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TURNOVER AT SAUDI AIRLINES COMPANY: EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTION

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ABSTRACT

One of the largest airlines, the Saudi Airlines Company, has a high turnover rate. This work discusses the concept of turnover of the Saudi Airlines Company from the perspective of employees. It focuses on employees' perception of turnover in order to explore their opinions on the reasons behind this turnover. This is done through eight interviews: four employees from three different departments of the Saudi Airlines Company. The other four employees had already left Saudi Airlines. In fact, this research includes an analysis by previous employees of the Saudi Airlines Company in order to gain a deeper understanding of these issues. The result of this research shows that, contrary to the reputation of the Saudi Airlines Company, the turnover rate is perceived by most of the interviewees as normal. Data analysis helped to identify the main issues that the Saudi Airlines Company should be looking after in order to prevent such high turnover in the future. Issues include an uncomfortable working environment, lack of supervision, low competition and lack of promotion. The Saudi Airlines Company has opportunities for improvement in all these issues and enhances the retention of employees.

INTRODUCTION

Turnover is an action demonstrated by employees who leave the company due to a personal factor or a factor related to the company itself [1]. Usually, the company will replace them with new employees or candidates. The turnover of employees could be linked to injustice, because sometimes managers make

mistakes by firing the wrong employees or they are disappointed by the company's turnover. This will reduce the company's salary and payments without any benefit [2].

There are two types of turnover according to Carnahan et al. [3]. The first type is voluntary turnover and the second type is involuntary turnover [3]. Voluntary turnover occurs when the employee wants to leave the company; for example, to retire or to find a better job [4]. Involuntary turnover shall be decided by the company. They see how weak the performance of the worker during his work is, how late he submits for his work, and how late he attends. The employee may also leave for personal reasons [5].

Rubenstein et al. [6] stated that in order to control the voluntary turnover of a company, the management must concentrate and understand why employees decide to leave or stay in the company in general and the reasons behind that turnover. The important feature of voluntary turnover is that it consists of a voluntary, functional and dysfunctional turnover. According to Sikaroudi et al. [7] functional turnover is not detrimental to the company. Employees who are selectors for turnover from their work, however, may be employees with low skills and low performance. Bosomtwe et al. [8] found that dysfunctional turnover is detrimental to the company, employees who are difficult to replace with high skills and performance. Turnover matters to the organization for three key reasons, which are expensive, have an impact on the performance of the company and have huge cost on them [8].

There are positive and negative consequences for the turnover of employees. Negative consequences include recruitment, selection, training and manufacturing. This will have a costly impact on the company with a turnover of employees [9]. Lee [10] stated that positive consequences of turnover are managers will recognize the performance of their employees, look at their performance, skills and abilities if they are high or low, so that they can replace them with a better one. Sometimes the managers do not recognize underperforming employees until they leave [10]. There are several reasons related to employee's turnover.

Tongchaiprasit and Ariyabuddhiphongs [11] found that employees may be confronted with family issues that lead to low performance and a lack of balance between work and life. Employee satisfaction is also so important, because if they don't feel satisfied, they won't work in the right way, and that might make them leave the company. The work of Caesens et al. [12] found that lack of recognition is the main reason for the turnover of employees. Employees want to hear encouragement, motivation and recognition, if there is a lack of these things, it will cause employees to make a turnover. Furthermore, Leider et al. [13] stated that, financial incentives remain a retention tool within the organization, although this may not work with environmental factors such as: poor communication, lack of rewards, and difficulties in staff relations, which will affect the intention of employees to remain in the organization. Likewise, the work of Grissom et al. [14] found that employees may leave their job because there is no development in professional and personal aspects, so they join the organization that provides attractive payment and career growth.

The Saudi Airlines Company is considered to be one of the largest airlines to have started in 1945 [15]. In a strong company like the Saudi airlines, there is always a need to improve human resources by recruiting and retaining talented candidates. However, recently, the Saudi airline has been recruiting candidates, but they leave after a few months. This has caused a huge struggle for Saudi airlines to perform the recruitment process all over again. Moreover, the resignation of employees led to a delay in the work that rendered Saudi airlines ineffective. In addition, this turnover also affects the career of employees. Therefore, this study was carried out to analyze the issue of the increase of turnover in the Saudi Airlines company.

METHODOLOGY

This work was done based on qualitative research method. The sample population of this work was employees from Saudi airlines and previous employees who left the Saudi Airlines Company. The number of samples for this work was 8. The details of the sample population are stated as follow. The first employee is from the Management Information Systems Department, the second is from the Management Department, the third is from the Computer Engineering Department and the fourth is the First Officer (Pilot).

The fifth employee is an Instructor, the sixth employee is a Flight Training Manager, the seventh employee is a Specialist, and the eighth employee is the Skills Development Training Manager. The data collection was done based on interview method. The interview was conducted with eight employees: four employees from three different departments of the Saudi Airlines Company, and the other four employees from different companies who were former employees of the Saudi Airlines Company. The main topics that the authors used in the interview were personal factors, lack of recognition and reward, lack of professional and personal advancement, attitude of the employee, performance appraisal and feedback, and ineffectiveness of communication.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Interview Analysis

The respondents were asked several questions related to the turnover at Saudi airlines. The feedback to those questions is discussed and presented.

The respondents were asked "What do you think about turnover in the Saudi Airlines, and how do you describe turnover? (high? low? dangerous? ordinary?). Interviewee 1,2,3 agree that there is a turnover in Saudi Airlines Company but it's ordinary because it depend on the individual and the competitors that are working to attract employees. Interviewee 4,5,6,7 agree that there is a turnover in Saudi Airlines Company and its high. This is due the existence of three other Airlines than Saudi Airlines. Interviewee 8 agrees that there is a turnover in Saudi Airlines Company but it's low.

The respondents were asked "Do you think that turnover is affecting one specific category of employees/departments more than another?". Interviewee

1,2,3 have different opinions but they all agree that turnover is affecting on employees that are working in different departments. Interviewee 4,5,6,7,8 agree that turnover is affecting all the categories.

The respondents were asked, "Did you leave the company? (In both of the answers) Why?". Interviewee 1,2,3,4 stated that they were still working on the Saudi Airlines Company, both of which were satisfied, and the other two were satisfied, the first said that they did not find better positions on other companies, the other said that they were still hoping for a better situation for the Company. Interviewee 5,6,7,8 stated that the four of them quit the company for different reasons.

The respondents were asked "Do you think that the company is facing problems to retain employees? Can you explain why?". Interviewee 1,2,3 have different opinions, one of which agrees that Saudi Airlines is facing a financial problem and benefits change for employees, the other believes that Saudi Airlines is dominant and that employees should remain in the company. Interviewee 4 stated that he had a different view which was related to retention. Interviewee 5,6,7,8: The two agreed that the company was faced with a problem due to competitions, the other two stated a different reason for lack of experienced employees and no incentives.

The respondents were asked "Do you have any idea about the reasons behind turnover in the company?". Interviewee 1,2,3: They have different opinions the first interviewee stated that the reasons behind the turnover In Saudi Airlines are: to increase the tasks without bonuses, to delay the upgrade and to reduce the advantages granted at the beginning of the contract. The second interviewee said that the main reason for his view is that new competitors are trying to attract expertise. The last interviewee said there are few reasons for the turnover of Saudi Airlines, such as: insurance for medical care, deduction of housing allowances and lack of training. Interviewee 4: he has a different opinion from the three interviewees who said that he thinks the large privatization of many sectors in the main company is behind the turnover. Interviewee 5,6,7,8: the three of them agree that the lack of management is the reason behind the turnover of Saudi Airlines. The other one said it was due to maintaining a good job and a high quality of work.

The respondents were asked "What are the alternative solutions that helps decrease turning over at the Saudi Airlines company from your point of view?". Interviewee 1,2,3: The three agree that solutions to reduce the turnover of Saudi Airlines are to focus on their employees what they want, what they can retain, and motivate employees to make a significant contribution and trust them. Interviewee 4: The other has a different opinion from the three, he said that he valued the highly active and efficient staff. Interviewee 5,6,7,8: The three of them agree that the solution for declining turnover is to meet the needs of employees. the other said study the current job offers, open office strategy and appreciation.

The respondents were asked "Work pressure leads to employees' turnover. Do you agree? And why?". Interviewee 1,2,3: Two of them agree that work

pressure leads to the turnover of Saudi Airlines and the other does not agree. Interviewee 4: agrees that work pressure can be a turnover factor like the other two employees. Interviewee 5,6,7,8: Four of them agree that work pressure leads to turnover of the Saudi Airlines Company.

The respondents were asked "Do you think that salary is a major factor that leads employee to turnover? And Why?". Interviewee 1,2,3: Two of them see that salary is not the main reason for the turnover of employees, while the other said that it might be a reason for the turnover of employees. Interviewee 4: agrees with the third employee that pay may be a major factor in the turnover of employees. Interviewee 5,6,7,8: The three agree that salaries can be a factor in the turnover of employees of the Saudi Airlines Company. The other one is not in agreement because the morality is directly linked to the style of management.

The respondents were asked "Do you think that supervisors and relationship with supervisors affects turnover or employees' retention?". Interviewee 1,2,3: The three agree that there is a disengagement between supervisors and their employees and that this will have an impact on the performance of employees. Interviewee 4: agrees with the three employees that there is disengagement between supervisors and their employees and that will have an impact on the performance of employees. And he thinks that the better the relationship between the supervisor and the staff, the lower the stress level. Interviewee 5,6,7,8: The three of them that affect the relationship between supervisors and employees. The other one said it had an effect on retention.

The respondents were asked "Do you think that lack of supervision between managers and lower level employees can lead to turnover?". Interviewee 1,2,3: Both agree that there is a lack of supervision that leads to turnover, disrupts the relationship between the employee and the supervisor, and leads to a depression among employees. The other was of the opinion that lack of supervision leads to a reduction in productivity, but does not lead to the turnover of employees. Interviewee 4: agrees with the two employees that there is a lack of supervision which leads to turnover and neglect by employees which may reduce their enthusiasm. Interviewee 5,6,7,8: The four of them agree that the lack of supervision between the manager and the employees leads to the turnover of the employees.

The respondents were asked "Lack of promotions and rewards are factors to employees' turnover. Do you agree? And why?". Interviewee 1,2,3: Both agree that lack of promotions and rewards will lead to a turnover of employees because, if there is no lack of promotions and rewards, employees will be motivated to work harder. The other does not agree because he saw that promotions and rewards are similar to lack of supervision and do not lead to a turnover of employees. Interviewee 4: agrees with the two that lack or promotions and rewards will lead to the turnover of employees. Because the employee is going to lose morale and productivity is not going to be the same as before. Interviewee 5,6,7,8: Four of them agree that lack of promotions and rewards may affect the turnover of employees of the Saudi Airlines Company. The respondents were asked "Do you get regular trainings programs at the Saudi airlines company? If no, do you think this is a factor of turnover?".

Interviewee 1,2,3: Both agree that regular training programs will lead to turnover if the employee does not benefit from the training program. The other said that there are no regular training programs that do not result in turnover. Interviewee 4: agrees with the two interviewees that regular training programs will lead to turnover if the employee does not benefit from the training program. Because he said they only get a training program once a year. Interviewee 5,6,7,8: The three of them received a training program at the Saudi Airlines Company. The other one said there have been no training programs for the last three years.

The respondents were asked “Do you think that there is a high competition amongst employees at the Saudi airlines company? Do you think that employees are comfortable with high competition? Do you think that high competition amongst the employees can be a factor of turning over? And how?”. Interviewee 1,2,3: The three of them do not see that competition is a factor in turnover, but they all agree that they are highly competitive with Saudi Airlines. Interviewee 4: He disagrees with the three interviewees because he said that today the level of competition is high, but not everyone is happy with high competition because it could lead to a turnover due to high stress. Interviewee 5,6,7,8: The three agree that there is high competition for the Saudi Airlines Company. The other one said no competitions, all are just a good connection to do the job.

The respondents were asked “Do you think that employees are turning over from the Saudi Airlines company because of better offers from other companies?” Interviewee 1,2,3: The three agree that better job opportunities in other companies will lead to turnover. Because employees are seeking higher pay and benefits, this must be a big difference than Saudi Airlines. Interviewee 4: agrees with the three interviewees. Interviewee 5,6,7,8: The three agree that employees are turning away from the company due to better job opportunities. The other one said not really.

The respondents were asked “Can you describe how you've been recruited in the company (the recruitment process)?” Interviewee 1,2,3: The three of them have been through the same recruitment process. Interviewee 4: He has gone through a different process, not like the other three interviewees. Interviewee 5,6,7,8: The four of them underwent a different process by applying for the Saudi Airlines Company.

The respondents were asked “What was the main responsibilities/position that was affected to you? Were you satisfied with that position/responsibilities? Why?” Interviewee 1,2,3: Both explain their main responsibilities and both are satisfied, while the other does not explain anything about them. Interviewee 4: explains his main responsibilities, but did not say whether or not he satisfied them. Interviewee 5,6,7,8: The four of them are satisfied with their positions and have different responsibilities.

The respondents were asked “Did you face any difficulties to work? Did you overcome them? If yes, how/ If no, why?” Interviewee 1,2,3: The two of them have no problems with their work, the other has problems with their work

environment. Interviewee 4: As a pilot, he faces difficulties with his work environment. Interviewee 5,6,7,8: The three of them did not face any difficulties at work. The other one was faced with a lot of difficulties.

The respondents were asked "Are you overall satisfied with your responsibilities, experience, and learnings in the company?" Interviewee 1,2,3: The two of them are fully satisfied, while the other has a problem only in his work, not in my specialized education. Interviewee 4: He's not satisfied like the first interviewee, because many of us have great potential to perform other tasks, but we haven't been given a chance yet. Interviewee 5,6,7,8: The four of them are completely satisfied with everything.

The respondents were asked "Some of candidates are looking forward to work in Saudi Airlines Company, but they heard that a lot of employees are leaving the company. Does this affect the reputation of the company? Does this affect the recruitment process at Saudi Airlines company? And how? Interviewee 1,2,3: Two of them see that the turnover does not affect the recruitment process, while the other agrees that the turnover affects the recruitment process. Interviewee 4: agrees with the second interviewee that the turnover is affecting the recruitment process. Interviewee 5,6,7,8: Two agree that this will affect the reputation of the company. The other two are not in agreement.

The respondents were asked "Are there some practices that can help retain employees? Interviewee 1,2,3: The three of them have the same point about retaining employees who, by motivating them, promotions and bonuses, will increase the loyalty and satisfaction of employees. Interviewee 4: It has a different opinion that is changing the non-qualified anti-improvement people in higher positions. Interviewee 5,6,7,8: The three of them have written different practices that can help retain employees. The other one said that there was no authority with Saudi Airlines.

Overall Discussion

The finding of this work has shown that the interviewees agree have that the turnover of the Saudi Airlines Company is ordinary. In terms of reputation, turnover rate in the Saudi Airlines company is considered high among the employees of other airlines. Furthermore, the finding of this work has shown that pushing in turnover was due to lack of supervision and poor management. Likewise, lack of work promotion has also contributed to turnover among the employees of Saudi Airlines. In addition, the finding of this work has shown that work pressure is reason that cause turnover among employees of Saudi Airlines. Moreover, salaries are also a factor that influences turnover among employees. Besides that, other job offers from other airlines have contributed to turnover among the employees of Saudi Airlines. This is because the job offers received were more lucrative. Furthermore, the findings of this work have shown that in order to enhance retention of employees, work environment and work motivation has to be improved. Additionally, providing adequate training programs to employees might reduce the turnover rate. Finally, the outcome of this work has shown that appreciation of work, appealing organization atmosphere, positive relationship with colleagues and good communication may reduce the turnover rate among employees. The

findings of this work are in accordance to the work of Guan et al. [16] where it was reported that there is turnover intention among employees due to lack of recognition, poor management practices and better job offers by competitors. Furthermore, the work of Lu et al. [17] have found that turnover among employees can be dealt by ensuring proper organization practices such as providing adequate support to employees in term of work recognition, salary and work environment. This will improve the work satisfaction among the employees and it will reduce the turnover rate.

CONCLUSION

This study has discussed the issue of the increased of turnover in the Saudi Airlines company and its causes from an employee's perspective. The key findings of the work have shown that the rate of turnover in the Saudi Airlines Company is indeed ordinary. Furthermore, the result has shown that lack of management, promotion, salaries and other job offers will definitely cause to employees' turnover. There is therefore a need for the development of management skills, which will help retain employees and prevent them from leaving the company. As a result, Saudi Airlines is aware of the turnover rate in the company and the employees are willing to help the company maintain its employees.

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