

# **UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

# IMPACT OF JOB CONTROL, JOB DEMAND AND SOCIAL SUPPORT ON TURNOVER INTENTION AMONG ACADEMICS IN A MALAYSIAN PRIVATE UNIVERSITY

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# IMPACT OF JOB CONTROL, JOB DEMAND AND SOCIAL SUPPORT ON TURNOVER INTENTION AMONG ACADEMICS IN A MALAYSIAN PRIVATE UNIVERSITY

By

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Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Master of Science

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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January 2013

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In view of the rapid development especially in the global knowledge economy, it is important that in order to sustain and be successful, the higher education institution should retain good and experienced academics. They are regarded as the repository of knowledge, disseminators of knowledge and creators of new knowledge. However, as Malaysia is expected to be a regional hub for international higher education, consequently it can burden the academics particularly in the private institution of higher learning. As such, it triggers stress among the academics and will lead them to stimulate the turnover intention. However, academics turnover intention can be considered as dangerous because it not only have impacts on the institution but also directly and

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attempts to determine the relationship between job demand, job control and social support on turnover intention and also the effects of job control and social support as the moderator in the relationship between job demand and turnover intention.

This study draws on the empirical results from 201 academics in private institutions of higher learning in the Klang Valley by using simple random sampling. The hypotheses were tested by using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and the hierarchical multiple regression analysis in order to examine the relationship between the three independent variables with turnover intention as well as the moderator effect. Instruments were used from Job Content Questionnaire (Karasek, 1985) and turnover intention from O'Driscoll and Beehr's, (1994). The empirical results support the view that job control determine the level of turnover intention as well as social support on turnover intention. The regression estimation shows that social support was significantly reflected in turnover intention among academics.

The findings suggest that if the private institution want to make a better account in sustaining and achieving success in the global knowledge economy; it should place much greater emphasis not only on the role of social support (co-worker and supervisor) but also by providing academics with greater job control in order to retain them. Social support from co-worker and supervisor is viewed as an important element in order to eliminate or buffer the stress which is derived from excessive job demand while job

control provides academics with the sense of autonomous in delivering their jobs and role to the institution.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

KESAN KAWALAN KERJA, TUNTUTAN KERJA DAN SOKONGAN SOSIAL TERHADAP NIAT BERHENTI DI KALANGAN ANGGOTA AKADEMIK DI PENGAJIAN TINGGI SWASTA MALAYSIA

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Untuk mengekalkan kejayaan dan untuk maju ke hadapan di dalam pembangunan yang pesat terutama di dalam ekonomi pengetahuan global, institusi pengajian tinggi persendirian perlulah untuk mengekalkan para pensyarah yang cemerlang dan berpengalaman. Pensyarah di lihat sebagai seorang wadah pengetahuan, penyebar pengetahuan dan pecipta ilmu pengetahuan yang baru. Tetapi, berhubung dengan jangkaan Malaysia untuk menjadi pusat serantau antarabangsa untuk pengajian tinggi, ia sekaligus membebankan para pensyarah terutamanya di dalam institusi pengajian tinggi persendirian. Keadaan sedemikian boleh mencetuskan tekanan perasaan di kalangan para pensyarah dan sekaligus mencetuskan niat untuk berhenti. Ini boleh di

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anggap berbahaya kerana ia boleh memberi kesan kepada institusi and pelajar secara langsung dan tidak langsusng. Jesteru itu, kajian ini cuba untuk menentukan samada hubungkait antara tuntutan kerja, kawalan kerja dan sokongan sosial dengan niat berhenti dan juga untuk mengkaji pemboleh ubah moderator kawalan kerja dan sokongan sosial di dalam hubungkait tuntutan kerja dan niat berhenti.

Kajian ini melibatkan seramai 201 orang pensyarah dari institusi pengajian tinggi swasta di Lembah Klang. Hipotesis di uji dengan korelasi Pearson dan analisis regresi hirarki. Penggunaan instrumen di ambil dari Karasek (1985) untuk menguji pemboleh ubah tidak bersandar manakala bagi pemboleh ubah bersandar, instrumen di ambil dari O'Driscoll dan Beehr's (1994). Hasil kajian menunjukkan hanya kawalan kerja dan sokongan sosial yang berhubungkait dengan niat berhenti dalam kalangan pensyarah. Estimasi regresi menunjukkan bahawa niat berhenti adalah digambarkan dengan sokongan sosial.

Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa institusi pengajian tinggi persendirian perlu mengekalkan sokongan sosial (rakan sekerja dan penyelia) dan juga kawalan kerja di dalam usaha untuk mengekalkan pensyarah supaya institusi dapat kekal bertahan dan berjaya di dalam ekonomi pengetahuan global. Sebagai manusia, sokongan sosial berupaya membantu menghilangkan atau merendahkan tekanan yang berpunca dari beban kerja yang berlebihan dan kawalan kerja yang tinggi dapat memberikan autonomi kepada pensyarah dalam menyampaikan tugas dan peranan mereka kepada institusi.

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Finally, I would like to thank my mother whose love is boundless and for my father who is my role model.

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 23 January 2013 to conduct the final examination of Afdzal Aizat bin Ramli on his thesis entitled "Impact of Job Control, Job Demand And Social Support on Turnover Intention Among Academics in a Malaysian Private University" in accordance with the Universities and University College Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Science.

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# **DECLARATION**

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

AFDZAL AIZAT BIN RAMLI

Date: 23 January 2013

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#### **CHAPTER 1**

#### INTRODUCTION

## **Background of the Study**

Due to the expansion of the higher education sector, there are a lot of opportunities offered to the public to further their studies in private institution of higher learning which apparently is be able to propel the knowledge-based economy. It arose from the concept of knowledge generation and utilization so as to ensure its contribution to the economic growth and wealth creation (Mustapha & Abdullah, 2004). In order to contribute to the economic growth, it is the functions of tertiary education to discover knowledge, generate ideas and encourage more innovation. Therefore, since 1995, the Malaysian government has encouraged the development of private higher learning institution which has been existence for the last two decades, in order to generate a pool of well-educated and skilled professionals (Sohail, Jegatheesan & Nor Azlin, 2002).

In the Malaysian context and according to Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), there are two modes of ownership for tertiary education which can be divided into two groups, namely public institution of higher learning and private institution of higher learning. Public institution of higher learning is highly subsidized and managed by the Government of Malaysia and is basically non-profit oriented. While on the other hand, private institution of higher learning is owned and managed by the private organization

and it is profit oriented. Due to the liberalization, deregulation and privatization, this education sector can be seen as very dynamic and fluid with its rapid expansion, innovative educational programs and changing educational policies.

According to the MOHE, private institution of higher learning can be divided into four categories comprising of university, university college, branch campus and college. Today, their presence is dominant in several fields of educational system and their numbers show an amazing total of 470 institutions. Table 1.1 below depicts the detail number of private institution of higher learning in Malaysia.

Table 1.1. Private institution of higher learning in Malaysia

	Number	Percentage
University	29	6.17
University College	21	4.47
Branch Campus	5	1.06
College	415	88.30
TOTAL	470	100.00

Source: jpt.mohe.gov.my/menudirektori.php

Generally, the functions of institution of higher learning are to provide extended knowledge and also the experience to students based on their courses which are divided into several levels like certificate, diploma, extended diploma, first degree and higher degree qualifications. According to MOHE, there are three types of fields offered by private institution of higher learning, which can be divided into science, literature, social science and technical. Under the three main majors, there are several of programs

offered for students in order to find the niche of their interest and prepare for future work field.

In order to perform the responsibilities of providing and delivering good education to the students, the workforce of private institution of higher learning should advocate for high quality of positive attitude and knowledge. Thus, it is viewed that output from the tertiary education will determine and change the labour market needs since the production of knowledge can be considered as a marketable good and a saleable commodity. As the numbers of academics in private institution of higher learning is seen as significant to the contribution of graduate's success (Trower, 2005), it is viewed that more research should be conducted with an emphasis on increasing and enhancing the productivity of academics.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine and investigate on how the job content influence the academics' turnover intention which it will lead to the actual behavior of turnover. It is important to retain those capable academics in the tertiary institution because of their ability to perform magnificently particularly in teaching, research and great deal of services in community (Trower, 2005). Moreover, academics are the ones who are able to produce the future human capital of the state (Lew Tek Yew, 2009) and their responsibility to the students is the core of university's mission and of the academics' duty (Kenedy, 1997). In order to probe the issue in detail, this study will explore the relationship of the job demand, job control, social support and

turnover intention among academics in private institution of higher learning in Malaysia.

Past literatures have stated that the scenario of turnover stimulate greater cost especially in recruiting a new capable employee, which contributes to a hike of induction and training cost as well as operation cost (Ongori, 2007; Amah, 2009). In another point of view, if the employee and training are not connected or aligned with the expectation of the organization, this will jeopardize the efficiency of the organization. Batra and Tan (2003) have highlighted that an efficient organization is more likely to provide formal training for their workforce where else less efficient organization seldom, hold training. In fact, training is mostly regarded as a high cost especially in time and financial constrains when in actual fact the resource can be used for other purpose.

In order to be competitive in the dynamic environment, the turnover issue must be fully understood by the management of the university. Hence, the study will explore the influences of job demand, job control and social support from the academics itself towards the turnover intention.

#### **Turnover Intention in Academia Context**

An intent to either stay or leave the organization can be classified as a final stage in the psychological decision-making process of a person before leaving (Mobley, 1977). Therefore, turnover intention can be described as a forerunner to an actual turnover

behavior in many turnover models (Hom, Caranikas-Walker, Prussia & Griffeth, 1992; Hom, Griffeth & Sellaro, 1984; Mobley, 1982; Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982; Smart, 1990; Steel & Ovalle, 1984; Steers & Mowday, 1981; Vandenberg & Scarpello, 1990).

Apparently, in most organization employee turnover can best be described as an unfortunate and costly aspect of human resource management. From a review of the classic studies, it can be seen that most of turnovers typically will result in negative consequences (Mobley et al., 1979). Therefore, the consequences faced by organizations in employee turnover can be divided into two aspects comprising of direct cost and indirect cost. According to Wood and Macaulay (1989), direct cost is referred to the organization's consumption of time and money in order to fulfill the need in the process of finding, hiring and training replacement employees. Whereas in indirect cost, it will occur during the process of finding replacement for employees, which organizations are facing up to in their declining productivity especially in where there are understaffing and the inexperience of new employees.

In the context of the higher education field, the investment in its searching and hiring process by universities can be considered as high, however, the return is poor when compared with an earlier investment. This situation is viewed as one that is not able to get a return from an investment in faculty member's promotion, training and sabbatical leave. Moreover, turnover phenomenon is able to jeopardize the aim of the organization in gaining and sustaining the quality of human capital and workforce. This point of view is supported by Bowen and Schuster (1986), which stated that "The excellence of

higher education is a function of the kind of people it is able to enlist and retain on its faculty" and in addition to that, the problem of academic staff turnover or in other term, "Brain Drain", still continues in local universities (Khoo, 1981).

However, from a positive point of view, turnover can be seen as the movements of labor in and out and it tends to generate income and economic growth for both organization and individual. Indeed, it provides new opportunity for a vacancy and variety of knowledge and skill by transferring from one organization to another by both parties. In fact, as suggested by Mobley (1982), turnover phenomenon is able to stimulate positive changes in the organization through the creation of promotional opportunities, reorganization and restructuring of reporting lines and decision making, and the infusion of new people with new. While from an individual's perspective, the decision to quit a position is positively associated with individual's career objectives, or with the movement away from a stressful situation. This is supported by the studies done in Japan (Yadori & Kato, 2007) and United States (Kacmar et al., 2006; Shaw et al., 2005) which stated that voluntary turnover ratio is negatively related to labour productivity.

According to the study done in an academic context, it is viewed that some turnover among academic profession can be considered as a natural part of professional advancement. In Brown's (1967, p. 25) study, the author suggested that the mobility of academics is accepted and approved by the profession "because loyalty to discipline transcends loyalty to school and that teaching and research skills are readily transferable

among schools". Moreover, human capital theorists also believed that personal endowment such as ability and education could translate into returns in the marketplace.

On the other hand, Ghiselli (1974) found that some workers tend to move from one job to another, sometimes for no apparent or rational reason, despite having better alternative job offers or not. This phenomenon is called as job hopping behaviors. It is viewed that hobo syndrome behavior can be described as, "...the periodic itch to move from a job in one place to some other job in some other place" (p. 81). It is observed by the number of times workers reportedly leave their jobs for another in their entire career. In addition to that, Kawabe (1991) found that job hopping are common occurrence among information technology (IT) employees because of monetary reason; while James (1991) contended by highlighting that money solely is not the main reason, but happen by the availability of vast options in the job market.

To understand well in the context of higher educational learning, an academic is the main part in driving the credibility especially in marketable and employability of the student and also shaping and coloring the future of the student. This point of view is supported by Perkin (1969), which stated that the academic professions are the most important profession of the twentieth century and highly qualified academics' possess' important role in determining the quality of the output (graduates). Therefore, when turnover of academics happened, the cost is directly affecting the individual, departmental and institutional levels. The cost of turnover is able to trigger problematic situation in the higher education institution such as subsequent recruiting expenses,

disruptions of course offerings, discontinuities in departmental and student planning and loss of graduate student advisors (Ehrenberg, Kasper & Rees, 1991).

With the trend of fast moving globalization, liberalization and reforms of educational system, the process of improving the ranking of higher education institution, tends to stimulate challenge on developing ways particularly in improving the staff commitment to the universities. In order to achieve the desired goal, it is viewed that the ability of universities to retain excellent and experienced academics is the most vital criteria in order to lead world class universities. Therefore, by creating a team of committed and high quality academics who are committed to teaching, leading in research and innovation, would accelerate Malaysia's higher education institutions into world class standard and turn it into a leading education hub and apex universities as has been highlighted in National Higher Education Strategic Plan (Atan, 2007).

To fulfill Malaysia's target of becoming an international hub for a world class education and hold big responsibilities in the education scene, especially in achieving a target of attracting 100,000 foreign students, it therefore require that the higher education institution work together in offering excellence and quality services. With the influx of foreign students into Malaysia, it could boost the economy with the monetary flows and it is estimated that around RM50 millions would directly contribute to Malaysia annually (Uda Nagu, 2007).

## **Problem Statement**

To compete in the volatile global knowledge economy, institutions of higher learning should provide and enhance their productivity and occupational skills to other sectors by linking academics and students with activities from industrial and community (Tight, 2003; Humphrey & Hoque, 2007). Academics are viewed as the key elements in academia, whereby their roles determine the quality of undergraduate's experience and society (Capellaras, 2005). Moreover, academics accounted as the guardian of current knowledge, disseminators of knowledge and creators of new knowledge, as well as being critics of conventional academic and epistemological wisdom (Maimunah & Lawrence, 2007).

However, the rapid and dynamic education sector cannot be denied since there are numerous private institutions of higher learning in Malaysia and are pressured to achieve target of being a regional hub for international higher education. To cope with it, the academics have been burdened with academic and non-academic work and will be threatened to be set off from institution if he or she could not deliver the job given (Azman, Amy Yao, Elizabeth Yeo, Kuan Kong Lai & Yew Ju Soon, 2010). It will trigger pressure at the workplace and stress will occur immediately which will lead to stimulate the intention to leave in order to release and get out from stress (Hom & Kinichi, 2001; Rhoades et al., 2001; Baharudin, 2003; Brough & Frame, 2004; Elitharp, 2005; Blau, 1980; Mohd Kamel, 2009). It could significantly impact on the students

(Winefield, 2000) and to the university itself such as quality of graduates, research and publications (Mohd Kamel, 2009).

As such, a few gaps were identified from previous studies, particularly from the view of occupational stress, job satisfaction, organizational support and organizational commitment (Azman et al., 2010; Mohd Kamel, 2009; Fauziah & Kamaruzaman, 2009; Raemah & Rosli; 2011; Lew Tek Yew 2009). Therefore, there are needs to probe the phenomenon and examine them from the perspective of job demand, job control and social support towards academics' intention to leave. Perhaps this study will help to narrow the gap and enhance the existing body of knowledge surrounding the turnover intention among academics.

# Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to determine the relationship between job demand, job control and social support towards academics' turnover intention in private institution of higher learning in Malaysia. The specific objectives are stated below.

# **Specific Objectives**

1. To determine the level of job demand, job control, social support and turnover intention among academics.

- 2. To determine the degree of relationship between job demand, job control and social support towards turnover intention among academics.
- 3. To determine the moderating effect of job control on the relationship between job demand and turnover intention among academics.
- 4. To determine the moderating effect of social support on the relationship between job demand and turnover intention among academics.

Derived from the specific objectives, this study presents the five hypotheses which are as stated below.

# Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Increased job demand is related to increased turnover intention.

Hypothesis 2: Increased job control is related to decreased turnover intention.

Hypothesis 3: Increased social support is related to decreased turnover intention

Hypothesis 4: The relationship between job demand and turnover intention is moderated by job control.

Hypothesis 5: The relationship between job demand and turnover intention is moderated by social support.

## Significance of the Study

Specific to the case in private institution of higher learning especially in Malaysia, it seems that research on turnover among academics has been limited in several ways. Firstly, only few of public higher education institutions have been researched systematically (Mohd Kamel, 2009) and secondly, a small number of private institution of higher learning (Lew Tek Yew, 2009; Azman et al., 2010; Fauziah & Kamaruzaman, 2009; Raemah & Rosli; 2011).

Since the government urged that Malaysia become an international education hub, there is a need to conduct this study as the knowledge workers are the capital of competitive advantage for the knowledge economy (Drucker, 1999). In addition, it is viewed that highly skilled professional should not be managed as disposable productive resources but rather be considered as human beings with specific needs and interests (Pare & Tremblay, 2007). Aligned with Tan (2008), it is important to retain employees' skills and experience within the organization. Since the capability of an organization is good to retain academics, it will lead to more committed academics who will assist the nation in providing and enhancing quality of human capital.

Furthermore, this study will also reassesses and clarifies the job demand, job control and social support for academics that may support the need for reevaluation of current practices and programs. It can also identify which area that needed either amendment or improvement. Consideration on academics' responsibility, discretion and social support

must be taken into the account seriously. In addition, from the viewpoint of Human Resources managers, it may help in designing their strategy on how to enhance the specification of the job itself.

Perhaps, the results and findings will help the management to retain the academics and minimize the implication that may arise from turnover intention. It may also aid the administrator to understand well on the issues of actual turnover behavior as well as the consequences.

## Limitations of the Study

This study has done its best to reduce any limitations that may have to any negative influence on its findings. However, certain limitations could not be avoided in the sampling procedure.

The sample group used in this study was limited to academics only from the private institutions with the status of a university and university college in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. Thus, its finding may not be generalized neither to entire of private institution of higher learning across Malaysia nor overseas and to public higher education institution as well as other industries.

While no restriction was made as to age, racial, educational or other backgrounds were made, however, time constraints and geographical limitations prevented the researcher from surveying the entire population in the entire region.

#### **Definition of Terms**

- 1. <u>Turnover intention</u>: According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) and Igbaria and Greenhaus (1992) turnover intention can be defined as the most immediate determinants of actual behavior. While, scholars like Firth, Mellor, Moore and Loquet (2004) stated that turnover intention refer to the individual who may be thinking to quit job. To align with the objective of the study, the definition of turnover intention is according to O'Driscoll and Beehr (1994) where it is a thought of leaving the present job, planning to look for new in job in future and actively search for a new job outside the organization or institution. Therefore, academics' turnover intention is a detachment behavior towards institution such as neglecting teaching hours, service task and professional development activities (Seigall & McDonald, 2004) and desire to leave for another position and/or career alternative (Rosser, 2004).
- 2. <u>Job Demand</u>: Job demand has been defined as the input which is coming in the form of technical, intellectual, physical, social or financial challenges. Meanwhile, Perrewe and Ganster (1989) classified it into two sets of group namely the quantitative and qualitative. The first set, quantitative refers to individual need to accomplish in a given period of time while qualitative, refer to complexity of work or level of required skills,

abilities and cognition in order to accomplish the job. According to Karasek (1985), job demand refer to psychological workload which measure the degree of task completion particularly derived from the organizational and physical exertion which measure the degree of job-related tasks that required physical effort in order to complete the task.

- 3. <u>Job Control</u>: Typically, it is defined as an influence over a person's work and work environment in order to establish a less threatening or a rewarding work situation (Fox, Dwyer & Ganster, 1993; Ganster, 1989; Soderfeldt, Soderfeldt, Muntaner, O'campo, Warg & Ohlson, 1996). According to Frese (1989) and Ganster (1989), job control consists of two dimensions which are decision making and job autonomy. Karasek (1985) defined the job control accordingly into two parts, which are skill discretion and decision authority. Skill discretion refers to creativity, flexibility and variation needed to complete the task. On the other hand, decision authority refers to job-related autonomy particularly in job design, scheduling and procedures in carrying out the task.
- 4. Social Support: Earlier definition refer to three aspects of social support such as emotional support, esteem support and network support. In general, it is viewed that social support is the availability and quality of help extended to an individual in need (Egbert, Koch, Coeling & Ayers, 2006; Hobfoll & Shirom, 2001). For the purpose of this study, refrence is made to Karasek (1985), whereby social support is divided into two aspects, which are supervisory support and co-worker support. Supervisor support refers to immediate superior who providing encouragement and support within work

group while co-worker support refers to colleague who providing encouragement and support within work group.

5. Academics: Trower (2005) defined the term an academic as a person who is capable in teaching, conducting research and providing service to the community particularly in tertiary institution. In detail, academics are the guardian of current knowledge, disseminators of knowledge, creators of new knowledge as well as being critics of conventional academic and epistemological wisdom (Maimunah & Lawrence, 2007). From the technical aspects, according to the Statistics of Higher Education of Malaysia (2011), an academic is a person who holds one or more qualification from the highest (Ph.D) to lowest (certificate, advanced diploma & professional level) with the job title of tutor, lecturer/assistant lecturer, senior lecturer, principle lecturer, associate professor and professor.

## Summary

This introductory chapter consists of the research problem that is going to be addressed in this study. It consist of the background of the study on the turnover problem focusing in the private institution of higher learning. Next, the research will cover the problem, objectives, significance and limitation of the study in order to highlight the importance and the need for this study.

This study will concentrate on the variables such as job demand, job control and social support and its relationship toward turnover intention. In addition to that, the moderation effects of job control and social support toward job demand and turnover intention will also be probed.



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