

Labor Turnover of a Manufacturing Firm in Tarlac City, Philippines

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— *Review of* —
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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to look into the labor turnover of a manufacturing firm in Tarlac City, Philippines. It sought to determine the factors contributory to labor turnover of the firm and to find out the reasons for such turn over. It hoped to understand the strategies of that the managers put into place to minimize the effects of turnover, using descriptive-survey research.

The data obtained were used to determine the factors contributory to labor turnover; problems encountered related to labor turnover; and actions taken accordingly by the firm. This study endeavored to recommend measures on how the firm can improve and strengthen its Human Resource Development, policies, plans and programs with a quality, sufficient and competent workforce, ably responding to the fast changing labor landscape in the area.

The target population was 110 separated employees. The respondents were requested to fill up a pre-crafted questionnaire and on occasion, interviewed for some clarification and validation on some data that will yield better data output. The questionnaires were primarily on the extraction of information that was directed towards revealing answers to the study.

A one-on-one interview with the management, as represented by the Human Resource Manager was conducted to provide a balanced and objective presentation of facts.

Data and information gathered from the respondents covered very sufficiently the objectives of the study, as the degree of cooperation was highly observed and the quality of responses revealed enlightened knowledge on the subjects presented. Research etiquette was strictly implemented.

I. INTRODUCTION

Labor turnover is a term widely used in the business circle to mean the proportion of employees leaving a business firm over a year. It is calculated by dividing the number of employees leaving by the average number of employees within the business and then multiply it by 100.

Most studies have been made on labor turnover in the Philippines but these were focused on its causes rather than examining the sources of the turnover, its effects and the various options and strategies that maybe used by the managers to ensure there is employee continuity in the organization and therefore enhances organizational competitiveness and even survival.

There is no doubt business organizations invest so much in their people in terms of induction, training, and developing while maintaining them in the organization. Managers must therefore, at all cost, minimize employee turnover. A wide range of factors have been found useful in interpreting employee turnover although there is no standard framework for understanding the employees' turnover process as a whole. There is a need to fully understand employee turnover, the effects and strategies that managers can put in place to minimize turnover.

High turnover often means that employees are unhappy with the work or compensation but it can also indicate unsafe or unhealthy conditions, or that too few employees give satisfactory performance due to unrealistic expectations, inappropriate processes or tools or poor candidate screening. The lack of career opportunities and challenges, dissatisfaction with the job scope or conflict with the management has been cited as predictors of high turnover.

Low turnover indicates that none of the aforesaid is true: employees are satisfied, healthy and safe, and their performance is satisfactory to the employer. However, the predictors of low turnover may sometimes differ than those of high turnover. Aside from the above-cited career opportunities, salary, corporate culture, management's recognition and comfortable workplace seems to impact employee's decision to stay with their employer.

Labor turnover generally indicates how content a workforce is within a business. An increasing turnover rate could be an indication that employees are dissatisfied with their job or the business. The causes of a high labor turnover could be both due to internal or external factors.

Internal factors may include: leadership that is ineffective or management styles that are inappropriate; the level of pay that is being offered by the business is less than comparable jobs within other organizations; communications between management and employees may be poor; employees may feel that working conditions are inadequate or they may not like certain working practices and; the wrong people maybe being selected for the wrong types of jobs due to flawed recruitment and selection processes.

External factors that may affect labor turnover within a business would include the state of the labor market. If there is an increase in the availability of jobs that the business's employees find more attractive they may leave for another job. How attractive a job is to an employee is determined by a number of factors. These factors may include better pay, better working conditions improved training, the location of the job and whether the job would be more interesting or satisfying.

Unskilled positions often have high turnover, and employees can generally be replaced without the organization or business incurring any loss of performance. The ease of replacing these employees provides little incentive to employers to offer generous employment contracts; conversely contracts may strongly favor the employer and lead to increased turnover as employees seek and eventually find more favorable employment.

However, high turnover rates of skilled professionals can pose as a risk to the business or organization due to human capital (such as skills, training and knowledge) lost. Notably, given the natural specialization of skilled professionals, these employees are likely to be re-employed within the same industry by a competitor. Therefore turnover of these individuals incurs both replacement costs to the organization, as well as resulting in a competitive disadvantage to the business.

Practitioners can differentiate between instances of voluntary turnover, initiated at the choice of the employee and those involuntary instances where the employee has no choice in their termination such as long term sickness, death, and moving overseas, or employer-initiated termination.

Typically, the characteristics of employees who engage in involuntary turnover are no different from job stayers. However, voluntary turnover can be predicted and in turn controlled.

The manufacturing firm in Tarlac City, Philippines is an interesting case in the study on labor turnover, whose employment is three times a thousand fold. It is observed to be a major job destination of job seeking professionals, as well as those who are technically trained in the City.

The firm had an average manning of 3,629 permanent employees in 2008 with a labor turnover rate of 4.7% or 171 separated individuals; 3,355 in 2009 permanent employees with a labor turnover rate of 9.6% or 322 separated individuals and 3,524 permanent employees in 2010 with a labor turnover rate of 2.3% or 81 separated individuals.

From a low turnover rate of 4.7% in 2008, it is highly noticeable that the turnover rate went two-fold in 2009 at 9.6%, which could be explained by the time the “ripple effect” of the financial crisis from the United States hit the domestic front.

Benchmark figures, based on the Labor Turnover Statistics in Large Enterprises in Metro Manila would show (Labstat, Vol 15 No 6 April 2011) for the years 2008, 2009 and 2010, the manufacturing firm compared relatively statistically better. As when the company posted 4.7% in labor turnover, the Metro Manila average was about 8.37%. In 2009 however, when the firm posted 9.6% turnover, Metro Manila firms was about 8.4%. In 2010, the firm significantly lowered its turnover rate to 2.3% while Metro Manila firms stood at a high 9.54%.

The manufacturing firm derives its business primarily from overseas clients for their automotive wiring harness for automobiles, corrugated tubes and spare/applicator parts. Product demand mainly comes from international consumption which dictates the economic behavior of the firm. As the international market exhibits a slowdown or an aberration, the company consequently reacts to market forces thereby reducing output which ultimately impacts on the labor equation.

The firm's labor turnover rate in the years cited were reflection of the characteristic behavior of external forces that buffeted the firm economically. Local factors may not play significantly on the operational decisions of the firm considering its business orientation.

In short, the labor turnover rate of the firm is particularly unique on its own, as the peculiarities, such as its roster of clientele, its network of business partners which are mostly overseas, that are embedded in the firm's business culture may suggest a totally independent behavior from the other local enterprises in its league.

Through the recent years, more particularly during 2008 to 2010, the firm figured in fate defining economic episodes that tested its viability, as global economic “shocks” reached

Philippine shores. How it managed to avert setbacks and even upheavals or reveal its possible inadequacy in the face of the most trying circumstances in the labor front is precisely the reason upon which this study hopes to unravel.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study aimed to look into the labor turnover of a manufacturing firm in Tarlac City, Philippines. It sought to determine the factors contributory to labor turnover in the firm and find out reasons for such turnover. It further hopes to understand the strategies that managers put into place to minimize the effects of turnover.

More specifically, the study sought to answer the following:

1. How is the profile of the separated employees described in terms of:
 - 1.1 Age
 - 1.2 Sex
 - 1.3 Position
 - 1.4 Work Assignment
 - 1.5 Work Schedule
 - 1.6 Length of Service
 - 1.7 Civil Status
 - 1.8 Educational Attainment
2. How does the following factors contribute to the labor turnover:
 - 2.1 Organizational Variable
 - 2.2 Occupational Variable
 - 2.3 Individual Variable
3. What are the problems encountered related to labor turnover?
4. How are the actions taken by the management in response to the problems encountered?
5. What action plan can be proposed to address labor turnover?

III. METHODOLOGY

A. *Questionnaire*

The questionnaire method provided most of the data and information that the study primarily needed from the statement of the problem. Data retrieval from few separated employees who were outside the country was done through overseas calls as extremely necessary. Here and now questionnaires were fielded for those already here.

B. Interview

To provide objectivity to the study, pre-approved interview sessions with the Human Resource Manager was conducted, whose inputs became the official data and information coming from the management.

To target the 110 separated employees who are rare or difficult to locate and enlist as respondents, purposive sampling was the most logical option.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following are the results from the specific questions raised in the beginning of the research.

1. Profile

The primary concern of this study was to have a better understanding of the company's manpower composition.

- 1.1 **Age.** The age profile was remarkable as it reflected the individual maturity and career perspective of those who comprised the age group. Those inclusively from ages 21-35 were observed to contribute largely to labor turnover as the decision to leave may still matter and prove quite advantageous to them as a result.
- 1.2 **Sex.** Female respondents were bigger in number than their male counterparts. Reasons for the females' leavings were attributable to marriage, gynecological reasons, better employment locally or overseas or dissatisfaction with company superiors.
- 1.3 **Position.** The separation may naturally occur among the rank and file while those in the middle management may have some misgivings about their action considering what they may be losing as a result of resignation.
- 1.4 **Work Assignment.** The greatest number of workers resigned came from the assembly unit for the rank and file while for the middle management, coming from Finance under the Support Group.
- 1.5 **Work Schedule.** A big portion came from the work schedule that was characterized as production time and which were apart from the usual 8:00AM-5:00PM work hours for the office. The company did not provide enough room for the separated employees' choice of work schedule, which could have provided some measure of convenience from them to adjust their body clocks and ex-company activities.
- 1.6 **Length of Service.** From among the total number of separated employees the greatest number stayed in the 5-8 years' service bracket.
- 1.7 **Civil Status.** Separated employees who were singles during the time of their employment are now married in their post working days, which speaks about transition through the years in the lives of people.
- 1.8 **Educational Attainment.** There were slightly more high school diploma holders from among the separated employees than college degree holders. In their post working days however, there were few who went into vocational or technical education.

2. Factors Contributory to the Labor Turnover

The factors contributory to labor turnover presents the idea of the firm's "labor character" as seen from the viewpoint of the management and its separated employees. The perspectives contained both differences and similarities upon which findings lead to the formulation of a strong set of recommendation that may improve, strengthen and finally resolve persistent problems in the business organization.

2.1 Organizational Variable. The organizational variable focused on the characteristics of the firm based on its size and working environment. It looks as its quality management system, its environmental disposition and its occupational health and safety management schemes.

Source of data was primarily inputted by the Human Resource Manager of the company in response to the interview guide crafted solely for the management. Although with some limitations on the disclosure of some company information, the data substantially satisfied the necessary elements required in the study.

2.1.1 Firm Size. The company has the manpower complement, the financial strength and the pool of expertise required to operate its business.

2.1.2 Working Environment. The company has the structural amenities and physical plant for its size.

2.2 Occupational Variable. This provides an idea on how well management looks at the sufficiency of its labor complement as provided by the quality of kills, the longevity of stay and desirability of the workers to make the firm its final career destination. It probes on the benefits and welfare of its employees as a whole.

2.2.1 Skill Level. The company has the expertise of its workers and the leadership savvy of its managers to keep the business going even in the midst of adversities.

2.2.2 Experience. The company has the best professional pool of leaders who can steer the company to greater heights.

2.2.3 Tenure. The company adheres to the mandated labor law of the land and assures its workers the observance of due process while employed in the company.

2.3 Individual Variable. This includes pay scale, job security, rewards, advancement opportunities and work ethics as viewed by all separated employees.

2.3.1 Pay Scale. The company offers a compensation scheme that is comparably higher than the industry average and pays its workers commensurately according to their competence and qualifications.

2.3.2 Job Security. The company assures its employees of their basic rights and privileges during employment. The separated employees, although at the time were already secured in their tenure with the firm, had decided to leave because of attractive job offers, fears of plant closure in 2009, reasons of educational pursuit and change in social status.

2.3.3 **Reward.** The company has an established system of rewards. Separated employees agreed they had a better chance professionally inside the firm, during their stay.

2.3.4 **Advancement Opportunity.** The company has an established promotional system for all its workers.

2.3.5 **Work Ethics.** The company adheres to and implements a strong ethical standard to all its employees.

3. Problems encountered related to labor turnover

The separated employees were presented with an array of problem choices relative to their job performance and their relationship with the company. They were made to identify these problems according to how severe their experience was in encountering them.

Table 1 shows the top among the problems encountered by the respondents was “unreasonably strict supervisors”, coming in closest was “arrogant company superiors and officials”.

“Favoritism in the workplace” came in 3rd. At the 4th was “workload discrimination”.

“unheard and unsolved employees’ grievances or concerns” came in 5th. Breakdown in communication and feedback process was the 6th.

Interestingly, the 8th problem was “others” which surfaced “tax issues” as the primary concern of the separated employees against the company, which they claimed the management has not satisfactorily explained about. In their stay with the company, they have not been given worthy answers to their questions about the computation of their taxes paid.

Problems at the bottom but should still nevertheless merit attention were “sexual harassment in men or women”, “unfavorable or unsafe working conditions” and “unlawful termination”.

TABLE I. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

Problems	F	%	R
Unreasonable strict supervisor.	63	20.06	1
Arrogant company supervisors and officials.	56	17.83	2
Favoritism in the workplace.	53	16.88	3
Workload discrimination.	27	8.60	4
Unheard and unsolved employees’ grievance or concerns.	25	7.96	5
Breakdown in communication o feedback process	19	6.05	6
Unpaid or underpaid allowances, benefits, overtime	18	5.73	7

pays			
Others: Tax issues	17	5.41	8
Sexual harassment in men or women	13	4.14	9
Unfavorable or unsafe working environment	12	3.82	10
Unlawful termination	11	3.50	11
	314	100	

4. Actions taken by the company in response to the problems encountered.

The company was made to match its responses from a range of management initiatives to problems raised by the separated employees. It must be noted that benchmark statements on the 3 variables namely: organizational variable, individual variable, and occupational variable that elicited “agree” responses were taken into account, which means that the solution where a reflection of what the company has already institutionalized in the workplace. The herein problems according to how the respondents viewed them in decelerating order and which management appropriately responded to.

The actions taken by the firm with respect to labor turnover have been matched against the individual problems of separated employees, which they have ranked accordingly from the pressing to the least. Likewise, management action based on the list of choices ranged before it, were ranked from top priority to the least.

It must be understood that perspectives naturally differ, as the company looks at priorities having the greater interest of the manufacturing firm.

Foremost among the problems raised by the separated employees during their stint with the company was “unreasonably strict supervisors”, which was not matched by any management action. It could mean two things: (1) the problem persists and does not actually elicit any step by which management is able to resolve

the issue or (2) the firm has a management unit that handles cases of supervisors who are overzealous in their jobs up to a fault. Either case however, would in the surface appear to be an unsolved problem, although at the contention of the separated employees, the issue is number one. At the second slot was “arrogant company superiors and officials” which involve persons whom the separated employees believe distract them from productive work or a source of stress or irritation in the workplace. The management however did not consider it a problem as no action was taken to mitigate it.

Third on

The list was “favoritism in the workplace”, another “people problem” which management has not responded to quite favorably because no action was ever tendered, so far.

TABLE 2. ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE FIRM IN RESPONSE TO THE PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY THE SEPARATED EMPLOYEES

Problems	R	Actions taken by the Management	R	Met/Unmet
Unreasonable strict supervisor.	1			Unmet
Arrogant company supervisors and officials.	2			Unmet
Favoritism in the workplace.	3			Unmet
Workload discrimination.	4	Workforce revamp to put the workers where they are most needed during the time; Multi-tasking of certain capable workers to increase efficiency; and Additional work-loading to the existing company workforce.	5 3 4	
Unheard and unsolved employees' grievance or concerns.	5			Unmet
Breakdown in communication o feedback process	6			Unmet
Unpaid or underpaid allowances, benefits, overtime pays	7	Making attractive overtime or shift differential payouts; Making attractive mobility and compensation scheme including fringes.	6 7	Met
Others: Tax issues	8			Unmet
Sexual harassment in men or women	9			Unmet
Unfavorable or unsafe working environment	10	Enhancing workplace conditions	1	Met
Unlawful termination	11			Met
		Retooling or re-engineering of workers to suit local company requirements.		

Problems 5 and 6 which were about “unheard and unsolved employees’ grievances/concerns” and “breakdown in communication/feedback process, respectively, did not elicit management action the same way with the top three problems. The causes of these problems however were more under the mantle of “process and communication”. There could be unheard and unsolved cases in the workplace as no communication channels were in place or barriers to communication were stifling the upward and downward flow of ideas and opinion.

With the problem on “workload discrimination” though which came in fourth to separated employees, the firm addressed it with ““multi-tasking of certain capable workers to increase efficiency, a company solution ranked 3rd, “additional workloading to the existing company workforce, a company solution ranked 4th, and “workforce revamp to put workers where they are needed most during the time”, a company solution which ranked fifth among the company’s priorities. The company approach to the “workload problem” may be varied but the ranges of these solutions were in close proximities with each other as the actions taken were in the range of ranks 3-5, which means that anything that has got to do with “workload” may significantly imply a host of several “remedial measures” that does not necessarily hit the point but may, on a larger scale prove beneficial to the company as a whole.

On the number 7 problem “unpaid/underpaid allowances, benefits and overtime pays” by the separated employees, the management matched it with “making overtime/shift differential payouts attractive’, with a priority level at sixth and “making attractive mobility and compensation scheme including fringes”, with a priority level at 7th. The number 7 problem fell under the ambit of compensation scheme, salary and benefits administration, the reason for the match up.

“Others” which was 8th on the list of separated employees surfaced to be “tax issues” wanting to be explained or needing clarification but which management did not bother about educating the employees.

Sexual harassment in men and women was a problem taking the 9th slot. From interviews with current employees around, it was found out that this particular offense is classified “Class A” which comes with a lighter disciplinary action, ranging from a mere oral reprimand to dismissal than those classified up to “Class D” offenses, which gets an outright penalty of dismissal. No management action was rendered on this particular problem.

Listed as number 10 problem by the separated employees was “unfavorable working conditions”. Hitting the top mark among management’s solutions was “enhancing workplace conditions”. The firm must be very particular with its production plant standards and processes that it makes the workplace its top priority in the enhancement and upgrade efforts. The “distance” between the separated employees’ problems, being number 10 with the firm’s priority, the “enhancement” being number 1 provides the “perspectives” earlier mentioned about.

“Unlawful termination” which was complained of by a few separated employees did not merit any management action. Management “solutions” ranging from the “re-tooling/re-engineering of workers, multi-tasking of certain capable workers, additional work loading and making attractive compensation and mobility schemes were items that did not particularly hit any single problems of the separated employees but nevertheless ranked highly in the order of things by the company.

Six choices were outlined for the Human Resource Office to choose from for their external action in dealing with its labor needs brought about by labor turnover.

Topmost was “direct company hire”, seconded by “personal referrals. Third option was “in-house advertisements”. Fourth option was “print and broadcast media advertisements”. Fifth option was “online application” Sixth option was “outsourcing”.

5. Proposed action plan to address labor turnover

Rationale:

The manufacturing firm in Tarlac City, Philippines is a large business organization that is engaged globally in the manufacture of a line of automotive wiring harnesses and other related products. It employs thousands of workers to satisfy the increasing demand for its products, intended primarily for the international market. Pursuant to its business for goals, it has to rely heavily on its manpower resources to meet targets and deliver goods in their finest quality form. Human resource management therefore assumes a pivotal role in keeping the company highly competitive and assumes a position of leadership in its field. The problem however arises when workers leave on a scale that cannot be controlled by management because of some underlying factors that may be called contributory to labor turnover. The firm, in several respects through its integrated management system policy, has performed commendably well in its labor management. However, this study, as a third disinterested party hopes to contribute its humble share in suggesting actions on factors that may help control or improve labor turnover given the circumstances at hand.

Objective	Task/Sub-Task	Expected Output	Responsible Persons	Time Frame
Unreasonably strict superiors	The management should consider regular dissemination on the company's corporate culture and work ethics in the workplace. Educate the workforce of the company officers' job description including their areas of jurisdiction in the company.	Understanding of the company's corporate culture. Appropriate behavior of superiors and the workforce on the workplace. Better understanding of the individual worker's role in the company.	HRM Department Training Officer The company officers and rank and file	Annually
Arrogant company superiors and officials	The company should engage the services of a professional management consultancy firm to enhance knowledge of company superiors and officials on proper, graceful management of workers and appropriate decorum on company premises.	Improved management of the company workforce particularly the rank and file.		Annually

Objective	Task/Sub-Task	Expected Output	Responsible Persons	Time Frame
Favoritism in the workplace	The company should firmly uphold company values on fairness and equity to all workers as amplified in its company code of ethics.	Enlightenment on the workforce particularly responsible officers on the value of equity and fair play as factors for productivity and growth.	HRM Department Company officers and the rank and file	Semi-Annually
Unheard and unsolved employees' grievances/concerns	Create a Discipline Committee that will handle solely work-related, valid employee grievances and concerns.	Minimized incidence of rank and file gripes that will reinforce motivation and spur upbeat disposition in the workplace.	A representative from top management HRM Department Labor Union Rank and file	As frequently as necessary
Breakdown in communication/feedback process	Establish a communication channel; and feedback and feed-forward mechanism.	Free, unimpeded flow of ideas, opinion and suggestions that will enhance workforce relationships and esprit de corps.	HRM Department Mid Management Rank and file	Regular monthly meetings

Objective	Task/Sub-Task	Expected Output	Responsible Persons	Time Frame
Others: Tax Issues	The management should regularly exclude during orientation time, convene a forum devoted primarily on taxes and taxation issues.	Better appreciation of the workforce on their pay statements and tax obligations	BIR HRM Department Rank and file	Annually
Sexual harassment in men/women	The management should emphasize the severity of sexual harassment cases as a serious management concern.	Greater respect among gender classes and better tolerance on gender differences.	Gender and Awareness Specialist. HRM Department Rank and file.	
Establish or reinforce an existing Grievance and Discipline Desk that will handle issues relating to infraction to workplace conduct and behavior	Form a tripartite group composed of management, labor union and rank and file to handle cases of workplace misdemeanor and violations of company	Industrial peace and greater productivity	IWS Labor Union Human Resource Department Rank and File	Quarterly every year

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