

Employees of Independent Full-Service Restaurants in General Santos City, Philippines: A Descriptive Inquiry of their Perceptions at Work

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Abstract

This study focused on describing the perceptions of the employees towards organizational factors at work in terms of the quality of leadership, learning and development, rewards and recognition, work environment, and their level of organizational attachment. A descriptive approach was used in this study, which was comprised of purposefully selected employees from full-service independent restaurants. The findings showed that the level of quality of leadership, learning and development, rewards and recognition, and work environment were perceived to be excellent by the employees, while they also showed a good level of attachment towards their organization. This study offers suggestions for future research that will further provide a better understanding of employees' attitudes in this sector.

Keywords: organizational attachment; full-service restaurants; food service employees; leadership; work environment.

1. Introduction

Many organizations have been struggling to obtain employees who are dedicated to the company (Bodjrenou et al., 2019). Employees' working conditions can stimulate them to search for a better alternative job and start the intention to leave the organization voluntarily (Ahmad, 2018). This is also true for the hospitality industry, even though it is one of the more progressive industries (Doggrell, 2020). The global growth of the hospitality industry was expected to decelerate from 5.5 percent during the beginning of the pandemic to 4.1 percent in 2022 and 3.2 percent in 2023, arriving at pre-pandemic levels (The World Bank, 2022). It has been observed that high worker turnover has been a problem in the hotel industry (Yao et al., 2019). Employee turnover has also been a challenge for restaurants, especially independent or locally owned restaurants, due to limited resources to support their employees and their ability to retain them (Gordon & Parikh, 2020).

Employees who are attached to the organization tend to exhibit lower turnover and pose increased support for their organization (Luu, 2017). Organizational attachment among the employees is described as the employees'

intention to stay within the organization (Abouraia & Othman, 2017). It is the core part of a worker's life, and organizational attachment tends to make employees more satisfied with the job, more productive (Grabarek, 2019), and display better work engagement (Mura et al., 2022). This motivated the researchers to further study and understand the organizational attachment of employees and their perceptions of other organizational factors, especially among locally owned restaurants.

Empirical gaps are being highlighted in this research. Organizational attachment as a concept has not been well clarified in research, including its measurement, which hinders its theoretical advancement (Verma & Khatri, 2021). It supports the observations of De Andrade and Pedruzzi (2020) that there are few attachment measures that are in the organization's context. Although there are several studies that have explored organizational attachment, they have focused on coworkers and other members of the organization instead of the organization as a social entity (Feeney et al. 2020).

This study aimed to describe the perceptions of the employees towards organizational factors at work in terms of the quality of leadership, learning and development, rewards and recognition, work environment, and their level of organizational attachment.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Organizational Attachment

The individual's affection to bond with the organization defines organizational attachment, which manifests an individual's sense of trust and belonging to the organization (Chen et. al., 2019). Organizational attachment is a variable that has evolved from the concept of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), which found the factors of employees' commitment and staying intentions (Menon, 2015). The study by Tsui et. al. (1992) defined organizational attachment as the individual's behavioral and psychological involvement in a social unit of which he or she is a part.

Attachment theory and leadership have inspired a new view that enables a better understanding of leader-follower relations by acknowledging how attachment dynamics and the evolutionary foundation of human relations apply in organizational contexts (Mayseless & Popper, 2019). The primary thought for human-oriented leadership style is reliant upon the behavior of a leader who is strongly inspired by pioneering individuals rather than projects and/or power in accomplishing organizational strategy and objectives (Leanard, 2018; Oh & Lim, 2018). The discoveries of 21st-century leadership behavior studies reveal that organizational attachment is unequivocally conjured by the capability of the leaders to proficiently carry out human-oriented styles in performing day-to-day tasks and responsibilities. As a result, this situation might prompt higher encouragement to perform work in organizations (Chi et al., 2017).

2.2 Leadership

According to the study of Paaïs and Pattiruhu (2020), leadership is a process that can help an individual become a leader through various activities that motivate subordinates to achieve the goals of the organization. The study by Di Fabio and Peiro (2018) described that having human capital sustainability leadership has resulted in employees being more productive and efficient among organizations. In attachment styles, studies have used the idea of secure base support in interpreting leader-follower behavior (Yip. et al., 2015).

2.3 Learning and Development

In order for organizations to achieve returns from their investments, training and development programs must be effectively managed, as they are vital to the productivity of the organization's workforce (Maimuna & Yazdanifard, 2013). Employees in the organizations required knowledge, skills, and abilities. The effectiveness of learning new skills and knowledge provided by the organization has made the employees excel with their performance and behavior (Iyanda et. al., 2017). As employees seek interest in the plans of the manager for their learning and development, it is important that there are discussions about their progress, job assignments, and potential career paths (Nelson, 2018).

Several studies have reported the positive consequences of training and development programs. According to the research of Keomorakath and Suhariadi (2021), there is a phenomenon in which employee performance experience has dramatically increased after attending seminars and trainings, with employees having the takeaway of feeling good about the development of their careers. The study by Chanana (2021) showed that employees are staying, even with the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly because of the evolution of engagement activities in organizations, like webinars with industry experts, social interactions in a virtual office, and live sessions for new-skill training. Garavan et al. (2020) indicated that the development of the employees' learning, skills, and attitudes has positively resulted as organizations continue to invest in their learning and development programs.

2.4 Rewards and Recognition

Executing a reward and recognition program within the workplace can boost employee engagement and improve retention efforts. Reward, recognition, or incentives for a job well done can provide support (Pillay & Singh, 2018). While compensation and workload have become the most influential components of deciding whether an employee will stay or exit the hospitality industry (Abdou & Shehata, 2021). Hussain et. al. (2019) stated that there has been a study among employees of an organization indicating that employee rewards and recognition play an important role in employee performance. Rewards and recognition are important resources that can motivate employees to accomplish organizational goals and play a key role in employee retention and the performance of their employees. An organization must offer a diverse range of rewards to its employees (Madhani, 2020). In the study of Tehseen and Hadi (2015), organizations attain maximum achievement and employees accomplish their tasks better when they get recognition from the management.

Rewards and recognition are means for organizations to establish the value of their employees. An organization's effective rewards and recognition strategies also signal that it cares about its employees' well-being and is willing to invest in them (Madhani, 2020). A reward system that consists of financial rewards and non-financial rewards has become important to an organization in managing employees' performance (Noorazem et al., 2021). It was revealed in the research study of Gopinath et al. (2021) that appreciations, stipulations of incentives, recognition, and tangible rewards for employees have given employees determination in organizations. It was also recommended that organizations attain their goals through proper compensation of employees as another way of recognition and effective reward.

2.5 Work Environment

Kundu and Lata (2017) suggested that organizations should develop a positive work environment in order to retain employees, and the managers of the human resources department should expand towards retaining competent employees by making the work environment a supportive setup. It has been observed that a negative workplace promotes inefficiency at work (Sarwani, 2017). Supriyanto et al. (2020) claimed that it is essential for

an organization to cultivate a work environment in which employees are productive and effective in their performance. Work environment has a significant impact on employees' error rates, level of innovation, collaborative abilities, and even absenteeism. It also plays a significant role in motivating employees to become engaged with their organization (Mariza, 2016; Samson et. al. 2015; Kammoun & Dhifaoui, 2021).

Employees are more likely to be enthusiastic about their jobs when they work in an environment that is welcoming and inviting, which in turn will lead to improved performance and work discipline (Putri et al., 2019). It is stressed that an agreeable workplace and great representative connections influence worker execution since when laborers are agreeable in their workplace, they will turn out to be more focused and headed to accomplish the objectives of the association. The organization's high level of work satisfaction and high productivity within the organization demonstrate how the working environment is favorable (Putra, 2020). Managers of the organization must be the ones to observe the work climate, as this factor directly affects and forms the work environment.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and Procedure

This study used purposive sampling. There was limited data on the actual number of independent full-service restaurants in General Santos City. The City Economic Management and Cooperative Development Office (CEMCDO) of the city had given the researchers a list of 891 food service establishments in General Santos City for the year 2023. In the list, there were 30 identified and categorized as independent full-service restaurants, but only 27 actively volunteered and expressed their participation in this research. Hence, the basis for selecting the respondents were establishments that are (1) non-franchised, (2) locally owned, (3) serve meals for at least breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and (4) are located in General Santos City. There were 161 respondents who participated in this study. These were the employed personnel from independent full-service restaurants for less than 1 year, regardless of their age, sex, job position, educational attainment, and employment status.

Consents from the establishments were obtained from the owners and managers to allow the researchers to conduct the survey. Before the survey questionnaires were distributed, the researchers explained the purpose of the study to the employees and asked for their approval to participate. It was explained to the employees that only the researchers have access to the data gathered from the survey questionnaire, and confidentiality and anonymity are highly valued. The data gathered from the respondents' responses was held completely confidential, and all other concerns of the respondents were respected and safeguarded. It was ensured that participation in the research is voluntary.

The demographic data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. The mean was used in analyzing the levels of quality of the variables: leadership, learning and development, reward and recognition, and work environment. The mean was also used in analyzing the level of attachment of employees.

3.2 Instrument

This study adopted questionnaires from various research studies. The measure for organizational attachment was adopted from the Organizational Attachment Scale (OAS) developed by Feeney et al. (2020). The OAS measured attachment anxiety (items 1, 2, 3, and 4) and attachment avoidance (items 5, 6, and 7) with a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Items for scales of leadership, learning and development, rewards and

recognition, and work environment were adapted from Soliman et al. (2019). Each scale was measured using a 5-point scale with anchors ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Demographic profile of the respondents

The majority of the respondents were within the age range of 25–34 at 51% during the data gathering (as shown in Table 1). It was dominated by female employees, with more than half of the respondents at 52%. In terms of job positions, most of the respondents were in rank-and-file positions at 97%. In terms of educational attainment, most were college-level at 45%. Lastly, most have been working in the service industry for less than 1 year or less than 11 months, or 37%.

Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Age		
18-24	57	35%
25-34	82	51%
35-44	9	6%
45-54	11	7%
55- above	2	1%
Sex		
Male	77	48%
Female	84	52%
Job Position		
Manager/ Supervisor	5	3%
Rank File/Staff	156	97%
Highest Educational Attainment		
Elementary Graduate	0	0%
High School Level	14	9%
High School Graduate	43	27%
College Level	72	45%
College Graduate	32	20%
Master's Degree	0	0%
Doctoral Degree	0	0%
Years of Service in the Food Service Establishments		
Less than 1 year (11 months below)	59	37%
1 year - 3 years and 11 months	42	26%
4 years - 6 years and 11 months	32	20%
7 years - 9 years and 11 months	18	11%
10 years - 12 years and 11 months	7	4%
13 years and above	3	2%
<i>N</i>	161	100%

4.2 Quality of leadership, learning and development, rewards and recognition, work environment, and organizational attachment

Table 2 presents the level of quality of leadership, learning and development, rewards and recognition, and work environment. This shows that the quality of leadership, learning and development, rewards and recognition, and work environment were perceived to be excellent by the employees with means of 4.42, 4.40, 4.25, and 4.41, respectively. This means that in terms of leadership, employees in the independent full-service restaurant feel that their managers create an excellent positive emotional climate in the workplace and encourage teamwork and collaboration. Furthermore, employees feel that they have been excellently heard by their managers regarding their views, opinions, and suggestions, were treated with fairness, and were also helped at work. This result shows that employees have great trust and confidence in their managers. Related to this, the ability of leaders to adequately provide material and moral support in executing daily tasks such as showing concern for the welfare of the subordinate, respecting their feelings, and expressing trust in their capabilities has been an essential predictor of organizational attachment (Yiing & Ahmad, 2009; Mahdi et al., 2014; Al-Ansi et al., 2015; Ismail et al., 2016).

In terms of learning and development, employees perceived that they had excellent access to varied learning and development opportunities. They are excellently coached to develop and improve their performance. The results also show that they have been excellently provided with opportunities for their career growth and advancement. It is true that the learning and development provided by the organization affects the employees' psychological state, and when the employees receive proper training, they feel that the organization is concerned with improving their skills and abilities, making them attached to their organization (Chang, 1999).

In terms of rewards and recognition, employees feel that they have been excellently valued and rewarded by their managers. Formal recognitions, such as reward packages, are excellently implemented. Rewards are part of motivational incentives, and when the organization meets the expectations of employees through motivational incentives, the employees will lead to positive organizational attitude. It also makes the employees more satisfied at work (Baskar & Rajkumar, 2013).

In terms of the work environment, employees feel that they have an excellent working environment where fairness and positive work relationships are excellently promoted and motivated. Positive and good work environment in the organization proved that it increases employees' condition to help the organization with its goals and that a good working condition increases employees' performance (Jain & Kaur, 2014; Mokaya et al., 2013), and it fosters positive relationships with coworkers (Arfan, 2021).

The level of quality of organizational attachment is described as good, with a mean of 2.93. This implies that employees' presence is highly valued, and employees feel that they can depend on the organization. When employees exhibit good attachment behavior at work, their commitment level towards their organization strengthens as well (Verma & Khatri, 2021).

Table 2: Descriptive Results

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Leadership	4.42	Quality of leadership is Excellent
Learning and Development	4.40	Quality of learning and development is Excellent

Rewards and Recognition	4.25	Quality of rewards and recognition is Excellent
Work Environment	4.41	Quality of work environment is Excellent
Organizational Attachment	2.93	Quality of organizational attachment is Good

5. Conclusions

This study concludes that the quality of leadership, learning and development, rewards and recognition, and work environment were perceived as excellent by the employees among full-service restaurants in General Santos City. The level of quality of attachment of employees towards their organization is good, which insinuates that the presence of employees in the organization is valued and cared for.

6. Practical Implications

This study showed that the quality of leadership within the organization is excellent. This suggests that managers or owners of independent restaurants must continue to practice a positive workplace climate through the encouragement of teamwork and collaboration among employees. This can be done through regular team building.

Commonly, independent restaurants are micro, small, and medium-sized; hence, additional activities like this may add to costs. But team building may not require sophisticated venues or materials. Simple, short, yet regular after-work fellowships may be a good start for these establishments. This will also serve as an avenue where employees can express their thoughts about their job, co-workers, and the organization as a whole. This may eventually promote open communication and understanding among the staff and managers.

The quality of learning and development within the organization was revealed to be excellent. This implies that there is excellent access for employees to learning and development opportunities in the organization. Looking at the results, it is recommended that owners or managers continue to provide excellent professional growth opportunities in the organization. It can be done through the provision of relevant training and career-boosting programs aimed primarily at improving their knowledge, skills, and attitude in both personal and professional aspects. This may include seminars on improving the technical and soft skills of the employees thereby maintaining their good perception towards learning and development opportunities.

The result of the study revealed an excellent quality of rewards and recognition programs in the independent restaurant organizations. It is recommended that owners and managers should sustain these positive perceptions of employees. It can be done through formal, regular, and consistent reward and recognition programs. Recognition programs may increase its value when conducted formally as well as its relevance and message become clearer to employees. Organization may award ‘champions’ or ‘stars’ to employees of the establishment. They will become an inspiration and mentors for their other co-workers as well. Further, organization may also seek feedback from their employees for them to understand the preferences and perception of the rewards and recognition that they get as it helps the organization in adjusting and improving the reward system, ensuring that it remains effective and relevant to their jobs.

The quality of work environment with organizations were described to be excellent. Creating a physically comfortable workspace is also one of the reasons why employees want to continue working. To ensure that employees are comfortable with their workplace, organizations should continue to provide their employees with comfortable, clean, safe, secured and conducive to productivity environment.

7. Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

There were some establishments that declined and chose not to participate, and the data were limited to those who voluntarily participated in the survey. With this, further research may be extended to regional scope, cities, and areas to gather larger samples and data, hence improving the generalizability of the results, and a similar study may be conducted with other sectors. Moreover, since the present study used a descriptive approach only, other statistical analyses may be used to analyze the relationship between quality leadership, learning and development, rewards and recognition, work environment, and organizational attachment.

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