SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO? DECIDING FACTORS OF ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL TO STAY OR LEAVE AN ACADEMIC INSTITUTION DURING A PANDEMIC: BASIS FOR AN IMPROVED EMPLOYEE RETENTION POST-PANDEMIC PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly reshaped the workplace, impacting employee perceptions of their employers based on crisis response. The widespread adoption of remote work has expanded job opportunities, leading to a noticeable trend of job hopping, particularly in the Filipino workforce. This phenomenon poses potential challenges for businesses, necessitating a reevaluation of company policies and plans to effectively address changing needs and conditions related to employee retention. More so, it focuses on understanding the decisions of administrative employees within academic institutions to either stay or leave, considering the potential influence of their experiences with remote work during the pandemic. Employing a qualitative research approach with a multiple case study design, data were gathered through structured and semi-structured interviews with randomly selected administrative employees categorized into rank and file, supervisory, and managerial roles. Reflective thematic analysis, utilizing both inductive and latent approaches, was applied to identify codes and major themes. Factors influencing the decision to stay include a love for work, proximity to home, employee benefits (such as school discounts), job stability, positive relationships, a sense of freedom, and gratitude. Conversely, factors influencing the decision to leave encompass salary concerns, manager-employee relationships, work modality, company policies and their implementation, communication processes, leadership and collaboration, motivation, position-specific training, wellness initiatives, and heavy workload. In light of these findings, companies are urged to review and revise their policies and plans to better align with evolving employee needs, thereby fostering a supportive environment for staff retention during these transformative times.

Keywords: human resource, multiple case study, Philippines, retention, thematic analysis

INTRODUCTION

Meeting customer requirements and achieving customer satisfaction have been the key priority of any organization. There lies the strength of any business which indicates its success. On the other hand, "customers" in an organization do not solely mean those who buy the goods or services, but it also includes the employees—who are the internal customers of the organization (Gupta, 2013). Undoubtedly, employees play an important role in any organization because employees' knowledge and skills are central to companies' ability to be economically competitive. When the

initial outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic the companies were forced to adopt a work-from-home scheme for them to continue their operations.

The situation enables the employees to work remotely (for the first time in other companies) realizing they can successfully do their jobs without coming to their physical work. The opening of such an opportunity affected the employee's decision to stay in their current workplace. Hence, job-hopping become a trend, especially for talented individuals.

In America, half of the employees surveyed in 2021 plan to look for a new job. Employers experienced a high turnover since the pandemic. Driven in part by what's come to be known as the Great Resignation, the primary reasons for Americans leaving their jobs include low pay, a lack of opportunities for advancement, and feeling disrespected at work. It is according to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center.

The situation is not different in the Philippines. The COVID-19 pandemic left many companies stupefied realizing that their policies and procedures do not include anything to address such a situation. The Philippine News Agency (PNA) determined a 176% percent increase in voluntary resignation across all industries in the Philippines. According to the study conducted by a local software as a service (SaaS) firm in 2022, many Filipinos have quit their jobs amid the pandemic and several also prefer hybrid work. Management decisions such as lay-offs, salary cuts, and other cost-cutting measures also have high contributing factor tofactorsdecision. Companies lost the mainstays of their retention program during the pandemic which resulted in the employee's disengagement, burn-out, and decision to leave the company (Maurer, 2021).

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, human resource has been vulnerable to many risks. Employee retention, as well as recruitment among colleges and universities in the Philippines, have been a common challenge. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, the turnover rate of the employees at the University of Perpetual Help-Molino increased from 10.8% in 2019-2020 to 21.84% in 2020-2021 (UPH-Molino Attrition Rate Report, 2021). Research also revealed more people are retiring in the wake of the pandemic (Bond et.al. 2021). A lot also decided to exit the workforce due to family and health reasons. In the case of the University of Perpetual Help-Molino, from 0.8% in 2019-2020, the percentage of retirees increased to 2.90% in 2020-2021. Therefore, if the trend does not change, the company should prepare for events like high turnover to avoid the business from collapsing. They also need to embrace the idea that business strategy and workforce planning will be different in the post-pandemic (Davidescu, 2020). Key information lies in the deciding factors of their current workers. Through that, they may fully understand what they need to do and how they will do it.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aims to identify the factors influencing employees' decisions to stay or leave a private educational institution amidst the challenges posed by the pandemic. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Describe the experiences of administrative employees regarding the work arrangement implemented during the pandemic.
2. Identify factors that may affect the decision of the employee to stay or leave the institution.
3. Suggest improvement of the retention strategy (if applicable) based on the findings.

This research is structured using Herzberg's Two-Factor Motivation-Hygiene Theory. Introduced by Herzberg (1959), this theory presupposes that two sets of factors affect employee motivation and satisfaction. The first

factor is called the motivational factor. This factor motivates the employee to work harder. Hence, it is sometimes called satisfier, it may include opportunities for personal growth, promotion opportunities, achievements, or recognition. The second factor is hygiene factors. Though hygiene factors do not bring direct incentives if mishandled or absent, they may cause dissatisfaction among the employees. Some of the believed hygiene factors are quality of supervision, pay, company policies, and physical conditions. The retention strategies revolve around the mitigation of these set of factors so talented employees may choose to stay in the company. This research reveals the motivational factors and the hygiene factors that may affect the decision of UPH-Molino employees to leave or stay at the institution during the Pandemic.
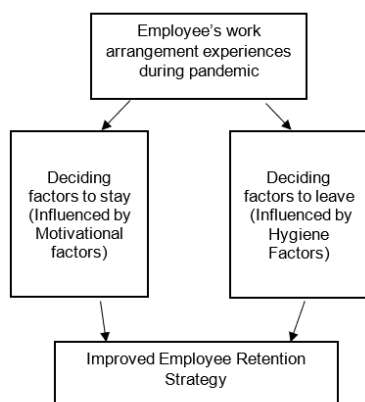

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Using this framework, the researcher seeks to identify the underlying causes of the notable surge in the employee turnover rate at UPH-Molino at the onset of the pandemic (SY 2020-21). Additionally, the objective is to assess whether this pattern of increased turnover will persist as the pandemic unfolds further.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design. This study is qualitative research and adopts the multiple case study design. Qualitative research strives to comprehend phenomena within specific contextual settings, such as real-world environments, without any attempt by the researcher to manipulate the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2022). Thus, the researcher wanted to understand the decisions of the employees through their personal work experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and associate it with their decision to stay or leave their current job.

Multiple case study analyzes the data within each situation and across different situations (Yin, 2013). The multiple-case design investigates a real-world system with multiple boundaries by extensively collecting detailed and in-depth data from various sources of information (Cresswell, 2013). The researcher believed that this research design would explain the similarities and differences between the cases and would provide an in-depth exploration of the reasons to understand employee decisions in the general sense. The analysis will be based on the respondent's comments, inputs, and interpretative perspectives to the questions being asked to them.

A combination of structured interviews (through Google Forms) and semi-structured interviews (in a face-to-face setup) was used by the proponent. Patterns in the respondents' answers were identified through reflexive thematic analysis in which the researcher changed, removed, or added codes as she worked through the data. The researcher did not prepare a pre-determined code; thus, the study used a combination of inductive and latent approaches in identifying the codes and categorizing them into major themes. The latent approach enables the researcher to go beyond the face value of the data and theorize meanings through interpretation based on the related literature present.

Research Site and Participants. The participants of the study are administrative personnel in the University of Perpetual Help-Molino campus. The respondents were randomly selected and no age or gender preference was applied in the selection. The researcher sent email requests to 21 employees but only 10 returned with an answer. The respondents were grouped into 3 levels: rank and file, supervisory, and managerial.

The 10 respondents for this study are composed of 2 participants for the rank and file; 4 respondents at the supervisory level; and 4 participants at the managerial level.

Instrumentation. The researcher drafted an interview guide to extract data from the participants. The researcher solicited comments and suggestions from the university research head. The research head asked to revise some of the questions to ensure that the questions were aligned with the objective of the study. The research head validated the questions in the revised research tool afterward.

Research Ethics Protocol. The researcher has undergone the University research protocol. Then, the researcher asked for approval from the head of the Human Resources department to allow her to conduct data gathering on the employees of the university. The researcher also asked the HR head for documents needed for the study.

The respondents were asked to participate in the survey through email and their answer was recorded through Google Forms. The respondents were ensured that their anonymity would be strictly considered through the informed consent form included in the Google form. Once they agree, they will be directed to the research questions.

The researcher also conducted a face-to-face interview with some of the participants to extract more answers and validate their statements in the Google form.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Work Arrangement Experiences of the Administrative Personnel during the Pandemic

It is important to describe the experiences of employees regarding their work arrangements during the pandemic to know their perception of it or how it may affect their decision to stay or leave their current position. Results revealed that all employees regardless of rank and position experienced difficulty in work during the pandemic. However, these work difficulties are different depending on the employee's status and position. Most rank-and-file employees were imposed with a reduced workweek scheme, where, the employee will only attend 2 weeks of work instead of 4. Some rank and file were forced to take a 6-month leave, as regulated by the government. Therefore, it is not surprising that employees from this rank experienced financial difficulty during that time. Collectively, employees' negative work experiences during the pandemic revolve around financial difficulties, heavy workloads, and work modality. On the other hand, the employees also gained some positive work experiences by learning new modes to continue their work or to make their work easier. This is aside from the fact that they were also given extra time to spend with their families.

`Below is the description of the respondents and the summary of their statements about their positive and negative work experiences during the pandemic.

Rank and File No. 1

Rank and File No. 1 is a laboratory custodian in the college department.

He said, *"I was assigned a rotating work arrangement, which made me attend work for only half of my monthly working hours".*

This kind of work set-up brought financial difficulties to the said employee. Also, because of the reduced workweek schedule, his work piled up and he has to catch up for the week gone.

"The work arrangement affected me negatively because my monthly income was reduced and also tasks at work took much longer to be done or finished".

On a more positive note, Rank and File no. 1 appreciate his extra time and use it to do other responsibilities and enjoy family time. He said, *"Positively, it gave me time to spend with my family and was able to make room for me to attend to other responsibilities".*

Rank and File No. 2

Rank and File No. 2 is a college secretary. Like rank-and-file no. 1, she emphasized the financial difficulty brought by the work setup. However, she still appreciated having work during the pandemic.

She said, *"The institution gave us an opportunity to work even though we are skeletal work arrangement".* Positively, the situation allowed her to spend extra time with her family.

Supervisor No. 1

Supervisor no. 1 is a program chair in the college department with academic and administrative work. She emphasized the amount of workload given to her during the pandemic that is not equally compensated. Though she is still grateful for having a job during the pandemic, she still feels demotivated.

She said, "*Demotivated. My skills and time in teaching were compromised due to my Full-time schedule as Admin and as Faculty. I hope I can choose which to focus or at least in a 70/30 ratio. I have received the lowest teaching rate in my 10 years of teaching career".*

The need to provide her internet also added to her hardship in teaching and complying with administrative work.

She said *"I need to spend more than usual for internet connections at home and in school. Using one internet provider is not reliable. Also, the workload seems to be timeless and boundaries were not observed."*

Supervisor No. 2

Supervisor no. 2 works on student welfare. She stated, *"Difficult but at the same it's challenging. It made me discover how I can thrive amidst difficulties".*

She did not mention anything about financial difficulty on her part though she mentioned that it is one of the reasons why her colleagues in the department chose to change work. She said, *"It made me really sad and disappointed when a lot of the Guidance Personnel were retrenched while some of them eventually resigned because of the situation…"* She accepted the situation with the statement *"…Through it all, to those who were left, we did our best to use the available resources and tools we have".*

Supervisor No. 3

Supervisor no. 3 belongs to the academic support team. According to her, working in a pandemic is a *"survival state".* She was put on forced leave for 6 months, therefore, she ought to find other sources of income. Luckily, she found a part-time job online.

Supervisor No. 4

Supervisor No. 4 also belongs to the academic support team. According to her, her work experience during the pandemic has been *"challenging".* Since she held two positions, she had to make reports for her two bosses. She also experienced financial problems because of the work arrangement. She said, *"Financially challenging but considered some work-from-home tasks"* She also mentioned that there are times when she had to justify her reason to come to work and to be paid.

Manager No. 1

Manager No. 1 is a college dean. She said, *"(I) was fortunate to still be working full time".* Maybe because she has academic and administrative duties (as dean) she was able to retain a full-time schedule with an occasional work-from-home arrangement.

Manager No. 2

Manager no. 2 is the administrative head of the IT department. When classes were shifted from face-to-face to fully online, the IT department experienced increased work weight.

She said, *"The weight of work has increased due to the online transactions. I had to name it so we can see the broad aspect of the IT*

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needs…". Their task was more challenging since they had limited manpower during that time.

She said, **"***The ITS manpower was reduced from 6 employees to 4. 1 was removed from our office due to habitual absenteeism and tardiness and was relocated to other offices and the other one was laid off. We requested 1 additional in May 2021. IT had to make several systems to make it all work"*.

However, due to the situation, she and her team were able to create a system that helped a lot in their work. She said, **"***The ITS made a lot of progress in terms of teamwork. Systems were generated that made the redundant tasks easier with minimal errors"*.

Manager No. 3

Manager No. 3 is an academic support head. Since he was hired during the pandemic, he worked full time, with occasional work-from-home setup. He also experienced a reduced workweek but only for a short period of 2 months. According to him, his work experience is *"Quite cool. I was hired during the pandemic and so far, my work schedule is quite OK. There were times during the previous months when we needed to report on rotation. But that was for around 2 months only"*. Since he reported regularly, he was not affected much by the implemented reduced workweek setup.

Manager No. 4

Manager No. 4 is also an academic support head. Although he is an academic support head, he was forced to leave for 6 months. Therefore, he described his work experience during the pandemic as *"Challenging"* since he may experience financial difficulty during those times. He said, *"No work no pay for 6 months."* He also mentioned that the uncertainty of the situation and the indecisiveness of the management made him want to quit the job. However, after 6 months, he was offered to be head of a temporary project.

2. Deciding Factors of Administrative Employee to Stay or Leave the Institution

Following the concept of Herzberg's, the following factors emerged to be motivating (satisfiers) the employees to stay in the institution. Overall, there are 7 factors identified.

2.1. Love for Work

According to social psychology and interpersonal love models, love for work refers to three factors: passion, intimacy, and commitment. Moreover, loving one's work involves a level of joy or engagement that encourages people to seek challenges, exert additional effort, and address their fears (Kelloway, et.al, 2010). These descriptions follow the concept of vigor which drives job engagement (Shaufeli, et.al, 2004).

Two main themes of loving one's job include pride and joy of achievement and commitment to purpose (Bygrave, 2020). The mentioned definition of love for work is confirmed in the employee's statements *"I love what I do and I enjoy working with my team. I enjoy doing the guidance activities with students. I know that what we do has a positive impact among students"* and,

"I enjoy working with students while making a difference in their lives…"

The respondents' statements also resonate that love for work is the achievement of self-actualization (Martela et.al, 2018) and or doing the greater good rather than merely recognition or approval from others (Bygrave, 2020).

Therefore, employees who perceive their work as a labor of love tend to be more engaged and attached to their work. With such attributes, the employee will likely stay in the company or organization.

2.2. Proximity from Home

The distance as a retention factor may not be as simple as avoiding stress due to traffic and long commuting. In a much deeper sense, proximity from home enables the employee to achieve work-life balance. A study in Indonesia revealed that a good quality of work-life balance increases job engagement and reduces the sum of turnover

intention to Y generation workers (Lestari & Margaretha, 2021).

Since work-life balance means having an opportunity to set priorities between work and personal life (Pandiangan, 2018), it affects job satisfaction (Qodrizana, 2018). Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between work-life balance and job engagement (Žnidaršič, 2020). Long commuting may disrupt work-life balance since it may cause mental and health problems. An article published in Scientific Mind, mentioned that recent studies have shown that long-distance commuters will most likely suffer from psychosomatic disorders than short-distance commuters. The physical symptoms encompass ailments like headaches, backaches, digestive issues, and high blood pressure. Mental health challenges encompass sleep disturbances, fatigue, and difficulties with concentration. Commuters who drive may also be faced with stress caused by bad weather, traffic jams, and accidents. A study from South Korea revealed that long commuting creates sleep problems that consequently affect work-life balance (Kim et.al, 2019). A study suggests that American workers who spend more than 3 hours a day commuting are more likely to have poor health and become obese (Christian, 2012).

2.3. Job Security and Stability

Oxford Dictionary defines job security as the state of having a job that is unlikely to be dismissed. On the other hand, the Cambridge dictionary defines job stability as the fact of an employee, or a group of employees, being able to keep the same job for a long time.

The COVID-19 pandemic has engendered fear of losing one's job or position. The vulnerability of the economy brought severe instability and insecurity among employees. Since job insecurity and instability can reduce job satisfaction (Sefora et.al, 2021) and increase turnover intention (Probst, 1999; Arijanto, 2020), employers launched programs that may improve employee's perception of job security and stability in their current job. According to the research conducted by Hays (the world leading specialist in recruitment and workforce solutions) in 2021, 70 percent of Asian respondents prioritize job stability and security in their job after the pandemic.

2.4. Employee Benefits (School Discount)

Benefits, aside from monetary, refers to reward and services provided by the employers to their employees (Ayache & Naima, 2014). It may be in a form of insurance, cash incentives, allowances and reimbursements. These compensations are given to motivate employees to increase productivity, and organizational commitment (Rahaman et.al, 2016) and retain employees (Hassan, 2022).

The respondents in this study also mentioned the non-wage benefits they claim as employees of the institution. They specifically highlighted the school discount for their children or even themselves. These kinds of benefits attract employees to stay in the institution as stated in some of the respondent's statements:

"Good benefits for my daughter"

"The scholarship opportunity they give to their employees and apart from the regular functions expected from me, there are other tasks given that I believe would help me grow".

"Tuition discount for children"

One of the most in-demand employee benefits recently is education benefits alongside wellness (Chabaraba, 2022). In the US, 47% of employers offer undergraduate or graduate school tuition assistance to their employees while 10% offer 529 plan payroll deductions. 8% offer loan repayment assistance. The data is based on the 2019 survey result of Statista, a German company specializing in market and consumer data. Therefore, organizations need to consider the benefits they will provide to attract and retain employees, especially when the labor market is relevantly tight.

2.5. Good Relationship

Good or bad relationships in the workplace may affect the mood of one's employee while doing

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his job (Hosie et.al. 2006). There is a notable correlation between a positive workplace relationship and job satisfaction. This correlation highlights that effectively managing positive workplace relationships is a crucial factor in enhancing job satisfaction, ultimately leading to improved performance and productivity (Abun et.al. 2019). Therefore, good relationship can improve work mood and motivate employees to do their job. Good workplace relationships can also create resiliency since employees may provide support for other employees having a rough time in his/her job.

Building a good relationship is both the duty of the employee and the employer. However, as the number of employees within an organization increases, establishing strong interpersonal relationships or fostering good relationships becomes increasingly challenging. Such circumstances can have an impact on the job satisfaction of employees. In comparison to smaller firms, larger firms often face more difficulties in cultivating effective employer-employee relationships (Tansel, 2013).

3. Sense of Freedom/ Work Flexibility

One growing priority for talented professionals nowadays is the sense of freedom in their workplace. The ability to choose their schedule, work, and manner to complete their task is now one of the core elements to have a fulfilling career. Autonomy provided a sense of self-determination for the employees though some may argue that freedom leeway and choice are actually trivial or illusory. Nonetheless, autonomy helps build employee engagement in the organization. (Sihembonguila, 2019). Flexible working is a form of autonomy. Work flexibility, also known as workplace flexibility, refers to a scenario in which employers grant their employees varying degrees of freedom to determine the timing (when), location (where), and manner (how) in which they carry out their work. This approach aims to align the goals of the organization with the individual goals of the employees. (Pahwa, 2022). However, not all works can be as flexible as the other. Therefore, the human resource department should find way to

leverage working flexibility for engagement and productivity.

3.1. Gratitude

Gratitude has been defined and understood in various ways, encompassing its conceptualization as an emotion, virtue, moral sentiment, motive, coping mechanism, skill, attitude, and more (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000). Therefore, gratitude can mean different things to different people in different contexts (Allen, 2018). An employee may feel gratitude towards his/her company for various reasons. Nonetheless, gratitude can affect the employee's decision to stay. One respondent of this study expressed gratitude as one of her reasons to stay, with the statement *"The kindness and generosity of the first family"*. By saying 'first family' she was referring to the owner of the school. She also gratified her boss saying, *"The School Director is very kind and understanding. He provides us everything we need."*

On the other hand, there are a total of 10 hygiene factors that affect the decision of the employees to stay or leave. The following are factors that need improvement or mitigation to lessen dissatisfaction and avoid employee turnover.

3.2. Salary

Employees who are not paid fairly in relation to the workload may have less motivation to work. If the employees are not happy, therefore, they are more likely to change their job (Vermandere, 2013). Since morale and job satisfaction are affected by compensation, there must be a balance (equity) between how much the employer is willing to pay and the sentiments of worth felt by the employee (Nunez, 2015). The employer may compromise employee morale and satisfaction in an attempt to save money. On the other hand, an employer who would want to decrease employee turnover may increase pay and salary grades.

However, the study of Vermandere mentioned that employees may be willing to make a trade-off by accepting a lower salary in exchange for various benefits, such as a higher retirement payout, engaging job responsibilities, proximity to

home, additional vacation time, improved company car, enhanced job security, and a sense of reduced workplace surveillance. Another significant consideration is the prospect of promotion, which entails progression within the organizational hierarchy. Receiving appropriate compensation in itself serves as a motivating factor. Therefore, employers must accurately assess and quantify an employee's contributions to ensure optimal performance. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that one of the most effective methods for eliciting an individual's best work is to create a comfortable and happy work environment (Nunez, 2015).

3.3. Employee-manager relationship

Organizational or business performance is also depending on working relationships (Ramjee, 2018). Several studies proved the correlation between job satisfaction and workplace relationships (Bakotic, 2016; Abun et. al, 2018) while job satisfaction is one of the contributing factors in retaining employees.

When employees are harmonious with their supervisors, they will be more likely to be satisfied with their jobs (Lee, 2015; Ilgan, 2015; Santoso et. al 2017).

One of the respondents highlighted that she would leave the company because of her 'ill-mannered boss'. She signified her intense dissatisfaction with her boss with the statement *"Emotional abuse and unethical behavior of immediate superior must be reprimanded, performance evaluation of the immediate superior must be conducted, the confidentiality of departments matter must be strictly practiced and observed".* In a blog post by Karla Miller in The Washington Post, she mentioned that people's stress and anxiety during the pandemic meddle with their work, especially the boss. However, this situation does not justify the nasty attitude of the heads and supervisors.

3.4. Work Modality

By definition, work modality pertains to the operation or process of how a specific task is done. During the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, remote working has been adopted by companies

to continue their operations. As the effect of the pandemic subside and works and operations start to go back to normal, the employees are now looking for other options regarding work modalities. In 2021, the University of Texas at San Antonio, USA established 4 work modalities for their university staff, these are:
1. On-campus – Primarily works only on campus
2. Remote – Primarily works remotely and comes to campus as needed.
3. Hybrid (regularly) – Works remotely and on campus a set number of days; 5 + days on-campus per month.
4. Hybrid (occasionally) – works remotely and on campus a set number of days; 1-4 days on-campus per month.

In the Philippines, a company that follows a hybrid work model is a workplace that gives employees the option to work on-site/in the office or remotely following a schedule – providing employees with the flexibility to work wherever they want to on days that they are not required to report on-site.

This type of work arrangement gives employees security and peace of mind amidst the ongoing pandemic (plus freedom over their time and resources) while also satisfying the need for companies to have a workforce in the office (Papa, 2022).

One employee of this study is dissatisfied with the work process implemented by the company during the pandemic. She expects at least a combination of work-from-home set-up and onsite. She stressed that the school must have a clear structure of the work modality specific for each type of employee.

3.5. Company Policy and Implementation

It was previously discussed how employee benefits package affects employee retention (Hassan, 2022). Poor implementation of such policies will be more likely to bring dissatisfaction among employees. A study among public office workers in Pakistan revealed that the employees will be less satisfied if he perceived the company

to have less career growth, poor governance, and poor level of professionalism.

One of the respondents said that the reason he may leave the company is because of his dissatisfaction with the company policies, specifically, unclear policies on promotion and retirement.

He said, "*I will leave because I no longer feel happy with the system. I will leave because I already feel burdened. I will leave because I'm overloaded. I will leave because my original contract wasn't followed. I will leave because I think there's not much benefit and the policies on promotion, salary increase, and retirement benefits are quite not clear and properly disseminated to employees. I will leave because I no longer feel excited to report to work every day*"

The process used to determine promotions have consistently received the lowest satisfaction rating among the UPH-Molino employees for the past 3 years (2018-2020). It is based on the employee satisfaction survey conducted by the Human Resource Department. Perhaps, the employees need further information regarding how they will get a promotion or salary increase. Also, the process and the computation of retirement benefits must be clear so the employee may properly decide whether to stay or not.

3.6. Communication Process

Communication has always been a critical element in the effective implementation of any organizational change (Lewis and Seibold, 1998). In the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, communication is essential because information can make or break the employees' trust in the company. Accordingly, the organization should proactively create communication strategies for employees. For example, the management should explain why specific changes are required. The message must be repeated multiple times through multiple communication channels. The company must also recognize that there are employees who prefer face-to-face communication. Lastly, the company must also ensure that the messages sent are actually received. It is important to recognize the value of communication and understand that no communication can bring more negative rather than neutral effects to the recipient (Allen, 1995). There are 4 communication strategies that would help retain employees: 1) meeting regularly with employees, 2) providing regular performance management feedback, 3) committing to ongoing learning and professional development, and 4) conducting periodic stay interviews (Allen, 1995).

Most respondents answered that communication at the University must be improved.

To quote the respondents, they said:
"*Communication--upward, downward, and lateral*" "*Communication is lacking, creation/retrieval of documents for any accreditation is not easy, especially in my department where there no safekeeping of documents*".

"*Effective and clear communication program that would translate the plans, decisions, and actions, understood by all*"

3.7. Leadership and Collaboration

Research shows that a major determinant of how organizations handle crises like the pandemic is collaboration (Gardner & Matviak, 2020). Leadership promotes this collaboration. A good leader, during a crisis, must act quickly, adapt plans, and lead with empathy (Nichols et.al. 2020). The respondent mentioned that leaders should have immediately drafted a preemptive plan that would streamline the functions of the administrative employees to make the downsizing of employees rightful and will not burden those who are left. The main concern of discussion should be *"How can we help each other during the pandemic".* According to him, the leaders should have come together and raised the concern to the management while offering their discussed solution that would reflect the case of Molino.

This statement describes the participative leadership style. Participative leadership is a leadership style whereby leaders listen to their employees and involve them in the decision-making process. It requires an inclusive mindset, good communication skills, and the ability — and inclination — to share power (Ismael, 2021). The Involvement of employees in decision-making can motivate the employees to stay in the organization (Noah, 2008). A study among employees in Ogun State Nigeria supported this claim and revealed a positive and significant relationship between participative leadership style and employee's productivity. Aside from increasing employee productivity, participative leadership style can boost employee morale, hence, it may be used as a motivational tool for workers (Kowo, 2018).

3.8. Motivation

There is a plethora of factors that can motivate employees. Motivational factors can range from compensation (Rahaman et.al, 2016), recognition (Baskar, 2013), achieving work-life balance (Aguenza & Son, 2012), Development Opportunities, Work Environment, Social Support, Autonomy, Training and Development, and Management/Leadership (Kossivi et.al 2016)
A crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic may lead employees to become weary, disengaged, and less motivated in their current workplace. Demotivation can be caused by a lot of factors. Therefore, a company must understand what motivates the employees and develop programs accordingly. One of the participants vented her feeling of lack of motivation. She said that sometimes she struggles with her task since she lacks motivation to continue supporting the school when the management seems like not showing support to her. By support she meant that the school have not given her 'ayuda' (financial support or groceries) since the pandemic started. The disappointment of the employee came from her high expectation to the company.

3.9. Training Specific to the Position

Job training increases retention and commitment (Deery, 2008; Ahmad, 2013). Employee loyalty can be also improved through training and development (Leidner, 2013).
The value of this training and development was reflected in one of the participant's statements:
 "Training of all employees with their respective positions and departments. We all have to (be) competent for the job."

The respondent added that although there's training and seminars available in the university (post-pandemic) she found none related or specific to her field. Therefore, she somehow struggles to accomplish some of the tasks since she does not have the proper training. Another employee mentioned that there's a lack of training that would refresh or increase the knowledge of the employees regarding their task.

3.10. Wellness

The well-being of the employee is essential to any organization since it directly affects engagement, satisfaction, and productivity (Charaba, 2022). According to the survey conducted in the Philippines, the cited rising stress brought by pandemic enable 85% of employers to plan to include wellness program as they operate in the new normal. Therefore, wellness is one of the most considered employee retentions in this era.

"My wellness is my priority." stated one of the respondents. The COVID-19 pandemic not only raised a global health crisis but also a mental health crisis. According to the American Psychological Association report in 2021, 71% of employees typically feel tense or stressed out during the workday. The majority of the stress is revealed to be caused by the employee's belief that they are overworked yet underpaid. These work stress together with other factors greatly affect the mental health of the employees.

As said by one of the respondents of this study, *"The institution should really be intentional in taking care of employees not only focused on the upgrade of the physical aspects, etc."*

3.11. Workload

The majority of the interviewed employees in managerial positions complain about increased workloads during the pandemic. Since their staff was assigned with rotating work arrangements or skeletal work arrangements, some of the managerial level employees took the responsibility for other work in the department.

"...the workload seems to be timeless, and boundaries were not observed".

Some departments experienced increased workloads due to the shift from onsite transactions to online transactions.

"The weight of the work has increased due to the online transactions…"

According to an article written by Andra Picincu in 2019, a heavy workload is one of the primary causes of stress among employees. It may affect the morale of the employees which result may hurt the organization. In a study published in the International Journal of Business, Economics, and Law (2020), too much workload is one of the factors that trigger the chain of psychological states that lead to the intention to quit among employees.

"(I feel) demotivated. My skills and time in teaching were compromised due to my full-time schedule as admin."

CONCLUSIONS

This study has revealed that administrative personnel share different experiences during the pandemic. The majority of the rank-and-file employees were required to attend to a reduced workweek schedule while some were forced to have a 6-month leave with no pay. The employees in managerial positions, though continuously have full-time work during the pandemic, struggle with a high workload. Since their staff was forced to get a leave or attend in a reduced workweek, they don't have assistance and must do all the work, even clerical, on their own. Given the case, the administrative heads still appreciate having a full-time job during those times. The employees on the supervisory level also experienced reduced work week and a high volume of work. Some supervisors felt demotivated by their workload (having two functions: administrative and academic), which is inequivalent to their expected compensation. A supervisor, with no teaching load, has a more accepting reaction to the situation.

Deciding factors of the employee to stay were: *love for work, proximity from home, employee benefits (school discount), job stability, good relationships, a sense of freedom, and gratitude.* Deciding factors of the employees to leave can be affected by: *salary, manager-employee relationship, work modality, company policy and implementation, communication process, leadership and collaboration, motivation, training specific to the position, wellness, and workload.*

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study the following are recommended:

1. The university must provide a clear policy for the administrative personnel working in a pandemic setting. The policy should discuss the work setup, workload, and responsibilities of the administrative personnel. Though offices are now slowly returning back to normal, the management must still be prepared if ever another pandemic will strike the country.

2. The management must review the workload of the employees, whether to lift a certain employee from his/her additional workload or compensate with the additional workload being given to him/her. Thus, a re-assignment and re-alignment of work must be considered.

3. The retention program of the university must be reviewed and modified to become more sustainable amidst the crisis. Aside from remuneration, this study suggested including wellness and motivation activities among the employees. Such activities will make the employees feel that the company cares for their health and engage them more in their work.

4. A more thorough study should be conducted that will allow profiling of the employees and assess the degree of effect of the factors for them to leave or stay. The information will help identify whether the employees of the

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institution 'have to stay' or 'want to stay'. Once that information is available, the company may draft a more precise plan for the development and retention of the employees exclusive to the Molino campus.

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