining the employees. Nowadays, individuals going into the workforce will most likely expect to change jobs a few times during the life of their career. Miller for example, states that seven out of ten young adults, ages between 15 to 31 are considering whether it is better to stay with one organization over their career life [5]. However, approximately one third of these employees believe they would only stay at their current jobs no more than one year. Half of them are expecting to leave the organizations within two years. Consequently, this situation is giving bad impact to a proper function of any organizations and services industries or hospitality industries are not excluded since these employees are the most essential resources to the business industry as for serving and entertaining the customers [3].

### Background of Study

A' Famosa Resort Hotel (AFRH) SDN. Bhd. offers accommodations for customers or tourists of A' Famosa Resort. AFRH provides 217 guest room and suites (Deluxe Single, Double or Family Room) inclusive of all modern facilities.

Based on researcher's two months industrial training experiences in AFRH, there were many problems associated with employees' retention in the company. There were a number of employees leaving AFRH especially those who were working at the management assistance level was approximately 6% per month, this contributing to an average of 72% annually. Table 1 below provides a snapshot of the employees' leaving rate AFRH based on the company's record.

**Table 1: Leaving rate of a Famosa Resort hotel (AFRH) SDN BHD**

	March 2008	April 2008	May 2008
Number of employees leaving (person)	5	4	3
Total manpower (person)	78	73	75
Leaving rate (%)	6.4	5.4	4.0

Sources A' Famosa Resort Hotel (AFRH) SDN BHD

### Statement of Problem

According to Inversion and Deery, hospitality industry has developed a turnover culture, where employees who entered the industry are expected not to remain in the organization permanently [6]. Besides that, employees within the hospitality industry are also characterized as part-timers and casual workforce due to an absence of the internal labour market [6]. According to the authors, such situation is due to low job security, little chance of promotions, low wages and low skills levels involve in the industry. According to Holtom, Mitchell, and Lee, employees' turnover, cost an organization as such, losing any employees will reduce company's effectiveness and increases expenses due to intellectual capital lost [7].

New employees would require training before taking over any vacancies position [8]. Other expenses included costs associated with employees' leaving, recruitment cost, training costs, loss of productivity costs, loss of sales costs and new hire costs. The sum of those costs could easily reach up to 150% of a person's salary. However, the sum of a managerial position, the percentage could reach between 200% to 250% [9]. In addition, Parise, Cross, and Davenport reveals that when employees leaving an organization, they also brought with them critical knowledge, abilities and skills that they possessed [10]. Consequently, an overall organizational

work structure and function would be affected and as in A' Famosa Resort Hotel SDN BHD. case, the assistance management level of employees who left the company at a rate of 6% per month was considerate as critical and would lead to adverse effect on the company's overall performance.

According to Table 1, AFRH has problem in retaining the employees since quite a number of employees leaving the organization per month and those leaving are at management assistance level. There were some questions that triggered the researcher to undertake this research as follows:

- What is going on in A'famosa Resort Hotel (AFRH) SDNBHD with regards to employees' retention issues?
- Why those employees left the company?
- What are the reasons behind such departure?
- How do the employees experience working at A' Famosa Resort Hotel SDNBHD?
- Why do they stay working in A' Famosa Resort Hotel SDNBHD?
- What are the issues surrounding employees' retention in A' Famosa Resort Hotel SDNBHD?
- How the employee and management teams do perceived these issues?
- How does the management team manage such problems?

### Research Question

The research questions of the study are as follows:

- What are the issues surrounding employees' retention in A' Famosa Resort Hotel SDN. Bhd.?
- How do the employees reflect their experience working in A'Famosa Resort Hotel SDN. Bhd.?
- What are the issues perceived by employees regarding those have left the company?
- How do the management and administrative staff manage the issues of employees' retention?

### Objective of the Study

The research was exploratory in nature and the aim was to provide an understanding of the issues regarding employees' retention in A' Famosa Resort Hotel SDN Bhd. The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To review the literature surrounding the issues on employees' retention with particular reference to the hotel industry.
- To identify issues surrounding employees' retention in A Famosa Resort Hotel SDN Bhd.
- To investigate issues relating to employees' retention by drawing on the experiences of the management and general staff who are working in A'Famosa Resort Hotel SDN Bhd.
- To examine the role of the management in dealing with the issues of employees' retention.

### Previous Study

#### Consequences due to low Employees' Retention level

Day argues, if companies cannot retain their employees, the economic result could be devastating for the organization [11]. According to the Saratoga Institute, which specialist in quantitative human resources measurement system, the average company loses is about \$1 million with every 10 professional employees who leave [12]. Additionally, organizations may experience a decrease in performance, efficiently, and morale, and an increase in the disorder of social networks, group cohesion, and communication [13]. Employees' retention is an issue to be concerned by many organizations. It is costly to replace personnel, and often the individuals who leave would take proprietary knowledge that is impossible to replace.

### The Reason behind Employees Staying with an Organization

There are for reason stated by Harari, Kouzes and Posner and Jamrog that make employees stay with an organization [14-16]. The first reason is organization give employees work that will stimulate and create value to the organization. The second reason is organization creates diversity in the work assignments and inspires employees to remain on top of their careers. The third reason is organization design an organizational culture that promotes intellectual accomplishments and inspiration as such by allows employees the opportunity to contribute and take responsibility for their work. The fourth reason is organization keeps the local culture and community structure in mind in order to provide the employees a balance between work and life affairs.

### Factors that Contribute to Employees' Retention Problem

Ryan and Mor Barak, et al. reveal that there are many factors correlate with turnover or low level of employees' retention [17,18]. This study will address the major factors such as organizational commitment, Employee perceptions, Union presence, Turnover culture, Pay or income, Stress, Lack of communication, Lack of training and development and Job content.

### Employee' Retention Strategies

Redford explains that there are six major ways can be used to manage employees' retention problems as follow:

- Give new starters realistic expectations
- Conduct regular 360-degree appraisals
- Provide training and development
- Benchmark benefits and pay
- Conduct exit interviews and attitude
- Flexible work arrangement [19].

### Research Method

According to Strauss and Corbin, qualitative research method is appropriate to be used in research that attempts to understand the meaning or nature of the experience of persons with problems and finding out what people are doing and thinking [20]. This study explored the issue of employees' retention in AFRH. The respondent of the research are employees working in AFRH which include management level and general staff. The researcher conducted eight in-depth interviews. The employees of A' Famosa Resort Hotel (AFRH) were selected based on purposive sampling. According to Idris, the intention of choosing respondents based on purposive sampling was to lead the study to a more productive discussion than would a random sample [21]. Thus, one management staff and one general staff were chosen from each of the four major departments which are Front Office, Housekeeping, Food and Beverage and Human Resource as respondents to obtain their overall understanding regarding employees' retention issues.

There are four common techniques in conducting research qualitatively [22]. The examples of the research techniques are participant observation, direct observation, unstructured interviewing and case studies. The author defines case study as a detailed, in-depth examination of a person, group, or setting. It includes of multiple data sources and perspectives. This study conducted by using in-depth interview, the types of in-depth interview is the modus-operandi but they are few limitations or pitfall of in-depth interviews as described by Boyce and Neale [23]:

- Prone to bias
- Time-intensive
- Interviewer should be properly trained with the interviewing techniques
- Not generalized

## Findings

### Different Reasons for Joining A' Famosa Resort Hotel (AFRH) SDN BHD

Different employees revealed different reasons for working with AFRH. Most the respondents claimed that their main reason of working with AFRH was due to convenience factors such as location, managing families and adequate amount of salaries received. The evidence also shows that some of the employees foresee the advantage of being permanently employed with some security. For example, Michelle who works as Assistance Housekeeper and is responsible for handling whole housekeeping department voiced up her reasons working with AFRH. According to her, AFRH is located near to her mother's house and she can stay and take care of her mother. Elisa is a room attendance who is responsible for cleaning the rooms. She chooses to work in AFRH because she gets higher salary.

The fact that AFRH is located near to her home and according to her, the working hours are not long which make it easier for her to look after her children after work. In others work, even though the employees had different reasons of working. At AFRH, majority of them preferred to work due to the near location of the company with their home, a few agreed that to work there because of families' obligation while there were others claimed their reasons were based on survivalist issues.

### Employees Experience of working in AFRH

Different employees had revealed different experience of working in AFRH. The following section provides detail explanation regarding employees' feelings as well as their personal experiences with regard to working in AFRH. Michelle expressed her concerns of having to work long hours in a day. According to her, she had to work eleven to twelve hours long; walk around the hotel and make follow-up on many things and felt very tired especially during peak season. Elisa complained that of feeling tired and tensed during the peak season as she had to clean many rooms within a short period and sometimes scolded by unreasonable guests. Mr. Zen regretted his decision to work in AFRH because he found that AFRH is not an ideal place for him to develop his career and work achievement. He expressed much dissatisfaction towards AFRH after working in AFRH for 3 months. Anita revealed that she likes her current job but she has to work longer hours (12 hours) a day due to lack of manpower. MsVean elaborated that as a head of department, she had to handle and follow-up many things such as group of guests, walk-in guests, VIP guests; problems and complaint occurred. Ken revealed that as a bell boy, he required to carry out his bell boy duties as well as other tasks such as cleaning the guests' toilet, sending some documents all over AFRH and went to get some small change for the front office. Susan revealed that she had to handle many things as well as works which were out of her job's scope.

Most of the respondents had dissatisfactions over their current jobs. Most of them revealed that their heavy workloads and they were required to handle many job responsibilities. Some of the employees claimed that they had to carry out others' works that out of their jobs' scopes due to the lack of manpower at AFRH.

### Employee Retention Issues

Frank et al. defines employees' retention as the effort implement by an employer to keep workers in order to meet business objectives such as achieving certain amount of sale's output per month [24]. However, there were many retention issues in AFRH that caused AFRH failed to retain employees such as lack of trust and lack of manpower.

### The Non-Systematic Working System of AFRH Creates Problem to the Employees

According to the interviewees, the non-systematic working system of AFRH had contributed too many problems and inconveniences to employees in carrying out their jobs such as problems related to bookings and late delivery of raw material to the kitchen department.

### Trust Is Barely Exist Between Employees and Employers

From the interviews, it was found that lack of trust between parties, employers and employees. Issues of trust are barely existence at AFRH. Few of the respondents claimed that Closed Circuit Televisions (CCTVs) are placed all over the AFRH to monitor the movement of staff. In some instances, the CCTV s is badly interpreted by the employees but in certain case the CCTVs were used are required to solve some issues.

### Lack of Man Power Created Complications and Problems to AFRH

From the interviews, it was found that most of the respondent who claimed that their respective department suffered lack of man power. Lack of manpower created complications and problems to AFRH such as employees had to take over other jobs that were out of their jobs' scope which contributed to high stress, high workloads and employees' job performance decreased.

### Confusions over job Positions of the higher Management level Executives

Based on the interview, there were few respondents who claimed that the job positions of higher management keep on changing. Frequent changes of management roles created confusions among employees.

### Too Much Concern over cost Creates Employees' Dissatisfaction

From the interviews, there were some respondents who claimed that management has put too much concern over cost because management was seen as reluctant to spend money in terms of recruiting sufficient manpower and purchasing tools and utensils. Mr. Zen claimed that higher management is putting too much concern over cost because they were reluctant to spend money on things which could lead the company to become more successful in near future.

Besides that, most the respondents claimed that their respective department suffers lack of manpower. Therefore, they speculated lack of manpower was due to management was stingy over cost. After employees left, the management is reluctant to hire new staff as to reduce cost.

### Lack of career Development Created Dissatisfactions among Employees at AFRH

According to the interviewees, lack career development at AFRH such as lack of promotion opportunities and no training program had created dissatisfactions among employees. Most of the interviewees claimed that they cannot foresee their future career growth if they continuously working at AFRH.

### Reasons for Employees Leaving AFRH

From the interview, employees left their jobs due to many reasons. Employees in AFRH comprise of local and foreign workers. However, most of the employees in AFRH are local workers and few of them are contracts workers which came from other countries. Most of the local employees revealed that their leaving reasons were due to lack of career development, low amount of salary given, very high workload, stressful working environment, long hours of working which contributed to minimum time spent



for their families and personal life. In addition, a few of employees left due to better salary offered elsewhere on top of other personal reasons.

However, most of the foreign employees decided to leave AFRH due to the fact that they missed home so much, they received very low salary and experienced problems in term of saving some money. Others decided to leave due to they were unhappy with the current jobs and unhappy with the current working environment.

### **High Turnover of Employees Resulted many Problems to the Employees and the Management of AFRH**

Most of the interviewees claimed due to high number of turnovers, AFRH suffered the lack of manpower as such the existing employees were required to do more works which resulted longer working hours. Most employees expressed their concern over such problems which led them to become more stressful.

### **Due to longer hours of work Schedule, Highly Stressed work and very few Manpower, The Overall Employees' Job Performances were very low**

From the interviews, it was found that most of the respondents claimed that problems relating to small number of employees, they were required to take over others' jobs which resulted longer working hours. This contributed to them to be more stressful. Consequently, it decreased employees' job performance and productivity.

### **Reasons for Staying at AFRH**

Different employees had different reasons for staying at AFRH. They worked in AFRH because of they needed to support their family (family obligations), they talk about survival issues and happy to mix with different types of guests.

## **Discussion**

### **What were the Issues Surrounding Employees' Retention in AFRH?**

From the findings, there were many problems regarding the retention issues in AFRH. The first retention issue was due to lack of systematic working systems. This has created many problems and inconveniences to the employees. MsVean, Assistant Front Office Duty Manager revealed that such complaints usually occurred in the system. This problem was due to the sales department staff failed to check the email frequently as everyone was so busy and there was a lack of manpower. Due non-systematic working systems, raw materials for cooking such as meats, vegetables were always delivered late. This has caused Anita who in charge of cooking staff's meal had very little time in preparing the meals in advanced. Failing to deliver the meals on time, she would be scolded by the supervisor due to her inability to prepare meals on the fixed time frame. Sometimes the raw materials were delivered too soon. It had resulted Anita to felt more stress in preparing the meals. Moreover, Michelle, Assistant Housekeeper revealed that housekeeping department is lack of systematic working systems because she had to prepare many paper works such as daily report, weekly report and monthly report to list down things that had happened and conducted. Due to the lack of systematic working systems, Karen, HR Executive revealed that some employees complained that their overtime (OT) allowance and salaries received were incorrect. These problems were due to their respective supervisor did not wrote down correctly the OT hours in the OT claim form. Poor systematic work systems in term of recording overtime allowance created further dissatisfactions among employees.

The second retention issue was related to trust. Trust barely existed between employees and employers. Mr Zen, Pastry Chef argued that the employers do not trust their staff. According to him, the CCTVs are placed all over the workplace to monitor employees' activities. Employers used CCTVs to guard employees' movement. On the other hand, employees also did not trust their employers because employers did not da as promised especially in recruiting new staff as promised. Management failed to recruit new staff as it had been two months for Anita to wait for a helping hand.

The third retention issue was due to lack of manpower. Lack of manpower had created further complications and problems to AFRH because employees were required to carry out their own jobs as well as others that were out of their job's scopes. This situation had decreased employees' job performances and productivity because employees' workload was heavy and employees may be not as the expert in carries out others' jobs. Hence, employees had to spend longer hours to complete the jobs which contributed to most of them feeling stressful and lack of time spent for families and personal agenda.

The fourth retention issue was regarding the confusions over job positions of higher management level executives. Employees were confused over job positions of the management level executives because managers kept on changing and organization chart was not fixed and clear. The employees claimed that sometimes they were confused over whom they were required to report to since managers kept on being transferred to take over different departments. Besides that, job positions of the management level executives were created from time to time by the top management in order to supervise employees who failed to achieve the desired targets. These indicated that the overall management system was messy and poor.

The fifth retention issue was related to the issue regarding too much concern over cost. Management was putting too much concern over cost which created dissatisfactions among employees. The employees speculated that the management was reluctant to spend money but requested the services to be at 5-star rate. These were evidence through the comments made by employees regarding the management is reluctant to hire sufficient employees. The problems were seen critical as some departments were seriously needed of adequate manpower. In fact, the management took longer period to recruit new staff.

The last retention issue was lack of career development. Lack of career development has created employees' dissatisfaction because employees had been working in AFRH for a certain amount of time. The workloads have been increasing from time to time but they were still at the same job position and pay. Besides that, no training program was offered by AFRH to improve the overall employees' skills and knowledge which contributed to employees' dissatisfaction and motivation.

### **How did the Employees Reflect their Experience of working in AFRH?**

From the findings, it was found that different employees had different experience and feelings about working at AFRH. Most of the respondents have several dissatisfactions about their current jobs. Most of them revealed that their workloads were very high and they had to handle many things. Some of them claimed they had to carry out others' work which went beyond their jobs' scope due to the lack of manpower.

### **What were the Issues Perceived by Employees Regarding those have left the Company?**

AFRH suffered the lack of manpower where employees and employers are requested to do more jobs and working longer hours. These contributed to some dissatisfaction among employees because they were overloaded, they have to work longer hours in a day which contributed to more hectic and stressful and would experience little time for their families and personal matters. At the same time, employees' job performance and productivity were decreased because they failed to handle so many jobs effectively at one time. Mr Zen claimed that employees working at AFRH did not have the motivational spirit to work; they worked for the sake of money only. This is due to the fact that they got bored to do routine works every day and they had so many things to deal with since lack of power. The second leaving reason was due to low amount of salary given. Employees felt that the amounts of salaries received are low, insufficient to afford their daily expenses. Hence, they decide to leave. This finding is aligned with research by Porter and Steers who stated that there is negative relationship between employees' departure and pay satisfaction [25]. They explain that when employees dissatisfied with the pay level, they will leave the organization.

The third leaving reason was due to the stressful working environment. Employees decided to leave because they felt very stress as they had to carry out many jobs as well as jobs out of their jobs' scope. If they failed to complete the jobs on time, they were scolded badly by respective supervisor or manager. These findings echoed the works of Mor Barak, et al. and Chiu et al. who stated that employees who have high levels of stress have a higher likelihood of leaving the organization [18,26].

The fourth leaving reason was due to longer working hours. Employees decide to leave because they were dissatisfied due to the long working hours in a day. As such, it had resulted employees feeling very tired and had no time for personal life and families.

The fifth leaving reason was due to better job offer that they received elsewhere. Employees decided to leave because they had some dissatisfaction over their current jobs such as long working hours, stressful working environment and some of them obtained better offers from other party which promises such as higher salary, more benefits and better career developments.

For foreign employees, the first leaving reason was due to the fact that they missed home so much since they only allowed going back to their own country after finishing their two years contract. They only could use mobile phone to contact their family. The second leaving reason was due to the fact that they dislike their current jobs. The third reason was due to low amount of salary received. After deducted levy, their salaries are between RM300-RM450 per month depends on the jobs they worked for. Their main objective working in AFRH was to earn money but they experienced problems in saving due to the fact that they were needed to pay for their own meals. The forth reason was due to the fact that they were not happy with the current working environment. They decide to leave because they had problems in communicating and working with others foreign workers due to different languages, culture and customs.

### **How did the Management Manage the Issues of Employees' Retention?**

The findings showed little efforts from the management in dealing with the problems. The management requested employees to do more jobs and worked longer hours to help the company. Management did not honor their promises that they would recruit new employees as soon as possible to replace the vacancies.

### **Conclusion**

#### **What were the Issues Surrounding Employees' Retention in AFRH?**

It was found that there many issues surrounding employees' retention in AFRH. The first issue was due to lack of manpower. Due to the lack of manpower, employees in AFRH were required to do more jobs and work longer hours. Consequently, the employees suffered heavy workloads which contributed to most of them felt very stressful, fatigue and had little time for their families and personal matters. These situations caused some of the employees left AFRH.

The second issue was related to trust which was barely exist between employees and employers. Employers do not trust their employees, hence in some occasion's CCTVs were used to monitor employees' activities closely. As a result, most of the employees felt less empowerment, less appreciated and valued and a few who did not see their future of continuously working with AFRH had left the company. The employees on the other hand, did not trust the management since they (referring to the top management people) did not honor their words or promises made on several occasions, one related to purchase of kitchen equipment's and the other regarding employing new staff.

The third issue was regarding the lack of career development. Employees complained about the lack of promotion opportunities and career development of training program which would brush up their working skills and knowledge beneficial to AFRH. Most of the employees who had left felt that employers did not care about their future and less appreciate and value their existence. Thus, they decided to leave.

The fourth issue was related to the issue regarding too much concern over cost. Some of the employers were speculated that the management of AFRH was reluctant to spend money or hire more employees because the management was too much concern over cost and keep on maximizing profits.

The fifth issue was about confusions over the job positions of higher management level staff. The positions of management level staff are kept on changing which indicated the messiness and poor overall management system. Consequently, the overall employees' confident level was jeopardized and they felt less secured working at AFRH.

The sixth issue was due to lack of systematic working style. According to the employees, many problems and inconveniences occurred due to the ineffectiveness and inefficiency of the AFRH's working style. Many of the employees were disappointed with the company on the ways works are delegated and assigned to them.

#### **Research Question 2: How do the Employees Reflect their Experience Working in A' Famosa Resort hotel SDN Bhd.?**

The finding from the study revealed that the employees of AFRH were overloaded and burdened due to the lack of manpower issue. Employees were required to do jobs beyond their responsibility which required them to work longer hours and contributed to their tiredness and stress especially during the peak season. Many employees expressed their dissatisfaction over workload which resulted them to have little time for their families and their own. Moreover, one employee (P.37) claimed that he had regretted his decisions of working at AFRH because he later found that AFRH had many problems, the working environment is less an ideal for developing new career and achievement for his life. This evidence had contributed to many employees left the company resulted a more chronic situation of under staff at AFRH.

### Research Question 3: What are the Issues Perceived by Employees Regarding those have left the Company?

The employee felt that those had left AFRH had contributed too many of the work suffering. Those who remained with AFRH were required to carry out more jobs, work longer working hours which resulted them to more stress, tired and no time for their families and self-life. Employees' overall job performances and productivity were poor because they had to handle so many jobs at one time. Employees had hoped the management to recruit new staffs as soon as possible to replace the vacancies but the management was considered not serious upon the issue and spent half year to recruit the new staff. On the other hands, it was found that those employees who had left AFRH included the foreign employees as well. For the local employees, their main reasons were due to lack of career development, low amount of salary given, the stressful working environment, long working hours and due to better offer that they received from elsewhere. The foreign employees however, the main reason for leaving was due to they missed home so much as they were not allowed to go back to their own country after they had finished their 2 year-contract. Secondly, they left because they disliked their jobs. Thirdly, they claimed that the amount of salary received was low. Their main objectives working with AFRH was to earn money but they faced problems in saving because environment and they had difficulties in communicating and working with others foreign workers.

### Research Question 4: How does the Management and Administrative Staffs Manage the Issues of Employees' Retention?

The finding from the study exposed when there were employees left AFRH, the management suffered lack of manpower. However, the management resolved the problems by requesting the existence employees to work harder and work longer hours to help the Company. Even though, the management had promised that they would recruit new staff as soon as possible to replace the vacancies, but their action was relatively slow. Exploratory studies of retention issues from the perspective of the employees of one particular hotel or resort setting. Therefore, overall aim and objectives of this exploratory study have been achieved. Based on the finding, it can be concluded that there were problems associated with the retention of between employees, very limited career development which contributed to most dissatisfaction among the workers.

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