

Assessing Involuntary Turnover and Its Effect on Employees' Performance: Evidence from Coca Cola Ghana Limited

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Abstract

The research was undertaken to assess how employees' performance are affected by involuntary turnover. In carrying out the study, the researchers relied on both selective and purposive sampling as a mean of gathering data from employees of the company used for the study and the human resource manager. The main data collection instruments were interview and questionnaires and Pearson rank correlation was adopted to assess how employees' performance is influenced by involuntary turnover. Results of the study through the questionnaires obtained from the employees showed that involuntary turnover has positive effect on employees' performance as it changes the behaviour of existing employees since they do not want to fall into the same trap as their colleagues whose contract of employment were terminated by the organization. The calculated Pearson rank correlation gave a mix influence on employees' performance by involuntary turnover depending on the type of independent variable. Whilst layoff for poor performance and employee dismissal for indiscipline affect employees' performance positively, other independent variables such as pension, poor health, death and pregnancy before serving probation period affect employees' performance contrary. The recommendation based on the results from the study is for organizations to put measures such as embarking on proper human resource planning in order to reduce the negative impact on employees' performance brought by involuntary turnover.

Keywords: Involuntary turnover, employees' performance, contract of employment.

1.0 Introduction

Employee turnover in organisations has received substantial attention from both Academics and Managers. Much of this attention has been focused on understanding its causes. Implicit in this approach is the assumption that turnover is driven by certain identifiable characteristics of workers, tasks, firms, and markets, and that, by developing policies to address these characteristics, managers might reduce the occurrence of turnover in their respective organisations. As noted by several observers, however, the consequences of turnover have received significantly less attention from researchers (Staw 2001, Mobley 1982, Glebbeek and Bax 2004). To maintain an environment that supports employee satisfaction and engagement, organisations must try to ensure that good performers want to stay with the organisation and that employees whose performance are chronically low are encouraged or forced to leave. Both these challenges involve employee turnover, that is, employees leaving the organisation. When the organisation initiates the turnover, the result is said to be involuntary. Examples include terminating an employee contract of employment for violating the terms and conditions on which the employment is based. In general, organisations try to avoid the need for involuntary turnover and to minimize voluntary turnover, especially among top performers. This effort as indicated in the literature of Blake (2006) supports the fact that a 10% reduction in employee turnover is worth more money than a 10% increase in productivity or sales. Effective human resource management can help an organisation minimize both kinds of turnover especially with respect to involuntary turnover despite the fact that with a company's best efforts at selection, training and compensation, some employees will fail to meet expectations or will violate company policies. And when this happens organisations need to apply a discipline programme that might ultimately lead to discharging the individual. For a number of reasons, discharging employees can be very difficult but potentially important way to maintain high performance and maintaining the organization's culture. Analyses of the costs associated with turnover yield surprisingly high estimates. With these high estimates, it is important for organisations to understand that general turnover rates in the workforce can have a serious impact on an organisation's profitability and even survival. This cost is an important economic issue because according to the Bureau of Labour Statistics 2005, about one-fifth of workers voluntarily leave their job each year and an

additional one-sixth are fired. Also, high employee turnover rate has been considered as one of the highest drivers for direct and opportunity cost to rise for companies, Kukreja (2011). One of the companies that have more subsidiaries around the world is Coca Cola Company Limited and this presumes that with the large number of subsidiaries, they are expected to employ more people to fill the vacant positions that may occur in these subsidiaries. The more employees organization have, the high likelihood that some may violate the terms and conditions on which the organization's contract of employment is based and hence involuntary turnover will tend to be inevitable. For a number of reasons, discharging employees can be very difficult but potentially important way to maintain high performance and maintaining the organization's culture. Analyses of the costs associated with turnover yield surprisingly high estimates. With these high estimates, it is important for organisations to understand that general turnover rates in the workforce can have a serious impact on an organisation's profitability and even survival. In a Coca Cola Retailing Research, Blake 2006 (as cited in Kukreja 2011) estimated that about US\$5.8 billion annually are lost in the supermarket sector alone due to employee turnover. More importantly, this figure significantly reduces the profitability of firms to as much as 40%. Apart from this, the cost of involuntary turnover can be attributed to the fact that, it demoralizes employees that what has happened to their colleagues can equally be extended to them and as such they tend to slow down putting up their best which in turn affects productivity. Despite the fact that involuntary turnover can be costly to organizations, some commentators are also of the view that, involuntary turnover has positive effects on organizations and as such should be encouraged. To them, it is the means by which an organization can separate the grain from the chaff. It enables organizations to inject new blood into the system as a result of new recruits and also make employees to respect the terms and conditions on which their contract of employment is based. Looking from these two different opinions, it is necessary for one to assess if involuntary turnover affects existing employees performance negatively or otherwise.

2.0 Methodology

The main objective underlying the study is to assess the effect of involuntary turnover on employees' performance. In achieving this objective, the researchers used Coca Cola Company as the study area based on the fact that it is the only multinational company in Ghana that has sister organizations almost across the whole world with a total workforce of 146,200 as at end of December 2011. With this huge total workforce, involuntary turnover is inevitable since it is difficult to get all employees to comply with the terms and conditions on which their contract of employment is based. The target population of the study was the entire employees and Management of Coca Cola Company but limited to the subsidiary in Ghana. With regard to the employees, the researchers resorted to the use of selective sampling and the basis of choosing this method of sampling was based on the fact that not all the employees were willing to cooperate with the researchers in gathering the data and therefore those who were willing were selected for the study. In all, the researchers identified 60 employees from different departments who were willing to cooperate and they were selected for the study. Talking about management, purposive sampling was used and the Human Resource Manager was selected for the study because of her specialized knowledge in labour related issues. The data collection instrument used was questionnaires and interview and they were directed to the employees selected for the study and the human resource manager respectively. Likert type questions were used for the employees and it centres on the causes of labour turnover in the company as well as the effect of these turnovers on their performance. The researchers also used Pearson rank correlation to assess the relationship between involuntary turnover attributed to indiscipline, non performance, retirement or pension, death, incapability (poor health), getting pregnant before serving the probation period and existing employees' performance. Unstructured interview was also used to solicit information from the human resource manager to clarify some of the answers that were provided by the employees in the questionnaire with regard to involuntary turnover and how it affects the performance of the existing employees.

3.0 Literature Review

An involuntary termination means a severance from employment due to the independent exercise of the unilateral authority of the employer to terminate the employment, other than due to the employee's implicit or explicit request, where the employee was willing and able to continue performing services (Naveh and Erez 2004) An involuntary termination may include the employer's failure to renew a contract at the time the contract expires. Some researchers are of the view that involuntary termination does not include the death of an employee or absence from work due to illness or disability. To them, the determination of whether a termination is involuntary is based on all the facts and circumstances. For example, if a termination is designated as voluntary or as a resignation, but the facts and circumstances indicate that, absent such voluntary termination, the

employer would have terminated the employee's services, and that the employee had knowledge that the employment relationship would be terminated, this can be classified involuntary. Involuntary terminations may occur for a variety of reasons including employee malfeasance or redundancy (Society for Human Resource Management 2013). From the literature of Bowen (1995), involuntary turnover refers to an employee's discharge by the organization. To him, involuntary turnover happens for a number of reasons, including a decline in corporate revenue, retirement, or career changes. In every case, an employee's departure is not a result of a negative relationship with the employer. He adds that in most cases, involuntary turnover is unavoidable and part of the cost of business and life. This understanding of involuntary turnover is reflected in the explanation provided by Haskel (2001). To the writer, involuntary turnover is caused by layoffs and similar actions where the decision for an employee to leave is made by the company and not the employee. In a research on involuntary turnover amongst executives, Shen and Cho (2005) explain involuntary turnover to be the situation whereby executives are forced to leave the organization for reasons other than age or health concerns. Some of these reasons include but not limited to non-performance and the need to align with changing environmental demands. March (1991) adding their voice to involuntary turnover by limiting it to tertiary institutions indicated that an organization can take such action as a result of gross unethical or criminal behaviour such as the use of university funds or release of confidential information. This can also be extended to misrepresentation of facts and employees unwillingness to adhere to terms and conditions of employment. Since involuntary turnover has its own effects, it is necessary for organization to measure them and make decisions as to what extent they are benefiting from such practice. To measure involuntary turnover, Jot (2011) is of the view that an organization can use several methods to measure such turnover. This to him includes the separation, accession, replacement and the influx methods. Despite these methods that can be used by organizations to measure its turnover, Mirvis and Lawler (2004) and Benedict (2012) are of the view the most frequent ones used by organizations is the influx method which involves the combination of both the separation and the replacement method. Though measurement of organization's involuntary turnover can be very vital in making decisions such as how competent the organization's recruitment and selection system is and also how employees are committed to obeying the rules and regulations of the organization, getting the measurement accurately is not an easy task. For instance, according to Mowday (1982), most organizations record reasons for turnover as part of routine personnel record keeping, and from these data, it would be very difficult for one to justify whether a particular turnover was initiated and implemented by the employer or it was the employee who requested for it. Since reasons taken from company records cannot be trusted blindly, it is obvious that seeing a company's record and interpreting it as voluntary or involuntary may be ambiguous. Again, from the literature of Martin (2003), the measurement becomes difficult as employers in a face saving effort decide not to record the true cause of the turnover. There can be instance where instead of recording turnover as 'resign' will record it as 'fired'. From the words of Ruby (2002), whether an organization turnover rate is accurate or not may have a serious effect on the future performance of the organization as it negatively affects the morale of existing employees. This follows that organizations need to be circumspect in their recruitment and selection by getting employees who will be committed to the rules and regulations of the organization so that internal factors that will make an organization to commit such acts are avoided.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

The findings start from looking at the socio demographic information of the respondents with respect to age, gender and educational level since these variables play important role in terms of determining motivational needs with respect to how employees performance are affected when friends, relatives and colleagues leave the organization unwillingly. The data with respect to these variables indicate a greater portion of male (75%) as against female of (25%). Again, majority of the respondents fall within the age of 30-40 (69.5%) as against minority of 50-60 (8.3%). With regard to educational level, most of the respondents representing (56.7%) had a first degree whilst (23.8%) represents the minority. For any analysis to be done on the impact of turnover on employees' performance, it is prudent for us to examine the causes of turnover (both voluntary and involuntary) using the company selected for the study. In examining the causes of these turnovers, questionnaires sent to existing employees to solicit their views on what might cause an organization to sack them and replace with new employees or what might motivate them to become 'turnovers' of their organizations indicate the following responses:

Table 1: Causes of Turnover at Coca Cola Ghana Limited

	D	U	A	SA	Mean score
Voluntary causes					
Disgust with current working conditions			37(61.7)	23(38.8)	4.38
Better pay from a labour market competitor			43(71.7)	17(28.3)	4.28
Change in desired career path	32(53.3)	7(11.7)	21(35.0)		2.82
Desire for more leisure time			32(53.3)	28(46.7)	4.47
Desire to learn new skills on a new job	12(20.0)	5(8.3)	43(71.7)		3.52
Boredom with current job			23(38.3)	37(61.7)	4.62
Low job satisfaction			13(21.7)	47(78.3)	4.78
Involuntary causes					
Death of worker			14(23.3)	46(76.7)	4.77
Pension			12(20.0)	48(80.0)	4.80
Lay off for Poor performance (LPP)			37(61.7)	23(38.3)	4.38
Lay off for indiscipline (LINDIS)			23(38.3)	37(61.7)	4.62
Health		9(15.0)	27(45.0)	24(40.0)	4.25
Child care or pregnancy (CHCARE)			47(78.3)	13(21.7)	4.23

[1 = strongly disagree (SD), 2 = disagree (D), 3 = neutral (U), 4 = agree (A), 5 = strongly agree (SA)] Percentages are in parentheses

From the responses above, out of the total respondents (n=60) surveyed, the majority (61.7%) agreed that the bad working conditions at Coca Cola Ghana Limited is a potential contributory factor for them to become turnovers. This is further evident in the mean score of 4.38. The study also revealed that the majority (71.7%) of the respondents regard better pay from labour market competitors as a voluntary cause of turnover. However, the majority of the surveyed respondents disagreed with change in desired career path as a major cause of voluntary turnover at Coca Cola Ghana Limited. The mean scores of 4.47 and 3.52 indicated that the respondents agreed to 'desire to learn new skills on a new job' and boredom with current job as also major causes of voluntary turnover at Coca Cola Ghana Limited. On the side of causes of involuntary turnover, job satisfaction with a mean score of 4.78 indicates respondents' strong agreement to it as a major cause of involuntary turnover. Out of the total respondents surveyed for the study, the majority (78.3%) strongly agreed to death of employees as a major cause of involuntary turnover at Coca Cola Ghana Limited. The majority (76.7%) of the respondents surveyed also strongly agreed to pension or retirement as a major cause of involuntary turnover in the organisation. Lay-off for indiscipline reasons was also strongly agreed to as a major cause of involuntary turnover at the company. Other factors that were agreed to by the respondents as major causes of involuntary turnover were lay-off for poor performance, health issues and child care or pregnancy. As it has been the objective of the study to assess the effect of involuntary turnover on employees' performance, data gathered through the questionnaires distributed to the employees of the company used for the study gave the following responses:

Table 2: Effects of Involuntary Turnover on Employee Performance

	SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean Score
Increase in employee productivity			23(38.3)	37(61.7)		3.62
Decrease in employee Absenteeism			4(6.7)	38(63.3)	18(30.0)	4.23
Improve employees' commitment to duty				43(71.7)	7(11.7)	3.45
Increase in employee job involvement				39(65.0)	21(35.0)	4.35
Improvement in the disciplinary behaviour			7(11.7)	21(35.0)	32(53.3)	4.42

[1 = strongly disagree (SD), 2 = disagree(D), 3 = neutral(U), 4 = agree(A), 5 = strongly agree(SA)] Percentages are in parentheses

Source: Field Survey, 2013

From the data above, out of the total respondents (n=60) surveyed for the study, the majority (61.7%) agreed to increase in employee productivity as an effect of involuntary turnover. This means when a company dismiss its employees as a result of poor performance, it keeps other employees alert that the same punitive measures can be extended to them and as such the antidote to avert this unpleasant situation is to work hard to increase productivity. Again from the data above, it shows that 63.3% agree that involuntary turnover change employees' behaviour positively by reducing the rate at which they absent themselves from work. With regard to

involuntary turnover on commitment to work and employee job involvement, the data shows majority of employees of 71.7% and 65% respectively agreeing to the fact that involuntary turnover makes employees to be committed to their work as well as improving the rate at which they involve themselves in the job which they do. In terms of disciplinary behaviour and involuntary turnover, it is evident that majority of the respondents (53.3%) strongly agree that terminating employee contract of employment due to non conformity of rules and regulations changes employees behaviour positively. Looking from all the responses with regard to the effect of involuntary turnover on employees' performance, it clear that employees performance are affected positively when this act is initiated and implemented by the organization. As a means of ascertaining the responses given by the respondents, the researchers also used Pearson rank correlation to assess the relationship between employees performance (dependent variable) and the independent variable (involuntary turnover) which involves employee pension, lay off for poor performance, dismissal for indiscipline, Poor health, death and pregnancy before serving probation.

Table 3: Correlation between Involuntary Turnover and Employee Performance

	EMPE	Pension	LPP	DINDIS	PORHE	PREBSP	Death
EMPE	1						
Sig. (2-tailed)							
N	60						
Pension	-.718***	1					
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000						
N	60	60					
LPP	.581***	.634***	1				
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000					
N	60	60	60				
DINDIS	.649***	.632***	.698***	1			
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000				
N	60	60	60	60			
PORHE	-.518***	.523***	.537***	.647***	1		
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000			
N	60	60	60	60	60		
PREBSP	-.522***	.505***	.515***	.630***	-.969***	1	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		
N	60	60	60	60	60	60	
Death	-.261***	.193***	.139**	.147***	-.048*	.577***	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.004	.002	.390	.000	
N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

* Not significant

From Table 4, the Pearson rank correlation revealed a negative relationship (-0.718) between employees going on pension or retirement and employee performance (EMPE) at a significance of 1%. This therefore indicates that any significant increase in retirement or pension of employees could reduce the performance of other employees. This relationship could be attributed to the fact that new employees often learn from the older and experienced employees and so their departure will deprive them of the ability to tap from such experiences. The non-parametric correlation revealed positive correlation (0.581) between employee lay-off (LPP) for non-performance and employee performance. This implies that any significant increase in lay-off of employees of the company could lead to improvement in employee performance. This relationship comes from the backdrop that any lay-off for non-performance would encourage other workers to up their performance in order to avoid any similar punitive measure extended to them. The Pearson rank test further revealed a positive correlation (0.649) between employee dismissal for indiscipline (DINDIS) and the performance of other employees at a significant level of 1%. This also implies that any increase in dismissal emanating from employee indiscipline could also lead to improvement in the performance of other employees. However, involuntary turnover as a result of pregnancy before the employee finishes serving her probation (PREBSP) negatively influences the performance of other employees at a significant level of 1%. This negative relationship with employees performance could largely be attributed to the fact that, despite the fact that the law will not be harsh on the employer when an employee is dismissed whilst still serving on probation, it has a serious negative effect on the emotions of employees especially the female since they know pregnancy is part of human life which cannot be avoided in

future if not now. On the issue of Death of employees and its effect on employees' performance, the data (-0.261) above shows a negative relationship between the variable and employees' performance. This negative relationship could also be attributed to the fact that, the death of experienced employee can affect the performance of existing employees since they may not get the opportunity to tap from the experience of the dead. Again, replacing the dead employee with new recruit can also affect the performance of the existing employees since they have to spend some time out of their work supervising the new recruit before they become conversant with the job. Last, at 1% significance level, there is negative relationship (-0.518) between involuntary turnover as a result of poor health and employees' performance. This negative correlation can also be attributed to the explanations given to the relationship between death of employees and employees' performance. With regard to the interviews that were conducted with the Human Resource Manager, it was emphasized that involuntary turnover is a parasite to the progress of the organization and as such the company tries to avoid taking such action. To her, employees become one family when they work together for a long period of time and when such cohesion and solidarity breaks as a result of involuntary turnover initiated and implemented by the organization, it affects the morale of the workers and hence their performance. Looking from the responses of the Human Resource Manager, it presupposes that apart from those involuntary turnovers that are inevitable such as death of employees and incapability as a result of long illness, organizations should try to develop a positive culture and get all of its employees to be well committed to the culture so that always employees subordinate their individuals interest to that of the organization.

5.0 Conclusion

The main objective underlying the study was to assess involuntary turnover and its effect on employees' performance using Coca Cola Company Ghana as the study area. It was evident through the responses of the employees selected for the study that the major cause of involuntary turnover in the company is terminating contract of employment of the employee as a result of the employee going on pension or retirement. This was shown in 80% of the respondents who strongly agree to this assertion. Again on how employees' performance (dependent variable) is affected by involuntary turnover (independent variable), it was revealed through the calculated Pearson rank correlation that there is a mix of how the independent variables which include pension, pregnancy before probation, death of employee, poor health, poor performance and dismissal for indiscipline influences the dependent variable (employees' performance). Whilst layoff for poor performance and employee dismissal for indiscipline affect employees' performance positively, the other variables are on the contrary as they affect employees' performance negatively. It is therefore concluded from the study that, whilst organizations need to encourage involuntary turnover as a result of poor performance and indiscipline, they should discourage such actions that may be initiated and implemented as a result of employees becoming pregnant before probation period and poor health. This discouragement can be made possible since it is possible for organizations to put measures in place that will promote the health of the worker as well as becoming pregnant after probation period. On the issue of retirement and death of employee, though it affect employees performance negatively, its occurrence is inevitable due to 'nature' but what is important is for organizations to embark on proper human resource planning so that new recruits who succeed retirees and dead employees do not spend more time receiving supervision from existing employees since the time experienced employees spend coaching and supervising new recruits can affect their total time needed to complete their own work.

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