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Assessing Staff Turnover: A View from Hotel Workers in Reykjavík

Causes and Impacts

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Abstract

Staff turnover is an endemic issue in the hospitality industry, worldwide. Voluntary staff turnover has been the focus of many studies in the past decades and many researchers have constantly intended to connect a number of variables to it. This study deals with a human perspective of staff turnover and the aim was to add to the understanding of staff turnover within the hospitality industry. This was achieved by conducting in-depth interviews with hotel workers in three and four-star hotels in Reykjavík, Iceland. The causes and impacts of the turnover was examined with qualitative method. Investigation of the factors influencing employees' intention to leave their current organization and the impact staff turnover causes to the remaining staff was carried out. The results revealed that professional advancement is a critical predictor for the employees to leave, along with factors such as work content, personal reasons, organizational factors and the nature of the tourism industry. Furthermore, the impact staff turnover causes on the staff are factors such as social connections, increased responsibilities and time and energy consumption.

Keywords: Departure, hospitality industry, human resource management, retention, Iceland

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1. Introduction

The hospitality industry is a wide group of businesses that provide service to customers, it has three main areas: Accommodation, food and beverage and travel and tourism. The hospitality industry is very demanding towards its staff and is known for long working hours and long days, it has low job security, there is a great need for coordination with people and it includes shift work with varying hours (Blomme, Van Rheede and Tromp, 2010). Hang-yue and Foley, 2006 argued that staff turnover is one of the big matters for any organization due to lost abilities, institutional memory (collective knowledge and experiences of a group), and the immediate effect on the financial aspects connected to the loss of asset in human capital, new recruitment and training, and the bad results it has on productivity (as cited in Guchait and Cho, 2010, p. 1228). Appelbaum et. al (2000) discussed that even though staff turnover is one of the crucial concerns of the service industry, very little research has been done on human perspective on turnover. So far, most studies have been done within the manufacturing and production industry (as cited in Guchait and Cho, 2010, p. 1229). Therefore, it is of importance to fill this gap with new research and since the tourism industry has increased rapidly in Iceland in recent years, the researchers of this paper found it important to investigate how the service industry there is dealing with staff turnover.

The study area chosen for this research is Iceland, a country located in the North-Atlantic sea, lying on the continually active geological border between North America and Europe ("Iceland | Culture, History, & People", 2018). With its approximately 123 00 inhabitants, Reykjavik is Iceland's capital and largest city ("Basfakta om Island", 2018). Due to the Gulf-stream Iceland experiences a cool, maritime climate, with fresh summers and exceptionally mild winters ("The Big Picture", 2018), and is famous for its volcanoes, geysers and glaciers. Iceland is not a member of the European Union but takes part in the European Economic Area (EEA). With its 337 000 inhabitants (Iceland Population (2018) - Worldometers, 2018) Iceland now has seven times more tourists than locals. In 2017, a number of 2.195,271 departures of foreign passengers went through Keflavik International Airport, an increase from 2016 with 24.2 %. The total numbers of overnight stays were around 7.8 million in 2016, an increase by 21.2 % since 2010, meaning that the number of employees within the tourism industry has increased by more than 60 % since 2012. The month of August in 2016 had a total number of 28 900 people employed, the majority working in accommodation and restaurants (Tourism in Iceland in Figures | Icelandic Tourist Board, 2018). A report from the

Icelandic Tourist Board stated that 20% of companies within the industry had difficulty acquiring staff and the main reasons for it was lack of people and competition over competent staff due to the low unemployment rate in Iceland (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2016). At present, the travel industry is by far the largest export sector for the country and earns more foreign exchange than processing of fish and aluminum smelting. This sudden increase of incoming tourism does not only boost the economy but also calls out for increased services, more training and education in tourism and improved infrastructure across the country (Ferdamalastofa, 2017).

Research problem

The hospitality industry in Iceland has been forced to develop quickly due to the increased demand from tourists for accommodation and other tourism related services. Increased quality of the product and service has been one of the priorities and focus of the tourism development in the country (Stefánsdóttir, Jónasson & Andrésdóttir, 2002). This rapid growth of tourism in the country creates a demand for new hospitality staff within the industry. The total number of workers employed in tourism-related services was 19.500 in January 2016 and 28.900 in August the same year with most of the workers employed in accommodation and restaurants (Tourism in Iceland in Figures | Icelandic Tourist Board, 2018). Since turnover culture is considered to be a large problem in the hospitality industry, it is important to investigate what motivates the workers to stay as well as what factors influences workers intentions to leave their company and to gain an understanding of the implications of the staff turnover for the remaining staff. Kim, Im and Hwang (2015) discovered that high staff turnover in hotels lead to bad service quality, which anticipates that new employees need time to adapt to a new environment and will be in need of acclimatization. It can be assumed that this is related to the surveys done among tourists in Iceland that shows that a part of them are dissatisfied with the quality of the hotel service. It has been called out by numerous of tourism stakeholders that if the quality of the service is not ensured, the hospitality industry in Iceland might become a low-income sector that focuses mainly on quantity rather than quality (KPMG, 2014).

The motivation for investigating staff turnover in the hospitality industry comes from a personal experience of one of the researchers from working in the hotel sector in Iceland and in that time experiencing high staff turnover in a relatively short period of time. The turnover was especially high for the chefs in the workplace, resulting in the need of designing new à la

carte menu three times in nine months. This experience raised a curiosity of staff turnover and its impact on the employees.

The findings of this research will provide insights into the perspectives of the hospitality workers towards the issue of staff turnover and the reasons for why they decide to leave their organization and what further can be improved.

Rationale of the research

Labor turnover has often been investigated, however, this research will examine the topic from a different angle, as the researchers have not found studies that investigate specifically how hotel employees experience staff turnover in Iceland. Furthermore, little is known about staff turnover in the hospitality industry in the country (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2016), and a need for more knowledge about staff turnover within companies in Iceland has been called out by researchers (Jónasdóttir, 2011). This research used a qualitative method by interviewing six hotel employees working in two hotels in Reykjavík (three and four-star hotels) within the same hotel chain, and such cannot be claimed to represent the entire industry, however, it is assumed that it might provide a base for comparisons, either between similar hotel chains or destinations. Qualitative methods will be used due to the fact that it will be the best way of getting in-depth answers. The results will then provide new insights into the topic and give an understanding of high staff turnover intentions. Furthermore, questions about the impact staff turnover causes the employees and questions relating to the staff intentions to leave the organization will be asked.

Research aim: The aim of this research was to add to the understanding of staff turnover within the hospitality industry.

Research questions:

- What are the impacts of staff turnover for the staff?
- What are the factors influencing employees' intentions to leave their current organization?

2. Literature review

Departure is one of the biggest areas of concern in the hospitality business and many researchers have constantly intended to connect a number of variables to it. The reasons with the closest correlations are age, ownership, content and job satisfaction. Other reasons for leaving can relate to skill level, the kind of profession and education (Ghiselli, 2001). The general agreement is that younger employees have higher turnover rates than the older staff (Ghiselli, 2001). Further, Ghiselli (2001) discuss that the characteristics of the job can be a key for turnovers, this includes autonomy, variations, task identity, feedback, handling others and friendship opportunities. By evaluating and changing these elements, Ghiselli (2001) states that managers have the opportunity to improve and enhance the jobs and thereby raise employee satisfaction. Other studies have for example shown that low payment, no career development, seasonality and emotional labor are reasons to leave. Emotional labor is to manage feelings to fulfill the emotional requirement that is needed when performing a job. Seasonal changes in work opportunities, part-time contracts, part-time jobs or taking a career break are other forms of turnovers (as cited in Chalkiti & Sigala, 2010).

2.1 Staff Turnover

Staff turnover has been defined as “rotation of workers around the labor market; between firms, jobs and occupations” (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000, p. 333). Turnover is categorized as voluntary and involuntary. Involuntary turnover is the discharge of employees while voluntary turnover happens when employees hand in resignation. Voluntary turnover can create a critical situation in organizations as the departing employees often migrate to competing firms (Stovel & Bontis, 2002). There are two types of voluntary turnover; functional and dysfunctional. The functional turnover is beneficial for the organization because the leaving individual might be an underperformer or lacking in necessary skills, therefore the organization is not concerned. Dysfunctional turnover however is hurtful to the organization and the managers prefer to retain the individual (Torrington, Hall & Taylor, 2005). Employee loyalty is one of the underlying factors of customer satisfaction within an organization (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000). However, Lashley (2000) states that staff turnover has been classified as “avoidable” and “unavoidable”. The avoidable turnover appears when

staff is discontented with salaries, the lack of training, suffer from organization stress, the relation with management and other staff, working hours, and problems with transport. Unavoidable turnover happens when staff retires, are sick, dies, are pregnant or are moving away (as cited in Mohsin, Lengler & Aguzzoli, 2015).

Many authors such as Yang et. al (2012), Wells and Peachy (2011), and Yang (2010) implies in their discoveries that enthusiasm at work assists in creating loyalty towards the organization and that affects any motive employees could have to quit. In India for example there has been a discussion as a part of a research study where it is suggested that staff were probably more motivated to stay if they were offered a professional working environment since this raises their organizational enthusiasm (Mohsin et al., 2015)

Lawson et al. (2005) argues that high staff turnover can have a negative effect on organizations, particularly regarding their operations and Kacmar, Andrews, Van Rooy, Steilberg, & Cerrone (2006) suggests that higher staff turnover is acknowledged with a drop in organizational performance (as cited in Tremblay, Y. Haines & Joly, 2015).

Studies done by Blomme, Tromp, and van Rheede (2008) show that more women than men leave the hospitality industry at a certain age. The number is peaking at the age group 32-44 years, where as much as 61 percent of the women left, compared to 47 percent of men. A reason for this could possibly be occupational stress (as cited in Blomme et. al, 2010).

2.2 Implications of Staff Turnover

Labor turnover affects the workplace efficiency, productivity and the hotel cost structure. Researches have shown that extensive costs are attributed to labor turnover. One study conducted in the Australian hotel industry brought to light that the tangible and intangible cost of employee turnover is extraordinary high and runs into hundreds of millions of dollars annually (Davidson, Timo & Wang, 2010). According to Davidson et al. (2005) and Hinkin and Tracey (2008) examples of turnover costs not only involves recruitment and training but a decreased work rate (as cited in Guilding, Lamminmaki & McManus, 2014).

Another problem with high staff turnover is the possible negative impact on customer service. Of course, it is anticipated that new employees need time to adapt to a new environment and during this time of acclimatization it is normal that they cannot offer the most effective service as they are in the middle of their learning progress. The lack of trained staff can lead to 'brain drain', which is defined as the loss of important personnel, and that is a problem according to Powell and Wood (1999). Low customer service and brain drain that emerges from staff turnover can also be a negative effect for hotel finances (Mohsin et al., 2015). Similarly, Kim et al. (2015) discovered that high turnover can destroy the service quality and that managers can decrease it by using a suitable managerial program(s).

In addition, both Lin, Jiang and Lam (2013) argues that there is a strong connection between job satisfaction and stress where high levels of stress can contribute to decreased job satisfaction. Occupational stress is described as damaging physical and emotional reactions acquired in the work environment. This kind of stress can lead to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and decreased personal accomplishment and with time it becomes so negative that it actually is related intentions to leave the job and to actual turnover. Further, Cooper et. al. (2001) states that a way of investigating the reasons of staff turnover, especially among women, is to look at it from this exact aspect. Since occupational stress is the stress that arises from unexpected responsibilities and pressures that do not cooperate with a person's knowledge, skills or anticipations, which restricts a person's ability to cope. This can create tension, both between individuals, but also with the organization, which can lead to turnover.

2.3 Employee Retention

Employee retention is the ability of organizations to retain its employees by putting effort into keeping the working environment pleasant to support the current staff (Business Dictionary.com, n.d.). There can be many different reasons to why a person decides to leave an organization. People are diverse, with different perceptions and expectations. Srivastava and Rastogi (2008) suggest that it can often be assumed that whatever the aim for leaving is, it is concluded that the employee was dissatisfied with the organization and choose to leave. Further, it is stated that an unhappy employee is worse than no employee as a dissatisfied person can do more harm than good to the organization.

An article in the Graduate training and employee retention journal (2017) discusses the importance of giving new employees good training, how essential it is to invest in both training and development. If doing so, employees will be prone to be more emotionally attached to the company, if attempts are made to help them achieve both personal and company goals. The study was done on graduates in Portugal: the intention to leave the organization became lower when the graduates had positive impressions of recruitment, initiation, training and development.

Blomme, van Rheede and Tromp (2010) argue that an essential challenge for the hospitality industry is to retain highly educated staff, although this is not only showing within the hospitality sector but also in other industries. There has been a drastically change in the employee/employer relationship due to fast transformations in society and industries for the past three decades. 30 years ago, the employer could offer job security and promotions and the employee brought in hard work and loyalty. But today, the environment is more individualized with more emphasis on flexibility and employability. Workers are living in a flourishing economy and have a huge variety of job opportunities. This mixture of elements has created an environment where the organization needs its staff more than the employees need the organization ("Work Environment More Important to Employees", 2018). Blomme et al. (2010) found in their research that young people have a higher tendency to leave the organization. The younger the respondents, the less committed they were towards the organization, and were more likely to leave. Further Blomme et al. (2010) discovered that the most considerable predictor of the intention to leave had to do with promotions and salary. Thus, the more challenging, inclusive and various the job is, the more likely the employee is to stay.

According to Frank, Finnegan and Taylor (2004) and Burke and Ng (2006) the mean age of employees in the Western world is rising steadily. Besides, the employees of the 'baby boom' generation (a person born between 1946 and 1964) are continuously retiring. As a consequence, there is a critical loss of skills and other competencies that are not so simply replaced by just hiring new staff (as cited in Kyndt, Dochy, Michielsens & Moeyaert, 2009). Therefore, it is of importance to take a special interest in employees learning, since learning has a powerful positive effect on retention (Kyndt et al., 2009).

Generation Y (also known as millennials) are the individuals that are born between early 1980s and early 2000s, it is expected that by 2030 the Generation Y will account for three quarters of the global workforce (Naim & Lenka, 2017). The work values of Generation Y are significantly different from members of Generation X and the Baby Boomers (people born between 1945-1964) (Naim & Lenka, 2018). Generation X, the people born between 1965-1980, is described as the “postponed generation”. Their employment rates were high and the chances of being children of divorce was twice as high in contrast to their parents. When the generation reached their middle age, they were the least financially secure generation. Generation X was characterized as slackers, cynical and dissatisfied, but when they reached mid-life they were described as active, happy and achieving a work-life balance (Coleman, 2014). Given their distinct characteristics, it is a challenge to retain Generation X employees, the factors that affect the retention of this generation are: compensation, career advancement (work content and utilization of skills), work-life balance, security and leadership (Masibigiri & Nienaber, 2011). Members of Generation Y on the other hand have a tendency to switch jobs frequently and have lower organizational commitment compared to the older generations. Furthermore, members of Generation Y are ambitious, creative and goal-oriented and have confidence in their abilities (Naim & Lenka, 2017). Organizations need to develop appropriate strategies to retain Generation Y employees as they have a strong need to learn and seek success in every endeavor.

Work-life balance (WLB) is “a comfortable state of equilibrium achieved between an employee’s primary priorities of their employment positions and their private lifestyle” (What is work-life balance? definition and meaning, 2018) and studies done by e.g. Deery and Jago (2015) and Mescher, Benschop and Doorewaard (2009) states that the area of work-life balance (WLB) points out that WLB plays an important part of employee retention. According to Deery and Jago (2015) it is of importance to maintain a good work-life balance in order to retain employees.

A study that investigated what hospitality workers expect from their careers, jobs, companies and the hospitality industry concluded that high task variety involved in the work significantly decreased the plans of the respondents to leave the hospitality industry while also the findings indicated that hospitality workers are actively controlling their careers and

switching jobs and companies to do so. Workers are likely to stay with the same company when they see a potential for growing (Walsh & Taylor, 2007).

2.4 HRM Strategies and Staff Turnover

Human resource management (HRM) is a term that refers to a formal system within an organization that is devised for the management of people. The goal of the HRM is to maximize the productivity of the staff in order to make the organization more effective (Inc.com, 2018). HRM practices have been recognized to impact the overall effectiveness of organizations and can contribute to its competitive advantage, especially in the service industry. Cheng and Brown argued that it is essential for the hotel industry to develop efficient HRM practices and policies (Cheng & Brown, 1998). The practices and policies that hotels can adapt can be varied and diverse, the following text will go over few examples. The policies for recruitment and selection processes could be that trainability of the employee would be the major selection criteria when selecting new employee or it could be to make use of psychological tests as the norm for selection of all staff. An example for HRM policies relating to the training can be an explicit policy requiring all staff to spend specified minimum period annually in formal training Another example of HRM policy for hotels is regarding the job design, it could be flexible job descriptions that are not linked to one specific task (Hoque, 1999).

The hotel labor market is two-faced as it can be difficult to attract competent staff while the industry also has relatively high staff turnover rate, representing loss of investment in human capital, training and quality. The issues of: assessing the extent of labor turnover, assessing the direct cost of turnover, examine the accountability structures related to turnover, assessing the impact of turnover on service quality and productivity are critical for shaping HRM strategies and managerial implications for retention of workers (Davidson, Timo & Wang, 2010). The results of a study that examined the relationship between HRM and performance in the UK hotel industry showed that the success of the strategies depended on the business strategies the hotels used and that hotels that pursue an HRM approach together with a quality focus within their business strategy perform the best. Further, HRM practices are more likely to contribute to competitive success of the organization when it is a bundle of practices (Hoque, 1999).

HRM strategies that focus on enhancing the commitment of employees with decentralized decision making, suitable training, financial compensation and employee participation have a positive outcome for increasing higher performance for the staff (Youndt, Snell, Dean & Lepak, 1996). A study that investigated the impact of gender on turnover intentions of highly educated employees showed that there is a substantial amount of variance among the employees regarding their intention to leave an organization. For women, promotion opportunities and work-family balance were an important predictor for leaving while the clarity of job description was the most critical predictor for the men (Blomme, van Rheede & Tromp, 2010).

In an international study conducted by Tower Perrin (2005) it was describes that the top recruitment drivers for workers included factors such as: work/life balance, opportunities for career advancement, competitive benefits, salary and challenging work and reputation of the organization as good employer while the top retention drivers were: opportunities to learn new skills, base salary, managers understanding the motivations of the employees, retirement benefits and fair compensation (as cited in Hughes & Rog, 2008). It is important for businesses to investigate the reason for why their staff leaves as well as what motivates them to stay. The insights will help to understand the cause of the turnover and further develop effective talent management and HRM strategies (Davidson, Timo & Wang, 2010).

2.5 Friendships at work

A lot of the literature about friendships at work focuses on how the workplace relationships can be connected to developing organizational fallouts, such as productivity and efficiency, minimize staff turnover, and by assisting staff subscribe to new organizational values. Research has also demonstrated that employees can share high-quality information and improve monotonous work. Further, employees' that develop friendships can give each other influential and emotional support (Rumens, 2017). Managers and scholars have always been contradictory when it comes to the value of friendship between employees. Previous studies have only mentioned about the negative aspects of friendships at work, such as sexual harassment, favoritism and gossip. Nevertheless, more and more studies have found that friendships in the organization can extend employees' good work attitude but also their

organizational capacity. At an individual stage, having friends at work can boost staffs' job involvement, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, social support, endurance, and community creation by promote shared values and experiences. At the same time, at the organizational level, friendships boost the institutional participation, and motivates the staff to better serve the workplaces' aim. Both the positive and the negative aspects of friendships should be considered so that an even balance of relationships can be accomplished (as cited in Song & Olshfski, 2008).

3. Methodology

At first this research aimed at sending out a survey to the employees of a hotel chain in Iceland. A questionnaire with a total of 22 questions related to staff turnover was created and sent out to a contact at the human resource development and quality department at one of the hotels. But due to unknown reasons, the contact decided not to go through with the survey and the researchers of this thesis had to change their approaches.

The new plan consisted of changing the research from a quantitative method with a survey, into a qualitative method with interviews instead, but still with the same topic of staff turnover. The method was in-depth semi-structured interviews with predetermined questions as a guide. However, this gave the researchers the opportunity of asking follow-up questions, which gave a deeper understanding of the research question (Ritchie, Burns & Palmer, 2005). The aim of the interviews was to seek facts, attitudes, knowledge and behaviors amongst the participants and to explore the individual perspectives of the staff on staff turnover. The sampling method became convenience sampling, both because of the easy accessibility to a population, but also because the data collection was simplified during a short period of time (Convenience sampling - Research Methodology, 2018).

The focus of this research was to explore the reasons behind why employees that are working in the hospitality industry decide to leave their jobs. The researchers wanted to study the reasons and by doing interviews among employees and ask them questions about their intentions to leave or stay at their job. Further, it was investigated how the turnover impacts the employees, if it is considered to be positive or negative.

The methodology section will demonstrate the different phases of the methodological choices that the researchers have decided to use.

3.1 Participants

The participants were chosen with convenience sampling due to the ease of their volunteering or selecting units because of their easy availability or easy access. The benefits of this method were the availability and swiftness in which data could be collected. However, there were some negative aspects that had to be taken into consideration, for example, the sample is not representative of the entire population and it can be biased by the participants (Brotherton, 2015) due to the motive of why some people decide to participate and others not (Convenience Sampling (Accidental Sampling): Definition, Examples, 2018). The participants work at two different hotels in Reykjavik at the time when the interviews took place. The hotels are three and four-star hotels within the same hotel chain. All of the participants volunteered to and approved to be a part of this study. They were invited by one of the researchers, who visited the two hotels and randomly selected six frontline hotel employees and asked them to participate. The respondents were all frontline staff and that had to do with the random selection of the convenience sampling method. The front-line staff are the employees that deal directly with the guests. The researcher also received verbal permission from the hotel managers of the hotels.

Table 1. Respondent's profile (n = 6).

No	Current hotel type	Current position	Gender	Age
1	3-star hotel	Bartender	Female	34
2	3-star hotel	Receptionist	Male	27
3	3-star hotel	Bartender	Male	31
4	4-star hotel	Concierge	Female	26
5	4-star hotel	Bartender	Male	36
6	4-star hotel	Shift manager over kitchen	Male	38

Source: Interview data.

3.2 Interview Guide

The interview guide and the interview questions were prepared based on the research aim and questions. After receiving consent from the participants, each interview was recorded to facilitate data organization and to make it easier to make a fair analysis. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and took place in Reykjavik between May 7th and 9th 2018. Five interviews were conducted in English and one in Icelandic and was then translated to English. The questions can be found the appendix.

The interview guide followed the following structure of topics:

- **Demographic information:**
 - Gender
 - Education
 - Job role
- **Turnover:**
 - The experience of staff turnover
 - Satisfaction related to employment
- **Organizational questions:**
 - Training
 - Professional growth
 - Appreciation at work
 - Salary
 - Work-life balance
- **Friendships**
- **Future employment**

3.3 Data Processing and Analysis

The interviews were recorded, and the researcher wrote down notes while the subject answered the questions. Next step was to produce verbatim transcripts and read it over carefully to gain an understanding of the answers. Following that, the concepts were built by labeling relevant words, phrases, sentences and sections. The coding process consisted of two stages, open coding and axial coding. The codes were categorized into hierarchy (see figure 1 and 2), in order to get a clearer overview. The figures also assisted the researchers in analyzing and exploring the results of the interviews. The hierarchies were constructed based on the questions asked in the interview and the answers of the participants. The questions asked were based on the literature found on the topic. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data and summarize the factors influencing employees' intention to leave the current organization and the factors impacting the staff regarding staff turnover.

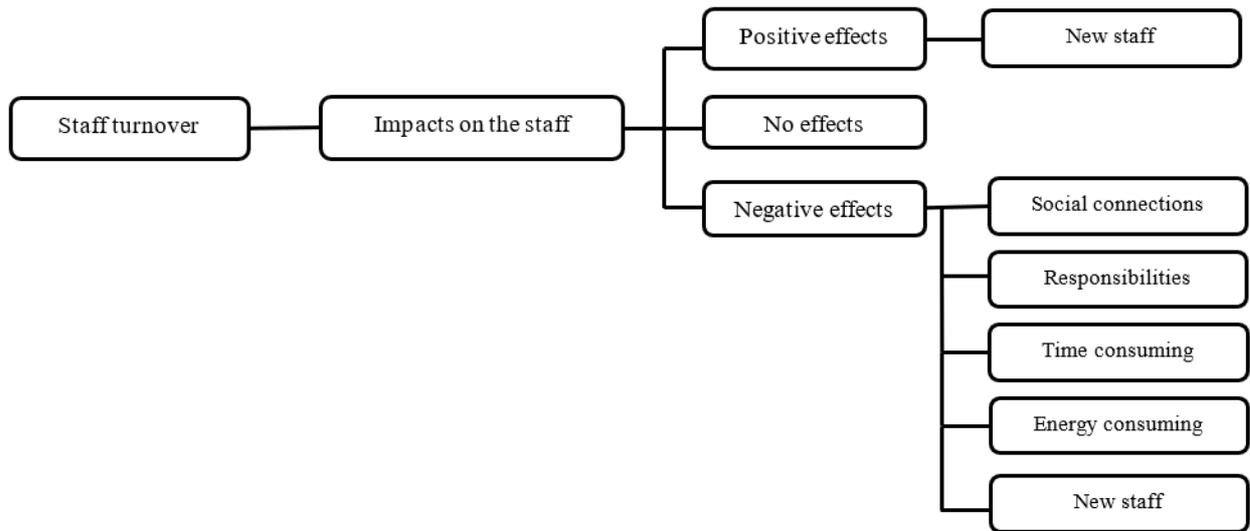


Figure 1. Impacts of staff turnover for the staff.

Source: Interview data.

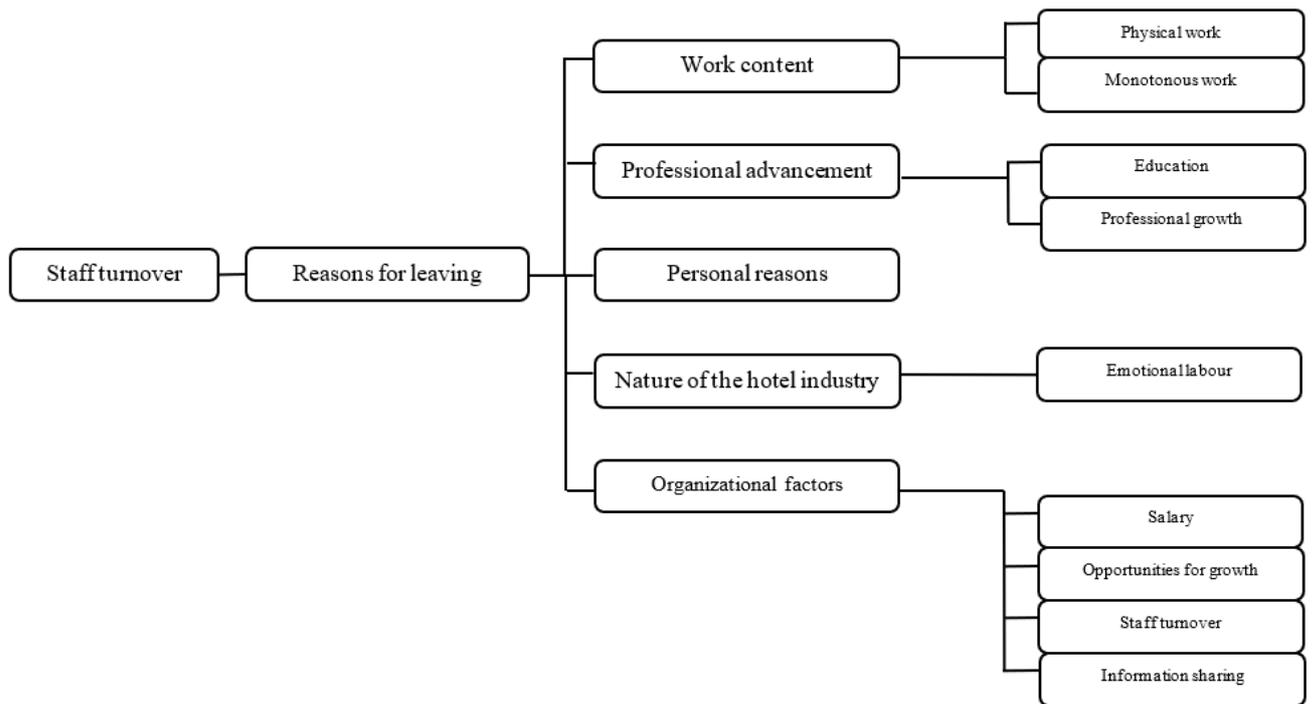


Figure 2. Factors influencing employees' intentions to leave.

Source: Interview data.

3.4 Limitations

The limitations of this research began with the researchers having to change their method from quantitative to qualitative in a rush, and therefore the researchers got a pressed time frame. Thus, the initial plan of sending out a survey to hotel workers within a specific hotel-chain in Iceland could not be carried out, the new plan consisted of interviewing the employees and reaching them by using convenience sampling. There is inherent bias in convenience sampling, meaning that the sample is not likely to represent the whole workforce of the hotel-chain and it is likely that the sampling techniques will lead to under or over representation of the population. This undermines the ability to make generalization of all the employees within the chain but rather can provide in-depth insights into the views of the selected participants towards the topic.

Further, during the process of the interviews there was a language barrier between the participant and the researcher. Since five out of six participants came from other countries than Iceland, and all six of them spoke English as their second language, there were a few misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the questions asked, which might have

influenced the results. Additionally, some of the respondents were very open and talkative, which lead to long and detailed answers. Meanwhile others spoke less and gave more brief answers. This can also be a factor that has influenced the final results and thereby the analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

This research was carried out in order to investigate the different reasons of why staff turnover is high within the hospitality industry. Remarkably, all of the findings closely linked back to the literature review. The main purpose of this research was to investigate the reasons behind why hotel workers decide to leave their organization and to explore employees' individual perspectives on staff turnover in two selected hotels within the same hotel chain in Reykjavík. This was achieved by conducting in-depth interviews with hotel employees. The following sections will explain the most apparent themes, which emerged from analysing the interview transcriptions. The chapters follow the literature review topics. The interpretation and the discussion of the results will be included in the result section.

4.1 Factors influencing Employees' Intentions to Leave

According to the literature review there are many existing reasons as to why an employee decides to leave their present employment. When the participants were asked if they had plans to leave their current organization within the next 12 months, four participants reported that they were planning to leave the organization within that time frame and two participants reported that they would maybe leave, depending on other job offers. After analyzing the data from the interviews, it was found out that the factors influencing employees' intentions to leave their current organization can be grouped into five themes, those were: work content, professional advancement, personal reasons, nature of the hospitality industry and organizational factors. Following five sections will go over the themes in more detail.

4.1.1 Work Content

When the respondents were asked about the most negative aspect of their job, a couple of participants explained that working as a bartender is a physical job and is perhaps more

suitable for younger people because it requires standing all day, carrying heavy beer kegs, and that one can get injured from broken glasses. The bartender working in the four-star hotel said the most negative aspect of his job was:

“.. the long hours of standing, you are not allowed to sit [...] Standing all day, if you are twenty its ok. But for me, my body starts shaking, it is hurting, you have to be visible.”

Another bartender explained:

“sometimes you have nothing to do, it gets boring, monotonous”

The same respondent complained about dealing with the binge-drinking customers, he stated:

“basically, working with drunk people and you have to ask people to leave which is unpleasant”

As stated in the literature review, Ghiselli (2001) discussed that the characteristics of the job can be related to turnovers, that included autonomy, variations, task identity, feedback, handling others, and friendship opportunities, which is evident when looking at the results of these interviews. Further, the results showed that work becomes boring at times and that there is monotony occurring every day. The bartenders explained that standing behind the bar is very physical and tiring, which even more indicates that the task variety is very important for employees' overall satisfaction and for the staff not to be “worn out” and leave due to illness or injuries.

4.1.2 Professional Advancement

When the respondents were asked about intentions to leave the organization and the reasons for it, four respondents reported that the reason for leaving would be for their professional advancement. Whether it was to go back to university or to work in a profession that they are already educating in or to go to work for another company that offers opportunities for professional growth. When the respondents were asked about if they were satisfied with their opportunities for professional growth, one respondent answered:

“no, that would also be a reason for me to quit”

Another one answered when asked about reasons for leaving the company:

“I don’t grow in this company, there is no future here. I want to work with people that are better than me but, in this company, we need more people that I can learn from”.

One respondent did not see opportunities in general in the tourism industry and shared his views of it, he explained that it is not desirable to grow in the company:

“There are no opportunities for growth in the tourism industry in general, there isn’t much space to grow, you want to work in a bar, you work in a bar, you want to work as a guide you work as a guide. The only thing you can do is work as a shift manager which will increase a little bit of your salary, not much but only give you a lot more responsibilities.”

Furthermore, the respondent explained that he was a foreigner in the country and that would be reason for him not to grow. The only participant that displayed any positivity towards opportunity for professional growth was native, all other participants were foreigners and were not hopeful for opportunities for professional growth. This could indicate that language barriers affect the perceived opportunities. The majority of the participants said that they would leave because of the professional advancement. Either the reason was to go back to university or to work in a profession that they were already educated in, or to start working for another employer that could offer opportunities for professional growth. As cited in Chalkiti & Sigala (2010), no career development is a significant reason to why staff decide to leave and Blomme et al. (2010) discovered that the most substantial predictor of the intention to leave has to do with the possibility of promotion. All of the respondents implied that there were no opportunities for promotions and professional growth within their respective organization, and therefore no reason to stay. Although one stated that he had not sought the opportunities and therefore could not answer either yes or no to the question. Additionally, to this question, the researchers asked if the

participants planned to leave their job within the next 12 months. The answer was uniform; they all plan to leave.

4.1.3 Personal Reasons

When the participants were asked if they planned to leave the organization within the next 12 months interviewee 4 said:

“I’m planning to leave for another country, to travel more... It’s not specifically because of the job, just personal reasons”

And where interviewee 5 said:

“I’m not a career guy, I just move on from countries, from relationships... I don’t like settling...”

Boredom was also mentioned as a reason for moving on, either by travelling or to find new challenges. As previously mentioned, there has been a huge change in the employee/employer relationship, and that today, the work environment is individualized with much more focus on flexibility and employability, and where the employees have extensive job opportunities. This can also be connected back to the study written by Naim & Lenka (2017), where generation Y, the millennials, have the tendency to change jobs frequently and are not as committed to the organization as the earlier generations. In addition to this, generation X are also difficult to retain due to their distinct characteristics. The main reasons had to do with personal reasons such as travelling and not being able to settle down. Likewise, boredom and monotony came up as talking points, which once again indicates that Chalkiti & Sigala (2010) and Blomme et al. (2010) were right in their studies.

4.1.4 Nature of the Hospitality Industry

The hospitality industry is characterized by seasonality, long working hours and shift work and it requires emotional labor. When asked about the most negative aspect of a job, two

respondents mentioned that it could be exhausting to deal with the guests, one respondent stated:

“You have to serve people, so you have to be in a very good mood all the time, there is a golden rule, the guest is always right, even if you know he is wrong and you have to bite your tongue not to say anything.”

The receptionist stated when asked about the most negative aspect of the job:

“Being alone in the reception, sometimes, you are dealing with unpleasant guests and you can’t solve the problem, you just need to stand and take the anger.”

Furthermore, one respondent explained that it can be stressful to work in the high season, for example when there is northern light season and there are long lines of people waiting and the customers can become unpleasant and difficult. Since seasonality, has these distinguished characteristics, most of the participants agreed that one of the most negative part of the job is that it requires emotional labour, that it can be exhausting to deal with the guests. And where the receptionists mentioned that they often work alone and therefore has to deal with complicated and demanding guests alone. This type of occupational stress can, as cited in the literature review, lead to turnover. Another strain mentioned by one of the respondents was the need to be in a good mood all the time, which of course is a golden rule within the industry, which eventually restricts a person's ability to cope. Another point to consider is the heavy work that the bartenders mentioned that they cope with daily, such as heavy lifting and standing all day but also the chance of getting hurt from broken glass, which once again indicates the importance of task variance. There is also the possibility that the workers might become exhausted, and therefore decide to quit.

4.1.5 Organizational Factors

After analyzing the interviews, it became clear that two of the respondents were discontented with the salary they received. Interviewee 5 said

“[...] I can find better salary for the amount of hours [...]”

and Interviewee 2 declared that

“the salary could be higher”.

Most of the participants found the salary reasonable in comparison to the amount of work that they were doing, although, interviewee 1 mentioned that:

“this is the question, if you don’t like it, you can go somewhere else... Because this is the rule here in ... (hotel’s name kept anonymous), if you are not happy with your salary you just change your job. But I think my salary is not that bad actually”.

After analyzing the interviews, it was noted that two out of six respondents were dissatisfied with their salaries. The chef (who has equivalent education) said that it is possible to find other jobs with higher salary for the amount of hours that they are working, whilst another one said the exact opposite; that the salary was good in comparison to the amount of working hours. This difference can indicate that it depends on in which department of the organization that you work in, or whether or not the employee has equivalent education. Maybe the employee can accept a lower compensation due to the lack of corresponding education.

As pointed out by Ghiselli (2001), one of the reasons for leaving an organization has to do with the type of contract that is being offered. In order to being able to pay rent and other living expenses a full-time contract often is required. Interviewee 1 and 4 have part-time contracts and interviewee 1 said that because of it, she plans to leave the current organization, which is also indicated as a reason for turnover in the literature review. The interviewee stated:

“I’m only working 50% and I feel I don’t do a good job here and there, I’m putting myself into pieces, so I think it’s very stressful. I prefer to be 100% in one place.”

A full-time contract can be hard to obtain in the hospitality industry.

Further it was discovered that almost all participants agreed to the fact there are no opportunities for professional growth within their workplace. Here interviewee 2 said:

“[...] can I say neither satisfied nor dissatisfied? I haven ‘t exactly gotten any opportunities, but I haven ‘t been looking for anything, if I would have looked for it I might have got it in my hands”,

Whilst interviewee 1, 3, 5, 6 says that there are no possibilities of professional growth within their respective workplace and that this would be one of the reasons as to why they would quit. Interviewee 3, who works in the bar, thinks that the hotel manager puts all the focus on the reception area in this aspect, and therefore, forgets about the staff in other departments. Additionally, interviewee 6 said that the lack of challenges, and the lack of people to learn new skills from are reasons to why there is no future within the organization.

Other factors related to the organization and the reasons behind turnover are the information sharing or the communication between staff and management. The lack of the good communication takes its toll on the employees. Interviewee 6 talked about how the most negative part of the job is not knowing;

“for example, if we have a group or a party, if I’m not planned before it, that would be really great, sometimes we know something in the last minute, I feel like it’s not prepared, well organized. Sometimes we have a group of people coming in and nobody told me.”

This type of situation can be really stressful on the employee and the level of frustration can rise very high. Eventually this can lead to a feeling of ‘having’ enough.

4.2 Impacts of Staff Turnover for the Staff

After analyzing the data from the interviews, the impact of staff turnover on the staff was grouped into: positive effects, no effects and negative effects. The results revealed that the staff that worked in the four-star hotel perceived the staff turnover to be higher than the staff that worked in the three-star hotel. The following sections will explain further the themes associated with effects of the staff turnover for the staff.

4.2.1 Positive Effects

When asked about in what way staff turnover affects the respondents in the workplace, most of the respondents had some opinions about the topic and mostly negative impacts were mentioned, however one respondent explained that it was a positive change. The respondent stated:

“I feel the people that left and the people that came instead were better working... people who came in now are very nice”.

Incoming staff is often coming from competing firms; there is a possibility that the new staff will bring fresh ideas and new knowledge into the workplace. During the process of this research the author's searched for articles regarding positive turnover but were unsuccessful, the only thing found concerning positive impact was the functional staff turnover, that is when underperformers quit. There is a possibility that this could be the case in the circumstances described by the interviewee.

4.2.2 No Effects

The analysis brought to light that the extent of impact of the turnover for the workers depended heavily on the job position of the respondents. Hotel workers that worked alone, like the receptionist and the concierge were not engaging much with other workers outside their departments and therefore were less concerned of the staff turnover and its impact. The receptionist stated when asked about the impacts of staff turnover for him:

“It does not matter that much for me, especially because I’m alone in the reception, so I’ve had two reception managers during this period, there were little changes involved for me. There is no interaction with breakfast and the housekeeping staff, it does not matter for me if there is high staff turnover in those departments”.

The concierge explained when asked about the effects of staff turnover for her:

“Me personally, I think like minimum. I’m working separate from the reception, probably affects the reception more.”

The reception in the four-star hotel had three employees working together compared to one in the three-star hotel. The hotel workers that worked together in teams, the kitchen staff and bartenders were more concerned about the impacts of staff turnover and had stronger opinions of it.

4.2.3 Negative Effects

Of the six participants, three of them had several negative stories to tell about the staff turnover in the workplace. The negative effects were further grouped into five themes: Social connections, time consuming, energy consuming, responsibilities and new staff. Next four sections will elaborate on the themes.

4.2.3.1 Social Connections

The social connection refers to the feeling of belonging to a group or feeling close to other people. The bartender in the four-star hotel stated that there is extraordinary high staff turnover in the workplace and it affected him very much. The respondent explained that there are numerous of people coming and going as they please, only staying for couple of weeks or months. When asked if the staff turnover affected him, the employee stated:

“Yes, very much, in the moment when you begin to connect a little bit with your colleagues you know that you are going to be together all summer, suddenly they leave and new people coming, and you have to start over, reconnect and show them around”

he further explained:

“..Some people need time to trust and adapt and before you know it, they are leaving, build trust and then someone goes”.

When people come and go like this and only stay for a limited time, it is hard to build trust and friendships because as soon as a relationship has been established a person decides to leave. In other words, it is exhausting and time consuming to get to know and count on somebody that anyways will leave. From the respondents answers it can be assumed that they eventually close themselves and do not bother with building new relationships. As discussed

in the literature review, having friends in the workplace can for example boost the staff's job involvement and enhance the job satisfaction. But when turnover is high it can instead turn into resistance and people closing themselves.

4.2.3.2 Time Consuming

The staff turnover can affect the employees by taking up time for the more experienced employee, especially for the staff that work in teams and are dependent on each other to achieve a certain task. The respondent that worked in the kitchen explained that when four orders come in at the same time, it might take five minutes for experienced kitchen employee while it might take twenty minutes for beginners and he described the situation as:

“this affects my mood, this is stressful. and I’m thinking that I should quit also”.

4.2.3.3 Energy Consuming

Energy consuming refers to the amount of energy used by individual while performing the job. The respondents explained that staff turnover can both be time and energy consuming. The respondents shared a similar view of the staff turnover, that it can be exhausting. Interviewee 6 described the effects:

“Yes of course this affects me. When people learn, they know how to do their job so we just follow our procedures daily and when new people come in you need to tell them and explain everything, this takes time, this takes energy and the standard of the job, quality, can go down.”

He further explained:

“...people go very often, and it affects me, and it makes me fed up with this place”.

The participants argued that it is time consuming for the more experienced staff to always have to train the new ones together with doing their own duties, they also have to teach and demonstrate the new staff time after time. Further, one interviewee said that it is energy consuming and that the standard and the quality of the job can go down. As argued by Powell and Wood (1999), it is expected that new staff need time to adapt to a new setting and therefore it is natural that they cannot offer the most productive service.

4.2.3.4 Responsibilities

The stories about the negative effects of turnover had the theme of responsibilities in common. When new workers are adapting to the working environment it creates a situation where the workers with more experience will need to take on more responsibilities along with training the new employee. One respondent stated:

“Basically, I will have to do more because a new worker will do less”.

Another respondent explained that he must do side-training sometimes, that is not part of his job description. This is likely to be something that an employee can accept a few times, but when these things become regular it can be perceived as annoying and irritating.

4.3 Work-life balance and Friends at work

Work-life (WLB) balance is the balance a person has between work and its personal life. When the researchers asked the participants about how they experience WLB, the majority answered that they feel that they have a good WLB or that there is nothing to complain about. According to Interviewee 2, who works in the reception, it is very easy to change work shifts and thereby being able to adjust the work-life balance. The only participant that actually complained about WLB was interviewee 3, the bar manager, who answered:

“no because it’s an evening job so it affects my biological clock, I get up later and go to bed later as well..”

According to the literature review one important aspect of enjoying the job is to have friends at work. When the participants were asked about having friends at work, interviewee 2, 3, 4 and 5 said that they have friends at work that they also meet outside of their workplace. Whilst interviewee 1 and 6 said that they have friendly colleagues and friendly relationships at work. Interviewee 6 also mentioned that it is hard when people come and go, that it is exhausting to reconnect and rebuild new relationship all the time.

4.4 Occupational stress

It is no secret that there is a distinct connection between occupational stress and job satisfaction. Occupational stress can harm the physical and emotional reactions acquired in

the work environment. When the participants were asked about if they feel stress in their respective workplace, interviewee 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 said that they feel stressed at times. But they view that as perfectly normal within this field of work. The chef stated that if you cannot handle stress you should not work in the kitchen and one of the bartenders said

“but the stress is part of this line of work, so it excites me as well”.

The receptionist mentioned that when the hotel switched to a new booking system the environment became really stressful, he stated:

“Nobody knew what they were doing and that was very uncomfortable.”

4.5 Training

The literature review describes the importance of giving new employees sufficient training, and by doing so, staff is more willing to stay. First the researchers asked what the participants highest level of education was and Interviewee 6, the chef, was the only participant with a relevant degree from a chef school, the other participants came from other backgrounds. Later in the interview, the researchers asked about the participants training and what they thought of it. Interviewee 2 and 4 claim that they got training in the beginning of their employment, and both said that it was good and sufficient. However, interviewee 3, 4 and 5 expressed that they did not receive any training from the employer. Interviewee 3, the bartender, even answered

“no, I had to train myself”.

The Graduate training and employee retention journal (2017) and Kyndt et al., (2009) discussed the importance of giving the staff sufficient training. During the interviews it became evident that only two out of six participants got adequate training in the beginning of their employment. Three participants declared that they did not receive any training at all from the employer. According to the previous studies mentioned it is essential that the employer takes interest in employees learning, since learning has been found having a powerful positive effect on retention. One can assume that this would be of interest of every employer since good training is proven to result in good service quality.

4.6 Participants

The respondents came from culturally diverse backgrounds and none of them had English as their first language, neither has the researcher who conducted the interviews. Therefore, the only interview that took place in the native language was with the receptionist that is Icelandic, and the interview was later transcribed and translated into English. Other respondents came from different parts of Europe except for one that came from Asia. This might limit the study due to the fact that some of respondents might have misunderstood the questions and/or perhaps were not able to fully express themselves when asked the questions. Furthermore, some of the questions were sensitive, for example the question relating to satisfaction and salary and the researcher sensed a discomfort from some of the respondents. Another factor that might have influenced the results is that some respondents might have been afraid to say what was on their mind since they are still working for the company and do not want the complains to be heard by their managers. This was noticeable for one respondent that praised the hotel manager highly and when asked about the salary, the respondent explained that this was the rule in the company, if the employees do not like it, they can leave.

At least two of the participants were guest workers or foreign workers, meaning that they temporarily reside and work in a host country. Therefore, it will be difficult to retain those individuals and it can be expected that they are not staying for a long time. One respondent explained that the reason for leaving was because of travelling, it was not specifically because of the job and the respondent did not care much about professional growth within the company. Another respondent explained that he was not a career guy and did not like settling.

A respondent that had been working in the same bar for almost seven years explained that he will have to work in Iceland for one more year to gain an Icelandic citizenship, this might be a motive for him to stay this long for the company, furthermore, he is educated in another field and aims to work in that profession, however he did not get his Polish certificate valued in Iceland and therefore, is taking the program again in the university of Iceland. The employee views his position as temporary nonetheless it has been almost seven years.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The results indicated that the hotel workers are to some extent satisfied with their employment, however there is some room for improvement. The staff turnover is a factor that can contribute to the stress of the hotel employees that already work in oftentimes-stressful working environment. It is advisable that managers try to reduce the turnover culture to minimize the negative effects it causes on the remaining employees. The results showed that the reasons for employees to leave the organization was largely for their professional advancement, that might provide a hint that managers should try to motivate their employees to work their way up and give them opportunities for professional growth within the company. It might also be helpful to give a proper training to get the employees involved and engaged in the job and since many of the respondents did not receive adequate training that might cause them to feel as they are not important, and some respondents reported that they were not appreciated for their work. Another way for managers to utilize the results of this study is to provide the employees with higher task variety as some of them complained about monotonous work, if possible, to give the employees more challenging work.

Suggestion for future research includes to investigate the factors that contribute to the staffs' perceived possibilities of professional growth within its organization and to investigate the perspective hotel workers have towards growing in the hospitality industry. The results of this study indicated that many of the participants perceived their current position as a temporary, this raises curiosity of the reasons for this view.

To conclude, the aim of this research was to add to the understanding of staff turnover in the hospitality industry. The results revealed that the factors influencing employees' intentions to leave the company can be grouped into five themes: work content, professional advancement, personal reasons, the nature of the hospitality industry and organizational factors. Further, the results also revealed that the negative impact of staff turnover for the staff outweighed the positive impacts by far, the staff turnover can cause increased responsibilities of the more experienced staff, it can consume the time and energy of the staff and can prevent them to build up trust and form a deeper social connection with their colleagues. On the other hand, and on more positive note, the new staff is often migrating from competing firms and can bring fresh ideas and knowledge into the workplace.

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Appendix

Interview guide:

1. Gender?
2. How old are you?
3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
4. What is your job role?
5. What type of employment do you have? (full time, part time)
6. Where are you from?
7. How long have you worked for the organization?
8. To what extent have you experienced staff turnover in your department?
9. Does staff turnover affect your satisfaction in the workplace?/Does staff turnover affect you in the workplace?
10. How satisfied are you with your employment?
11. Are you satisfied with the training you received?
12. Are you satisfied with your opportunities for professional growth within the organization? Why?
13. Is the organization dedicated to your professional development?
14. Do you feel appreciated for your work?
15. Do you feel stressed at work?
16. If yes, to what extent does that affect your job satisfaction?
17. How satisfied are you with the salary you receive?
18. How satisfied with the work-life balance?
19. How many friend/s do you have in your workplace?
20. Are you planning to leave the company in the next 12 months?
21. If yes, why?
22. What is the most negative aspect of your job?
23. What is the most positive aspect of your job?