

Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, and Turnover Intention: A Case Study on Employees of a Retail Company in Malaysia

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Abstract—High employee turnover rate in Malaysia's retail industry has become a major issue that needs to be addressed. This study determines the levels of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention of employees in a retail company in Malaysia. The relationships between job satisfaction and organizational commitment on turnover intention are also investigated. A questionnaire was developed using Job Descriptive Index, Organizational Commitment Questionnaire, and Lee and Mowday's turnover intention items and data were collected from 62 respondents. The findings suggested that the respondents were moderately satisfied with job satisfaction facets such as promotion, work itself, co-workers, and supervisors but were unsatisfied with salary. They also had moderate commitment level with considerably high intention to leave the organization. All satisfaction facets (except for co-workers) and organizational commitment were significantly and negatively related to turnover intention. Based on the findings, retention strategies of retail employees were proposed.

Keywords—Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, retail employees, turnover intention.

I. INTRODUCTION

HIGH employee turnover rate has increasingly been an issue of interest to both practitioners and academicians, not just in developed countries but also in the developing countries. Concerns over the issue have valid ground if one observes the reported statistics on turnover rates. In the United States for example, employee turnover has been seen as a national workplace crisis. The overall number of voluntary turnover (measure of workers' willingness or ability to change jobs) was 2.1 million in April 2012, up from 1.8 million at the end of the recession in June 2009 [1]. In 2004, annual employee turnover rate in Malaysia was reported as approximately 16% [2]. A more recent statistics based on the Hewitt Total Compensation Management Survey, the average employee turnover rate in Malaysia was 18% in 2007 [3].

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From the perspective of human resource management, high turnover rate is a serious issue due to several reasons. First, high turnover rate has financial consequences. When employees leave, recruiting, selecting, and training of new employees are necessary. Replacing a full-time, private-sector worker may likely to cost 25% of his or her total annual compensation [4]. Second, employee turnover may disrupt company's productivity and thus performance, especially when it involves critical positions in organizations. High turnover also fosters a sense of discontinuity in the workplace hence unsettling managers and employees. Companies that are not able to reduce their employee turnover figure will likely lose their competitiveness in the long run [5]. Due to these detrimental consequences, it is therefore crucial for organizations to better understand the factors contributing to employee turnover in organizations.

Similar to other industries, the retail industry is often faced with high turnover rate in both management and sales employees which, in return, influence company profit [6]. In the United States, there was a 0.2% increase in the retail employees' turnover rate within just a year from April 2011 to April 2012 [1]. In Malaysia, the average yearly turnover rate of retail employees particularly was 18% from July 2010 to June 2011 [7]. The Q110 BMI Malaysia Retail Report predicts that total retail sales will grow from an estimated US\$33 billion in 2009 to more than US\$61 billion by 2014 [8]. To meet this projected growth, retail companies need committed employees to increase productivity or pursue growth opportunities. Shortage of employees may affect operations and the profitability of retail businesses. Thus, employee turnover issue in the retail industry warrants attention from the academicians and practitioners alike.

Turnover intention has consistently been viewed by scholars as the most important variable in predicting employee turnover [9]. Supporting this view, a study by [10] found that individuals' turnover intentions matched their actual turnover behaviour. According to [11], intentions offer a good explanation of turnover because they encompass one's perception and judgment. Thus, identifying the antecedents of turnover intention can shed some light in understanding employee turnover in organizations.

This study focuses on understanding the current level of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention among employees in a retail company in Malaysia.

In addition, the influences of job satisfaction and organizational commitment on turnover intention were also investigated. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment were studied as they have been the most influential predictors of employee turnover and meta-analyses have confirmed these widely accepted findings [12], [13]. Finally ways of creating an organizational climate conducive in retaining retail employees are suggested.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intention

Job satisfaction is defined as a person's evaluation of his or her job and work context [14]. It is an extent to which one feels positively or negatively about the intrinsic and/or extrinsic aspects of one's job. In simpler words, it is about how employees feel about various aspects of the job [15]. Since job consists of various spectrums, job satisfaction is often conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that consists of many elements, typically called job satisfaction facets [16]. Common job satisfaction facets include co-workers, appreciation, benefits, job conditions, pay, promotion, supervision, and organization's policies or procedures [15].

Review of available literature has shown considerable interest in the study of job satisfaction [17]-[29]. In fact, as noted by [15], job satisfaction is "*the most frequently studied variable in the organizational research*". The extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their job has received enormous attention mainly due to its associations with issues that are of high concerns to organizations such as commitment, absenteeism, and staff turnover [15], [30].

Many studies conducted amongst the employees in the western countries consistently showed negative and significant relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention [17], [19]-[23], [29]-[31]. Similarly, studies conducted in the Eastern countries, for instance in China also supported the generally agreed notion of a negative association between job satisfaction and turnover intention among employees [18], [24]-[27], [32]. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that regardless of the differences between both the cultures, job satisfaction is negatively related to turnover intention among employees.

Studies in the retail sector have also revealed similar pattern of findings. References [33] and [34] for example, found negative and significant relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention. Likewise, job dissatisfaction has been found to be positively and significantly associated with turnover intention among retail employees [35]-[38]. Overall, although limited, studies in the retail context have interestingly revealed similar pattern of findings to other industries. In general, studies on job satisfaction and turnover intention have consistently provided evidences that unsatisfied employees tend to have intention to leave their organizations and find alternative jobs. If opportunities are unavailable at that particular time, employees may emotionally or mentally "withdraw" from the organization [39]. This is certainly

undesirable for the customer-orientated retail business as studies have found that the level of employee satisfaction is positively related to customer satisfaction [40].

B. Organizational Commitment and Turnover Intention

Organizational commitment refers to a psychological state that binds the individual to the organization [41]. In contrast to job satisfaction that is linked to the job, organizational commitment emphasizes links to the organization [42].

Indications of organizational commitment are concerned with feelings of attachment to the goals and values of the organization, one's role in relation to this, and attachment to the organization for its own sake rather than for strictly instrumental values [43]. In essence, measuring organizational commitment is an assessment of the congruence between an individual's own values and beliefs and those of the organization [44]. By understanding commitment, practitioners will be in a better position to anticipate the impact of a particular policy or practice on the organization [45].

In an organization, commitment will promote a stable self-concept and therefore a more predictable and consistent behavior and performance [46]. Reference [47] asserts that the more committed employees are, the more role behaviors such as creativeness and innovativeness are shown. This is often what keeps an organization competitive. Reference [45] notes that committed employees have higher tendency to stay on their jobs. Studies have consistently supported that increased organizational commitment has been positively associated with individual actions such as decreased intention to search for new jobs and reduced turnover [45], [48], [49].

III. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND OBJECTIVES

Overall, the literature has highlighted some key issues on employee turnover. First, there has been considerable evidence that job satisfaction is associated with turnover intention. Second, studies have also shown significant association between organizational commitment and turnover intention. Based on these, the relationships between job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention are constructed to form the research framework for the present study, as shown in Fig. 1.

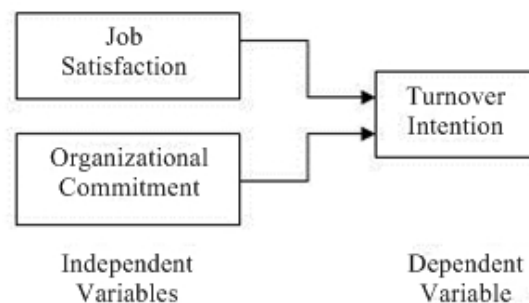


Fig. 1 Research framework

The following are the research objectives (ROs) of this study:

RO1: To determine the level of job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intention among employees in a retail sector.

RO2: To investigate the relationship between job satisfaction on turnover intention.

RO3: To investigate the relationship between organizational commitment and turnover intention.

The findings can assist practitioners and researchers in providing better understanding of the underlying causes of turnover intention among employees in the retail setting. Such an understanding would provide insight on how to manage and perhaps reduce this growing concern of high turnover rate in the retail context.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Instrument

A questionnaire which included questions on (1) respondents' demographic details, (2) job satisfaction, (3) organizational commitment, and (4) turnover intention was developed for the study. Demographic details such as (1) age, (2) gender, (3) education level, (4) employment years, (5) position held in the organization, and (6) income were asked to provide an understanding of the background information of the respondents participating in the study.

Job satisfaction is referred as a multi-dimensional construct that consists of interrelated attributes or dimensions, typically called job satisfaction facets [16]. This highlights the need to look at job satisfaction from a more detailed perspective rather than an overall perspective [49]. This study thus adopted the Job Descriptive Index or JDI [50], which measure satisfaction with five aspects of the job namely salary, promotion, co-workers, the work itself, and supervision. The JDI is one of the most popular measures of job satisfaction and has been found to produce highly reliable results [51]. The methodological rigor employed during its construction and validation, its normative data, its relatively low required reading level, and the fact that it assesses satisfaction with five of the most basic aspects of a person's work role most likely account for the JDI's attractiveness to many researchers [52].

Organizational commitment was measured using the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) by [53]. The measurement consists of statements describing employees' attitudes towards their organizations. Finally, turnover intention was measured using three items developed by [54]. The respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire using a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

The questionnaire was first translated into the national language of Malaysia which is Bahasa Melayu by the researchers. The translated draft was then checked by a local school teacher who is fluent in both Bahasa Melayu and English. The revised version was later given to two employees at the company to test the viability of the instructions given, words used, and the length of the questionnaire. The feedback

and comments obtained were used to further refine the questionnaire. After making the necessary changes and modifications, the questionnaire was finalized.

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0 was used for the statistical analyses. This study adopts a combination of descriptive and correlation data analysis procedures. Table I shows the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients for all the variables which exceed 0.60, indicating good internal consistency of the measures [55].

TABLE I
RELIABILITY STATISTICS

| Variables | Cronbach's Alpha |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| <i>Job Satisfaction</i> | |
| <i>Salary</i> | 0.79 |
| <i>Promotion</i> | 0.69 |
| <i>Co-workers</i> | 0.75 |
| <i>Work itself</i> | 0.65 |
| <i>Supervision</i> | 0.88 |
| <i>Organizational commitment</i> | 0.84 |
| <i>Turnover intention</i> | 0.70 |

B. Research Setting

The study is set in one of the largest supermarket chain in the East Coast region of Peninsular Malaysia. The company has a total of 21 outlets throughout the East Coast that offer customers a one-stop household shopping facility ranging from fresh food to groceries. The company's vision is to be the top supermarket chain in the East Coast Corridor of Peninsular Malaysia, serving quality consumer products at fair price to meet customer needs and satisfaction. As a leading supermarket operator, the company has received several accreditations such as Fair Price Award, Enterprise 50 Award, and Pahang Chief Minister Quality Award from relevant authorities.

Being a family-owned organization, expanding the business was the main focus at the start during the 1980's and so for a long time thereafter. For the past few years, the company has been encountering an increasing employee turnover rate (18% to 24% annually) which has affected its operations and productivity. This situation has increased the demand for administrative time and resources for planning and rescheduling. Consequently, it has also increased overtime and fatigue among other employees from all levels and departments. With all these problems in hand, it is crucial for the management to identify and understand the antecedents that contribute to the increasing employee turnover rate.

C. Data Collection

The study was coordinated through the Human Resource Department of the company. The questionnaires were randomly distributed to 100 employees from the executive and non-executive categories, to ensure that all functional areas within the organization are fully represented. Confidentiality of the responses was assured to encourage the respondents to answer all the questions truthfully and without fear.

In total, the distribution and collection of the completed copies took approximately two months to complete. Although a total of 75 questionnaires were received, 13 questionnaires were found to be incomplete and therefore had to be excluded from further analysis. In total, 62 (approximately 10% of the total workforce in the company) questionnaires were accurately filled and used as the respondents of the study. This was less than had been originally anticipated but it could not be avoided since the researchers had no control over the distribution of the questionnaires. With these limitations, no claim is made that the samples utilized are representative of all employees in the company.

V. RESPONDENTS OF THE STUDY

The demographic profile of the respondents with respect to departmental position, tenure, gender, age, and education level are shown in Table II.

As shown, the majority of the respondents were below 35 years old (83.8%), female (71%), had qualifications at diploma levels and below (79%), relatively new to the organization (54.8% with less than 3 years tenure), and received salary of RM 1500 and below. Half of the respondents were at the executive level (head of departments, managers, and executives) and the other half were at the non-executive levels (cashiers and others).

TABLE II
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

| | | % |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|------|
| <i>Age</i> | Below 25 | 37.1 |
| | 26-35 | 46.7 |
| | 36-45 | 9.7 |
| | 46 and above | 6.4 |
| <i>Gender</i> | Male | 29.0 |
| | Female | 71.0 |
| <i>Education level</i> | Secondary school certification | 50.0 |
| | Diploma | 29.0 |
| | Degree | 6.5 |
| | Masters | 1.6 |
| | Others | 12.9 |
| <i>Employment years</i> | Below 3 | 54.8 |
| | 3-5 | 33.9 |
| | 6-8 | 11.3 |
| <i>Job category</i> | Executive | 50.0 |
| | Non-executive | 50.0 |
| <i>Income (RM)</i> | Below 1500 | 54.8 |
| | 1500 - 2499 | 33.8 |
| | 2500 and above | 11.3 |

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

A. Levels of Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, and Turnover Intention

To answer RO1, mean scores and standard deviations are computed. Table III provides descriptive statistics for each variable. As the responses used a 5-point Likert scale to

complete the questionnaire, the following statistics are used in interpreting the results of the study:

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 1.00 – 1.80 | Strongly Disagree/Very dissatisfied |
| 1.81 – 2.60 | Disagree/Dissatisfied |
| 2.61 – 3.40 | Moderate agreement/moderately satisfied |
| 3.41 – 4.20 | Agree/Satisfied |
| 4.21 – 5.00 | Strongly agree/Very satisfied |

TABLE III
MEAN, STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF VARIABLES

| Variables | Mean | SD |
|----------------------------------|------|------|
| <i>Job Satisfaction</i> | | |
| Salary | 2.52 | 0.72 |
| Promotion | 3.33 | 0.52 |
| Co-workers | 3.13 | 0.70 |
| Work itself | 3.24 | 0.55 |
| Supervision | 3.02 | 0.85 |
| <i>Organizational commitment</i> | 3.19 | 0.50 |
| <i>Turnover Intention</i> | 3.35 | 0.61 |

Higher score indicates higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intention

As shown in Table III, the respondents were moderately satisfied with promotion (mean = 3.3, SD = 0.52), co-workers (mean = 3.1, SD = 0.70), their work (mean = 3.2, SD = 0.55), and supervision (mean = 3.0, SD = 0.85). The mean score however suggested that they were dissatisfied with their salary (mean = 2.5, SD = 0.72).

According to [56], in Malaysia the majority of retailers offer unattractive salary which may contribute to low morale among the retail employees. As indicated earlier, the respondents of the present study earned a monthly salary of less than RM 1500 per month. This could have contributed to the respondents feeling not satisfied with their salary. In addition, the only monetary incentive given to this retail company's employees is annual bonus which amounts to their half month salary. This incentive is fixed and not tied to their performance, hence being a possible cause to employee dissatisfaction.

Promotion gives a sense of being acknowledged or appreciated by the organization to employees. Promotion is rather unlikely in the organization studied as the employees are generally young and the organization structure is rather flat. There are not many layers of job classifications or openings thus reducing the chances of getting promoted fast. At the time of the study, the employee career development strategy was yet to be finalized. The focus was more on business expansion. This may explain why satisfaction with promotion was only moderate among the employees.

Due to high turnover rates, the company started recruiting employees from various countries. Although this hiring strategy has reduced manpower cost (due to lower salary) to the company, clashing work-cultures and language barrier with the locals has created social problems and a rather undesirable work environment. These maybe the reasons employees were only moderately satisfied with their co-workers.

In the retailing industry, especially the sales section, job scope can be rather monotonous. The employees may thus experience dullness and boredom on the job. This may be the case in company studied, thus contributing to the moderate level of satisfaction with the work itself. Employees remain in the same department for a long period of time as it is believed to be time consuming for adaptation and to avoid undue training costs. Furthermore, in-house training department was not set up yet during the time of study. Besides, employees are not given a chance to get involved in decision making processes as it is deemed to be for the upper management level. Low sense of accomplishment could be the reason contributing to their moderate level of satisfaction with their work.

Our findings also indicated that the respondents had a moderate satisfaction with their supervisor. Generally, Asian companies tend to be more bureaucratic, hierarchical, and have centralized decision making compared to flatter organizational structure and low power distance in Western companies. Leadership tends to be based on position and authority. Direction and orders tend to be top-down and there is little delegation or empowerment [39]. Employees must follow instructions without questioning and are not able to voice out their dissatisfaction or opinions. Similar situation in this retail company may have led to the moderate level of employee satisfaction with their supervisors.

According to [57], employees in the early-career stage have higher tendency to explore different jobs and opportunities and thus, higher intention to leave their organization. As previously stated, the majority of the respondents were below the age of 35 years and with tenure of less than 3 years. This, among other factors, may perhaps have contributed to the moderate level of commitment and a high intention to leave the organization, as found in this study. These findings need to be of concern to the company's management as turnover rate was high at the time of the study.

B. Relationship between Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, and Turnover Intention

Pearson correlations were computed to address RO2 and RO3. Table IV shows the results from the analyses conducted.

TABLE IV
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN VARIABLES

| | <i>Turnover Intention</i> |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Job Satisfaction</i> | |
| Salary | -0.40** |
| Promotion | -0.32* |
| Co-workers | -0.23ns |
| Work itself | -0.56** |
| Supervision | -0.38** |
| <i>Organizational commitment</i> | -0.78* |

* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed), ns - Not significant

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In relation to RO2, the results indicated that only four of the five relationships were significantly related. Specifically, satisfaction with salary, promotion, work itself, and

supervision were found to be significantly and negatively related to turnover intention. This suggested that higher satisfaction with salary, promotion, work, and supervision will lead to lower turnover intention. Rather interestingly, the findings showed no significant relationship between satisfaction with co-workers and turnover intention, indicating co-workers as a non-significant contributor to intention to quit. Overall, these results provide partial support for earlier studies of the job satisfaction–turnover relationship [22], [58]–[60]. In relation to RO3, our findings found that higher organizational commitment will lead to lower turnover intention, thus supporting findings of previous studies by [48], [49], [61], [62].

VII. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Overall, the findings have highlighted the importance of salary, promotion, work itself, supervision, and organizational commitment in influencing turnover intention among the retail employees. These findings are useful in highlighting the need for the company to develop appropriate strategies and human resource practices in order to reduce its high employee turnover in the future. Several recommendations for improvement are proposed.

First, given that the respondents were not satisfied with their salary and salary was found to significantly influence turnover intention, the company should consider re-looking at its salary scheme. According to [61], employees judge fairness of their pay structure by making multiple comparisons; comparing to jobs similar to their own, comparing their job to others at the same employer, and comparing their pay against external pay level. Conducting a salary review would be useful as it allows the company to benchmark their salary scheme with competitors. Failing to do so may have detrimental impact as dissatisfaction with salary can lead to higher turnover among its employees. In addition, performance or sales-based incentives may also be introduced to motivate people to work harder and earn more monetary reward. In revising the monetary reward, the cost of living should be taken into account as this will protect employee welfare, increase their purchasing power, and decrease their burdens in fulfilling family and personal needs. This in return will invoke their satisfaction and commitment level to the organization.

Second, as satisfaction with promotion influence turnover intention and the respondents were only moderately satisfied with the promotion, it is thus important for the company to offer opportunities for promotion and develop fair promotion procedures. At the same time, employees need to be given opportunities to continuously enhance their skills by providing relevant training and development programs. A good performance tracking and evaluation system would also need to be established to assist the company in making fair promotion decisions. These proposed initiatives will be useful in improving the employees' satisfaction with promotion and eventually enhancing the company's ability to retain qualified employees.

Third, considering that the respondents were moderately satisfied with their work, there may be a need for the company to consider redesigning the work itself. For instance, a less repetitive work arrangement can be introduced to make work more interesting. In addition, job rotation may be adopted to reduce boredom among the retail employees. For the administration side, job enrichment may be useful to increase the employee's freedom, independence, responsibility and authority. Reference [62] found that employees who have autonomy in decision making have the highest level of job satisfaction and lower job stress than other employees. In addition, it is also important that clear job descriptions are provided to employees so that they are fully aware of their roles and duties.

Fourth, the finding has also highlighted the important role of supervisors in influencing turnover intention. This indicated the need for supervisors to provide encouragement and support to employees. Supervisors also need to play an important role in providing sufficient and clear information on work matters as well as in providing feedback related to work and performance. Establishing formal mentoring system can also assist to strengthen supervisor-subordinate relationship. In addition, suitable training programs to develop good supervisory skills may also be a good investment to the company. Such trainings will be helpful in enhancing the supervisors' competencies to provide assistance, communicate, counsel, and advise subordinates on various aspects. Supervisors should also be equipped with human-oriented problem solving skills and negotiation skills. These will facilitate good superior-subordinate relationships which can lead to appreciation, cooperation, and support from their employees. When employees are loyal to their supervisors, they will be psychologically attached and thus willing to stay or remain with the supervisors. As a result, these employees will have the tendency to remain with the organization.

Finally, the study has hinted on the need to develop employees' organizational commitment as it was found to influence turnover intention. As organizational commitment level was only moderate, there is a need for the company to seek ways to increase organizational commitment among its employees. This is important as employees who are less committed may likely route their commitment in other directions and tend to seek job opportunities elsewhere [45]. Thus, it is suggested that the company develops human resource strategies to strengthen employees' organizational commitment level. Research suggests that employees will interpret organization's human resource practices as support and commitment to them, hence reciprocating these kind deeds by increasing their own commitment to the organization [56]. For instance, strategies such as merit-based recruiting, fair performance appraisal practices, and opportunities for training and development may contribute to strengthen organizational commitment. In addition, a positive organizational climate based on trust, good communication, and cooperation can also develop better commitment among its employees.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study examined the level of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention among employees in the retail setting. Also investigated were the effects of job satisfaction and organizational commitment on turnover intention. The intention was to investigate whether job satisfaction and organizational commitment are significant variables in influencing intention to quit among employees in the retail setting.

Overall, the findings provided empirical support that satisfaction with salary, promotion, superior, and the work itself has a significant influence on turnover intention. Interestingly though, satisfaction with the co-workers was found not to be associated with turnover intention. In addition, along with many other studies, organizational commitment has been found to be associated with turnover intention. The findings thus have contributed to addressing retail employees' retention challenges by identifying factors influencing their turnover intention.

Several recommendations related to human resource practices have been proposed. This study is subject to limitation in terms of sample size and unit of analysis (only one company), thus the findings may not be generalized to other retail employees. Studies of similar nature using bigger number of respondents in various retail companies may provide further insight into how to manage and perhaps reduce this growing concern of voluntary turnover in the retail context.

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