

# The Determining Factors Of Permanent Harvesters' Turnover At Pt Bumitama Gunajaya Abadi Oil Palm Plantation In Central Kalimantan

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## ABSTRACT

The oil palm plantation industry is often called "green gold" which produces the CPO as a leading export commodity but it's also fraught with challenges, both from external factors and internal factors, such as the high turnover of palm fruit harvesters. Even though this commonly occurs and has a direct impact on the achievement of production and also on the company income, there is not much research regarding it. Therefore, this research would focus on the harvesters' turnover, through qualitative descriptive methods, the collecting data used the pre-surveys, analyzing primary, secondary data and in-depth interviews with the informants and data validity methods were analyzed by triangulation. The results stated if there were five factors which determined the harvesters' turnover, such as dissatisfaction with public facilities, social institutions and welfare in terms of income and easy access to basic daily needs and their relations with superiors.

## Keywords:

Oil palm plantations, harvesters, turnover, work dissatisfaction, public and social facilities and superior relations.

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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has the largest oil palm plantation in the world and this makes the nation proud. Apart from being able to create jobs, it is also being able to improve the people's welfare and it has been proven to be able to stand still in the economic crisis and also in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is currently sweeping the world including Indonesia. The strong basis of this business lies on the use of natural resources, such as soil conditions, rainfall, sunlight, fertilizers and seeds as well as other natural environmental factors, which depend on the quality of its human resources to manage these natural resources.

The dynamic challenges which come from external factors such as climate change (drought), the black palm oil campaign, falling prices, labor competition between palm oil companies and as for internal company factors, including plant productivity, the whole business processes which are still do manually and high employee turnover and less interest on labours to work at plantation sites. The fact that the oil palm plantation business is still labour intensive means that it involves a lot of labour to carry out its business processes,

starting from seeds preparation, planting, look after planting, harvesting / picking up the fresh fruit bunches and transporting them to the factory to be processed into CPO.

In the oil palm plantation industry where the crops are already producing, the presence of harvesters is very crucial and its absence could have an impact, because it has a direct or 'constantly' affect on productivity so that it will intrude to the achievement of the company goals. This is according to research conducted by Kusuma, H. et al (2019). Besides that, according to the authors, the importance of harvesting employees could be equated as the importance of nurses as medical personnel who are 24 hours close to all in-patients at the hospital, based on research from Alam and Asim, (2019) in Karachi. There is also research from Jasni, NA & Othman N (2019) in Kebun Mensuli, Sabah Malaysia which underlined that the existence of harvest employees if there is not any progress in management it could be a threat to oil palm plantations not only in Malaysia, but also in Canada, England, India and Bahamas (Shazwani et al, 2012:99-108).

PT Bumitama Gunajaya Agro, A Private company which is situated in Central Kalimantan, which is not immune from facing this high turnover challenge from the harvesters in 3 consecutive years. The harvesting employees rate

changes above 64%, aside from the existence of competition from oil palm plantation companies surround, it is fascinating to appraise about which determining factor that causes the harvesters change.

**Table. 1 Harvesters Turnover Data**

Year	Plant Area	Total of Workers (People)			Decrease	
	Yield (Hectare)	Beginning of the year	The end of the year	Average labor/year	Workers out	%
2017	26.354	1,450	1,850	1,650	1,082	65.58
2018	28.113	1,750	1,948	1,826	1	64.24
2019	19.720	1,989	1,993	1,991	1	64.59

The table shows that the more increasing plant area would produce a greater number of harvesters but also it decreases (stops). There are various predictive factors which encourage the harvesters to quit, including work satisfaction that is triggered by various reasons. For example, the harvesters would feel their income insufficient, unfulfilled expectations of the harvester's wife to participate as permanent workers, working environment conditions, housing conditions, easy access to basic daily needs, relations to the superiors.

This research would focus on scientific research to describe the nature of turnover and which causes harvesters to choose to resign and which factors that encourage them to quit. In oil palm plantations or non-palm oil companies, turnover is a common thing, 'sunnatullah' which naturally occurs, because none of the companies are free from turnover, but if the ones that leave are the main employees (harvesters) who have strategic role and constantly.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

The research on employee turnover in various types of industrial companies is quite large, but the research which specifically in palm fruits' harvester turnover in oil palm plantations is still limited / small, while Indonesia has the largest oil palm plantation area in the world, so in terms of demand oil palm fruit harvesters much sought after, while the supply is also limited.

Therefore, by keeping the harvesting employees by making the harvesters feel at home on the plantation location which is something that should be done.

The definition of employee turnover in English word which is translated into language has the meaning of employee rotation which defines and according to the author's understanding, is the process of terminating the work relations between employees and companies which provide facilities and benefits in return for their services, the higher the turnover, the more employees who leave the company. The job that is left behind, should be replaced immediately, through the initial process of selection / recruitment, placement, work adaptation and work environment also the company culture. For the process of hiring the employees, it would cost the money. Moreover, if those who left the company are talented employees who have special skills, then their leaving will cause losses to the company (L.Mathis & Jogn. H. Jackson in Elmi, F. 2018: 196-203).

There are 3 basic elements in turnover intention, first the thought of leaving a job, second looking for another job and third the intention to leave the organization. Strong intentions to leave the organization are based on factors of coworkers, management, compensation, experience and work environment (Carmeli & Weisberg in Asim and Nature, 2019); whilst according to Govindarajo. NS, et al., (2014) on

their research results it declared if the main determining factor for employee turnover in oil palm plantations in Sabah Malaysia, was associated with organizational factors (wages, welfare, work safety, management and environment), individual factors (health, motivation and family) and geographical factors (remote location, accommodation, access and cleanliness). According to Robbins (2019: 46-47) the aspects of work satisfaction, organizational commitment and worker involvement are 3 factors that affect person to stay. Hence, Robbins' theory becomes the reference of this research and has been proven by several scientific studies.

Work satisfaction (job satisfaction), although it is relative to each individual depending on the value of the self-value that it adheres to, in general, work satisfaction represents a positive or negative feeling for its job, the more employees have work satisfaction the more employees feel at home in the company. From work satisfaction in the form of working environment conditions, clean, neat, and physically comfortable have been fulfilled and will provide employee mood to complete their work (Colquitt, Lepine and Watson, 2013: 98). Even though the conditions of the work environment have been fulfilled, there are another work satisfaction factors which could affect employee turnover, including: income (wages received by workers), the job is tempting or not, supervisor's guidance (how the boss maintains a good relationship with those he / she leads), because the good correlation with the superiors gave a sense of comfort and finally there is an award (Robbins, 2019: 44-45). According to Tower Perrin's (2010) research results in the book of Douglass & Moon, (2015: 12), this award proven those appreciation for workers' contributions has a huge greater meaning for workers than their salary, no other motivation is more important than appreciation.

Organizational commitment means that a company which has a good organizational commitment is able to produce good performance. This shows from the low turnover rate and low employee absenteeism, besides employees are

also willing to be part of the company and have a strong desire to contribute and fight together (say, stay, and strive) in the company (Luthans, 2011: 250). There is a positive correlations between organizational commitment and employee work satisfaction. Employees who have work satisfaction are more committed to the company. On the other hand, employees who do not have work satisfaction have less commitment to their company. This would be raised with a lower level of workplace attendance (J.P. Hausknecht, et. al 2008 in Robbins, 2019:47). This was in line with the results of research from Bagus & Susilo (2019) and Hidayat, A.S. (2018) which concluded that there is a positive influence between organizational commitment and employee work satisfaction.

Employee engagement, According to research conducted by Hayes T.L et al (2002) in Robbins' book, (2019:48-49) stated if the companies which have a high level of involvement from their employees would produce a high level of customer satisfaction and its performance. The more productive, earned higher profits and lower number of work accidents, lower medical costs and lower turnover rate, when compared to companies with low employee engagement. Nowadays, worker involvement has become a necessity and it has been widely applied in business organizations. Employee involvement is created by the boss/manager. Because superiors are people who could provide comfortable support services to work as needed by employees, in addition, the superiors should be able to create situations where their subordinates feel appreciated, including by their colleagues (Employee Engagement Survey, 2013). Besides, according to research by Bryant, PC and Allen, DG (2013) said to retain their best employees, besides facilities and benefits, there is a need for extra/special approaches that need to be taken by superiors with no costs, while according to NR Lockwood in Robbins, (2019:48) that Caterpillar companies have successfully recorded an 80% reduction in worker complaints and 34% increase in customer satisfaction as a result of increased

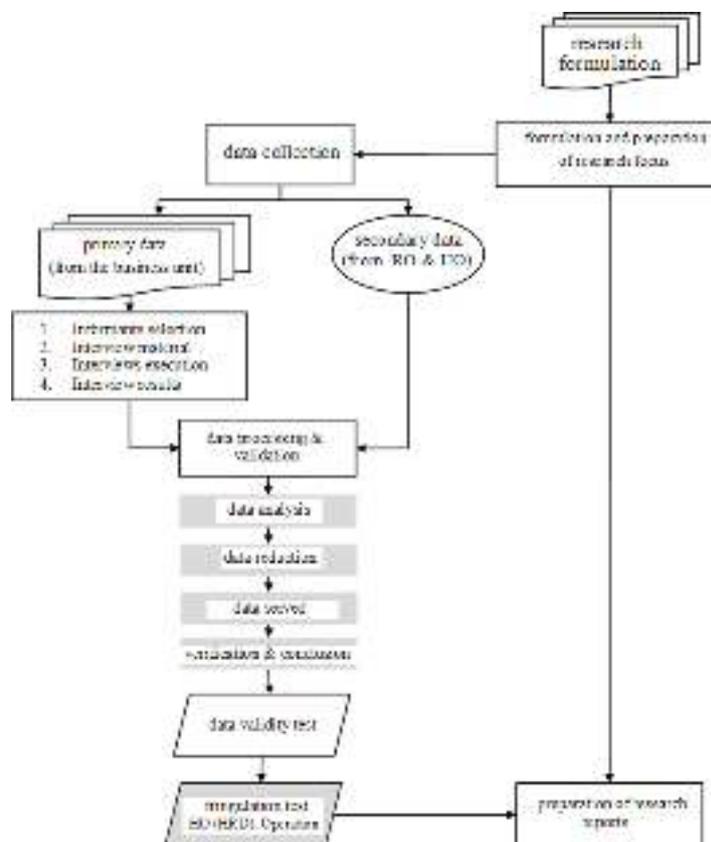
employee engagement. Employee involvement would increase productivity, higher financial benefits, reduce turnover, create higher mood and customer loyalty (Mohanty, M.K, 2018).

**RESEARCH METHODS**

This research used descriptive qualitative method approach, which is represented by qualitative researchers as wanting to find meaning, understanding of an incident phenomenon that is either directly involved or indirectly involved in the social setting conditions under this research, contextual and comprehensive. Providing a focus on the issue

under this research, the process is step-by-step to be explained and concluded during the process from the beginning to the end of the activity, which is narrative and holistic (Yusuf, 2016: 328-330).

The stages in qualitative research, starting from the formulation and preparation of what will be the focus of the research, collecting data, both primary and secondary data, selecting informants, compiling interview materials, conducting interviews, continuing with data process, examining the validity of data through the triangulation method and last is arranging the reports.



**Figure 1. Stages of the Research**

The research target is the employees of oil palm fruit harvesters who is known as FFB (Fresh Fruit Bunches) at Oil Palm Plantation in Central Kalimantan. One key informant was selected purposively and 30 informants were selected by snowball. Informants are grouped into 3 groups, divided into 10 informants who are still working, 10 people who have resigned and 10 informants who intend to resign.

Data collection methods are through pre-survey ; Exploring on primary and secondary data, as well as in-depth interviews with informants. The interviews who was conducted with key informants by a list of directed interview materials in the form of written questions, it would made it easier for informants to provide answers with no interview point was missed.

The method of checking the validity of the data used data triangulation in order to prove if the

data obtained and used in this research has an excellent level of reliability (reliable and valid), though the main instrument in qualitative research is the researcher. Triangulation of data was also helpful for data cross check, including different people, times and places. Triangulation of different people, apart from data informants, is cross-checked with people at the Regional Office and also at the Jakarta Head Office, 360%

sideways, up and down; while triangulation of time and place is data which has been collected proved at different times and places.

The data analysis method using the interactive model of Miles MB & Huberman AM (2014) with stages starting from data collection, data reduction, Data display and Draw conclusions and verification.

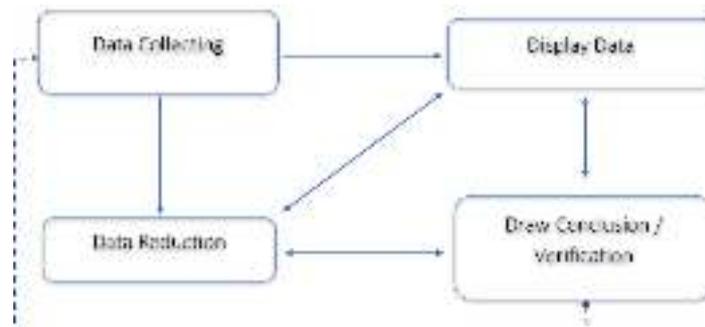


Figure 2. Miles MB & Huberman A.M's Interactive Model (2014)

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**Research Result**

Based on 30 informant profile background, there are 28 people (93.3%) of whom have elementary-Secondary school education and 2 high school students, the majority of whom are married and the wife was involved with their

husband to work in the garden, although not all of the wives who live in the garden are employees, as for the age of harvesters there are 63% under 35 years with work period is less than 3 years. The productive age with relatively short of working period.

Table 2. Informant Profiles

Informant	Education			Status		Wife living in		Wife who live in on the field		
	SD	SMP	SMA	Single	Marriage	Field	Village	Worker	Not Worker	
Longest	6	1		1	9	6	3	1	2	
already resign	3	7		1	9	7	2	7	0	
intention to resign	2	6	2	8	2	1	1	0	1	
<b>Total 30 Informant</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	
	36,7%	56,7%	6,7%	33,3%	66,7%	46,7%	20,0%	79%	21,4%	
	93,3%									
Informant	Ages (Years Old)					Working Period (Years)				
	20-24	25-30	31-40	40-50	>50	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-10	>10
Longest		2	2	1	3		0	3	7	
already resign		3	3	2	2	2	7	1		
intention to resign	4	4	1	1		10				
<b>Total 30 Informant</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>
	13,3%	30,0%	20,0%	13,3%	23,3%	40,0%	23,3%	3,3%	10,0%	23,3%

The interview material was that the informant was asked to select a list of options regarding what they felt and experienced about environmental conditions, the place of work that could support the informant's life at home to work on the plantation site. The question consist of 1)

employee housing environment and facilities, 2) children's school education, 3) fulfillment of basic daily needs, 4) income (salaries and premiums), 5) how is the relations to their superiors, 6) public facilities 7) social facilities institutions and 8) the

place of work (conditions of the work field) and finally several advises for improvements

The results from in-depth interviews between key informants and informants which

took place closely, were open to expressing their opinions without feeling forced, which could served in Table 3.

**Table 3. Total Informant of Selector Variable**

Variable	Still Working		Already Resign		Intention to Resign		Total			
	Satisfy	Dissatisfy	Satisfy	Dissatisfy	Satisfy	Dissatisfy	Satisfy	Dissatisfy		
1 Public Facilities	0	10	0	10	0	10	0	0%	30	100%
2 Institutional Social	0	10	0	10	0	10	0	0%	30	100%
3 Salary (Fair enough)	5	5	1	9	0	10	6	20%	24	80%
4 Daily Needs	5	5	3	7	0	10	8	27%	22	73%
5 Relation to superiors	6	4	7	3	2	8	15	50%	15	50%
6 Environment & mess facilities	5	5	10	0	7	3	22	74%	8	27%
7 Work Fields	10	0	9	1	7	3	26	87%	4	13%
8 Education (School)	10	0	10	0	10	0	30	100%	0	0%

- 1) Public and institutional social facilities: all groups of informants, both those who are still working, or who have already resigned and who want to resign, stated if they were not satisfied with the condition of public facilities, such as children's playgrounds, sports facilities, meeting halls and places of worship. Likewise with the institutional social aspect, such as there are no sports groups, regional associations or cultural arts.
- 2) Income: there were 24 people or 80% of the 30 informants who stated that they were not satisfied with the income they received in the range of Rp. 2.6 to 4 million, because the income was not good enough and the informants had no alternative source to increase their income.
- 3) Daily of Needs: there are 22 people or 73% of informants who feel dissatisfied with the easy access to buying daily basic necessities, it was mainly felt by informants who want to resign and have resigned because those prices way too expensive, and less quality of goods besides the location of groceries is quite far
- 4) Relations to their superiors: 50% answered that they felt they did not fit in with their superiors and this felt by many informants who wanted to resign, the supervisor in charged was the assistant, crew member and foreman, the reason behind that as the majority stated if their boss did not care about employee problems and rarely socialized.
- 5) Environment and housing facilities: there are 8 people or 27% of the majority of informants

who are still working stated that they are not comfortable with the environment and housing, in the form of inadequate electricity, conditions of toilets.

- 6) Work Fields: The harvest area location was only 13% of the informant group who wanted to resign stated that they were not comfortable with the area where they worked, besides the trees were already tall, and also the distance from their housing which is quite far, access roads and harvest points were also limited.
- 7) Education, all informants who have school kids are fully satisfied, thanks to the educational facilities and infrastructure that are very well supported by their teachers.

**Discussion**

In general, it can be illustrated based on the research results described above. From these 8 satisfaction variables which are the determining factors of discomfort at work, there are the top 3 ranks which cause the employees to feel less comfortable and have no satisfaction, such as; public facilities and institutional social facilities, where all informants stated not satisfied. By creating the oil palm plantations not only changes the condition of forest plants which are converted into oil palm plantations, but actually builds the social life of the community (people) including building village communities around the fields to their own Community members which are still interdependent to one another. With these characters (interdependent), there will build

special bondage between employees and the company, where the relations are based on a mutual relationship, to work together in order to get benefits from it. Therefore, both interests should be well maintained. Companies will progress with productive employees and employees could be more productive if at least their basic needs and a sense of security have been met first (A. Maslow's Motivation Theory). Besides that, they should be satisfied with their work regarding the work environment, such as public facilities and institutional social and income (Robbins, 2019; Luthans, 2014). The same thing was stated by Jiang H & Shen H's research results, (2018) which stated that the work environment supports a positive linkage between work and employee life and could retain its best employees for long-term business projects. Organizations are expected to improve the quality of the workplace and fill the requirements needed by their workers. (Anvari, R., et. al., 2014). Friendly work environment and superiors (Olubiyi, O et al., 2019); (Inegbedion, et al., 2020); work environment and turnover (Fardilah, H., 2017).

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

### Conclusion

Based on these research results which has been able to scientifically reveal the understanding of harvesters' turnover in oil palm plantations, as follows:

- 1) The definition of turnover is the leaving of employees from the company that is triggered by this determining and causal factors which strengthen employees desires to quit their job. The impact from the harvester turnover which is too high and significantly crucial for the sustainability of oil palm plantation companies.
- 2) The reasons for harvesters to quite are mostly individual reasons (health, motivation and family), for example a wife who did not want to follow her husband to the fields, parents, years of service, education, dissatisfaction with what was promised.

3) The determining factor for turnover, in this research was a situation where the minimum physical needs of employees have not been met, so that harvesters felt not satisfied in terms of:

- a) First is the condition of public facilities, which include the children's playgrounds, sports facilities, community meeting halls and places of worship.
- b) Second, the condition of institutional social facilities such as there is no sports groups, regional association groups and cultural arts.
- c) Third is income, which is triggered by the absence of bonus incentives for harvesting employees, especially for those who worked for more than 10 years, the income has no different compared to new employees.
- d) Fourth, there are difficulties in obtaining basic daily needs, apart from the distance, the price is also expensive with less quality of goods.
- e) Fifth, there is incompatibility with superiors because they seems do not care about sort of problems faced by employees and the superiors were seems to distance themselves.

### Suggestion

Highly turnover which has occurred in the last 3 years could be prevented through a comprehensive evaluation, starting from the recruitment process, welcoming the arrival, mentoring during adaptation and managing the harvesters. The researcher makes these several following recommendations such as:

- 1) Consistently running the "7 D Program" (Recruited, Welcomed, Known, Attached, Inspired, Trained and Assessed; from these 7Ds then summarized into 1 D "Sufficient"):
  - a) The recruitment process for harvesters that relies on external recruiters tends only to meet the demand quota, so it is appropriate for harvesters to be selected

- by the company's internal recruitment team who are competent in their field.
- b) Welcoming (Welcomed): Consistently carrying out the ceremonial pickup and reception of employees ('kenduri') which was led directly by the Assistant or Manager
  - c) The introduction, the new employee orientation program, the New Employee Orientation Program (NEOP) for harvesters is just as important as NEOP for the staff. The main purpose is to introduce the work culture in the fields, accommodate difficulties and take corrective actions for the future.
  - d) The 'sticking' program is not just an approach, but employees should be attached, sticky / loyal to the company, through a 'wolon' breakfast in the work area, between harvesters and their superiors (assistants, managers). Because when they gather on the field with a relaxed atmosphere, it would make it easy to establish openness then take that chance to be given motivation and they would easily accept.
  - e) The Tilik Warga Program (Javanese ditilik-i), after employees adapt to the field culture, it is necessary to hold a "Tilik Warga" event, every 2-3 months to evaluate the adaptation process, the difficulties faced when they worked and all of this should be done by Assistants and Managers.
  - f) Training (Trained) continuously until proficient so the employees are expected to have loyalty to the company.
  - g) Appraisal, by giving prizes / rewards, prioritizes the assessment through social activities of the field's internal community as a vehicle for getting closer between leaders and employees.
- 2) The Employment allowances given to the harvesters who work there for a long period of more than 5 years and there is also special treatment for harvesters with good

achievements (when this research is ongoing, the provision of motorcycle subsidies and a scholarship program for harvesters and umrah or holy land for exemplary harvesters)

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