

THE DESCRIPTION OF FAST FOOD EMPLOYEES' JOB INVOLVEMENT

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Abstract: *Employees' job involvement is crucial in determining the success of an organization. However, studies related to employees' job involvement in Malaysian fast food restaurants are still limited. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to describe the job involvement of fast food employees of restaurants in Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, Malaysia. A quantitative study was conducted, and questionnaires were distributed to 688 fast food employees. Result reveals that most of the fast food employees are moderately involved in their job. This is probably due to the nature of the fast food industry that requires a repetitive job, long working hours, provides low job security, and less competitive work. Additionally, moderate job satisfaction, uncomfortable working environment, and tasks overload are also factoring that are considered to be influencing moderate job involvement in this study. This implies that organizations need to encourage their employees to become more involved in their job in the future to improve employees' satisfaction and performance.*

Keywords: *Job Involvement; Fast Food Employees; Malaysia*

Introduction

Employees' job involvement plays a vital role in every organization. It can impact not only the employees but also the organization. It also significantly influences employees' decision to quit and determines organization achievement and turnover (Rotenberry & Moberg, 2007; Zopiatis, Constanti & Theocharous, 2013). Generally, a high level of job involvement leads to employees' improvement of job satisfaction, motivation, commitment and productivity (Abdallah, Obeidat, Aqqad, Al Janini, & Dahiyat, 2017). In this light, employees' job

involvement is considered as the source of development and innovation (Ghafoor, Qureshi, Khan, & Hijazi, 2011). Therefore, most of the organizations have adopted practices such as Just in Time (JIT), Total Quality Management (TQM), and Best Practices introduced by Abegglen and Stalk (1985); Deming (1986) and, Shadur, Rodwell, Simmons, and Bamber (1994) respectively to boost employees' job involvement. These practices made a positive impact to employees' and the organizations' performance (Rodwell, Kienzle, & Shadur, 1998). Thus, a study on employees' job involvement is crucial to determine the level of job involvement in an organization.

Fast food restaurant is considered as one of the well-known and profitable restaurants in Malaysia. The increasing number of fast food restaurants in Malaysia contributes the highest profit to Malaysia's economy (Basnayake, Arunachalam & Hassan, 2015). Moreover, the increasing number of working housewives has changed Malaysian lifestyle. Eating out and take away of fast food such as fried chicken, burger and pizza as offered by KFC, McDonald's and Pizza Hut have become a norm for Malaysians (Ryan, Ghazali & Mohsin, 2011). Hence, study about fast food employees is important to all fast food restaurants stakeholders and managers. Therefore, more information pertaining to fast food employees' job involvement is needed.

Most existing studies have focused on employees' job involvement in the western business context (Abdallah et al., 2017). In Malaysian context, many studies have investigated on manufacturing industry (Boon, Arumugam, Safa, & Bakar, 2013), education sectors (Sukri, Asogan & Waemustafa, 2015), government servant (Tharmalingam & Bhatti, 2014) and hotel industry (Ahmed, Ismail, Amin, Nawaz, 2013). However, very few studies were conducted on fast food employees. Therefore, the purpose of this empirical quantitative study is to describe the job involvement of the employees in fast food restaurants. Specifically, the objective is to identify the extent of employees' involvement in fast food restaurants in Malaysia. The findings of this study will add more information related to employees' involvement pertaining to fast food employee in Malaysia and it can serve as a useful guideline for the restaurant operators and managers to improve their employees' involvement and to increase employees' job satisfaction, performance and organizations' profit.

Literature Review

Job involvement has been identified by numerous researchers as an important element in influencing employees and provides a competitive advantage toward the organizations (Elankumaran, 2004). It is also considered as a pivotal element in determining the organization's success (Pfeffer, 1994). Employees' job involvement can be defined as a degree to which individuals links their work or the significance of the job psychologically to their total self-image and self-esteem (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965). Lodahl and Kejner (1965) are the first to introduce the idea of employees' job involvement and since then it has become the primary focus in the field of organizational behaviour and occupational psychology (Huang, Ahlstrom, Lee, Chen & Hsieh, 2016).

In the context of the hospitality industry, employees' job involvement also has a significant impact on the company (Cheng, 2011; Zopiatis et al., 2014). Many studies discovered that high employee's job involvement in their work will increase employees' performance and decrease employees' intention to change jobs and absenteeism behaviour (Hackett, Lapierre, & Hausdorf, 2001). However, most of the companies experience behavioural issues among the employees particularly low level of job involvement (Addison et al., 2000; Elankumaran,

2004). Previous researches highlighted that employees' job involvement has been recognized as the concept of work attitude and is highly emphasized on employees about the underlying factors that would motivate them including more efforts and time into their work (Galunic & Anderson, 2000; Nasuridin, Jantan, Wong & Ramayah, 2005). It is also believed that employees would display high job involvement if they are satisfied and contented with the work environment (Huang et al., 2016). Hence, to enhance the employees' job involvement, the company should fulfil the employees' needs.

Many researchers postulated that high level of job involvement employees would assert incredible effort to accomplish the organizational goals and these employees are more adverse to turnover (Kahn, 1990; Pfeffer, 1994). Moreover, employees with greater work involvement mostly have the tendency to use more mental and physical effort during working hours, their core lives are primarily directed towards the job itself and their turnover intention is very minimal (Liao & Lee, 2009). Similarly, employees that possess high level of job involvement usually reach satisfaction over work achievement because of their positive feeling towards work, willingness to commit and focus more on the company and expected to stay longer in the company (Liao & Lee, 2009). Hence, with a higher level of job involvement, usually, an employee will offer additional time and effort into their work (Huang et al., 2016). On the contrary, employees with low level of job involvement are expected to leave the organization and/or discard effort to work harder or utilize energy to do other jobs or often involve in much undesirable work (Kanungo, 1979; Rotenberry & Moberg, 2007).

Job involvement is a unidimensional construct which reflects the cognitive state of psychological identification with work (Kanungo 1982; Brown, 1996). Henceforth, according to Diefendorff et al. (2002); Lodahl and Kejner's (1965) and Kanungo's (1982) job involvement scales are extensively being used in numerous previous studies. Reeve and Smith (2001) claimed that Lodahl and Kejner's (1965) scale is the most preferred instrument by the researchers and a large amount of archival data are generated using this scale. Moreover, Lodahl and Kejner's (1965) scale has also been empirically analyzed and refined of its originality. Thus, the present study utilizes Lodahl and Kejner's (1965) scale in order to answer the research objective.

Methodology

A pilot study was employed to confirm the reliability of the instrument. Of the 159 questionnaires distributed at two fast-food brand restaurants in Kedah, Malaysia, only 126 were usable thus giving a response rate of 79% which exceeds the minimum number required for a pilot test (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). In order to measure the reliability of the instrument, the Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used, and the result indicated that employees' job involvement is reliable ($\alpha=0.900$). The researcher, then, proceeded to distribute the questionnaires to the respondents selected for this study.

A survey using questionnaires was conducted among non-executive employees of four fast-food brand restaurants in Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, Malaysia. These non-executive employees comprise of supervisors, cashiers, cooks, floor crews and riders who are not involved in the restaurants' management. The developed questionnaires are divided into two sections where Part A addresses the employees' job involvement in the company with 18 items adapted from Lodahl and Kejner (1965) and followed by Part B which is about the demographic profile of the respondents. This demographic profile comprises of gender, age,

and nationality. The questionnaire uses a five-point Likert scale ranging from “1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree”.

In term of questionnaires distribution, first, the researcher requested permission from the headquarters of these four fast-food brand restaurants through email. Upon confirmation from them, the researcher counter-checked on the exact branches that can be engaged by using a stratified random sampling method. Later, the researcher distributed the questionnaires within two months. By employing self-administered structure, using papers and pens, the questionnaires were distributed with the assistance from the restaurant managers from these four fast-food brand restaurants in Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, Malaysia. Next, all collected questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences’ (SPSS) version 22.0.

Then, the Cronbach’s coefficient alpha was used to check the reliability of the instruments. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013), the Cronbach’s coefficient alpha value of more than 0.70 indicates well accepted. In this study, the Cronbach’s coefficient alpha was 0.792 which is reliable. Finally, the researchers used descriptive analysis to analyze the 688 questionnaires.

Finding and Discussion

Out of 930 questionnaires distributed, only 688 were usable in the study and giving a response rate of 74%. Majority of the respondents in this study (61%), are male with another 39% are female. In terms of age, 56% of the respondents are in the range of 21 to 30 years old followed by 28% are 20 years old and below, while 16% of the respondents are in the range of 31 to 40 years’ old. The lowest percentage of respondents is 0.1% and is between 41 to 50 years’ old. The highest respondents in this study are Malaysians with 82% and another 18% are foreigners. Table 1 shows the respondents’ demographic profile.

Table 1: Respondents’ Demographic Profile

No.	Demographic	Particular	Frequency	Per cent (%)
1.	Gender	Male	422	61
		Female	266	39
2.	Age	20 years old and below	192	28
		21 - 30 years’ old	382	56
		31 - 40 years’ old	113	16
		41 - 50 years’ old	1	0.1
3.	Nationality	Malaysian	563	82
		Other	125	18

Eighteen items of employees’ job involvement introduced by Lodahl and Kejner (1965) were analyzed. The item with the highest mean value was “I usually show up for work a little early, to get things ready” followed by “You can measure a person pretty well by how good a job s/he does” and thirdly was “I’m really a perfectionist in terms of my work”. Meanwhile, the lowest mean value in this study was “Sometimes I lie awake at night thinking ahead of the next day” followed by the second lowest was “I’ll stay overtime to finish a job, even if I’m not paid for it” and the third lowest was “My job is everything to me”.

Based on the mean and standard deviation result, all items indicated moderate job involvement among the fast food employees in the context of Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, Malaysia as the mean value for all items are moderate. This probably because the

nature of the fast food industry is repetitive job, long working hours, low job security and less competitive (Lam & Zhang, 2003). Moreover, fast food employment is also categorized as low skilled, part-time, casual, low paid, short-term, and stop-gap employment. Hence, this kind of employment seems as demeaning, alienating, and “not big enough for the human spirit” (Allan, Bamber & Timo, 2005).

Another possibility that influence moderate job involvement is uncomfortable working environment. As mentioned by Ukandu and Ukpere (2014) fast food industry is categorized as a poor working environment and bad working conditions. Thus, since the employees spend one-third of their day at work, the employees need a good working condition (Charner & Fraser, 2003). For instance, working at the kitchen with the hot temperature consequently creates uncomfortable feeling for the employees. Hence, the companies and managers must ensure that employees can work in a comfortable environment in order to be productive.

The moderate job satisfaction among the fast food employees is also the reason for moderate level of job involvement to occur. A lot of studies have shown that many factors contributed to unsatisfactory employment in the fast food industry (Lam & Zhang, 2003; Ryan, Ghazali & Mohsin, 2011; Ukandu & Ukpere, 2014). Some of the elements are ability utilization, the need for achievement, the opportunity for advancement, company policies and practices, compensation, creativity, security, and working conditions (Mohsin & Lengler, 2015). The other factors are poor salaries and insignificant benefits (Ukandu & Ukpere, 2014). Therefore, companies and managers have to enhance satisfaction of the employees by fulfilling their needs to encourage high level of job involvement.

Work-life balance is also a factor that contributes to the moderate level of job involvement of the fast food employees. In this study, the fast food employees agreed that they have other tasks to accomplish besides their work and these tasks are more important as compared to their jobs. This indicates that work-life balance is also important for them. As mentioned by Ryan et al. (2011) the non-managerial fast-food employees face boredom at work due to highly routinized labour. Therefore, the organizations should strive to provide a good quality of working life to obtain the best result from the employees (Permarupan, Al-Mamun & Saufi, 2013).

The result also shows that overwork becomes a factor that influences moderate job involvement among employees. As stated by Ukandu and Ukpere (2014) most of the fast food employees have complained of overworking or tasks overload. Moreover, lack of supervision from the supervising managers also contributed to moderate involvement of the employees in the restaurant (Ryan et al., 2011). In sum, a few factors have been recognized as the contributing factors for moderate level of employees’ job involvement in this current study. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for all of employees’ involvement items.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Employee Involvement

No.	Item	Mean	Std. Dev.
1.	I usually show up for work a little early, to get things ready.	3.97	0.792
2.	You can measure a person pretty well by how good a job s/he does.	3.68	0.854
3.	I’m really a perfectionist in terms of my work.	3.64	0.773
4.	Sometimes I’d like to kick myself for the mistakes I make in my work.	3.53	1.003

5.	The major satisfaction in my life comes from my job.	3.47	0.954
6.	I used to care more about my work, but now other things are more important to me.	3.47	1.14
7.	Most things in life are more important than work.	3.45	0.997
8.	I feel depressed when I failed at something connected with my job	3.44	0.919
9.	The most important things that happen to me involve my work.	3.44	1.002
10.	I have other activities more important than my work.	3.41	1.128
11.	I am very much involved personally in my work.	3.39	1.118
12.	For me, mornings at work really pass quickly.	3.38	1.156
13.	I am ambitious about my work now.	3.38	1.084
14.	To me, my work is only a small part of who I am.	3.36	1.075
15.	I would probably keep working even if I didn't need the money.	3.31	0.989
16.	My job is everything to me.	3.15	1.089
17.	I'll stay overtime to finish a job, even if I'm not paid for it.	3.07	1.332
18.	Sometimes I lie awake at night thinking ahead to the next day.	3.05	1.271

Conclusion and Implications

As a conclusion, this study found that most of the fast food restaurant employees in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, Malaysia feel moderately involved in their job. This suggests that the management should improve the involvement of their employees in order to boost their job satisfaction, motivate the employees and reduce the intention to quit as well as to lower employees' turnover. Furthermore, the management is also encouraged to help the employees in getting more involve in the company's activities to make them feel happy and appreciated. As the result, the employees' attitude and behaviour will positively change and consequently, their performance will improve.

Limitation and Future Research

This study faces a few limitations. Firstly, this study solely focuses on non-managerial employees; hence it can only be generalized to the non-managerial fast-food employees. Secondly, the data was collected in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, Malaysia. Thus, the study cannot be generalized to other cities and states. In future research, other researchers can include other cities and states in Malaysia. Lastly, the study only focuses on job involvement. Future research can study other variables such as attitude, motivation, and performance.

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