THE MODERATING ROLE OF JOB EMBEDDEDNESS ON THE EFFECT OF ORGANISATIONAL JUSTICE AND ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING CULTURE ON TURNOVER INTENTION: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

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Abstract

Purpose: Employee's turnover has been investigated by many researchers as an organisations' negative outcome. The organizations that facing high rates of turnover should examine the fundamental reasons that cause employees' turnover in order to reach real solutions to this problem. For that, they should ask a dynamic question, why some employees stay and some leave?

Methodology: The reasons may seem difficult and consistent to the preferences and necessities of the employees. From another aspect, the majority of research in the context of turnover intention have been conducted in the western contexts, therefore it is worthwhile to encourage more studies in non-western settings to discover new understandings related to the problem.

Results: Malaysia is considered as one of the developing countries that is having high turnover of employees in many sectors. Consequently, this study proposed a research framework to examine the relationship between organisational justice (OJ)'s three dimensions (Distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice), organisational learning culture (OLC) and turnover intention (TI). Furthermore this study recommended the moderating role of Job embeddedness (JE) in this relationship. Hence, the suggested research framework will contribute to the body of knowledge through providing new insights.

Key words: turnover intention, organisational justice, organisational learning culture, job embeddedness, social exchange theory, planned behaviour theory.

INTRODUCTION

Due to its great effect on the long term plans and the efficiency of many organisations around the globe, employees' turnover became a main obstacle to these companies (Keni, 2013; Fareed *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, researchers deliberated employees' turnover as costly phenomena to the organisations, and this cost will appear in numerous aspects such as advertisements, recruitment, selection, training and termination (Long, 2016; Abid and Butt, 2017; Parasız *et al.*, 2017; Labrague *et al.*, 2018; Sumaira Khalid *et al.*, 2018). In order to achieve competitive advantage in the current international active business environment, preserving capable employees is one of the key indicators (Chib, 2016; Hamid *et al.*, 2016; Kim and Hyun, 2017; Lin *et al.*, 2017; Parasız *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, the companies and sectors that are facing high employees' turnover rates should inspect the important reasons that cause this phenomenon in order to reach to actual explanations to this problem.

Instead of turnover (the actual behaviour), this study emphasis on turnover intention (intentional behaviour), because the intention is a strong interpreter of turnover. (Lin *et al.*, 2017; Ozkurt and Alpay, 2018). There are many factors behind having high rates of employees' intention to leave. Thus, investigating these factors such as OJ, OLC and job embeddedness is important. Saoula *et al.* (2016) in their research suggested the mediating role of OCB in the effect of personality traits on turnover intention, and proposed that future researchers should involve factors such as organizational justice, organizational learning culture and job embeddedness in similar models and context of research.

From the findings of the prior studies in Malaysia (e.g., Hassan, 2002; Hemdi and Nasurdin, 2007; Ponnu and Chuah, 2010; Phayoonpun and Mat, 2014; Saraih *et al.*, 2017), many researches on the relationship between organisational justice and turnover intention have focused more on the two dimensions of the organisational justice (i.e., distributive justice and procedural justice) while little studies explored the effect of interactional justice. Hence, the current research will focus on the three dimensions of organisational justice (distributive, procedural and interactional) and their impact on employee` turnover intention.

The larger part of the previous studies on the OJ, OLC, JE and turnover intention were conducted in the western contexts (e.g., Lee *et al.*, 2004; Holtom *et al.*, 2006; Mallol *et al.*, 2007; Burton *et al.*, 2010; Holtom *et al.*, 2012; William Lee *et al.*, 2014; Kiazad *et al.*, 2015; George and Wallio, 2017; Greene *et al.*, 2018; Harris *et al.*, 2018), where the national cultures differ from non-western settings. In this case, the results will not be appropriate to the different contexts of research. Thus, further examinations on the relationship between OJ, OLC, JE and turnover intention will enrich the literature and add value to the body of knowledge, particularly in Malaysia and generally in Asia and the world.

In Malaysia, over many decades, the government throughout its economic plans focused in developing the human capital via talent management strategies and always encourage employers to support that. One of the major obstacles facing this development on the national and the organizations levels is the increasing rates of employees' turnover which is considered as costly and worrisome matter. In 2011, in the Asia Pacific region, Malaysian is placed sixth with employee turnover attrition rate of 15.9% (Langove *et al.*, 2016; Özmaden *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, according to Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF), among all sector that affect with high employee's turnover rates, information and communication technology sector (ICT) was the highest with a rate of more than 75%. (Nasyira *et al.*, 2014). This fact created motivation to call for and encourage more studies to examine and understand this phenomenon in the Malaysian context.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Turnover Intention (TI)

Academicians, practitioners and professionals have taken more interest in the phenomenon of employee's turnover due to its negative impact on the organizations (Ton and Huckman, 2008; Abid and Butt, 2017; Muqadas *et al.*, 2017; Sumaira Khalid *et al.*, 2018). Tett and Meyer (1993) defined turnover intention as "a conscious willingness to leave the organisation, which includes a thought or idea of leaving, the behaviour of searching for a new job, and the behaviour of deciding to leave the job" (p.262). Ongori (2007) argued that turnover intention deliberated as the direct precursor to the actual behaviour of leaving, and any plan by the individuals to leave the company will be considered as intention to turnover.

Organisational Justice (OJ)

In today's terms, organisational justice is associated with numerous distinct forms of what is commonly referred to as perceived justice, with each form of perceived justice offering several responses to the question, "What is fair?" (Greenberg, 2009). The term "organisational justice" was used to define a set of social psychological and sociological theories that defined perceptions of fairness by illustrating how organisational justice could be applied to organisations effectively (Greenberg, 1987). The three dimensions of organisational justice and their definitions are as the following:

Distributive Justice (DJ)

The focus on distributive justice by theorists was on the early conceptualisations of organisational justice. It was defined by Greenberg (1990) as "an individual`s judgment or perceived fairness of resource allocation, based upon the produced outcomes of the individual compared to expected inputs".

Procedural Justice (PJ)

Thibaut and Walker (1975) established the theory of procedural justice in responses to the argument of determination process in the legal system. They discovered how disputants` perceived control over the process and how the decisions will impact their perception of final verdicts.

Interactional Justice (IJ)

The concept of interactional justice was labelled by Bies and Moag (1986). In addition to distributive and procedural justice, researchers have revealed that the perception of justice in the organisation is affected by the quality of interpersonal treatment that the individual received.

Organisational learning culture (OLC)

The organisational learning culture concept is a sort of integration between organisational learning and organisational culture. Nowakowski and Conlon (2005) stated that "organisational learning culture is organisational phenomena that support the acquisition of information, the distribution and sharing of learning, and that reinforce and support continuous learning and its application to organisational improvement" (p.99). Marsick and Watkins (2003) and Senge (1990) defined organisational learning as the organisational culture direction that appreciates and intentionally develops it learning actions by breaking the obstacles and despreading its learning capability and supporting sustainable development and positive changes within the organisation to ensure the competitive advantage (Banerjee *et al.*, 2017).In this respect, important cultural features are identified to describe the learning organisation.

Organisational Justice and Turnover Intention

Social exchange theory of Blau (1964) assert that the continuous contribution is a way used by the individuals to pay back the favourable treatments from their organization. So, the association between organisational justice and employee' turnover intention is developed based on the construct provided by this theory (Karatepe and Shahriari, 2014). Many recent studies have proven the negative effect of organisational justice on employees' turnover intention in may contexts (Fatt *et al.*, 2010; Ponnu and Chuah, 2010; Sayed *et al.*, 2012; Karatepe and Shahriari, 2014). Contrariwise, there is a study in Malaysia proved that organisational justice does not have any association with the turnover intention (Saraih *et al.*, 2017). This finding inconsistent with the results of many previous studies, which means that there are mix results in the relationship between organisational justice and turnover inaction. Furthermore, Saoula and Johari (2016) in their research

suggested the mediating role of OCB in the effect of perceived organisational support on turnover intention, and proposed that future researchers should involve elements such as organizational justice and organizational learning culture in similar models and context of research. Hence, to fill the literature and practical gaps, further empirical studies on the direct and indirect effect of organisational justice on turnover intention are needed particularly in the Malaysia context. Based on the earlier discussion, the following proposition was formulated:

P1. Distributive justice is negatively related to employees' turnover intention.

P2. Procedural justice is negatively related to employees' turnover intention.

P3. Interactional justice is negatively related to employees' turnover intention.

Organisational learning culture and turnover intention

Based on the social exchange theory construct, the employees who benefit from satisfactory and necessary learning opportunities in the organisations may show less intention to leave the firm (Shore *et al.*, 2006). There are recent empirical studies proven the negative relationship between OLC and turnover intention (Islam *et al.*, 2012; Islam *et al.*, 2012; Islam *et al.*, 2013; Ahmed *et al.*, 2015; Islam *et al.*, 2016).

Contrariwise, some researchers revealed different results that OLC does not have a relationship with the turnover intention (Egan *et al.*, 2004; Emami *et al.*, 2012). These findings are inconsistent with the results of many previous studies, which means that there are mixed results in the relationship between OLC and turnover inaction. Hence, in order to fill the literature and practical gaps, further empirical studies on the direct and indirect effect of OLC on turnover intention are needed. Even though there are studies on the relationship between OLC and turnover intention, yet there is a need for more studies to understand the association between the variables, particularly in the non-western context such as Malaysia. As per the best knowledge of the researcher, in the Malaysian context, particularly in the service sector, there are limited studies have examined the association between OLC and turnover intention. Consequently, investigating more on the nature of this relationship is worthy. Therefore, the following proposition was formulated:

P4: Organisational learning culture has a significant negative effect on employees' turnover intention.

Job Embeddedness as Moderator

As JE is based on turnover's models , the basic purpose of it is to study voluntary turnover by analyzing the different motives for employees to stay (Yang *et al.*, 2011). The construct of JE was developed from employees' turnover field of research that investigated the movement of employees between job alternatives. This investigation in this organisational connection hypothesized that the perception of employees towards the attractiveness and easiness of leaving the job specified their final decision to stay in the organisation or leave it (March and Simon, 1958).

Yao *et al.* (2004), defined job embeddedness as "the combined forces that keep a person from leaving his or her job". The job embeddedness concept represents a wide set of influences on an employee's decision to stay on the job (Holtom *et al.*, 2006). It concentrations on the mass of links an employee experiences through his or her duties, experiences, responsibilities and relationships. As these interconnections become more complex, an employee becomes more embedded within the organisation and is less likely to leave. Employees become embedded as a function of the totality of forces that enmesh them in organisations.

Job embeddedness has developed from the unfolding model of voluntary turnover (Lee and Mitchell, 1994) and clarifies why individuals remain on their jobs. Yang *et al.* (2011) deliberated that staying and leaving are dissimilar behaviours, but they considered to have the same decision-making process. The unfolding model concentration is on turnover causes the forces which resisted employee's turnover and make them to stay in position. Alike balance scale, one side is turnover causes and the other side is attachment forces that are derived from social web.

When the employees are not satisfied with their current job, they will look for alternative positions elsewhere, and compare these alternatives with their present jobs. If this last is more beneficial and attractive they will leave the organisation (Mobley, 1977). In general, the employees will be bound to their job and organisation and show a low level of turnover intentions, if they found that their future plans, career goals and personal plans match well with the job as well as the organisation (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001). If these individuals built a strong official and unofficial links with others in the organisation they will likely remain in the organisation. When these employees have awareness that there is a possibility of losing opportunities and benefits that are related to the organisation they will likely quit from the organisation (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001). Job embeddedness is also known as "anti-withdrawal" or "retention" concept. It reveals the decisions made by the employees to straightly and widely contribute and transfer the academically concern beyond dissatisfaction and cause withdrawal.

A greater understanding of employee embeddedness is timely and important (Ng and Feldman, 2007). In addition, Allen (2006) argued that little researchers investigated job embeddedness in the organisations, thus further investigations on this topic are required. Job embeddedness has been mostly studied as an independent variable that affects work outcomes such as turnover intention, and as a dependent variable which is influenced by personal characteristics and organisational

factors. Halbesleben and Wheeler (2008) demonstrated that employees performance is predicted by JE. Sekiguchi *et al.* (2008) stated that the employees with great degree of job embeddedness, showed a strong influence of organisational self-esteem on task performance.

In human resource management, job embeddedness is a significant strategy for retaining preserving employees, thus researchers should further investigate it (Wheeler *et al.*, 2010). Similarly, Ng and Feldman (2011) deliberate that there is a need for more exploration on the reasons that make employees embedded in their occupations. Holtom *et al.* (2012) argue that the experimental research on job embeddedness should go beyond the previous investigations that only concentrated on the consequences by exploring the antecedents.

Due to limited recent studies related to job embeddedness area, Karatepe (2013) confirmed that factors affecting job embeddedness have been ignored widely. Thus, there is a need for more studies on the job embeddedness to clarify its moderation effect between different variables. Moreover, William Lee *et al.* (2014) encourage future researchers to continue to study and seek better understanding of employee embeddedness.

Saoula and Johari (2016) in their studies on the effect of perceived organisational support on turnover intention suggested that, future studies should engage job embeddedness as an important factor in the research models related to turnover intention. Furthermore, Saraih *et al.* (2017) investigated the relationship between OJ and turnover intention. They recommended further researchers to investigate any possible role of moderation between OJ and turnover intention. Moreover, (Saoula *et al.*, 2018) strongly recommended the involvement of JE in future studies related to turnover intention. In addition, due to the inconsistent results of the direct effect between OJ and turnover intention (Saraih *et al.*, 2017) the indirect effect through job embeddedness is proposed to be examined. Hence, the following propositions were formulated:

P5. *Job embeddedness moderates the effect of distributive justice on employees' turnover intention.*

P6. *Job embeddedness moderates the effect of procedural justice on employees' turnover intention.*

P7. *Job embeddedness moderates the effect of interactional justice on employees' turnover intention.*

P8. *Job embeddedness moderates the effect of organizational learning culture on employees' turnover intention.*

PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Based on the comprehensive and extensive literature review and support of the theories (Social exchange theory, job embeddedness theory and planned behaviour theory), initial research framework (Figure 1) have been developed in this study. These theories have been used to support and consolidate the effect of OJ and OLC on turnover intention through the moderation role of JE. Social exchange theory proposes that over the mutual exchange, an arrangement of reciprocal responsibility is recognized between the parties (Blau, 1964). The benefited party turns to be obliged to pay back throughout positive outcomes (e.g., high OJ, OLC, JE and low intention to leave). When the contacts are observed as fair over time, the awareness of organisational justice will succeed among organisational fellows and the consistency of the organisation will be improved. Furthermore, this theory delivers outcomes which shows that employees exchange necessary outcomes in return for fair treatment, support or care (Paillé, 2013). In addition, this theory suggests that when employees perceive that their organisation supports them in terms of training and development, having opportunities to benefit from knowledge and experience sharing, opportunity to develop their career (which reflects a high supportive organisational learning culture), they will be unlikely to intend to leave the organisation.

Furthermore, social exchange theory provided a construct that employees who built excellent connections and trusting with their managers and colleagues are likely to be embedded within the organisation (Liu *et al.*, 2018). This strong links with the managers and fellow workers show that the employees' relations to organisation and individual are very strong (Harden *et al.*, 2018). In addition, one of the most prevalent approaches to understand employees turnover and job embeddedness is job embeddedness theory (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001; Holtom and Darabi, 2018). This theory postulates that greatly embedded employees have a number of networks (formal and informal) with others at the workplace. (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001; Holtom *et al.*, 2006). The underlying premise of the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) is that employees make decisions reasonably and methodically through availability of information to them (Ajzen, 1991; Auf *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, if the employees feel that they are treated in a fair way, and they are aware about the culture of their organisational learning they will show low intention to leave the organisation and vice versa.

By emerging a proposed framework (Figure 1) that posited the direct effect of OJ's three dimensions (distributive, procedural and interactional justice) and OLC on turnover intention, this research will contribute to the body of knowledge. Furthermore, this research proposed the investigation of the moderation effect of JE on the relationship between OJ (distributive, procedural and interactional justice) and OLC on turnover intention to bring more insights into these effects.

METHODOLOGY

This research proposed a framework on the effect of OJ and OLC on turnover intention through the moderation role of JE. To test the phenomenon, quantitative research approach has been suggested. The survey questionnaire will be distributed among targeted participants proposed in this study, which are the full time employees working in the information and communication technology sector in Malaysia. In this sector, there are full time employees, part time employees, internship/practicum students. The reason behind choosing full time employees is that, they are permanent in the organisations. In addition, the intention to leave that will lead to voluntary turnover is related to the workers who are fully employed in the organizations of the targeted sector. The measurement of variables for this study will be adapted from obtainable literature. Structural Equation Modeling -Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) will be used to test the proposed research model (Ahmed, Majid & Zin, 2016; Ali & Haseeb, 2019; Haseeb, Abidin, Hye, & Hartani, 2018; Haseeb., 2019; Suryanto, Haseeb, & Hartani, 2018).
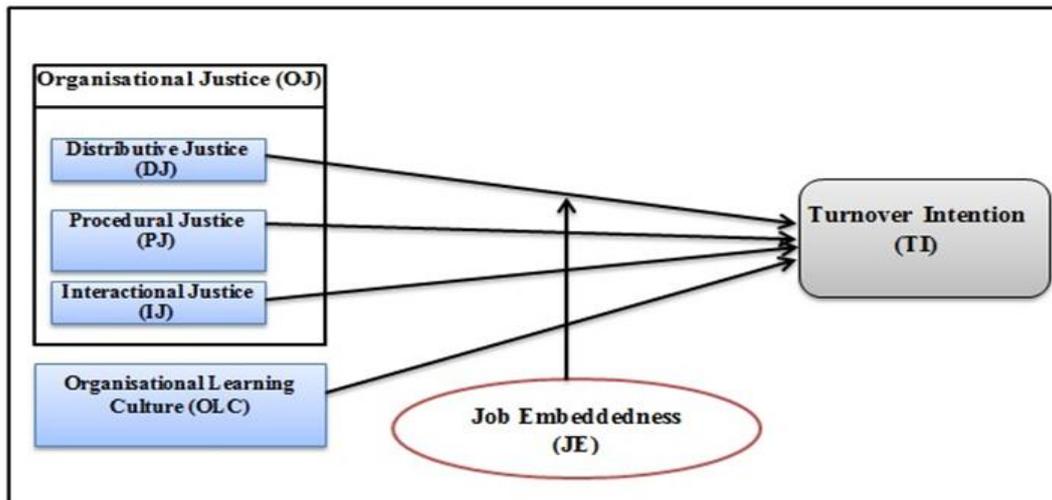

Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework

CONCLUSION

As above mentioned, this study is aimed to examine the effect of OJ's three dimensions (distributive, procedural and interactional justice) and OLC on turnover intention, and the moderating role of JE in the relation. By proposing this research model, this study is expected to encourage and invite more academicians, managers, practitioners and decision makers to identify more insights on the root causes of turnover intention. The previous studies have tried to link OJ and OLC with turnover intention, but the role of JE as a vital factor in this relation have been ignored. Preventing turnover is the aim of many organizations, and one of the vital ways of doing that is increasing the level of JE. Therefore, involving JE in this model will contribute in predicting turnover intention at early stages and will provide more insights in understanding the phenomenon to fill the research gaps.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future studies are strongly recommended to examine this research model empirically. Furthermore, future researchers are encouraged to consider adding other factors affecting turnover intention (e.g., Career anchors, career development opportunities, work-life balance and employee engagement) as these variables proved to be important in influencing the employees' turnover decision (de Beer *et al.*, 2016; Suifan *et al.*, 2016; Perera, 2018; Purwanto *et al.*, 2018; Puteri, 2018; Xiong *et al.*, 2018). Also, future studies should consider JE to be dependent variable as an important concept in the retention strategies of the companies. Moreover, future researchers should also consider any possible role of other moderating and mediating variables (e.g., perceived organisational support, personality traits, organisational justice, organisational learning culture) to provide new insights to contribute to the body of knowledge in the turnover intention literature. In addition, future studies should propose this conceptual framework to be investigated in different sectors.

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