Applied Project Submission Form

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"What are the key challenges leading to high turnover among part-time and immigrant workers in the catering industry, and what factors could improve their job satisfaction?"

Compiled by:
Ana Maria Santos da Silva

This project is submitted in part fulfilment of the Degree of Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in International Business

Independent College
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Acknowledgements

I would like to dedicate this project to someone who, although no longer physically with us, will forever be a part of who I am: my father. Thank you for always demanding the best from me - you saw my potential even when I couldn't. Look at how far I've come. Who would have thought that a girl from a humble family in Guarulhos, São Paulo, would be completing a postgraduate degree in a foreign country, in English? Everything I am today, and everything I have achieved, I owe to God and to you.

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My God, is this really happening? Someone pinch me! I'm graduating - finally! I close this chapter with immense pride. I turned my dream of studying abroad into reality. Life is about people, and I truly believe we need one another to grow. This achievement is not mine alone. It is the result of every helping hand, every encouraging word, every silent prayer. This chapter may be ending, but I know it's just the beginning of a life full of challenges - and, with faith, many victories too.

"I'm an apostrophe. I'm just a symbol to remind you that there's more to see" - Imagine Dragons.

Abstract

This research aims to investigate the reasons of their high turnover and low job satisfaction of part-time workers and immigrants in catering industry. Through an examination of five themes—job satisfaction, managerial challenges, professional development, work and life balance, and communication—the research seeks to identify obstacles these workers encounter.

The study was qualitative in nature and the method of data collection involved semi-structured interviews with five employees and two managers of a catering business in Dublin Airport. Data were thematically analysed using an interpretivist perspective to make sense of participants' experiences and views.

Results strongly correlated with the literature and described low recognition, limited career prospects, poor communication and variable scheduling as primary obstacles to employee contentment and retention. The manager admitted the strain on the operation of the high turnover with staff's concerns being confirmed.

Practical suggestions to improve satisfaction and reduce turnover include: regular input feedback, flexible work hours, basic training opportunities, and recognition programs appropriate for part-time and immigrant workers in high-stress environments.

List of Acronyms used:

WLB - Work and Life Balance

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INTRODUCTION

The catering sector is one of the most important sub-sectors of the hotel industry, providing food services in a variety of locations including airports, schools and corporate offices. The hospitality workforce is an important part of the tourism and service sector in Ireland, which recruits many migrant and part-time workers, particularly to meet the seasonal and annual needs of the sector. Despite their importance, these workers often work in precarious conditions, receive low wages, have low career progression and low retention rates (Eurostat, 2022; Fáilte Ireland, 2021).

The study was motivated by personal observation and professional interaction with the Irish food service sector, where ongoing dissatisfaction and instability among part-time and foreign workers is a concern.

Rationale of the Study

The direct relationship between high turnover rates and low job satisfaction rates in these vulnerable worker populations is relevant in terms of workforce stability and service quality. More broadly, much is known about the antecedents of turnover in the hospitality industry in general (Hom & Kinicki, 2001; Mobley, 1977), but little is known about the issues faced by part-time and immigrant workers in the food service industry. This is a gap that this project seeks to fill by revealing the perspectives and lived experiences of workers' day-to-day lives and shedding light on the need for more inclusive and supportive management.

Statement of Research Objectives

The primary research question guiding this project is:

"What are the key challenges leading to high turnover among part-time and immigrant workers in the catering industry, and what factors could improve their job satisfaction?"

To answer this question, the study is structured around five key themes:

- *Employee Satisfaction*
- *Managerial Challenges*

- *Career Development and Training*
- *Work-Life Balance*
- *Communication and Feedback*

Each theme was explored through literature review and qualitative interviews, aiming to triangulate findings and generate practical recommendations.

Overview of Data Collection

For this project, all data were collected using a qualitative approach, focusing on semi-structured interviews with five part-time and migrant employees, as well as two managers of a catering company operating at Dublin Airport. The interviews were conducted in person and via WhatsApp voice recordings, which allowed flexibility and accessibility to my participants. All data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns aligned to the five themes.

Expected Outcomes

This study is expected to confirm the challenges highlighted in the literature—especially lack of recognition, lack of communication, severely limited opportunities for development, and work-life imbalance—while also revealing context-specific insights from primary research. The results aim to illustrate practical interventions to increase satisfaction and reduce turnover in these types of sectors that employ part-time and immigrant workers.

Chapter-by-Chapter Overview

This report is composed of five chapters, all increasing the knowledge of what contributes to turnover and job satisfaction for part-time and immigrant workers in the restaurant sector.

<u>Chapter 1 - Introduction</u>
Establishes the reasons for and the context of the Study, explaining the relevance of studying employee retention problems in the catering industry. It explains the objectives of the study and central research

question, introduces the five axes that were analysed in the study and gives an overview of research design and structure.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Critically reviews the academic literature in relation to the five themes: employee satisfaction, management problems, learning and development, work-life balance, communication and feedback. This chapter discusses relevant theories, status of existing research and gaps in the literature, with a focus on the theoretical underpinning of the study.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

This chapter discusses the research philosophy and approach that have been applied to the research.The chapter establishes the rationale for the use of an interpretivist, qualitative design. Subject It informs about the sampling and data collection strategies (based on semi-structured interviews) and the thematic line of data analysis. The final section of the chapter is focused upon ethics, including issues of confidentiality, informed consent and researcher reflexivity.

Chapter 4 - Findings and Discussion

This chapter reports some of the principal outcomes of the research and analyzes how they relate to the five major themes. On each theme the chapter 'triangulates' between the literature and the voices of the interviewees. The results are then discussed critically in relation to published theories and within the context of the catering industry. At the end of each theme, recommendations that can be incorporated in practice to improve upon the identified challenges are proposed.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion and Recommendations

This final chapter presents the conclusion of this study and answers directly to the research question. This organizes the recommendations into an application-oriented table, comments on study limitations, and makes suggestions about future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review explores the key challenges that contribute to high turnover and low job satisfaction among part-time and immigrant workers in the food service industry. The review is structured around five main themes derived from the research question: **(1) Employee Satisfaction, (2) Managerial Challenges, (3) Career Development and Training, (4) Work-Life Balance, and (5) Communication and Feedback**. Each theme is examined through the academic literature to identify the issues highlighted, evidence from existing studies, and critical interpretations. The review seeks to establish a theoretical framework to guide primary research and highlight gaps that warrant further investigation.

Theme 1: Employee Satisfaction

The relationship between job satisfaction, lower turnover, and higher commitment has been around since 1976 (Locke, 1976). However, in the food service industry, satisfaction among part-time and immigrant employees remains low (Jenkins & Delbridge, 2013). The research subquestion associated with this topic is: What factors lead to dissatisfaction among part-time and immigrant employees in the food service industry?

Herzberg's (1968) Two-Factor Theory categorizes job satisfaction into hygiene factors (pay, status) and motivators (recognition, achievement). In hospitality studies, part-time employees are reported to have job security and fair treatment as the main factors of satisfaction (Lashley, 2001). However, Poulston (2008) has shown that this feeling of frustration is widespread, associated with low pay and little recognition, as well as the lack of any intellectual challenge. Both cultural assimilation and discrimination further diminish immigrants' job satisfaction (Baum, 2012).

A study by King et al. (2010) also notes that "many migrant workers feel 'invisible' in the hospitality industry and receive little recognition for their work." This lack of visibility is related to morale and motivation and corroborates Weiss (2002), who argued that emotional responses play an important role in work attitudes.

Another study by Testa (2001) also supports that organisational support is a strong predictor of employee satisfaction in hospitality. Employees develop higher levels of commitment and job satisfaction and lower intentions to turnover when they perceive that the organization appreciates their contributions and cares for their well-being. In addition, Karatepe and Kilic (2007) found that emotional exhaustion lies between work stressors and satisfaction, if this is the case for your catering workers they could potentially have a lesser morale due to such a workload due to stress, should they not receive adequate assistance they would end up morale deterioration.

There are also cultural reasons that may lead to a high level of satisfaction in immigrant workers. According to Moyle et al. (2013), lack of job satisfaction can be influenced negatively by cultural distance and difficulties to integrate in the workplace, especially in the presence of language barriers and discrimination.

It can be argued that providing recognition and providing ways to motivate can significantly contribute to

the satisfaction of part-time and immigrant workers, as indicated in the literature. For the project, interview questions could address whether employees feel valued, whether their work is recognized, and what forms of recognition are most important to them.

Theme 2: Managerial Challenges

Laying off employees places an operational and emotional burden on managers who must constantly recruit, train, and cover shifts (Hom & Kinicki, 2001). The research sub question here is: How does managerial stress lead to high turnover in the catering industry?

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) argue that staff shortages create stress for managers and reduce their ability to effectively support employees. Pouliston's (2009) research reveals that hospitality managers are tasked with "fighting fires" and "day-to-day crisis management opportunities" rather than empowering the team. Podsakoff et al. (2007) associate managerial overload with declining staff morale and increased absenteeism.

Managers in foodservice industries suffer from unplanned absenteeism, volatile demand, and workforce instability (Gupta & Shaw, 2014). Dissatisfaction increases when there is little time to engage employees. This is demonstrated by King's (2010) findings, which show that most immigrant workers experience social isolation from their supervisors.

Further reading shows that managerial issues for managers in the hospitality industry are not only about operational pressure. Kuo (2013) found that lack of leader education and training in hospitality management is associated with poor communication, less effective team management, and increased turnover. Second, according to Hoque (2013) managers in the sector are also hampered in their ability to employ strategic human resource management practices by their dependence on informal managerial styles.

The literature suggests that improving communication and managerial recognition can reduce the levels of stress experienced by managers and employees. Interview questions should address managers' experiences of themselves and their role in employee satisfaction, as well as what prevents them from providing more support.

Theme 3: Career Development and Training

"Stuck in the middle" is a common complaint of hospitality workers, particularly part-time and migrant workers, who have little room for advancement (Baum, 2012). The sub question is: to what extent might underinvestment in training and development be linked to labor retention among part-time and migrant workers in the food service sector?

Noe (2010) notes that training increases engagement and reduces employee turnover through skill development and confidence. However, Allen et al. (2003) explain that temporary and migrant workers tend to have more task-related skills due to job-centered training that does not allow for skill

development. Baruch (2004) finds that in the absence of development opportunities, employees feel frustrated and disgruntled.

Research (Lucas, 2004) found that most restaurant workers view their jobs as “dead ends” when there is no structured training or career development strategies in their establishments. This view leads to short-term rather than long-term investments. Similarly, Robinson et al. (2019) reported that immigrant workers face language barriers that impede their access to training opportunities.

Evidence by Baum et al. (2007) points out that low investment in training within hospitality is often justified by high turnover itself, creating a vicious cycle: organisations hesitate to invest in staff they expect to leave, yet lack of development drives that very turnover.

The literature also suggests that social platforms hold promise, even when developed on a small scale, for engagement and perceived value. Interview questions could ask whether employees have received any training, what skills they want to develop, and whether they see a path for growth.

Theme 4: Work-Life Balance

Work life balance (WLB) is an important retention factor but catering tasks involve difficult and antisocial hours (Cleveland et al, 2007). Sub-research question how irregular work time affects the reconciliation and the retention of part-timers and of immigrant workers?

Kossek et al. (2011) stated that flexible work scheduling would increase satisfaction and decrease burnout. However, Hill et al. (2001) suggest that flexibility, in the absence of predictability, rewards less. Deery's (2008) research points out that unstable schedules cause frequent changes to and interruptions in family life, particularly for parent/caregivers.

In a study of hospitality, Chiang. (2010) found immigrant workers may be forced to take undesirable shifts because they have little leverage, which can result in fatigue and absenteeism. Work satisfaction is related to life satisfaction (Judge and Watanabe 1993) making WLB an important factor for retention.

Increasing predictability in scheduling and giving staff more of a say in rotas might promote balance. Further, findings from Wong and Ko’s (2009) follow-up study indicate that unpredictability of shifts does not only result in a deficiency of life satisfaction, but also leads to physical and mental problems among hospitality workers. It leads to long, weird hours that makes people more tired, more stressed out, and less available for family or outside activities.

Furthermore, studies by Lewis et al. (2007) indicates that increasingly hospitality organisations do not mandate formal work-life balance policies per se, being more likely to do so in the form of informal agreements which may, or may not be enforced. The lack of predictability is an unfair burden for part-time and immigrant workers who do not have the leverage to request better schedules. Interview questions might ask about what they’ve been told about scheduling decisions, if they feel they have control over their shifts, and how it affects their personal lives.

Theme 5: Communication and Feedback

Effective communication is associated with employee engagement, but hierarchic, task-related communication is common in hospitality (Welch, 2011).

Feedback as a Tool for Individual Development Following Ashford and Cummings (1983. However, response for hospitality may be more reactionary and backward looking than developmental (Poulston, 2009). King et al. (2010)"immigration workers experience this worse through little feedback they are getting, and that adds to their isolation."

Kossek et al. (2011) contend that the two-way communication is a means for trust formation. But Nickson (2013) found that language and culture presents a barrier to open and free conversation in a culturally diverse team. This we have not now; and here is a want which is no way needy. Different research indicates that successful communication is not only about the transfer of information, it is about the generation of psychological safety. For instance, the environment of psych safety in which employees feel free to share thoughts and speak up is associated with increased participation and innovation (Edmondson, 1999). In service-based organizations, Nickson (2013) suggests that a top down approach can stifle upward feedback for frontline employees and as a result limit organizational learning. Furthermore, Brownell (2010) suggests that in a multilingual team in hospitality specifically designed communication plans are required to accommodate a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Without these corrections, miscommunication can serve to perpetuate the marginality of immigrant workers and continue to restrict their participation in feedback.

It is in this regard that the literature recommends consistent evaluation mechanisms as a way of improving communication and inclusion. Interviewer questions might probe whether workers are given feedback, how that feedback is delivered and whether they feel that they're being listened to by management.

Conclusion of the Literature Review

This is a literature review that identified five central themes regarding the influence of part-time and immigrant workers on job satisfaction and turnover in the food service industry. Common themes include low status and poor communication, lack of career progression, managerial stress, and poor work-life balance. These themes are supported by the structural and cultural context of the catering industry workplace.

Through the lens of a literature review, this chapter reveals limitations in knowledge about the encounters with these challenges as experienced by workers in practice. The understanding gained through the scoping provides a focus for the fieldwork, informing the design of interview questions and analysis.

METHODOLOGY

Philosophy and Approach of the Study

This research takes an interpretivist research philosophy, considering the significance of examining the subjective experiences and interpretations of individuals in the catering industry. According to Saunders et al. (2019), interpretivism can be suitable for researchers who seek to understand social realities from the perspective of the participants not objective quantification. In this vein, for part-time and immigrant workers, their personal, cultural and occupational contexts might influence their work-related difficulties in a different way. A qualitative method is consistent with this thinking in that it allows the researcher to gather in-depth and descriptive narratives of the dilemmas of this population (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Qualitative research is especially appropriate for the investigation of job satisfaction and turnover, which are affected by the perception of recognition, communication and personal context (Silverman, 2020). The design, interviewing, and data collection Semi-structured interviews were carried out in order to gain authentic and relevant experiences from the participants (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) and at the same time have the possibility to probe into new emerging topics.

Justification for the Adoption of Method

A qualitative design was selected to capture rich, lived experiences of workers that could not be measured through questionnaires or quantitative measures. As Flick (2014, p. 8) maintain, qualitative interviews help to gain insight into 'how respondents make sense of their working conditions and interactions within their organisational environment'. Semi-structured interviews were chose as they offer the researcher the opportunity to discuss pre-determined topics whilst also leaving space for the interviewee to bring in their own ideas (Bryman, 2016).

A semistructured interview questionnaire was developed based on five main themes that were identified from this literature review – job satisfaction, management challenges, training and career development, work–life balance, and communication and feedback. Each interview contained open-ended questions around these themes, such as “Do you feel valued for your work?” and “How flexible is it to juggle job with other obligations?” The guide was open to follow-up questions based on participants' responses.

There were two types of interviews: face-to-face or through WhatsApp voice messages, to facilitate the participation process. In order to make it easy for respondents involved in informal and fast paced catering activities to participate, this approach was appropriate.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The research adopted a convenience sampling technique to select participants who were readily available and willing to participate in the study (Etikan, 2016). The sample included 5 part-time/migrant workers and 2 managers from a catering company at Dublin Airport. Participants were approached

informally at their workplace or invited via WhatsApp to participate voluntarily. The group consisted of men and women, employed in the same workplace for at least 3 months, aged between 20 and 28 years, and involved in a variety of work types (full-time, part-time, student and migrant). Participants' responses were coded to ensure anonymity, allowing for the identification of inductive response patterns while maintaining anonymity; through the use of pseudonyms, e.g. "Employee A", "Employee B", "Manager G". Despite its small sample size, the sample is consistent with the principles of quality research, which value depth over breadth (Guest et al., 2006). The interviews sought thematic saturation, extracting recurring themes among the participants and not statistical generalization.

Data Analysis Method

Five employees and two managers from a large catering company based at Dublin Airport were interviewed at different locations using semi-structured interviews. The interview guide was organized around the following five themes, developed from the literature review: Employee Satisfaction, Management Challenges, Career Development/Training, Work/Life Balance, and Communication/Feedback.

For the employee interviews, the topics for each of these themes included a range of questions that sought to address individual work experience and personal perceptions of the work environment. The topics for the manager interview were the same five topics, but included questions modified to be specific to the role and management issues.

Due to the fast pace of the catering industry, the interviews were conducted in two formats: in-person audio recordings for employees with access to the location, and voice messages via WhatsApp for those who were unable to meet. This open-ended interview style allowed interviewees to choose what was most convenient for them to answer the questions at their own pace, and concerns were addressed across all areas.

The responses were then hand-coded by theme and classified into five categories for depth and clarity. Selected quotes were removed to demonstrate themes and inform conclusions in the discussion chapter. This provided the study with the opportunity to compare and contrast what staff stated and what management perceived, but with a structural analysis relevant to the research objectives.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues were thoughtfully addressed at every point in the research. A plain language statement describing the study's aims, voluntary participation and the ability to withdraw from the study at any stage was offered to participants. Oral or WhatsApp written consent was sought before the beginning of an interview. Anonymity of participants was guaranteed by replacing names with codes and in transcripts and reports. Data were kept in secure files that only the researcher had access to. Subjectivity is an inescapable component of qualitative inquiry, but does not imply bias if it is acknowledged and approached critically (Grene, 1994). No harm or risk to participants was foreseen considering the non-sensitive nature of the survey. The study was conducted according to university and general research ethics principles.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Theme 1 – Employee Satisfaction

Staff interviews identified a continuing frustration around recognition and appreciation in the workplace. Four out of five staff members felt underappreciated in their roles despite their best efforts. “I do my best, and no one ever thanks me, or notices," said one staff member (Staff A). "We don't get noticed for anything when we’re working hard," said another staff member (Staff B). These were examples of no morale-boosting.

This evidence is highly consistent with Herzberg’s (1968) Two-Factor Theory, which suggests that recognition is one of the motivators necessary to job satisfaction. Catering workers are also made to feel invisible as described by Poulston (2008) who claimed that a lot of staff did not get recognition from management. King et al. (2010) stressed that alien immigrants at the workplace are often subject to affective estrangement from lack of acknowledgment that leaves them with reinforcing an emotional exclusion.

The interviews revealed that staff also associate satisfaction with fairness and respect from supervisors. Staff B noted, “Sometimes I feel treated differently because I’m not from here; we get harder shifts.” This points to perceived inequities based on nationality or employment status, which literature confirms as a factor affecting immigrant workers' satisfaction (Moyle et al., 2013).

Further, emotional labour seems to contribute for service jobs such as catering where personnel having to stay polite and service accommodating although they feel not being valued. Hochschild (1983) suggests that, in the absence of organisational support, such emotional regulation is related to burnout, and detachment. This aspect is not specifically mentioned by participants, rather it can be deduced from the way in which they feel “tired to pretend everything is going well”.

Data shows that retention is not simply managed but also recognized as a key void in the current approach to management, affecting job satisfaction and keeping talent on board. The testimonies provided by participants confirm that lack of acknowledgment is related to feeling frustrated and unmotivated, especially in the case of part-time and immigrant workers who are already likely to be on a margin of society within the organisation.

The organisation should develop formal recognition system like “employee of the month” scheme, recognition during team meeting such as praising in the meeting or casual praise from supervisor etc. These type of initiatives will motivate your staff and create a greater feeling of ownership and added value.

Theme 2 – Managerial Challenges

The manager interviewed spoke about the challenges he faces in managing a high-turnover part-time workforce. “I end up covering more shifts than I do managing, coaching, and helping develop my team,” he said. This limits his ability to lead and build teams, as he has to take on responsibilities day in and day out. Staff also reported little contact with management, with Team C stating, “We don’t see the manager unless something is wrong or they need someone to cover a shift.”

This is consistent with Poulston (2009), who describes hospitality managers as “firefighters” who spend more time on problems than on strategic leadership. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) associate managerial overload with burnout, and Podsakoff et al. (2007) describe its detrimental effects on team morale and support. King et al. (2010) also found that immigrant workers distance themselves from managers in terms of engagement.

The results suggest that managerial capacity is overstretched, reducing opportunities for meaningful interaction with staff that would make a difference in day-to-day operations. This lack of engagement contributes to low satisfaction and undermines the company’s efforts to retain employees. Managers are “stuck” in an operational cycle that prioritizes only immediate staffing solutions rather than working on long-term team development, affecting both their well-being and the employee experience.

Notably, the manager also expressed frustration with the lack of freedom to make changes: “We have it from above; we can’t change anything if we want to.” This also reflects a rigid, top-down management style that stifled the ability of local management to operate, a problem described by Hoque (2013) in the hospitality industry.

The interviews indicated that both rank-and-file workers and managers felt constrained by problems in the system above them. This dual dilemma serves to highlight that some retention opportunities may require policy changes at the organizational level, not just at the front line.

The organization should provide additional supervisory support (e.g., assistant managers or shift leaders) to share tasks and help ease the burden on managers. This would free up managers to spend more time on engagement, communication, and recognition—all cited as important for employee retention.

Theme 3 – Career Development and Training

A lack of formal training and career progression was a common topic discussed during employee interviews. Of the participating employees, 80% reported never having received any formal training. “I just learned by watching others,” said Staff D. “There is no very specific training program here.” Some complained about the lack of promotion or career paths within the organization, which led to a feeling of stagnation.

This is consistent with Lucas’ (2004) findings that food service jobs were viewed by employees as “dead-end jobs.” Baruch (2004) also argued that when there is no development or training, employees become disengaged and retention decreases. Noe (2010) and Allen et al. (2003) emphasize that organized training builds employee confidence and motivation, but part-time and immigrant workers are often only trained on the job and have few opportunities for development.

Without training and long-term options for career progression, a decline in motivation and commitment

is certain. If the organization does not invest in the skills of its part-time and immigrant workers, who may already feel excluded from the mainstream of the organization, they are less likely to feel that their position is not easily replaceable.

Respondents explained that their skills were acquired largely through informal learning. “I just look at other people and get it. Nobody really trains you.” staff E explained. This dependence on peer learning is characteristic of the informal nature of skill transfer in much of the catering industry (Baum, 2007).

Yet, unsupervised training can amplify vague concepts and leave employees second guessing what’s expected of them. This can result in mistakes and aggravation. The fact that respondents would like to see more clearly defined steps indicates a potential for formal training tools, should they exist. In addition, migrant workers may encounter other obstacles if the training material is not available in their mother tongue (Nickson 2013).

The company should establish and maintain clear and easy-to-understand training documentation for different roles and languages. And making information about promotion opportunities open and clear – whether through posters, manuals or team briefings – can demonstrate that advancement is possible within the organization, in turn increasing employees’ motivation to stay.

Theme 4 – Work-Life Balance

Staff said they were receiving odd hours of work and their lives outside their jobs were being ignored. “I’m not able to plan if I don’t have the schedule,” - Employee C. A second respondent (Employee D) stated, “Someday I work late night and the next Ihave to wake up early, has no routine.” The top reason once again listed for mental health deterioration and unhappiness among those working in the office was inconsistency of schedule.

These findings support Deery’s (2008) claim that bad schedule arrangement is a part of hospitality workers’ poor WLB and turnover intention. Kossek et al. (2011) also observe that though part-time work allows members to be flexible with their work schedules, this flexibility is hard to capitalize on, because of the uncertainty of hours. Hill et al. (2001) propose that in the absence of stable time schedules an "achievement guilt syndrome" exists among employees, who can no longer keep an equilibrium between work and family or personal life.

There appears to be evidence to support that erratic schedules have not only a corrosion of work-life balance implications, but also increase in emotional exhaustion/emotional labor and are demotivating. For time-poor and immigrant employees who work multiple jobs or have family duties, an inability to organise their work times left those workers dissatisfied and less inclined to stay on in these jobs. Employees associated haphazard working hours not just with a personal inconvenience, but also with financial precarity. “When it comes to planning bills you never know, some weeks I get more hours some weeks I get less,” Staff D said. This illuminates an economic aspect of work-life balance that is often implicitly accepted.

Irregular hours additionally interact with other sources of constraint, such as childcare/other caring duties (Beninger, 1988) or dependence on public transportation (Ko & Wong, 2009), to further

complicate the demands of combining work and non-work roles. This effects is even more pronounced for immigrant workers who have no extended family support network in the host country.
Given the results of the study and the literature review, it is suggested that institutions adopt more predictable scheduling including providing workers with schedules at least two weeks in advance and allowing workers to indicate their availability as well. I reckon these will help people to achieve work life balance, have less stress and be more loyal.

Theme 5 – Communication and Feedback

Staff D shared, “We only hear from management when something is wrong—no one tells you how well you’re doing.” Staff E added, “There are no meetings or feedback; we just show up and get things done.” The manager also acknowledged this shortcoming, stating, “There’s no time for one-on-ones or feedback sessions, just keeping things going.” - This section examined the lack of ongoing communication and feedback tools within the organization from both staff and management.
This observation is in line with Poulston (2009), who identified feedback in the hospitality industry as largely reactive and negative, rather than constructive and developmental. King et al. (2010) similarly reported that immigrant workers often lack access to formal communication channels, further distancing them from management. Ashford and Cummings (1983) emphasize that feedback is essential for employee learning and motivation, while Kossek et al. (2011) highlight two-way communication as fundamental to employee engagement and trust.
Participants also expressed that feedback was not only rare but often vague or punitive. Staff C noted, “If something’s wrong, they tell us to fix it, but they don’t explain how.” This reflects a transactional communication style that fails to support learning or improvement (Brownell, 2010).
Additionally, cultural differences in communication styles may contribute to misunderstandings or reluctance to seek clarification (Nickson, 2013). For immigrant workers, fear of being perceived as problematic may inhibit them from asking for feedback or voicing concerns, perpetuating isolation.
A lack of regular and constructive feedback contributes to a sense of invisibility and devaluation among part-time and immigrant workers. Without these tools and open channels of communication to discuss performance, progress, or concerns, employees will ultimately feel disengaged and unsupported, causing increased turnover rates.
To increase employee engagement and satisfaction in your organization, it is recommended that you introduce consistent evaluation tools, such as brief monthly check-ins or even informal performance discussions, to help foster effective communication. These sessions, even if short, can provide recognition, clarify expectations, and create opportunities for employees to express their concerns and feel heard.

Summary of Findings

Across all five themes, one or more of the four questions on recognition, managerial pressure, career opportunities, work-life balance, and communication were clearly identified as key findings of the survey. Triangulating field data with academic evidence reinforces the idea that these interconnected issues are important factors in turnover and dissatisfaction among part-time and immigrant workers in the food service industry. By examining the interplay between these factors, this research provides insights to help practitioners make targeted recommendations to increase satisfaction, engagement, and retention in this industry.

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Conclusion

This study sought to determine the root causes of turnover, particularly among part-time and immigrant workers in catering services, and also to identify what factors might contribute to increased job satisfaction among these workers. Five high-level themes emerged from the literature review and primary qualitative research: employee satisfaction; management challenges; career development and training; work-life balance; and communication and feedback.

The results show that part-time and immigrant workers are dissatisfied with a combination of lack of recognition, inadequate communication, lack of training/opportunities for career development, unpredictable work schedules, and limited interaction with management. These issues can be mutually reinforcing: poor communication exacerbates dissatisfaction, and lack of training opportunities hinders visibility and advancement. Informed managers were fighting an uphill battle, and while they wanted additional support, they simply could not find the time or resources to adequately help their employees, hampering retention.

Triangulation of literature and primary data demonstrates that these issues are not isolated cases of operation, but rather systematic in the catering industry and among vulnerable workforce groups. This article advocates for a multi-level response that addresses both organizational practices and managerial competencies to address these issues in relation to these three challenges. Ultimately, increasing satisfaction and reducing turnover means creating a more supportive, communicative, and inclusive work environment.

Recommendations Table

Sub-Theme	Recommendation
Employee Satisfaction	Implementation of recognition programs (e.g., employee of the month) and informal acknowledgments to enhance visibility and morale.
Managerial Challenges	Redistribute responsibilities between supervisors and assistants in order to reduce the overload that occurs in management, allowing them to focus more on engagement and care for the team.
Career Development & Training	Clear and objective communication/training programs for promotion purposes, contributing to encouraging retention and developing staff skills.
Work-Life Balance	Promote the use of routine rota schedules and staff involvement in schedule design to achieve balance and decrease stress.
Communication & Feedback	Use regular review sessions or informal meetings to encourage open conversations and recognition, for example individual one-to-ones at least once a month.

Employee Satisfaction - In addition to formal recognition programs such as “employee of the month” awards, managers could be trained to provide spontaneous, daily recognition that is more aligned with the demands of a busy catering operation. Simple actions such as saying thank you during shifts or posting a compliment board in the employee lounge can begin to create a culture of appreciation with very little cost in time or money. This approach is consistent with Herzberg’s (1968) motivators and can be adapted to high-turnover contexts. Additionally, allowing peer-reviewed publications for recognition can help establish a team environment and bring more awareness to contributions that may otherwise go unnoticed by management.

Managerial Challenges - Re-distribution of management tasks may include moving routine tasks—such as staff scheduling or managing stock—to assistant supervisors in order to free up managers to do leadership and engagement work. In high-pressure catering environments this split of responsibilities not only reduces the pressure on the manager, it also facilitates for internal promotion by training up junior staff as supervisors. Another would be to provide leadership management training to managers moving them from operational management to people management, satisfying the gap between operations and people management as reported in literature (Kuo: 2013). Regular or even check-ins with senior leadership, in addition, might provide managers an opportunity to make the case for resource support.

Career Development & Training - The development of structured but adaptable training modules could initiate with role-related competencies, gradually building out to professional skills. For instance, trainings might address not just food safety, but also customer service, teamwork and the basics of leadership, enabling employees to see where they might move to beyond the counter. Informing prospective participants aware of the availability of training in several languages or providing visual aids can create access of content for immigrant workers, minimising exclusion. Prize certificates or badges given for completion of modules, can be a source of motivation, act as an external incentive, as well as provide materials evidence of skills acquired, which contributes to retention as students will tend not to throw away proof that they have invested in their future career.

Work-Life Balance - To increase schedule predictability, a company can implement digital scheduling systems that allow workers to view their work schedule and request shifts or days off in advance, helping to make scheduling more transparent and fair. They can also allow workers to swap shifts or provide availability preferences to give workers control over balancing their schedules with personal responsibilities, improving balance while meeting operational needs. These are practices adopted by leading catering companies and can be adapted to smaller teams as well. Additionally, prescribing a limit such as the number of consecutive late-night shifts can reduce fatigue and help improve work rhythms, as staff report fatigue and lack of predictability, or perhaps better understanding each employee's needs and schedules, allowing them to decide what best suits their own schedule.

Communication & Feedback - Establishing consistent evaluations need not be confined to just formal appraisals; short, informal "check-in" conversations, which can happen during shifts on the shop floor or in a weekly stand-up meeting, can create dialogues that continue all year. Establishing safe upward feedback channels like anonymous suggestion boxes or rotating staff reps may make employees feel more comfortable sharing ideas or concerns without worrying about retaliation. The incorporation of positive feedback in communication on a daily practise level might aid the overall single corrected-oriented communication pattern of staff described, and will help reducing the focus on negative elements. Providing communication workshops or peer mentors to multicultural team members can further diminish barriers and promote inclusiveness.

Limitations

There are several limitations that should be acknowledged in this study. First, the small number of participants (five staff members and two managers) might not make it possible to generalize results beyond the specific context of the organization involved in the study. Although this was a qualitative study which favours depth rather than width, the involvement of a wider range of participants from other catering settings could have extended the bandwidth.

Second, gathering self-reported information may lead to possible prejudices (e.g. social desirability, selective memory). It is possible that positive experiences have been underestimated and negative aspects overstated by participants. WhatApp voice recordings, while practical, may have inhibited the depth of responses relative to face to face interviews.

Lastly, the research was limited in terms of time and accessibility towards following a long-term trend of turnover and satisfaction. The research offers a snapshot of what employees are going through at a given time, not long-term trends.

Suggestions for Future Research

Further research could build on this exploration with a larger sample size containing workers from different food service organizations to determine whether these same effects transfer to other settings. Between-subject comparisons between full-time and part-time workers and native or immigrant employees would add more clear findings to the question which role demographic factors play on job satisfaction and turnover.

We propose that in addition to all of these, there is an increasing role that quantitative, population-based research can play in supplementing qualitative work and in conducting statistical tests of the relationships outlined in this project. Cohort studies to monitor turnover over time would be desirable in elucidating the degree to which interventions affect the level of retention in food service. Finally, the mediating role of cultural integration and language support of immigrant workers the implication of the two for communication and professional development opportunities may be investigated.

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