



## **FACTORS AFFECTING EMPLOYEE RETENTION IN PRINTING INDUSTRY: A QUALITATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY**

Wan Emril Nizar Bin Wan Embong  
Faculty of Education and Social Sciences  
Widad University College

### **ABSTRACT**

Focusing on employee retention is vital to increase organizational performance and strengthen a nation's economy. Employee turnover leads to high unemployment and slow economic growth around the globe. The purpose of this study was to explore the reasons and motivating factors that cause employees to remain in the printing industry. The data for this study were collected using semi-structured interviews, conducted with printing employees in Kuantan, Pahang. The study employed a qualitative phenomenological method to acquire the lived experiences of participants. The findings were in accord with the employee retention approach. The findings revealed that creating a good working environment including feeling comfortable with manager, management support, good team work, good relationship between management and employees, effective training would lead to employee retention in the printing sector.

**Keywords:** Employee turnover, employee retention, phenomenological method, semi - structured interviews, conceptual framework.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Employee retention contributes to economic stabilization in many ways like more job security, more personal income, and more expenditure on goods and services. Employee retention is essential to an organization's economic progression because a company can spend more time producing and less time training new employees. Concerning retention, an organization ought to be very selective on its hiring process by employing employees with noticeable commitment from the beginning. A company needs to make employee retention a priority particularly after it invests money on training. Retention enhances job satisfaction and



customer service. If employees have longevity in an organization, the economy will begin to grow and stabilize over time.

Critical analysis of workforce trends points to an impending shortage of highly-skilled employees who possess the requisite knowledge and ability to perform at high levels, meaning that organizations failing to retain high performers will be left with an understaffed, less qualified workforce that ultimately hinders their ability to remain competitive (Rappaport, Bancroft, & Okum, 2003) with managers facing a difficult challenge of motivating and retaining the employees in an environment of increased uncertainties (Mitchell, 2002). Retention rates generally falls as employees become distracted, confused and preoccupied with potential outcomes immediately following an organizational transition (Bridges, 1991).

Despite the vast literature on employee turnover, which is aimed at identifying factors that cause employees to quit (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000), much less is known about the factors that compel employees to stay. For example, Maertz & Campion (1998) noted *“relatively less turnover research has focused specifically on how an employee decides to remain with an organization and what determines this attachment...retention processes should be studied along with quitting processes”*. Steel, Griffeth, & Hom (2002) added *“the fact is often overlooked, but the reasons people stay are not always the same as the reasons people leave”*. This study examines the reasons behind why employees stay at the printing company in Kuantan, Pahang.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Retention is a complex concept and there is no single recipe for keeping employees with a company. In literature, retention has been viewed as *“an obligation to continue to do business or exchange with a particular company on an ongoing basis”* (Zineldin, 2000). A more detailed and recent definition for the concept of retention is *“customer liking, identification, commitment, trust, readiness to recommend, and repurchase intentions, with the first four being emotional-cognitive retention constructs, and the last two being behavioral intentions”* (Stauss et al., 2001). Studies have also indicated that retention is driven by several key factors, which ought to be managed congruently: organizational culture, communication, strategy, pay and benefits, flexible work schedule and career development systems (Logan, 2000).



Increasing numbers of organization mergers and acquisitions have left employees feeling displeased from the companies that they work and haunted by concerns of overall job security. As a result, employees are now making strategic career moves to guarantee employment that satisfy their need for security. On the other hand, employers have a need to keep their staff from leaving or going to work for other companies. In fact, companies that offer employee development programs are finding success with retaining workers (Logan, 2000). The literature on employee retention clearly explains that satisfied employees who are happy with their jobs are more devoted for doing a good job and look forward to improve their organizational customers' satisfaction (Denton 2000). Employees who are *satisfied* have higher intentions of persisting with their organization, which results in a decreased turnover rate (Mobley et al., 1979). The link between employee retention and economic stabilization is that to sustain a good economy, a nation needs to have a firm workforce. Managerial inspiration along with employment fulfillment leads to workers wanting to stay

### **3. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This study followed the theoretical framework of Dimitrov (2012) as the foundation. According to the study, sources of meaningfulness in the workplace are: work itself and pride in the product; the social environment; the self and spirituality at work; and becoming a humane organization. In present study, researcher proposes skill recognition (Redington, 2007) and training (Eisen, 2005) to encourage employees to stay besides the other factors of employee retention by Dimitrov (2012). So, the conceptual framework indicates that the reasons and motivating factors that lead to employee retention are work itself and pride in the product; the social environment; the self and spirituality at work; becoming a humane organization; skill recognition and training.

### **4. METHODOLOGY**

The qualitative research method along with the phenomenological approach was the design for this study. This qualitative phenomenological research study explored factors that contribute to employees staying in the printing industry. The aim was to find the ways in which some establishments motivate employees to stay and make recommendations to the



printing industry as a whole. The objective of this qualitative phenomenological method was to obtain data from participants (i.e., printing employees) and describe their lived experiences. The qualitative phenomenological study explored contributing factors through in-depth interviews on why employees stay in the printing industry. The aim was to find ways in which some establishments motivate employees to stay and make recommendations to the hospitality industry as a whole. The objective was to obtain data from participants (printing employees) and describe their lived experiences. The formulation of research questions leads to the selection of an appropriate method such as qualitative (Casey, 2006). The research methodology served as an outline and a firm foundation. Employing a phenomenological methodology lets a scholar clarify assumptions by going beyond his or her own expertise (Creswell, 2009). The selection of an adequate methodology affords the researcher with predetermined interview questions (Seibold, White, and Reisenhofer, 2007).

### Sample

The sample included 12 printing employees in Kuantan, Pahang. The participants had over five years of experience; all participants were over 25 years old. Out of the 12 employees, five were males and seven females. Four were binders, one was a clerk, two were graphic designers, another four were machine operators, and one was a manager. Table 1 below encompasses comprehensive demographic information about employee participants.

Participant Code	Age	Years in Industry	Area	Gender
PE1	32	7	Binder	Female
PE2	43	15	Operator	Male
PE3	38	17	Operator	Male
PE4	33	10	Clerk	Female
PE5	34	13	Operator	Female
PE6	39	20	Graphic	Male
PE7	31	16	Operator	Male
PE8	28	8	Binder	Female
PE9	29	6	Binder	Female
PE10	34	11	Binder	Female



Participant Code	Age	Years in Industry	Area	Gender
PE11	30	7	Operator	Female
PE12	45	21	Manager	Male

**Table 1. Demographics of Employee Participants**

A purposeful random sampling technique was employed to collect and analyze data from participants. Creswell (2009) explained that an examiner purposely chooses persons as well as a location to explore or study the main phenomenon. The findings should enlighten industry leaders and managers on the problems associated with employee retention within the printing sector. The findings should be used as guidelines to help leaders of other printing organizations thrive on employee retention. This paper employed in-depth interviews as instrumentation for data collection.

### **Procedure**

Participants who matched the criteria (over 25 years old and over five years in the printing industry) were originally contacted in person for participation. The members who voluntarily decided to participate were given convenient interviewing dates and meeting times. Participants were interviewed in a comfortable room at their workplace; the researcher went to meet with them.

Participants were assured that their identities would be kept confidential; they received an explanation and the procedural protocol. The affirmation created comfort, participants responded honestly. The creation of an amicable relationship with contributors led to openness and more cooperation from both sides (Clarke, 2006). Each interview lasted about 30 minutes and each person was asked the same questions. During the collection procedure, notes were taken and tape recorder was used to capture the interview conversations.

The analyzed data were brought back to the site and presented to participants to ensure they meant what they said during interviews. The researcher prepared some interview questions by himself. The interview questions were designed to connect with the phenomenon under research. The researcher used an open-ended question format to interview employees

on site at their workplaces in Kuantan, Pahang. Conduction and transcription of interviews befall in a 3-week period.

### **Analysis**

The data were analyzed using a line-by-line technique in addition to techniques used by others (e.g. Moustakas, 1994); the codification process was employed to organize themes. Bergin (2011) mentioned that the analysis of interview data requires the selection of a coding system. The use of codes helped in establishing and cataloguing transcripts. The coding system helped with finding similar words as well as paths related to formed themes. Each participant was assigned code for privacy and reliability purposes. PE1 stood for Printing Employee 1, 2, 3, and so forth. The themes were formed by rereading answers to every question recurrently.

## **5. FINDINGS**

Based on the answers from printing employee participants, the following themes emerged:

### **Theme 1: Working Environment**

Question one was: How would you describe the working environment in this organization? The researcher pursued to stimulate employees to provide detailed information on the working environment and its importance to them. The answers showed teamwork creates a positive ambiance and motivates employees to stay.

Some of the relevant quotes are as follows:

The working environment in this organization is good and has a wide range of diversity between ethnicity, age, and education. This diversity challenges the ability of each individual to adapt within a group to work together effectively. This organization has a togetherness environment; there is teamwork in every aspect of business operation. **(PE1)**

Pleasant, friendly, and stimulating sometimes. Due to the diversity in culture and language of guests, the stimulation becomes greater. The working environment requires a lot of consistency in your daily tasks. The pleasant along with the friendly atmosphere is the product of working together as a team. **(PE2)**

I would describe it as good. The environment is comfortable. The staff is friendly and management is considerate. Teamwork makes it a good working environment; it makes you feel you want to go to work when the staff is friendly and management approachable. I actually enjoy working here because of the way a typical day goes. There are not that many places when other employees can say the working environment is great. Here we treat each other as a family and help each department.

I would ultimately describe it as a happy ambiance; not perfect, but much better than most places where employees don't get along. (PE3)

The environment is very inviting and based upon teamwork. Fellow employees and the management team are very helpful and understanding. I will illustrate the operational atmosphere as a fast pace, forthcoming, high-quality people around, family-oriented with me taking part of it. My experience has been rewarding thus far because I love working with different people and serving different customers. Having been born and raised in Kuantan, I am somehow used to working with people of diverse background. (PE4)

I think it's a great one. No working environment is perfect, but this team tries very hard to work successfully together. It just takes a bit of communication, maturity, and understanding to be able to move forward. I guess everyone tries to make an effort to do the best in this organization; I know I am happy with the workload though. (PE5)

I would describe it as fast pace, we work together here and everyone works as a team. It is a fun working environment because everyone gets along very well. (PE6).

Employee-wise, the working environment is great because we get along very well and support each other. Management-wise . . . the working environment is good starting with the upper level management and down to middle managers, and supervisors who show concerns every now and then. I see my co-workers as my family and look for to coming to work here every day. (PE7)

The working area is clean and comfortable most of the time. Co-workers are mostly friendly and helpful. Managers are generally fair and supportive (PE8)

I would describe it as friendly, pretty straight forward, you know what to expect and what is expected of you. The working environment is well managed; when I came to work here, I was amazed on how the company operates. Management runs the company smoothly. There is teamwork, respect, and everybody is nice to me. (PE9)

There is teamwork; we help each other and work together. Sometimes there is miscommunication, but I guess it happens because we are always on a busy schedule. It is hard to describe, I sense a friendly atmosphere. Helping one another is the key point—it basically . . . it is about having customer service and everyone appears to cooperate. (PE10)

PE11 described it as straight, teamwork, good relationship with co-workers and customers.

PE12 stated, It is very good; the work environment is very educational if you allow it to be, not only that but it helps with knowing how to deal with customers, co-workers, and other people around you."

Table 2 below shows a breakdown of the answers related to this theme. Nearly all participating employees provided positive responses about the workplace environment.

### Theme 1: Working Environment

Responses	n	%
It is a teamwork environment	5	42
It is friendly	4	33
It is good	4	33
The working environment is great	3	25
It is great	3	25
I love working here	3	25
It is straight	2	17
I would describe it as fast-pace	2	17

### Theme 2: Reasons for Remaining in this Industry

The question was: What are some of the reasons you have chosen to remain in this industry? The purpose of the question was to elicit detailed information and approaches taken by management to motivate employees to remain in the organization and industry. Furthermore, the question was designed to gather specific reasons and contributing factors for staying in the industry from each participant. Table 3 below displays a list of reasons employees have remained in the industry.

### Theme 2: Reasons for Remaining in this Industry

Responses	n	%
Feel comfortable with manager.	9	75
The training is effective and awesome	5	42
Management support is good	6	50
There is a team spirit	6	50
Management has good relationship with employees	5	42
Mutual respect	3	25





Responses	n	%
Management always rewards and acknowledges them	3	25
Good downward and upward communication	2	17
There is opportunity to grow	1	8

## 6. DISCUSSION

The researcher pursued to stimulate employees to provide detailed information on the working environment and its importance to them. The answers from the 12 printing employees showed teamwork created a positive ambiance and motivated employees to stay. The answers also showed participants enjoyed working as a team. Hasle, Bojesen, Per, and Bramming (2012) suggested employee participation is fundamental and leads to a positive working environment. Nearly all participating employees provided positive responses about the workplace environment. The findings revealed having a good working atmosphere to be a determining, contributing factor to employee retention and greater cooperation among team members. Rasila (2012) stated, "The way the workers talk about their working environment is important as it may give some hints about their attitudes towards the working environments" (p. 95). Management should create and implement a positive atmosphere to achieve retention goals. The findings demonstrated that management can attract and retain talented workers as long as the organization has a good working environment. to achieve retention goals. The findings demonstrated that management can attract and retain talented workers as long as the organization has a good working environment.

Although there is a high rate of employee turnover, employees tend to remain for a number of reasons. The primary reasons for remaining in the industry include feeling comfortable with manager (75%), management support is good (50%), team spirit is good (50%), management has good relationship with employees (42%) and the training is effective (42%). Hence, those are the major factors that contribute to employee retention. Therefore, researcher recommends building a good relationship with manager is very important in this industry. Printing establishments would greatly benefit from the findings especially those



relating to training, working environment, policies implemented by management. The findings followed the conceptual framework of the study. The major contributor to employee retention is feeling comfortable with manager and the minor one is opportunity to grow.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The printing industry provides many jobs around the globe. This qualitative phenomenological study provides strategic approaches for employee retention to industry leaders and managers. The study provides industry leaders the necessary recommendations to get employees to stay in their organizations.

The study is auspicious for leaders to have a steady workforce. Recognizing the reasons and motivating factors that contribute to employee retention is very important for managers in the printing industry. Employee retention contributes to economic stabilization in many ways; it means more job security, more personal income, and more expenditure on goods and services. Employee retention is essential to an organization, economic progression because a company spends more time producing and less time training new employees. Retention enhances job satisfaction and employees can work as a team especially when a certain printing job needs to be done at once.



## REFERENCES

- Bergin, M. (2011). NVivo 8 and consistency in data analysis: Reflecting on the use of a qualitative data analysis program. *Nurse Researcher*, 18(3): 6-12.
- Bridges, William. (1991). *Managing transitions - Making the most of change*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books.
- Casey, D. (2006). Choosing an appropriate method of data collection. *Nurse Researcher*, 13(3): 75-92.
- Clarke, A. (2006). Qualitative interviewing: Encountering ethical issues and challenges. *Nurse Researcher*, 13(4): 19-29.
- Clarke, K.F. (2001). 'What businesses are doing to attract and retain employee—becoming an employer of choice.' In *Employee Benefits Journal*, March, pp. 34-37.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denton, J. (2000), "Using Web-based projects in a systems design and development course", *Journal of Computer Information Systems*, Vol. 40 No.3, pp.85-7.
- Dimitrov, D. (2012). Sources of meaningfulness in the workplace: A study in the US hospitality sector. *European Journal of Training and Development*, 36(2): 351-371.
- Eisen, P., Jasinowski, J., Kleineli, R. (2005). 2005 skills gap report - A survey of the American manufacturing workforce.
- Griffeth, R.W., & Hom, P.W. (2001). *Retaining valued employees*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Logan, J. K. (2000). Retention tangibles and intangibles: More meaning in work is essential, but good chair massages won't hurt. *Training & Development*, 54 (4), 48-50.
- Maertz, C.P., Jr., & Campion, M.A. (1998). 25 years of voluntary turnover research: A review and critique. *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 13, 49- 81.
- Mitchell, Lawrence E. (2002). *Corporate irresponsibility—America's newest export*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rappaport, A., Bancroft, E., & Okum, L. (2003). The aging workforce raises new talent management issues for employers. *Journal of Organizational Excellence*, 23, 55-66.



- Seibold, C., White, S. & Reisenhofer, S. (2007). The supervisor-student relationship in developing methodology. *Nurse Researcher*, 14(4): 39-52.
- Stauss, B., Chojnacki, K., Decker, A., Hoffman, F. (2001), "Retention effects of a customer club", *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, Vol. 12 No.1, pp.7-19.
- Steel, R.P., Griffeth, R.W., & Hom, P.W. (2002). Practical retention policy for the practical manager. *Academy of Management Executive*, 16, 149-162.