Employee Retention of First Line Managers of Thailand's Food Industry

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Abstract: *Human resources are the essential part of every organization. Currently, most organizations have shifted towards the technology-driven trend. However, human resources are still considered as a required factor to operate technology. As a result of technological improvement in each and every area of the economy, it creates more opportunities for businesses and it is the matter of human resources of organizations to catch these opportunities. There have been more challenges in terms of managing resources of the organizations because not only must the management of resources be conducted, but retainment of all resources must also be well-organized. Acquiring skilled personnel is not only the important job of any organizations. Securing them so that they will not leave the organizations is also crucial as employees' knowledge and skills express companies' abilities to be economically competitive. Therefore, companies need to satisfy their employees which is considered another challenge for the companies nowadays. Taking into account the issue of retention to any organization, this study aims to review the various available literature and research work on employee retention and the factors affecting employee retention and job satisfaction among the employees.*

Keywords: Employee Retention, First Line Manager, Food Industry

Introduction

One of the factors which is essential for human life is food. Therefore, food industry plays important role economically. The industry brings agricultural raw materials to process into products during productions. Thailand is one of the top countries which exports rice, canned fruit, sugar, seafood, meat, vegetables and fruits. In 2017, Thai food industry was expected to grow which would be positive impact for the domestic economy. It would also help boost the global economy as well. As a result, people would spend more money on food consumption. This has encouraged an increase in the number of foreign tourists in Thailand and the number of Thai tourist travelling overseas.

High-performing organizations are losing their leaders and inventors of innovations (Becker B., & Huselid, 1999). Companies' efficiency and productivity have been undermined by their turnover (Kurb M., 2011). Productivity, knowledge and contacts are taken along by employees who have left their companies (Becker B., & Huselid, 1999). High turnover impedes productivity, quality, and profitability which result in both financial and non-financial consequences (Iqbal, 2010). Advertising, recruiting, selecting, and hiring new employees are financial expenses that companies need to bear with. Moreover, the companies also have to put up with the expenses regarding time, costs of materials and equipment, cash expenditures, and loss of productivity. The unmeasurable financing costs are the loss of customers and damaged employee morale (Michaels & Handfield & Axelrod, 2001).

Human resource development is important in terms of sustainably develop employees in order to increase their efficiency and productivity in work and help retain those employees with the organizations.

According to the aforementioned research in previous paragraph, this study's goal is to study retention management of first line managers as it is important thing to keep talented workers in the organizations. First line managers keep middle managers and executive managers informed of problems and successes at ground level in companies. Nowadays, several organizations have encountered some challenges in managing their resources and retaining their workers. Every company would like to retain their efficient workers to keep working with the company. Therefore, all companies are now not only facing the challenge in management, but also the retention challenge as well as they have to satisfy their skilled workers so that these workers will not leave to work somewhere else. The importance and sensitivity of the issue of retention to any organizations have become things that must be taken into account.

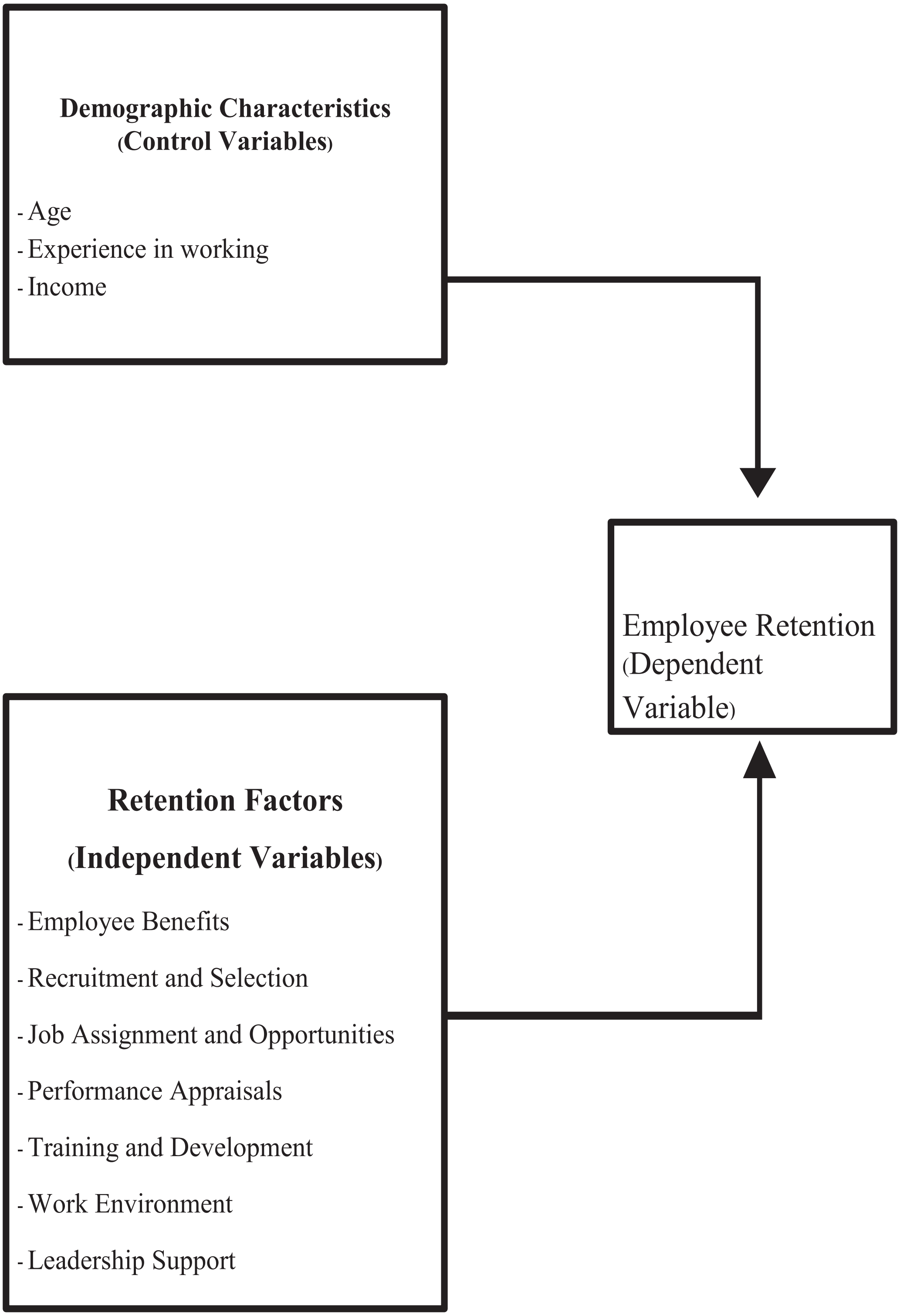
As retention management problem can be observed, the researcher has chosen a food business with a high retention level of top management in order to study the retention strategies of first-line managers in the selected food industry of Thailand to obtain a guideline to maintain personnel.

In order to achieve the organizational goals, human resources are the resource driving organizations to succeed in those goals. Efficient human resources are required for successful business operations. However, many organizations still face the lack of human resources for operational level, especially in production lines. Inability to maintain workers to keep working with companies is considered a great loss of such companies as they would have to endure more expense arisen after those workers left the companies. The cost of recruiting new employees is more expensive as after the companies obtain these new workers, they will have to train these workers to be skillful in their departments. Obtaining new workers and training them take more time and effort than trying to retain the old workers. It causes discontinuity of work as well when the old skilled workers leave the companies. For organizations to retain their employees, the retention strategies need to be used to attract and keep the current workers satisfied with the positions they have. If companies can successfully maintain their workforce, they are likely to achieve their business goals more. The companies that are able to manage their human resources well are likely to survive and sustain in business world. Keeping employees to work in companies willingly and happily is crucial thing.

Research Objective

To discover the factors of employee retention of first line managers in Thai food industry.

Conceptual Framework



Concepts and Theories of Conceptual Framework

Definition of Employee Retention

The employee turnover is not a recently discovered issue. It has been relevant to several company in fact and is expected to have a greater impact in the future. According to many analysts, it was believed that by the end of 2008 the job vacancy rate would be up to 20 millions jobs unfilled. This number is approximately two time larger than the current rate. The shortfall up to 30 million employees was projected by some analysts (Galbreath, 2001). There are several scenarios that show that turnover is a problem such as a blue-chip manufacturer announces 53,000 layoffs world- wide, a leading financial institution plans to shed 8,000 jobs, and a Big-Three automobile maker cuts 1,200 positions in a single plant. These problematic films are Boeing, Citi Bank Group, and General Motors. The headlines are not from yesterday's paper. They are from the headlines from the end of 1998. It was when the economy hit the peak. Employee turnovers of these companies caught everyone's attention. (Bernasek, 2001).

Concepts and Theories of Employee Retention

The employee retention has been emphasized by the recent publicity as it is widely written on countless articles and books. This has brought the issue to the attention of managers and specialists. The retention articles are regularly published in some magazines like Fortune, Forbes, and Business Week. There are some books describing the competition for talents and suggested solutions and workshops and seminars set up for retention and turnover issues. These topics have become main focuses in business and professional literature.

When the economy encounters its temporary decline, the employee retention has gained more recognition. 13 strategies to deal with a downturn in business has been written in Fortune magazine. along with three rules. One of the rules was "when times get tough, many organizations ease up on recruiting, figuring a slow economy will drive more applicants their way. They spend less on training as a way to raise profits quickly without doing immediate damage to the business." As mentioned by Fortune magazine, this approach of firms' thinking is not an ideal idea (Charan and Colvin, 2001). Fortune magazine is one of the few major business publications focusing on the importance of recruiting quality people during a downturn while continuing to invest in their training and development.

Factors Influencing Employee Retention

There 2 categories of the definitions of factors influencing employee retention defined by Jack L. and Adele O. (2003) which are external and internal issues as follow:

For external factors, there are the factors as follows:

The first factor is economic growth; most industrialized countries and many emerging countries have confronted long economic expansions.

The second factor is **slower growth of job seekers**; contrarily, the number of job seekers seems to be lower annually, especially in the United States; this shows the lower growth rate. As a result, many organizations have fewer job seekers and more job vacancies (Bolch, 2001).

The third factor is **unemployment rate at low level**; the low unemployment rate leads to an increase in turnover as there are more available job positions than **shortage of special skills**. This circumstance reflects the short supply of workers with special skills, particularly in high-tech occupations, health care, and other critical areas.

There were new reports stating the demand of recruiting people increased while the number of people applying for jobs decreased. This situation associated with high-tech specialists, engineers, and scientists, where employment opportunities was greater than the supply. This occurred in the entry-level positions as well, such as those in the fast-food industry.

According to this unmatched demand and supply circumstance, entrepreneurship may face tremendous challenges in the future (Bernstein, 2002). These recent years, there are many small businesses that have been established, particularly in those businesses created by individuals who used to be personnel in large organizations. They have brought their expertise with them to set up their own things. The situation in the United States showing that there is an increase in baby-boomers taking early retirement to start their own businesses. Some businesses established by these ex-workers of the big firms have turned to be rivals of those big companies themselves. The boom of entrepreneurship has become the global trend as many businesses have been newly established making the United States turn to be in the second rank after South Korea and slightly ahead of Brazil (The Economist, 2001). People have changed their jobs for more favourable surroundings. There is a significant number of job changes due to the reason that people change their jobs to more favourable weather areas. Particularly in the United States, it is outstandingly obvious in the western states, the coastal areas, the southern states, and other areas where year-round climates are milder. According to the climate reason, people have migrated and changed their occupations. In addition, this type of job change has so little to do with organizations, but locations of them.

For internal factors, there are the factors as follows:

The first factor associates with **internal changes in organizations** which influence the excessive turnover; these changes may be the issues for employee, for example, structural changes within the organization. Moreover, changes in employees' attitudes towards work and their employers drive them to have intensives to change their jobs which create a tremendous impact on turnover.

The second factor is the **lack of company loyalty**. The deterioration of company loyalty has occurred these recent years. According to Capelli (1999), there are some workers confirming that loyalty of employees to most American companies is nonexistent. Before many people would appreciate and loyal to their jobs. They would stay in their companies for a long time. People back then had the sense of pride and were proud of their positions in workplaces more than nowadays. For 40 years passed, there have been numerous studies continuing to study and figure out that loyalty is not only low, but continues to remain low. Moreover, it seems to decline over time. However, according (Cole, 2000), this research indicates the contradiction that employees want to remain with an organization/organization for longer periods, creating an opportunity for the organization/organizations to deal with such issue (Cole, 2000).

The third factor is **desire for challenging and useful work**; many people would like to enhance their abilities. They want to become more creative. Therefore, they enter for more challenging, and useful work. This kind of desire has evolved through years of work. However, for some certain people, their jobs mean to them as their identities as they define who they are. People tend to have incentive to change their job positions when they feel the need of more improvements and more significant contributions. When they feel like they cannot achieve those goals with their current jobs, people tend to change their jobs and look for ones where they can earn their **autonomy, flexibility, and independence**. People most want to have their freedom and independence to control their own work and work environment. Nowadays, telecommuting has eased off the work from far distance. Therefore, it is required for many organizations to offer more flexible work structure and work with **performance-based rewards**. More employees seek for rewarding systems that reflect individual contribution and individual performance. People will search for organizations that reward them according to their contributions and they have the needs of **recognition for participation, accomplishments, and contributions**. People want to be rewarded by what they do and have achieved. This can be in the for of monetary rewards. They also need periodic feedbacks to motivate them. Feedbacks and recognition have been studied in motivational research for years. Workers seek for workplaces where they can be acknowledged. They **desire for all types of benefits**. In fact, there are many people expect for all forms of compensations. So, they search for organizations with particular benefits. This reason makes companies have to adjust their programs and offer all types of perks. Nowadays, many employees prefer organizations which can provide them **new skills**. Developing by learning new technology, processes, and projects have become many workers' desires, particularly in the technical area.

Employees view skills acquisition as something providing their job security not their seniority. Therefore, people search for places that are willing to invest in them. Job trainings, tuition payments, and continuous development opportunities attract people to work with organizations which are able to provide **career growth in all directions**. People want to obtain and develop new skills and chances to grow in their workplaces. When people feel like there is no room for them to improve anymore in their organizations, they will move to new places which can provide them opportunities to grow. This is the **desire to be on the leading edge**.

Organizations with a strong reputation which are considered to be on the leading edge of technology or product development will attract people. It is natural thing that everyone want to get the best thing and be at the best place. These high-profile organizations admired by many people are attractive for everyone. When people realise that their current work situation cannot be improved, they may move to one that does. This is the **desire for competitive compensation**.

The most outstanding factor for internal changes in organizations are increased salary and work schedules. People want more desirable compensation when the time goes by. Their compensations should be worthy of their efforts. According to this reason, compensation levels are things that have outgrown other economic indicators. Some people have the **need for a caring and supportive environment**. They value a caring and supportive environmental workplaces. They will not tolerate with harsh attitudes, continuous conflict, and unappreciative bosses. If people who value supportive environment encounter these things, they will have their incentive to change their jobs. People who have the **need for work/life balance** will seek for workplaces where they can establish a balance between their work and personal lives. There are fewer employees are willing to work an excessive number of hours, cope with unusual working conditions, or tolerate highly stressful and demanding situations. Many workers have focused more on their involvement in family activities and social networks as well as time for religious commitments. If any organizations can provide proper work/life balance, such organizations will attract people who search for work/life balance. (Brady, 2002).

Research Methodology

Population and sampling

The population in this study is the group of first line managers who are the employees in food industry companies which have registered with the Department of Industrial Works and have employed more 50 persons (a big factory must have 50 employees according to the Department of Industrial Works), totaling 432 participants.

The researcher using sample size recommended by Yamane = 208, however the researcher can collect information at 242 first line managers.

Research Tools

The instrument used in this research were questionnaires developed by the researcher through studying document, concepts, theories, and research related to the employee retention of first line managers of Thailand's food industry.

Data Collection

Researcher delivered the letters of cooperation to the HR manager of Thailand's food industry to request permission for data collection from the first line managers in Thailand's food industry. The questionnaires were completed via a Google form. There were 432 participants. After the questionnaires were completed, the inspection and selection of the completed questionnaires were carried out to code base on the weight of each score recording the data to a computer for data analysis using a package software on the computer.

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the returned questionnaires based on the Statistics Package for Social Science (SPSS) for Windows software which is used to analyze the data by using descriptive statistics in the present study. The descriptive measures were related to the "description and/or summarization of the data obtained for a group of individual units of analysis" (Welman et al., 2005). Average, frequencies, standard deviations, correlations, one way ANOVA, and t-test were conducted to find out the factors of employee retention of first line managers in Thailand's food industry.

Results of Data Analysis

Table 1 General information of respondents

(n = 242)

General information	Amount	Percentage
Age		
Ages between 20 -30 years	38	15.7
Ages between 31 -40 years	131	54.1
Ages between 41 -50 years	45	18.6
Age over 51 years	28	11.6
Work experience		
Less than 5 years	39	16.1
Between 5 -10 years	90	37.2
Between 11 -15 years	36	14.9
Between1 6 -20 years	31	12.8
More than 20 years	46	19.0
Income		
Less than 20,000 baths	47	19.4
Between 20,001 –300,00 baths	58	24.0
Between 30,001 –40,000 baths	50	20.7
Between 40,001 –50,000 baths	44	18.2
More than 50,001 baths	43	17.8

From Table 1, the general information of the respondents showed that

Most age of the respondents was aged between 31-40 years, 131 people, representing 54.1 percent, followed by age 41-50 years, 45 people, representing 18.6 percent, aged between 20-30 years, 38 people, representing 15.7 percent and the least number is over 51 years old, 28 people, accounting for 11.6 percent.

Working experience found that most of the respondents had work experience between 5 - 10 years, 90 people, representing 37.2 percent, followed by more than 20 years, 46 people, representing 19.0 percent, less than 5 years, 39 people, representing 16.1 percent, and between 11 and 15 years, 36 people, representing 14.9 percent, and the lowest was between 16 - 20 years, 31 people, representing 12.8 percent.

Incomes found that most of the respondents had income between 20,001 - 30,000 baths, 58 people, representing 24.0 percent, followed by income between 30,001 - 40,000 baths, 50 people, representing 20.7 percent, income less than 20,000 baths, 47 people, representing 19.4 percent, income between 40,001 - 50,000 baths, 44 people, representing 18.2 percent, and the least income more than 50,001 baths, 43 people, representing 17.8 percent.

Part 2, Opinions level of employee retention of first line manager in Thailand Food Industry

Set the criteria for interpretation as follows

4.51 - 5.00 represents the highest level of opinions.
3.51 - 4.50 represents a high level of opinions.
2.51 - 3.50 represents a moderate level of opinions.
1.51 - 2.50 represents a low level of opinions.
1.00 - 1.50 represents the lowest level of opinions.

Table 2 Opinions level of employee retention of first line manager in Thailand Food Industry

Opinion issues	Mean	Std .Deviation	Opinions level
1.Employee Benefits	3.73	0.753	high
2.Recruitment and Selection	3.88	0.729	high
3.Job Assignment and Opportunities	3.97	0.642	high
4.Performance Appraisals	3.98	0.775	high
5.Training and Development	3.96	0.741	high
6.Work Environment	4.07	0.646	high
7.Leadership Support	4.02	0.636	high
8.Employee Retention	3.87	0.791	high
Total	3.94	0.585	**high**

From Table 2, it was found that the opinions level of employee retention of first line manager in Thailand Food Industry was at a high level ($\bar{x}$ =3.94, SD =0.585). The most opinions were Work Environment, opinions were at a high level ($\bar{x}$ =4.07, SD =0.646). Followed by Leadership Support, opinions were at a high level ($\bar{x}$ =4.02, SD =0.636). Performance Appraisals, opinions were at a high level ($\bar{x}$ =3.98, SD =0.775). Job Assignment and Opportunities, opinions were at a high level ($\bar{x}$ =3.97, SD =0.642). Training and Development, opinions were at a high level ($\bar{x}$ =3.96, SD =0.741). Recruitment and Selection, opinions were at a high level ($\bar{x}$ =3.88, SD =0.729). Employee Retention, opinions were at a high level ($\bar{x}$=3.87,SD =0.791). The least was

Employee Benefits, opinions were at a high level ($\bar{x}$=3.73, SD = 0.753) with details in each issue as shown in Table 3 - 7 as follows.

Table 3 Employee with different ages affect to employee retentions

(n = 242)

Employee with different ages affect to employee retentions		**Sum of Squares**	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Employee Retention	Between Groups	1.918	3	0.639	1.020	0.384
	Within Groups	149.093	238	0.626		
	Total	151.010	241			

From Table 3, it was found that the age difference, Employee Retention opinions level was not different.

- Employee with different experience in working affect to employee retentions. The statistic is ANOVA

Table 4 Employee with different experience in working affect to employee retentions

(n = 242)

Employee with different experience in working affect to employee retentions		**Sum of Squares**	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Employee Retention	Between Groups	9.413	4	2.353	3.939	0.004*
	Within Groups	141.597	237	0.597		
	Total	151.010	241			

From Table 4, it was found that the working experience was different, Employee Retention opinions level differed statistically at a level of 0.05. The comparison of individual pairs is shown in Table 5 as follows.

Table 5 Comparison of opinions level of Employee retention of first line manager in Thailand Food Industry in terms of Employee Retention and work experience

(n = 242)

Respondent group		Less than 5 years	Between 5- 10 years	Between 11- 15 years	Between 16- 20 years	More than 20 years
	$\bar{x}$	4.12	3.89	3.53	3.65	4.04
Less than 5years	4.12	-	0.225	0.589*	0.465*	.0796
Between 5- 10years	3.89		-	0.364*	0.239	.0-145
Between 11- 15 years	3.53			-	.0-124	.0-510*
Between 16- 20 years	3.65				-	.0-385*
More than 20years	4.04					-

*p ≤ .05

From Table 5, it was found that respondents with less than 5 years of work experience had more opinions on Employee Retention than respondents with between 11 and 15 years and between 16 - 20 years were 0.589 and 0.465 respectively.

Respondents with between 5 and 10 years of experience had 0.364 more opinions on Employee Retention than respondents with 11 to 15 years of work experience.

Respondents with more than 20 years of work experience had more opinions on Employee Retention than respondents with work experience of between 11 and 15 years and between 16-20 years were 0.510 and 0.385, respectively.

- Employee with different income affect to employee retentions. The statistic is ANOVA

Table 6 Employee with different income affect to employee retentions

(n = 242)

Employee with different income affect to employee retentions		**Sum of Squares**	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Employee Retention	Between Groups	2.383	4	0.596	0.950	0.436
	Within Groups	148.627	237	0.627		
	Total	151.010	241			

From Table 6, it was found different work experience had no opinions on Employee Retention.

Part 4, Retention factor seven factors as employee benefits, recruitment and selection, job assignment and opportunities, performance appraisals, training and development, work environment and leadership can predict to employee retention.

- The statistics are Correlation and Multiple regressions.

In the multiple regression analysis, in order to understand the meaning of presenting the corresponding analysis results. The researcher has identified the following symbols and acronyms used in data analysis.

b represents the regression coefficient

SE_b represents the estimate of the standard error of the regression coefficient for each variable

Beta represents the regression coefficient in terms of benchmark scores

t represents a value used to test which variables should be in the model

Sig. represents probability value Has a statistically significant level of 0.05

R represents the multiple correlation coefficient is the value that represents the degree of relationship between all groups of independent variables

R^2 represents the value representing the influence of all independent variables on the dependent variables

Adjusted R^2 represents the adjusted R^2 value.

SE_e represents the value indicates the degree of discrepancy cause by the use of all independent variables to predict the dependent variables

F represents the probability that is used to test that the independent variable exists in the model, it can be used in any variable or under the hypothesis

Table 7 To find out the factor of employee retention of first line manager in Thailand Food Industry of Employee Retention

Variable	b	SE_b	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	-0.754	0.207		-3.639	0.000 *
1.Employee Benefits	0.044	0.048	0.041	0.913	0.362
2.Recruitment and Selection	0.118	0.069	0.109	1.724	0.086
3.Job Assignment and Opportunities	0.074	0.080	0.060	0.930	0.353
4.Performance Appraisals	-0.107	0.068	-0.105	-1.584	0.115
5.Training and Development	0.264	0.060	0.247	4.392	0.000*
6.Work Environment	0.327	0.079	0.267	4.122	0.000 *
7.Leadership Support	0.440	0.087	0.354	5.041	0.000 *
R = 0.844	R^2 = 0.713		F = 82.917		
Adjusted R^2 = 0.704	SE_e = .43061				

*$p \leq .05$

From Table 7, the persistence factors of the top managers of the food industry in Thailand. It can be described as follows.

$\hat{y}$ = -0.754 +0.264)Training and Developmen + (0.327)Work Environmen + (0.440) Leadership Support

The equation above, consisting of Employee Retention, Work Environment, and Leadership Support, can describe the variance of the employee retention factor at 71.3%, with the junior manager commenting on the Employee Retention factor and no opinion of Training and Development, Work Environment, and Leadership Support. The junior manager has an opinion on Employee Retention score of -0.754 points, the factors affecting employee retention are as follows:

$\hat{y}$ = -0.754 +0.264 (Training and Development)

Leadership Support

The equation above, consisting of Employee Retention, Work Environment, and Leadership Support, can describe the variance of the employee retention factor at 71.3%, with the junior manager commenting on the Employee Retention factor and no opinion of Training and Development, Work Environment, and Leadership Support. The junior manager has an opinion on Employee Retention score of -0.754 points, the factors affecting employee retention are as follows:

$\hat{y}$ = -0.754 +0.264 (Training and Development)

The retention factor of the junior manager who has opinions on Training and Development will result in the retention opinions level of -0.490 score, and the Training and Development factor will make the junior manager increase of 0.264 points in retention.

$\hat{y}$ = -0.754 + 0.327 (Work Environment)

The retention factor of the junior manager who has opinions on Work Environment will result in the retention factor of the employee of -0.427 score, and the Work Environment factor will make the junior manager increase of 0.327 points in retention.

$\hat{y}$ = -0.754 +0.44 (Leadership Support)

The retention factor of the junior manager who has opinions on Leadership Support will result in the retention factor of the employee of -0.314 points, and the Leadership Support factor will make the junior manager increase of 0.440 points in retention.

Discussions of the research findings

It was found that employee with more experience will increase their employee retention. So organization will face the problem about the way to retain their employees. However, to retain first line managers, it needs to focus more on another factors. In food industry of Thailand, first line managers have an important roles in an organization. To retain these group of people, human resource manager need to prepare and careful consideration when making any decision. The lost of these first line manager costs a lot of waste for an organization.

Recommendation

Recommendation of this research

1. The training and development should realize in employee retention as employees are potential for higher post due to the training opportunity including organization there are training programs and organization support the training that you are interested.

2. The organization should encourage in job assignment and opportunities in employee have opportunity to share the idea then to learn different king of works and the employee have full autonomy to perform your works

3. The organization should provide appropriate work environment as supportive from colleagues and got respect in organization in order to have pleasant working conditions in organization.

Recommendation for Further Research

The organization should study in deep factor of training and development for support the employee for improve potential.

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