

*Full Length Research paper*

# The factors contributing to labour turnover in the sugar industry in Kenya (a case of Sony Sugar Company limited)

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Human resources are one of the most valuable resources of an organization and indeed an organization is nothing without human resources. This applies to companies and educational Institutions. Getting and keeping good people is critical to the success of every organization. Maintaining employees is about providing working conditions that are worker friendly, involvement in decision making, good salaries, recognition for good performance and so forth. Many companies are increasingly finding it difficult to retain employees. Turnover is becoming a serious problem in today's corporate environment. Turnover costs for many organizations are very high and can significantly affect financial performance of an organisation. Sony Sugar Company has been ranked at the lowest for two consecutive years by the government and has a high labour turnover as indicated in their newsletters. This study focused on Sony Sugar Company limited and its main objective was to asses the factors that contribute to labour turnover in parastatal organizations in Kenya. The study was able to find out the patterns of labour turnover and effects of labour turnover to Sony Sugar Company limited. The study used a sample size of 108 people out of the total population 1,008. Purposeful sampling was used to select the key respondents while random sampling was used to select the main respondents. The study used interview schedules and questionnaires to collect data; they were administered to the key and main respondents at their offices. Data was analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) and frequency distribution tables were used. The study came up with many recommendations which includes; The management should introduce better overtime pay and workers encouraged to take up the opportunity, the managers should involve workers in decision making, the management of Sony Sugar Company should review its pay package, fringe benefits and opportunities for growth be put in place in order to retain its workforce, the management should implement the findings of labour turnover in order to reduce its effects, the management should streamline the promotion procedures and should be followed strictly and Worker friendly leadership styles be used by all managers in the company for instance democratic and laissez fair

**Keywords:** Labour turnover, human resource, turnover costs and human resources.

## INTRODUCTION

Labour turnover refers to the movement of employees in and out of the organization. However, the term is commonly used to refer only to "wastage" or the number

of employees leaving. High levels of turnover can be serious problems for both large and small organizations. It is costly, lowers productivity and morale and tends to get worse if not dealt with (Cole, 1998)

This proposed study aims to provide suggestions and recommendations to help organizations scale down problems arising from labour turnover. All organizations can expect some degree of turnover. Indeed, certain

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degree of turnover may be desirable since it creates opportunities to induce wider experience and new ideas to the organization, as well as providing career development opportunities for existing workers. Persistently high levels of labour turnover, however, are costly both to individual organizations and to the economy as a whole and adversely affect efficiency, productivity and morale.

High labour turnover rate has impacts on organizations in relation to organizational costs, morale, training and customer service. Labour turnover is a term used to describe the number of employees leaving an organization and a certain level is expected and is acceptable. The analysis of labour turnover is a vital role of the HR department as the data may be used to forecast future recruitment requirements and also assists an organization's retention strategy. It also highlights areas of business that may require assistance in terms of people management problem issues. By measuring labour turnover on regular basis (usually annually) organizations can immediately recognize a change in levels and implement strategies for dealing with this.

Once employees leave an organization, there is need to replace them with new recruits. According to Hall (1986), the main reasons that make workers leave an organization are:

Resignation (both voluntary and due to incapacity – pregnancy, ill-health)., Dismissal (including redundancy), Retirement, Inadequate wage levels leading to employees moving to competitors, Poor morale and low levels within the workforce, Recruiting and selecting the wrong employees in the first place, meaning they leave to seek more suitable employment, A buoyant local labour market offering more (and perhaps more attractive) opportunities to employees and Death

## Labour Turnover

Graham and Benneth (1988: 169) stated that: "Labour turnover is the movement of people into and out of the firm. It is usually convenient to measure by recording movements out of the firm on the assumption that a leaver is eventually replaced by a new employee. The term separation is used to denote an employee who leaves for any reason." Graham and Bennett also give the formula to measure separation or wastage rate during the period (usually one year) as "percentage of the average employed during that period" given as:-

$$\frac{\text{Number of separation during that period}}{\text{Average number of employed during that period}} \times 100$$

Armstrong (1999: pg 323) says that employee turnover should be analyzed in order to forecast future losses and to identify the reasons for people leaving the organization. Plans can then be made to attach the

future problems causing unnecessary wastage and to reduce uncontrollable losses. The human resource planner therefore has to know how to measure wastage and how to analyze its causes.

Werther and Keith (1996) said that training and development teaches existing employees new knowledge, skills and abilities to ensure their continued usefulness to the organization and meeting their personal desires for advancement. The employer must be committed to training and development of the staff and show this by releasing employees from regular work to attend training and even sponsor them where possible. When training opportunities are lacking, workers gets demoralized and easily move to other companies even for allow pay but as long as there are chances for training and development. Chapman and Torrington (1987) maintained that an employer believes that employees should be paid a fair amount in relation to the skill and effort that have been exercised. Employees on their part that there is reasonable level of payment that can be expected for the contribution made, so that if the pay is low they get dissatisfied and causes mass exodus from the company. Herzberg (1968) in his theory he said that hygiene or maintenance factors help prevent loss of money, efficiency and demotivation. They are the primary cause of unhappiness at work. They are external and do not relate directly to the persons work. They constitute the persons work environment. They include salaries, job security, working conditions, status, company policies and quality of technical supervision among others. Employees are important in any running of a business, without them the business would be unsuccessful. However, more and more employers today are finding employees remain for approximately 23 to 24 months, according to the 2006 Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Employment Policy Foundation states it costs a company on an average of \$15,000 per employee, including separation costs, paperwork, unemployment; vacancy costs, including overtime or temporary employees and replacement costs including advertisement, interview time, relocation, training and decreased productivity when colleagues depart. Providing a stimulating workplace environment in which fosters happy, motivated and empowered individuals, this lowers employee turnover and absentee rates. Promoting a work environment that fosters personal and professional growth promotes harmony and encouragement on all levels, so the effects are felt company wide

According to Flippo (1984), the movement into and out of an organization by the workforce is an index of the stability of that force. An excessive movement is undesirable and expensive. High turnover from certain departments suggests a need for improvements in working conditions and/or supervision. Reasons given for leaving must be analyzed carefully to ascertain their truth.

A survey of labour turnover, published in December

1997, by the institute of Personnel and Development indicated that the cost of replacing staff has increased significantly in the UK in the last twelve months. Taking a detailed look at the available data on the labour in the UK the independent employment researchers, industrial relations services argued in 1997 that the economic recovery in the UK is leading to increasing numbers of resignations and skill shortages, which in turn are leading to substantial resourcing problems for employers. At the same time labour turnover is being adopted by many organizations in the UK as a “bench mark” indicator of performance and business efficiency (Betts, 2000). The overall conclusion of the IPD survey was that the cost of labour turnover associated with all occupational groups, with the exception of unskilled workers had increased over the period of the survey

### **Patterns and Benefits of Labour Turnover**

The highest rate of labour turnover tends to be among those who have recently joined an organization. Long serving employees are more likely to stay, mainly because they become used to the work and the business and have an established relationship with those around them (Armstrong, 1992). Labour turnover does not just create costs. Some level of labour turnover is important to bring new ideas, skills and enthusiasm to the labour force. A “natural” level of turnover can be a way in which a business can slowly reduce its workforce without having to resort to redundancies (this is often referred to as “natural wastage”

An alternative calculation of labour turnover is known as the “stability index”. This illustrates the extend to which the experienced workforce it’s being retained and is calculated as follows (Thomson, 1997).

### **Costs of Labour Turnover**

High labour turnover can be expensive although the actual costs are difficult to get some indications, organizations can start by adding up the most obvious expenses – those of advertising, recruitment and training together with the cost of associated management and supervisory time. The annual total could well convince the organization that time and effort spent reducing labour turnover is cost effective (saleemi, 2005).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Equity theory of motivation suggests that people are influenced in their behaviour by the relative rewards they either get or are going to receive. The theory is based on the assumption that people are most likely to be motivated by the way they are equitably treated at work.

People tend to compare for example the pay they get with what others are paid for the same effort and situation, so that if they are treated unfairly, they will consider themselves as victims of inequity (Robbins, 1993).

Herzbergs two factor theory of motivation, on the other hand classified job factors into two; motivation factors and the hygiene or maintenance factors (Herzberg, 1968). Motivation factors relate directly to the job itself. They are concerned with the job content of the work people perform. Failure to provide sufficient quality will cause job dissatisfaction while sufficient supply will lead to job satisfaction and high performance. These factors include achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, growth opportunities and so forth. Hygiene or Maintenance factors help prevent loss of money, efficiency and demotivation. They are the primary cause of unhappiness at work. They are external and do not relate directly to the persons work. They constitute the persons work environment. They include salaries, job security, working conditions, status, company policies and quality of technical supervision among others.

This study was guided by the Herzbergs two factor theory particularly the hygiene or maintenance factors. This is so because they capture the real work environment while the Equity theory only considers the workers treatment and not the work environment in totality

### **Statement of the Problem**

Organizations do experience labour turnover from time to time, which may have some impact on the organization’s performance. Sony Sugar Company has been experiencing some level of turnover as shown by the data in (tables 1 and 2). This turnover has been of great concern to the organization. Losing experienced and skilled labour is very costly, since the organization has to employ and train new employees.

From the table, the number of workers leaving the company has been on increase everyt year and the trend is worrying the industry players. Equally according to the Performance Evaluation results released by the government of Kenya under the Commercial and Manufacturing sector, Sony Sugar Company limited was ranked last at position 116 in the year 2008. It came last among the sugar mills ranked, including Chemillili Sugar Company that has been under receivership, which was ranked at position 115 while Nzoia Sugar Company was ranked at position 17. In this year’s (2009) ranking, Sony Sugar Company was ranked at position 100 and is the last among the sugar factories.

The poor performance experienced by Sony Sugar Company has the effect of demoralizing the workers. High labour turnover is costly, lowers productivity and morale and tends to get worse if not dealt with. It is on

**Table 1.** Group Employments

Department	No. Of Workers
Manufacturing	360
Agriculture	360
Human Resource	120
Finance And Accounting	35
General Administration	60
Logistics	50
Company Secretary	14
Sales And Marketing	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1008</b>

Source:-staff news letter 2008.

**Table 2.** Sony Labour Turnover Statistics

Year	Those Who Left	Those Who Joined
2002	9	11
2003	6	10
2004	10	30
2005	10	8
2006	35	19
2007	20	14
2008	25	23

Source: Staff Newsletters of 2008

the basis of the above premise that this study seeks to assess the exact causes of labour turnover at Sony Sugar Company limited.

### Justification of the Study

The rationale of this study is was carried out because the company is going down, there was labour turnover as indicated through a pilot study. Its also meant to contribute knowledge and lay the foundation for further research on labour turnover.

### The Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to assess the factors that contribute to labour turnover in Parastatal organization, a case of Sony Sugar Company limited.

### Specific Objectives of the Study

1. To establish the factors that leads to labour turnover at Sony Sugar Company
2. To find out patterns of labour turnover at Sony sugar

company

3. To find out the effects of labour turnover to Sony Sugar Company limited

### Research Questions

In conducting the research, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the factors that lead to labour turnover at Sony Sugar Company limited?
2. What are the patterns of labour turnover at Sony Sugar Company limited?
3. What are effects of labour turnover on Sony Sugar Company limited?

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Study Design

Descriptive cross sectional study design was adopted in conducting this study because the study was guided by the university academic calendar. Descriptive survey design was appropriate because it involves collecting data in order to test hypothesis or answer questions concerning the current status of subjects of the study.

**Table 3.** Sample Size

Department	Target Population	Sample Size (10%) Main respondents	Key informants	Total sampled
Manufacturing	360	36	1	37
Agriculture	360	36	1	37
Human Resource	120	12	1	13
Finance and accounting	35	3	1	4
General administration	60	6	1	7
Logistics	50	5	1	6
Company secretary	14	1	1	2
Sales and marketing	9	1	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,008</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>108</b>

Kothari (1985) notes that descriptive design is concerned with describing, recording, analyzing and reporting conditions that exist or existed. Engelhart (1972) argues that descriptive methods are widely used to obtain data useful in evaluating present practices and in providing basis for decision-making.

### Study Population

The study targeted workers of Sony Sugar Company in eight departments. The departmental managers were interviewed together with the subordinates in those departments. The departmental managers were used because by virtue of their positions, they have information on policy areas while the subordinates shed light on why labour turnover is experienced. Kothari (1990) states that a study population refers to all items in any field of study.

### Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Scholars do not agree on the exact proportion of the accessible population that should form the sample size. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) suggest that in descriptive studies ten percent of the survey population is representative enough to generalize characteristics being observed. In this study therefore ten percent of the accessible population constituted the sample size.

The study used purposive sampling and stratified random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to select people with desired qualities while stratified was used to group the samples in strata having similar characteristics. Stratified sampling was used to achieve representation of the main respondents. The main respondents were stratified on the basis of their departments. Key informants (heads of departments) were purposively sampled due the information they have by the virtue of the positions they hold. The (table 3) above shows the total sample to be used in the study.

### Data Collection Tools and Procedures

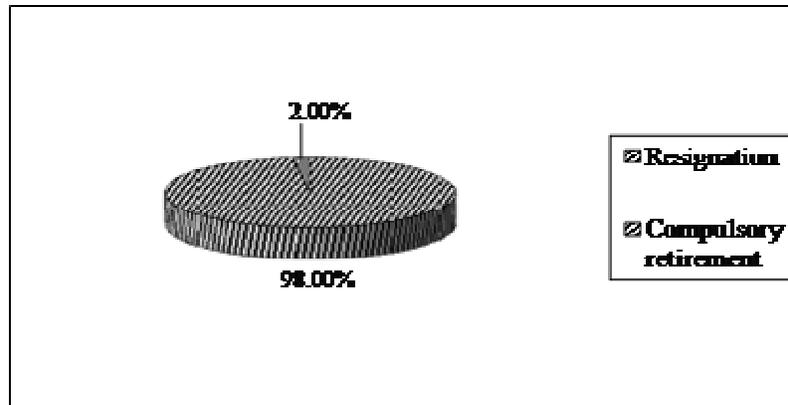
The study involved the collection of secondary data and primary data. Secondary data included documented information that was obtained in the company's library, books, newsletters and reports. Primary data was collected using questions and interviews. Structured and unstructured questionnaires were administered to the main respondents. These questionnaires were delivered by hand to the respondents at their duty stations during working hours by the research assistants. An interview schedule was used to obtain data from key informants. Interviews enabled the key informants to express themselves and provide in-depth data and make clarifications where necessary. Their responses were used to check if information from other respondents is consistent with the company's position

### Data Analysis

Data from questionnaires was summarized, edited, coded, tabulated and analysed. Editing was done to improve the quality of data for coding. Descriptive statistics was used. Data was analyzed using a statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Editing involved going through the questionnaires to see if respondents responded to questions and see if there are blank responses. Tabulation involved counting the number of cases that fall into various categories. A simple tabulation was used.

### Patterns of Labour Turnover at Sony Sugar Company

Sony Sugar Company has been experiencing mainly resignation form of labour turnover. 98% (n = 96) of the respondents noted this company has experienced resignation while 2.0% (n = 2) noted Compulsory retirement (figure 1). Categories of workers by grade who have contributed to the highest labour turnover in this company were sub-ordinate staff. 98.0% (n = 96) of



**Figure 1.** Forms of labour turnover Sony Sugar Company has been experiencing

Author: Field Data 2011

the respondents noted sub-ordinates have contributed to the highest turnover but 1.0% (n = 1) respondent felt the highest turnover has been contributed to by senior managers. The eminent reasons as to why the sub-ordinates are noted to have contributed to the highest turnover were; tribalism, too much work and long working hours, training opportunities are not competitively given out, they have a poor pay, have poor working conditions, working with risky machines, lack of clear promotion and training policies, mistreatment by the managers and there is a desire for upward growth or promotion

## DISCUSSION

a) The study established that given another job, 98% of the main respondents would leave the company. According to these respondents, the reasons why they wish to leave are: better salary, better fringe benefits and lack of opportunities for upward growth. The findings reveal that at Sony Sugar Company, there is overcrowding in the offices, few welfare services and inadequate protective clothing. The study further established that workers would quit their jobs due to poor working conditions, use of dangerous machines, harassment by managers and the fact that they are overworked.

b) According to the study, managers understood labour turnover as workers leaving the company for greener pastures. 100% of the managers would leave the present company and take up a new job if the job offers better salary and benefits than the current one. If it also provides training opportunities. Manager noted that some employees have left their jobs to advance their studies. Others quit due to the desire for training opportunities.

c) The study revealed that Sony Sugar Company has

been experiencing mainly voluntary form of labour turnover, 98% of the respondents noted most employees left due to resignation. Only 2% of the respondents reported that employees left as a result of compulsory retirement. Where an instance of turnover is genuinely voluntary, this instance represents the exercise of choice and is the result of a decision process. Voluntary turnover also represent a purer social phenomenon, as they catalogue where individuals have chosen to terminate a significant relationship. The study revealed that voluntary labour turnover was the one experienced because workers who left the organization did so on their own volition. They were not sacked or pushed out. The study has established that currently Sony Sugar Company is reducing labour turnover through: involvement of workers in decision making, management working closely with the workers' trade union and finding out why workers are leaving the company. Out of sampled workers 94% maintains that the company is not doing enough to reduce the labour turnover patterns being experienced while 6% applauds the efforts of the company. To reduce the labour turnover patters being experienced by the company, the study revealed the following to be done: adjust salaries of the staff upwards, provide training and development opportunities, invite workers in making of the decisions, address causes of the workers resignations and streamline promotion procedures..

d) The study established that labour turnover has both positive and negative effects. to the main respondents the positive effects included, new ideas will be injected into the company by the new employees, a chance for the organization to reorganize its human resource on the basis of gender and a chance to reduce tribalism. The managers who were interviewed on the other side identified the following as the positive effects of labour turnover: it gives a chance to bring in new blood, reduces fighting in departments, it's a chance to reduce tribalism

and to change workers composition in terms of gender. Even under the conditions of careful recruitment and selection procedures, some matches turn out to be better than others. This holds especially when productivity and performance do not so much depend on technology as well as on social relations and contextual skills

e) On the hand the study established the following as the negative effects labour turnover as stated by the main respondents: its hard to replace experienced workers, there is low morale of the workers left in the company, its costly to employ and train, the company production goes down, overworking of those left behind, its difficulty to maintain the organizations culture and history, causes fights between old and new employees and encourages others to want to leave. In fact 99% of the respondents said that they were affected by labour turnover. Only one respondent said he was not affected. The study also indicated that those who remained became lonely, was difficult to deal with new employees and that they were constantly harassed for not completing their assignments.

f) The study established that Sony Sugar Company was affected by labour turnover in form of poor productivity, poor company image, low motivation for the workers and causes the company to change policies. The study further revealed that 99% of the respondents felt the company is not doing enough to reduce the effects of labour turnover. They suggested the following as the remedies to the effect of labour turnover: the company needs to increase salaries of its staff, the company needs to employ immediately a vacancy is created, it should introduce over time payment that is attractive, encourage workers to take up overtime, engage casuals to do the work before others are employed, change the leadership styles and let workers sign employment contracts. 100% of the managers interviewed said that the company is not doing enough either to reduce the effects of labour turnover but they noted that the company was doing the following: increasing the workload for the remaining workers, offering overtime payment to the workers. On their part the managers recommended the following as the remedy: involve workers in decision making and implement the finding on the causes of labour turnover.

## CONCLUSION

- i) Most current employees of the company are ready to quit if offered another job with better terms of service
- ii) The level of dissatisfaction is highest among the low cadre of employees of Sony Sugar Company
- iii) Most employees who quit the company did so voluntarily (according to 98% of the respondents)
- iv) The subordinates contributes to the highest labour turnover experienced at Sony Sugar Company

- v) Sony Sugar Company management have not done enough to reduce the effects of labour turnover
- vi) Labour turnover has affected both workers and Sony Sugar Company

## RECOMMENDATION

- a) The Management should introduce better overtime pay and workers encouraged to take up the opportunity
- b) The Managers should involve workers in decision making
- c) The management of Sony Sugar Company should review its pay package, fringe benefits and opportunities for growth in order to retain its workforce.
- d) The Management should implement the findings of labour turnover in order to reduce its effects.
- e) The Management should streamline the promotion procedures and should be followed strictly
- f) Worker friendly leadership styles be used by all managers in the company for instance democratic and laissez faire

## Recommendation for Further Research

There is need for further research especially on:

- i The effects of labour turnover on productivity
- ii The relationship between bad recruitment procedures and labour turnover
- iii The costs of labour turnover.

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**APPENDIX I****QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MAIN RESPONDENTS**

The questionnaires here are intended to collect information aimed at finding out the situation regarding the causes of labour turnover at Sony Sugar Company

Please respond to each item/question as honestly as possible. The information collected will be to help come up with recommendations aimed at improving the organization's performance and reduction of labour turnover.

**PART I – EMPLOYEE PROFILE**

Please tick (√) the appropriate choice

1. Age.....
2. Gender a) Male.....b) Female.....
3. What is your marital status?
  - a) Married..... b) Single.....
  - c) Separated..... d) Divorced.....
4. What is your highest educational level?
  - i. University.....
  - ii. Tertiary.....
  - iii Secondary.....
  - iv) primary.....

Other qualifications attained.....

1. How many years have you worked with Sony sugar?
  - a) 1-2 years.....b)3-4 years.....
  - c) 5-6 yaers.....d) 6years and above.....
2. What is your current role?  
.....  
.....
3. In which department do you work?
  - a) Manufacturing.....
  - b) Agriculture.....
  - c) Human resource.....
  - d) Finance and accounting.....
  - e) General administration.....
  - f) Logistics.....
  - g) Company secretary.....
  - h) Sales and marketing.....
3. What is your profession by training?  
.....

**PART II –LABOUR TURNOVER FACTORS**

1. What do you understand by the term labour turn over?  
.....  
.....
2. If you got another job will you leave the present company?
  - a) Yes..... b) No.....
3. If yes give reasons for your decision

Appendix cont.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

4. Are there workers who have left their jobs?  
a) Yes..... b) No.....

5. If yes give reasons for their moving  
i).....  
.....  
.....  
ii).....  
.....  
.....  
iii).....  
.....  
.....

6. Is the moving of the workers from the company voluntary or involuntary?  
a) voluntary.....b) involuntary.....

7. Explain your answer in (6)  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**PART III-PATTERNS OF LABOUR TURNOVER**

1. What forms of labour turnover has Sony Sugar Company been experiencing?  
i) Redundancy.....  
ii) Dismissals.....  
iii) Compulsory retirements.....  
iv) Resignations.....  
v) Death.....  
vi) All of the above.....  
vii) None of the above.....

1 If none of the above, explain  
i).....  
.....  
.....  
ii).....  
.....  
.....  
iii).....  
.....  
.....

3. Which category of workers by grade have contributed to the highest labour turnover

Appendix cont.

- a) Senior Managers.....b) Middle level mangers.....
- c) Low-level mangers.....d) Sub ordinates.....

4. Explain the reasons for the answer above

- i).....
- .....
- .....
- ii).....
- .....
- .....
- iii).....
- .....
- .....

5. In your view what should be done to reduce the labour turnover patterns that are being experienced

- i) Increase salaries of all workers.....
- ii) Change the leadership styles in use to those which are worker friendly.....
- iii) Reduce the work load by employing more workers.....
- iv) Provide training and development opportunities.....

6. What is the Company doing to reduce the labour turnover patterns being experienced?

- i) Nothing.....
- ii) Finding out why workers are leaving.....
- iii) Involving workers in decision making.....
- iv) Management working closely with the workers trade union.....

**PART III-EFFECTS OF LABOUR TURNOVER**

1. State both positive and negative effects when workers leave an organization.

- i) Positive effects
- a).....
- .....
- .....
- b).....
- .....
- .....
- c).....
- .....
- .....
- ii) Negative effects
- a).....
- .....
- .....
- b).....
- .....
- .....
- c).....
- .....
- .....

Appendix cont.

2. Were you affected in any way when other workers left the company?  
a) Yes.....b) No.....

3. If yes explain how you were affected  
i).....  
.....  
.....  
ii).....  
.....  
.....  
iii).....  
.....  
.....

4. Does labour turnover have any of the following effects to an organisation.  
Poor productivity.....  
i) Poor company image.....  
ii) Low motivation fro the workers.....  
iii) Cause the company to change policies.....  
iv) None of the above.....

5. If none of the above, mention the effects  
i).....  
.....  
.....  
ii).....  
.....  
.....  
iii).....  
.....  
.....

6. What is the company doing to reduce the effects of labour turnover?  
i) Increase the work load of the remaining workers.....  
ii) Introducing over time pay.....  
iii) Transfer of workers to other sections or departments.....  
iv) Provision of free sugar to workers every month.....  
v)None of the above.....

7. Is the company doing enough to reduce to reduce labour turnover?  
a) Yes.....b) No.....

8. If No, What in your view should the company do to reduce the effects of labour turnover  
i).....