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## A longitudinal study of turnover satisfaction: The Sabah, Malaysia case

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### Abstract

*Purpose – To identify how and why a group of individuals satisfy with new life after a turnover. Design/Methodology/Approach – The exploratory study uses mixed methods approach, both quantitative data and qualitative data collect under snowball sampling strategy. As part of research proposal, total 4 participants are selected for the pilot study; from them, total 18 times of turnover are identified. A general view of turnover definition has introduced to the study. The data was analyzed by concurrent design. Findings – Few hypotheses can be suggested. Turnover from a government sector to a private company, it is easier to do so in the early stage of one's career. Employees care a position's permanency more than whether the position belongs to government sector or private sector. The information of each participant's current job should be absolved from the data analysis. Originality/Value – As a pilot study of a PhD paper, the study has proven the research design that is workable for a PhD study. The findings have developed the new idea of turnover satisfaction and have suggested few hypotheses.*

Keywords: *Turnover satisfaction, Longitudinal study, Concurrent design, Thematic cluster method*

### 1. Introduction

The thesis uses Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion (IMRAD) structure. IMRAD was recommended for writing scientific papers since the beginning of 20 century. In the 1940s, the IMRAD began to be used, and it reached 80percent usage in the research circle in the 1970s. By 1980s, it has become the only pattern for research paper (Sollaci & Pereira, 2004), and it was widely used in every research area (Kanpolat, 2002). Employees are becoming ficker. In China, every year, up to 30 percent of total workforce resigns from their job. Traditionally, an employee quite from job is because of the mixture of demanding on better compensation and ambition such as resign for higher salaries, faster promotions, a bigger car or a better secretary (Waldmeir, 2012). It was assumed that employees only actual do turnover from a job after successfully found an alternative position or workplace (Mano-Negrin & Tzafirir, 2004). However, youth workers in worldwide, nowadays, do not follow the tradition. Resign before they get the next job, is the pattern of their turnover. Lifestyle reasons such as relaxing working environment, flexible working hours, and leisure, and so on, are the most highly thought reasons for turnover by the younger generation workforce. Scholars believe that the baby-boomer generation is going to retire from their career; the new-generation workers are more demanding

on work-life balance (Sang et al., 2009; Hughes & Bozionelos, 2007). Therefore, turnover is become increasingly common in the workplace nowadays.

Firms see employees' turnover as costs of the company, especially the voluntary turnover (Judge, 1993; Dess & Shaw, 2001; Barrick et al., 1994; McElroy et al., 2001); it means employees are the one who willing to resign from a company. The costs may be represented on re-recruitment, re-training's tangible and intangible costs, and the costs even can address on customers' loyalty. Thus, to avoid employees' voluntary turnover, strategy on recruitment (Townsend, 2007; Bloomquist & Kleiner, 2000), training (Townsend, 2007), and strategic compensation package (Nourayi & Mintz, 2008; Dalsem, 2009) are the ideas to be suggested to the managers by the academic world.

However, Kay (2012) disagrees; he sees the reason that caused the junior generation doing the turnover more often is because of they did not receive what they should be deserved, compare to their parent's generation. Their parent's generation has experienced the economic growth after World War II, the world was recovering; therefore, the economy was keeping growing. In the situation, more jobs that were with good welfare were offered. On the other hand, now, worldwide, the economy becomes stabilized; as a result, younger generation is facing the situation that fewer job opportunities with poorer welfare. Meanwhile, strategic compensation package, in organizations, is applied by the managers as take employees' welfare in a claver way. The solutions that were given by the scholars may not suit to the real situation, because what employees need is the touchable welfare, which is not made up for better looking by using the strategies.

Regardless what the reason that caused nowadays employees' turnover is, and what the suit solution is, each group of the scholars has their own saying. Scholars are trying hard to develop theories to identify what caused the employees' turnover, how the employees make decision on their turnover, and how to avoid employees' turnover (Albrecht and Andreetta, 2011; Paille et al., 2011; Berthelsen et al., 2011; Brough et al., 2011; Park and Kim, 2009; Bigliardi et al., 2005; Mobley, 1977; Mobley et al., 1978; Jackofsky and Peters, 1983; Lee et al., 2004).

As the objective of the study, it differs from the other scholars attempting, it is to identify whether one satisfies with the new life that is after a turnover. And as the research questions of the study, is attempting to identify what type of turnover will lead an individual to satisfy about the decision. In other words, that is who and how an individual will be satisfied by a turnover action.

Furthermore, the study wants to test whether there is a match in between Job Embeddedness Model (Mitchell & Lee, 2001), and Expectation Confirmation Theory (Oliver, 1977; Oliver, 1980). The study could be useful for four groups of people. They might be 1) scholars; the study establishes few new ideas; they are individuals' turnover satisfaction, and applied general review of turnover into a longitudinal model. The idea can be used by scholars to explore how the employees' view of turnover is. 2) Policy makers; government sees the value of human resource or human capital as the main source of competitive power of a country. Human resource contributed competitive power is not viable, if without every of the employees' (manpower) contribution to a country's economy. Therefore, knowing the employees becomes the urgent issue to understand and figure out the overall picture of labour market. Without really

knowing the labour market, it is impossible to understand the human resource in a country. The study provides a new concept for policy makers to use as an index, to consider whether the employees' turnover satisfaction may indicate specific information of the certain kind of trend in the labour market, and certain policy may be made to extend the strengths and reduce the weaknesses that are caused by the individual employees' movement. 3) Managers; the study may be applied to business operative level to help managers in company to make the company's job position more attractive in the labour market. To know whether an individual satisfies with a turnover is the process to understand in-depth what the individual really wanted in the career life. The information may help managers make the company's job position and the organization structure more attractive. And 4) employees; in the current stage, when employees want to make whether turnover, there is only limited amount of information can be considered. The study wants to draw a draft of career life for individuals to use as references for their own decision making.

## 2. Literature Review

Turnover is one of the globally discussed topics in the organizational fields. The topic has attracted scholars' attention, since many years ago (Mobley, 1977). Porter and Steers (1973) indicate that turnover is a very decisive action which will have a potentially serious impact on organizations and individuals. Therefore, lots of researchers and managers have been interested in the determinants of employees' turnover (Mobley, 1977). Recently, due to worldwide declining of birth-rates and aging population caused potential labor shortage (Ovanessoff & Purdy, 2011), turnover becomes an increasingly important issue in the industrial fields.

**Table 1: List of Turnover Theories and Models**

Theories and Models	Source
March and Simon (1958) Theory	Mobley (1977)
Price (1977) Preliminary Causal Model	Griffeth and Hom (2004)
Price (2001) Model	Price (2001)
Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) Planned Behavior Model	Fishbein and Ajzen (1975)
Mobely (1977) Model	Mobely (1977)
Social Cognitive Theory	Pajares and Schunk (2001)
Steers and Mowday (1981) Model	Steers and Mowday (1981)
Cusp-catastrophe Model	Sheridan and Abelson (1983)
Lee and Mitchell (1994) Unfolding Model	Lee and Mitchell (1994)
Social Cognitive Career Theory of Newcomer Adaptation	Lent et al. (1994)
Holland (1996) RIASEC Model	Holland (1996)
Job Embeddedness Model	Mitchell and Lee (2001)

A thematic cluster analysis method is used to process all the information, which is gathered from the literature review. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research practice. Thematic analysis involves searching and identifying patterns from qualitative data. It is widely using in exploratory researches which intent to identify new indicators and variables. Thematic analysis is

the method which only requires a limited amount of previous knowledge and conceptual understanding of the research topic, before processing the analyzing (Boyatzis 1998). Previous turnover studies are interested on 1) retesting variables in different combination, 2) looking for new variables, 3) large sampling, 4) applying theories into different conditions (e.g. distinctive occupation, occupational stage, types of employment, distinct culture and different geographical area), 5) test rarely used theory, 6) seeking the way to reduce turnover, 7) different data collection method, and 8) identify the individual differences on turnover.

After literature review, four research directions can be found from the previous researches on turnover. The directions indicated what the latest turnover researches' the interested areas are. The directions are 1) from the professional workers to the non-professional workers (Meixner & Bline, 1989; Zairi et al., 1994; Melachrinoudis & Olafsson, 1995; Buchan & Seccombe, 1995; McBey & Karakowsky, 2000). 2) From who is leaving to who is staying (Sauber et al., 1991; Mitchell et al., 2001). Furthermore, 3) from organizational to socializational (Johnson et al., 2000; Guidice et al., 2009; Carraher, 2011; Wells & Peachey, 2011; Filstad, 2011; Yao et al., 2010; Groeneveld, 2011). 4) From consider employees as a group to consider each of employees as an unique individual (Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Adams et al., 2010; Antonacopoulou & Guettel, 2010).

In previous literatures, there were two elements on turnover be less explored. They are 1) adopting the generalized definition of turnover. Generalized view of turnover represents that an employee's occupation change as an organization member (Price, 1977; 1989). The definition suits on transferring to another job in the same company and find a job from another company. As early as Evans (1965) already identified that if transfer an employee from the current position to another one in the same company, can reduce the intents of that employee to quit from the company. In decades, mainly the turnover researches have adopted the narrow sense of view of turnover (Mobley, 1982) as the fundamental definition. Narrow sense of view of turnover holds on an employee totally cut-off all the relationship with a company. The nature of employees' transferring, promoting, demoting, which are turnover base on the general view of turnover, are less explored (e.g. whether un-willing promotion and transferring will lead an employee to quit from the company). 2) Turnover satisfaction or post-turnover. What had happed after an employee's turnover? Does an employee who had a turnover satisfy with the new life? There are no clear answers can be found for the two questions in the previous researches. Although, there are numbers of researchers has explored newcomer's psychological contract, recruitment satisfaction and newcomers' organizational socialization (O'Neill & Adya, 2007; Donovan et al., 2004; Filstad, 2004; Sutton & Griffin, 2004). Those studies divided employees into three different stages. They are regular employee stage, newcomer stage and applicant stage. Recruitment satisfaction is drawn as the comparison between pre-entry expectation and post-entry experience (Sutton & Griffin, 2004). Sutton and Griffin (2004) believe that increase recruitment satisfaction is the way to gain newcomers' organizational commitment, and job satisfaction. Employees' relocation and post-hire satisfaction, was an issue which is raised in the end of 1980s (Turban et al., 1992; Zottoli & Wanous, 2000). An organizational newcomer, during the period of socialization, will compare the pre-entry expectation and post-entry experience to

decide the post-hire satisfaction. Sutton and Griffin (2004) pointed out that newcomers' job satisfaction and organizational commitment depend on recruitment satisfaction. Robinson et al. (1994) introduced the idea (pre-entry expectation, socialization process, and post-entry experience) as a psychological contract. Later, Robinson (1996) argued that pre-entry expectation is come from employer's promise. Sutton and Griffin (2004) suggested that post-entry experience may be differing from pre-entry expectation, and post-entry experience is strongly related to realistic job previews. Improve the fit between employees' pre-entry expectation and the real environment is the way to increase organizational commitment (Price, 2001) and job satisfaction.

In addition, there are three future research directions are suggested by the latest turnover researches. These future research directions will also be listed into the research gap. 3) A longitudinal study (Bigliardi et al., 2005; Albrecht & Andreetta, 2011; Paille et al., 2011; Berthelsen et al., 2011; Brough et al., 2011; Park & Kim, 2009). 4) Studying turnover, not turnover intention (Park & Kim, 2009; Tett & Meyer, 1993; Gregory et al., 2007; Dam, 2008; Wheeler et al., 2007). 5) Turnover study in Malaysia, especially the Borneo part of Malaysia (Ryan et al., 2011; Ponnu & Chuah, 2010; Abdullah et al., 2010). In brief, a list of research gaps can be identified.

**Table 2: List of Research Gaps**

Research Gap	Reference
Rarely explored research area	
Adopting generalized definition of turnover	Developed from literature review
Turnover satisfaction	Developed from literature review
Well suggested research area	
Longitudinal study of turnover	Albrecht and Andreetta (2011), Paille et al. (2011), Berthelsen et al. (2011), Brough et al. (2011), Park and Kim (2009), Bigliardi et al. (2005)
Turnover, not turnover intention	Dam (2008), Wheeler et al. (2007)
Turnover study in Malaysia	Ryan et al. (2011)

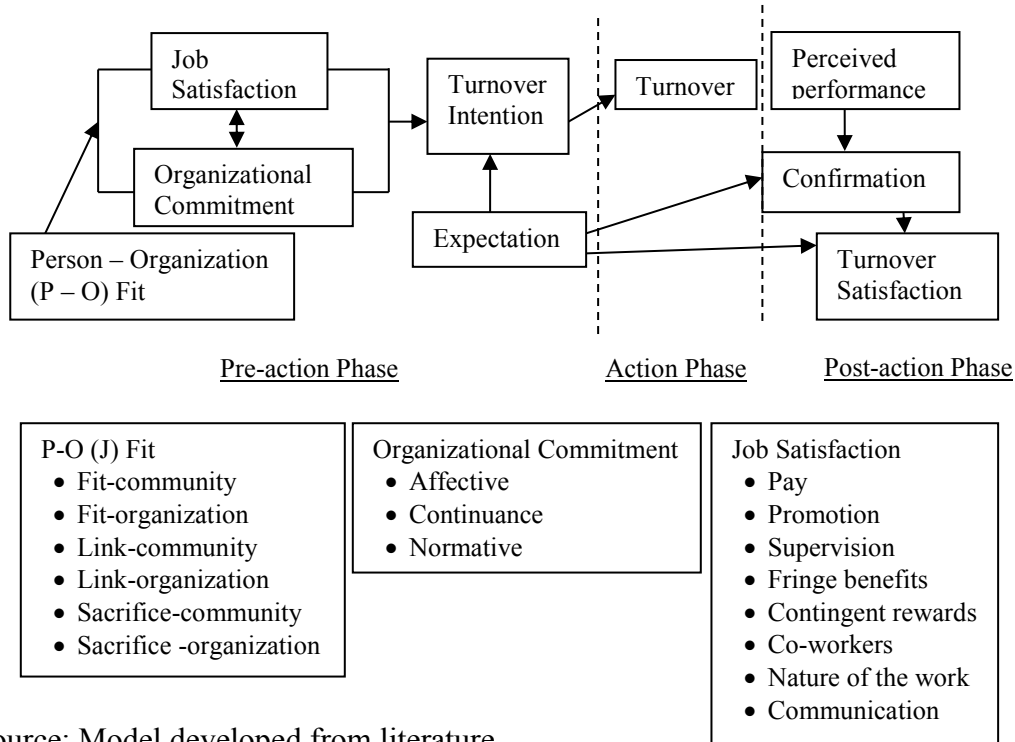
To fulfil the research gaps, a set (Table 3) of theories and models of satisfaction would be introduced.

**Table 3: List of Satisfaction Theories and Models**

Theories and Models	Source
Maslow 1954 Hierarchy of Needs	Maslow (1970)
Expectancy Theory	Vroom (1964)
Discrepancy Theory	Locke (1969), Oliver (1980)
Expectation Confirmation Theory	Oliver (1977; 1980)

To fulfil the five research gaps, the expectation confirmation theory together with Job Embeddedness Model are selected to develop a longitudinal turnover-satisfaction model for the study. The research uses the longitudinal model (Figure 1) to test turnover satisfaction in Sabah, Malaysia.

**Figure 1: Longitudinal Turnover-Satisfaction Model**



Source: Model developed from literature

## 2. Research Methodology

In brief, the study is designed to test both of the individual view and occupational view (Figure 2)

**Figure 2: The Conceptual Chat of Research Design**

Individual view	Age		Occupational view
		Company location	
	Nationality		
		Duration of the occupation	
	Gender		
		Company's industry	
	Race		
		Company's size	
	State of marriage		
		Monthly income	
	Family member		
		Frequency of turnover	
	Religions		
		Reason of resignation	
Educational background			
	Types of resignation		

Following the questionnaire, an interview will be introduced to each respondent. There are two propose for having an interview for the study. Firstly, having an interview is to ensure the quality of the data that is gathered from the questionnaire. Besides, an interview can help the researcher understand the research population in-depth (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2011).

An interview can help the researcher understand the stories behind the quantitative data (e.g. Why some of the individuals resign from one job to another regularly, how is their turnover satisfaction about? Why some individuals who resign regularly, and their turnover patterns are very similar to those who seldom doing a turnover and what made the difference.). All in all, the study introduces a quantitative approach and qualitative approach in same time. The detail of the study approach can be briefly summarized as the figure following (Table 4).

**Table 4: The Summary of the Research Design**

Quantitative Approach	Qualitative Approach
Non-experimental study	Collecting sensitive data
Data analysis on individual view	Case study
Data analysis on occupational view	Thematic cluster analysis (Boyatzis, 1998)
Confirmatory factor analysis (Child, 1990) test the correlation between variables	

The study focus on the employees who are currently working in Sabah, Malaysia, and have experienced turnover or change job position. A set of the questionnaire will be distributed to the employees to identify the degree of satisfaction, which they have evaluated to each turnover.

An interview follows after the questionnaire, for having the in-depth view of some special case. Snowball sampling technique is chosen for the study. In the year of 2010, Sabah has 1639.9 ('000) total labour force; 66.7 percent of them are participating in the labour force; unemployment rate is 5.2 percent (Department of Statistics Malaysia, Sabah, 2012). Among the labour force, 26.4 percent are working in the first industry, about 21 percent of labour force is working in second industry, and 52.6 percent of Sabah employees are working in the third industry.

Department of Statistics Malaysia, Sabah (2012) provides series of data that show the new vacancies reported by occupation and by industry. From the datas, a basic view of who the labour force users are can be understood. However, there are no statistics data shows the exactly number of how many employees have resigned from a company and how many of them have been re-recruited. The number of the population of the study only can be estimated from the data of the new vacancies reported by occupation and by industry. In the data, the number of new vacancies statistics' monthly report is only available from the year of 2011. Start from 2011, in Malaysia, the new semester for every public and private higher-education institute from September (Bernama, 2011). Therefore, datas show the larger number of new vacancies in September. However, except December, in every rest of the month, the number of new vacancies is from 8516 to 19981; most of them can be estimated as re-recruited employees.

Due to the nature of the study is a non-experimental research, random assignment is not able to be addressed. Therefore, the non-probability sampling method (Guo & Hussey, 2004) will introduce to the study. The study is using snowball sampling. The questionnaire will distribute to those who personally know the researcher and the researcher also understand that these respondents have experienced company's internal job transition or have (had) experienced resignation from a company. The next respondents will depend on these persons' introduction to the others. For mixed methods research, there are no systematized research designs have been discovered. To design a mixed methods research, researchers should base on the research question in each independent study to develop a study case by case (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004). However, there are two types of mixed methods research, concurrent design and sequential design.

Base on the research questions and research objectives, the concurrent type of mixed methods research will be selected for the study. The idea of concurrent type of mixed methods research is, collecting and analyzing the quantitative data and qualitative data separately; the two sets of data only be merged just before giving findings. The data analysis methods for the study are SEM (Child, 1990) for quantitative data and thematic cluster analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) for qualitative data.

The quantitative part of the study is divided into two parts. The first part is to analysing the descriptive data. The second part uses SEM to test the hypotheses. Thematic cluster analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) is used to analyse qualitative data. The purpose for analyzing qualitative data is to seek the possibility to develop new hypotheses for the studies in the future.



#### 4. Pilot Study's Findings and Discussion

A pilot study has been done for the study during 20 June 2012 to 11 July 2012. Two sets of data, quantitative and qualitative data, were collected from 4 participants, total 17 job positions' information was collected. Among the 17 job positions, 4 of the positions are the respondents' current position.

For quantitative data, an internal consistency reliability analysis was introduced to the pilot study. Cronbach's Alpha (Sijtsma, 2009) is the figure that indicates the internal consistency reliability. For social science study, the number is acceptable if it is greater than 0.7. Any of the numbers lower than 0.7, which indicates that low number of questions, poor interrelatedness between items or heterogeneous constructs; the Cronbach's Alpha more than 0.9, it indicates that the questionnaire could be simplified (Tavakol & Dennickq, 2011).

**Table 5: Pilot Study's Cronbach's Alpha**

Components	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
P-O fit	34	0.890
Organizational commitment	15	0.912
Job satisfaction	33	0.959
Turnover intention	8	0.819
Expectation	4	0.828
Turnover	2	0.735
Perceived performance	4	0.794
Confirmation	4	0.808
Turnover satisfaction	3	0.956
Overall 107 items		0.961

In the study, all components' question, the figures of Cronbach's Alpha are higher than 0.7, the overall Cronbach's Alpha is 0.961. It indicates that the questionnaire is acceptable for a social science study. The results from the qualitative data show that in early age of a career, especially before an employee experiencing marriage, in terms of importance, the position's permanency, the career development in future, and job tasks' varieties, the location of the working place takes over whether the position belongs to government or private sector. Some of the aggressive types of turnover, such as give up a primary school teacher's job, just because of the job is less interesting, in a rural area, and temporarily the job was base on yearly contract, not a permanent job is usually happened in the earlier stage of career. Furthermore, those who spend more years for education, the more willing to go for stabilized and to have more certainty in his or her life; therefore, for them, the government's position or jobs, the offers from a stabilized organization are more important.

Moreover, the married females are more willing to change jobs following their husband. If the husband and wife, one side is Sabahan (the name so called for Sabah's citizens), they are more like to delivery a baby in Sabah, due to the Sabah Identity Card holder can freely work in Peninsular Malaysia, and Peninsular Malaysia citizens are unable to work freely in Sabah. This is a very big factor to pulling people back to Sabah from Peninsular Malaysia via apply a job transfer or even resign from a company in Peninsular Malaysia.

Employee will stay in a management position longer, though the employee may not believe that an employee should be loyal to the company. The reason for the employee to stay longer is, want to see the result from how he or she changed the company; gaining reputation among an industry is another factor that made managers stay in a position longer.

However, the qualitative data is only gathered from four individuals; the data may not be saturated yet; later, the more patterns of answers are expected. The qualitative data that is gathered from the open-ended interviews is expected to add additional value to the study, together with the quantitative data.

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