



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***PREDICTORS OF INTENTION TO STAY AMONG EXECUTIVES IN  
MALAYSIAN MANUFACTURING ORGANIZATIONS AND MODERATING  
EFFECT OF INTERGENERATIONAL WORKFORCE***

**YONG SEE CHEN**

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By

**YONG SEE CHEN**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,  
in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**November 2017**

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is especially dedicated to my parents, girlfriend and brother for their patience, encouragement, support, and understanding.



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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**November 2017**

**Chairman : Associate Professor Roziah Mohd Rasdi, PhD**  
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The high average yearly turnover rate of executive employees in the Malaysian manufacturing organizations can destroy their competitiveness in the marketplace. Issues related on the efforts in increasing employees' intention to stay have become more critical when younger generations such as Generation Xers and Generation Yers employees are likely to quit their jobs more frequently compared to Baby Boomers. Previous study found that Malaysian employees are willing to remain in their current organizations only for less than three years. The objective of this study is to investigate the predictors of intention to stay and the moderating roles of a multi-generational workforce among executive employees in the Malaysian manufacturing organizations. Hence, this study examined how human resource practices and job-related factors influence an individual's intention to stay, and the moderating roles of a multi-generational workforce on the relationship between the selected independent variables and intention to stay. Investigation from this study generated both theoretical and practical significance which improved insights on intention to stay. This study applied Herzberg's Two-Factor theory, Robert Agnew's General Strain theory, and Generational Cohort theory in order to provide an integrative theoretical framework in explaining executive employees' intention to stay in the Malaysian manufacturing organizations.

The present study adopted a quantitative approach with descriptive correlational research design. In addition, it employed a cross-sectional survey using self-administered questionnaire in data collection. A number of 456 executive employees from manufacturing organizations in the three sub-sectors which include palm oil, electrical and electronics, and refined petroleum products participated in this study. The results of their responses were analyzed using descriptive and AMOS-SEM

analysis. The findings indicated the level of intention to stay was reasonably high among the respondents. The results in the AMOS-SEM structural model path revealed that pay and compensation, and career advancement (human resource practices), and role conflict and role ambiguity (job-related factors) significantly influenced executive employees' intention to stay. However, performance appraisal (human resource practice) did not contribute significantly towards executive employees' intention to stay. Moreover, the findings also indicated that pay and compensation (human resource practice) and role conflict and role ambiguity (job-related factors) were moderated by the multi-generational workforce. Employers need to be aware that Generation Xers are highly affected by pay and compensation and role ambiguity, while Generation Yers are strongly affected by role conflict. The findings of this study have highlighted the pay and compensation, career advancement, role conflict, and role ambiguity are among the key factors that need to be prioritized in the retention practices by HRD practitioners to focus on to increase intention to stay among their internal labor pool. Improving the employees' retention strategies and increasing intention to stay among the employees would provide an added value on HRD practices in Malaysia, specifically, those in the manufacturing organizations.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PERAMAL NIAT UNTUK KEKAL DALAM KALANGAN EKSEKUTIF DI  
ORGANISASI PEMBUATAN MALAYSIA DAN KESAN  
PENYEDERHANA TENAGA KERJA PELBAGAI GENERASI**

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Kadar pusing ganti rata-rata tahunan yang tinggi bagi pekerja eksekutif dalam organisasi pembuatan Malaysia boleh mendatangkan kesan negative terhadap daya saing mereka di pasaran. Isu-isu yang berkaitan dengan usaha meningkatkan niat untuk kekal dalam kalangan pekerja menjadi lebih kritikal apabila generasi muda seperti Generasi X and Generasi Y lebih kerap berhenti kerja berbanding dengan *Baby Boomers*. Kajian terdahulu mendapati bahawa pekerja di Malaysia sanggup kekal dalam organisasi mereka tidak lebih daripada tiga tahun. Objektif kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peramal yang mempengaruhi niat untuk kekal dan, peranan penyederhana tenaga kerja pelbagai generasi dalam kalangan pekerja eksekutif di organisasi pembuatan di Malaysia. Oleh yang demikian, kajian ini menyelidik faktor-faktor yang berkaitan dengan amalan sumber manusia dan kerja terhadap niat individu untuk kekal. Di samping itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peranan penyederhana tenaga kerja pelbagai generasi terhadap hubungan antara pembolehubah bebas terpilih dengan niat untuk kekal dalam kalangan pekerja eksekutif. Kajian ini akan menjana teori dan amalan yang penting untuk memberi pemahaman terhadap niat untuk kekal dalam organisasi. Kajian ini menggunakan teori *Two-Factor Herzberg*, teori *General Strain Robert Agnew*, dan teori *Generational Cohort* untuk memberi kerangka teori yang integratif bagi menjelaskan niat untuk kekal dalam kalangan pekerja eksekutif dalam organisasi pembuatan Malaysia.

Kajian ini telah menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan reka bentuk penyelidikan korelasi. Di samping itu, ia menggunakan kajian keratan rentas dengan menggunakan soal selidik sendiri dalam pengumpulan data. Sejumlah 456 pekerja eksekutif daripada organisasi pembuatan dalam tiga subsektor termasuk minyak sawit, elektrik dan elektronik, dan produk petroleum bertapis mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini.

Maklumbalas mereka dianalisis menggunakan analisis deskriptif dan AMOS-SEM. Hasil kajian menunjukkan tahap niat untuk kekal dalam organisasi adalah tinggi dalam kalangan responden. Keputusan daripada struktur model AMOS-SEM menunjukkan gaji dan ganjaran, serta kemajuan kerjaya (faktor yang berkait dengan amalan sumber manusia), dan konflik peranan serta kekaburan peranan (faktor yang berkait dengan pekerjaan) secara signifikan mempengaruhi niat pekerja eksekutif untuk kekal. Walau bagaimanapun, penilaian prestasi (faktor yang berkait dengan amalan sumber manusia) tidak menyumbang secara signifikan terhadap niat pekerja eksekutif untuk kekal. Selain itu, hasil kajian juga menunjukkan gaji dan ganjaran (faktor yang berkait dengan amalan sumber manusia), serta konflik peranan dan kekaburan peranan (faktor yang berkait dengan pekerjaan) disederhanakan oleh tenaga kerja pelbagai generasi. Majikan perlu sedar bahawa Generasi X sangat dipengaruhi oleh gaji dan ganjaran, dan kekaburan peranan, sementara Generasi Y sangat dipengaruhi oleh konflik peranan. Hasil kajian ini menekankan bahawa gaji dan ganjaran, kemajuan kerjaya, konflik peranan, dan kekaburan peranan adalah antara faktor utama yang perlu diberi keutamaan dalam amalan niat untuk kekal oleh pengamal pembangunan sumber manusia untuk memberi tumpuan kepada peningkatan niat untuk kekal di kalangan pekerja dalaman mereka. Meningkatkan strategi pengekalan pekerja dan meningkatkan niat untuk kekal di kalangan pekerja akan memberikan nilai tambah ke atas amalan pembangunan sumber manusia di Malaysia, khususnya, dalam organisasi pembuatan.



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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structures
AMOS-SEM	Analysis of Moment Structures - Structural Equation Modeling
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CB-SEM	Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling
CR	Construct Reliability
DF	Degrees of Freedom
GoF	Goodness-of-Fit
HRD	Human Resource Development
ITS	Intention to Stay
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, and significance of research. Assumptions, limitations, and operational definition of terms employed in this study are also presented.

#### Background of the Study

Promoting valuable employees' intention to stay has become an important strategy in organizations. Given the role of human resource in assisting organizations gain competitive advantages in challenging market environments, today's endeavor for motivating intention to stay among valuable employees is highly significant in organizations. In the human capital management concept, these employees possess skills, abilities, and experiences that have economic values for organizations (Kontoghiorghes & Frangou, 2009). Masibigiri and Nienaber (2011) stated that a considerable body of literature has increasingly focused on retaining employees who add values to organizations as either separately or as part of human resource management strategies.

Kim, Price, Mueller, and Watson (1996) stated that intention to stay is simply the converse of turnover intention. Ing, Hao, and Chih (2006) explained that turnover is the separation from a given employment relationship by employees who want to leave their employer and present organization. Based on Mobley (1982), and Steers and Mowdays (1981), intention to stay is significantly and negatively correlated to turnover. Allen and Bryant (2012) indicated that most turnover research focused on voluntary turnover, in which these are always valuable employees that organizations would prefer to retain. Retaining employees or employees' retention is about the existing human resource management, intention to stay, and their employment relationship with current organizations (Ing, Hao & Chih, 2006).

This study focuses mainly on the perspective of motivating employees' intention to stay although the construct of the study has already been used in turnover intention in previous studies. At the same time, efforts in retaining employees who have decided to leave are already too late (Allen & Bryant, 2012; Mosley & Hurley, 1999). Investigation into employees' intention to stay is thus more practical according to Thompson and Terpening (1983). They highlighted that since the existing employees can provide the appropriate information concerning their decision to stay, this enables the present study to generate another set of instant empirical results to help organizations in their effort to proactively retain their valuable employees. The results generated are perceived to be more helpful than relying on the perspectives of the now-former employees as the subjects of this study. Termination of employment cannot be taken as the absolute reason for leaving an organization due to the tendency of the

employees to fabricate information for various motives. This ambiguity may result in the difficulty to determine the voluntariness aspect of their resignation. Allen and Bryant (2012) suggested that these two different turnover decisions require different variables in measuring the impact between involuntary and voluntary turnovers. Hence, results generated based only on the perspectives of employees who have resigned may suffer from considerable inaccuracies.

Nonetheless, till now, the question on how far organizations have embarked on their efforts in increasing intention to stay among employees in the internal work pool when consistently facing valuable employees leaving the organizations is still unanswered.

### **Manufacturing Organizations in Malaysia**

In the Malaysia Third Industrial Master Plan (2006 – 2020), the nation aims to move into a position as a major manufacturing hub and service provider in the global supply chain. The Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011 – 2015) highlighted that Malaysia aspires to transform the economy by reforming the workforce, with a special emphasis on retaining valuable employees in organizations. Nonetheless, promoting and increasing valuable employees' intention to stay is a global issue, and more challenges for the emerging markets are to be anticipated (Devine & Syrett, 2014; Tymon Jr, Stumpf & Doh, 2010) in developing countries such as Malaysia.

In August 2008, McKinsey Malaysia and Company reported that valuable employees are a critical Malaysian corporate resource over the next 20 years (Tajuddin, Ali & Kamaruddin, 2014). Zheng, Kaur, and Wei (2009) also emphasized that the supply of high-performing human resources in specific capabilities may struggle to follow the growth of market demand. Commonly, it is easier for these valuable employees to land on new a job or find better employment in other places (Kontoghiorghes & Frangou, 2009).

Based on Malaysia Productivity Corporation (MPC, 2015), three manufacturing sub-sectors known as palm oil, electrical and electronics, and refined petroleum products are under the Economic Transformation Program (ETP) identified as National Key Economic Areas (NKEAs) and are expected to contribute to the economic growth of Malaysia.

Tang, Yahya, and Lim (2013) indicated that organizations in the manufacturing industry group have taken the role as the main contributor in the output of gross domestic product (GDP), ahead of agriculture and forestry. The manufacturing industry group has become the biggest contributor in the nation's export initiative. At the same time, the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM) reported that the voluntary turnover rate in Malaysia has increased 2.9 percent from 10.1 percent in 2009 to 13 percent in 2010 (Johari, Tan, Adnan, Yahya & Ahmad, 2012). They also

stated that FMM reported an average yearly turnover rate of 18.84 percent between July 2010 and June 2011.

Boudreau and Ramstad (2007) suggested that some positions are more critical than others. When these valuable employees are in the pivotal positions, their leaving is certainly a costly turnover. Kaye and Jordan-Evans (2000) highlighted that the replacement cost of valuable employees is 70 to 200 percent of their annual salary. Some scholars, for example, Lewis and Heckman (2006), remarked that valuable employees within the internal work pool, who possess high value in capability and the ability to successfully lead the change within the organization, are difficult to replace in a short period of time.

This study focuses on executive employees' intention to stay in the Malaysian manufacturing organizations. Joyce and Slocum (2012) highlighted that executives are the key assets in the organizations for their role in ensuring consistent work operation thus, creating significant organizational success. The nature is related to the responsibilities of executive position in dealing with both operations and management functions. This may include managing and developing other employees who report to them. Most importantly, executives are those who help increase the identified added values from employees' tendency to stay.

Therefore, the function of executive employees is central in implementing employers' commitment in offering development opportunities to other employees in different positions at lower levels. At the same time, executive employees are developing their management capabilities and are further promoted by the superiors in the upper management when they successfully demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities during their employment in the organizations. Growing organizations in the manufacturing industry group in Malaysia need to focus as much attention to managing and retaining key positions of executive employees as they do on any other corporate resources.

As Malaysian workforce diversity is rising with more young generations such as Generation Xers and Generation Yers in the present workforce, it is timely to expand these generations' awareness of the Malaysian manufacturing organizations. Given the fact that Baby Boomers will soon leave the workforce due to retirement age, a highlight on the future generations' loyalty with regard to intention to stay shall provide a better insight on the issue.

### **Future Generations in the Malaysian Workforce**

Generation Xers and Generation Yers will dominate the Malaysian workforce when Baby Boomers reach their retirement age very soon. In the generational labels by Tung and Comeau (2014), they are known as the Builders (*born in 1961 to 1981*) and the Developers (*born in 1982 to 2004*), respectively in the Malaysian context. The concept



of the Builders and the Developers was established based on Malaysian's socioeconomic transformation and demographic evolution which demonstrate local population growth being eventually influenced by urbanization, industrialization, and income rises.

According to the Western perspective, each generation is believed to possess different characteristics and has developed its own work-related values based on happenings that have shaped its lives (D'Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008; Jenkins, 2008; Crampton & Hodge, 2007; Giancola, 2006; Edmunds & Turner, 2005; Smola & Sutton, 2002). Previous studies found that Baby Boomers are less likely to change jobs and are significantly more satisfied with their current employment (Benson & Brown, 2011; Crampton & Hodge, 2007; Burke, 2004) while Generation Xers are less loyal to their employers and are more likely to change jobs compared to the former generation of employees (Festing & Schafer, 2014). Cordeniz (2002) identified that employees of Generation Xers change jobs, on average, once every three and a half years. Another study by Gursoy, Maier, and Chi (2008) also found the same trend among employees of Generation Yers who are known for placing less loyalty to their employers. In addition, Queiri, Wan Yusoff, and Dwaikat (2015) found that employees of Generation Yers in Malaysia change jobs, on average, once every one and a half years.

Besides that, Festing and Schafer (2014) stated that the same types of psychological contracts cannot fit into different generations in a comparable situation. Psychological contract may be defined as the mutual responsibilities relationship between an employee and an employer whereby each party holds different beliefs in regard to the existence and terms stated in the contract (Rousseau, 1990). She specified that the change in the psychological contract occurs due to different individual's perception. Previous studies determine that differences of generations' cohort of life experiences do influence work behaviors (Takase, Oba & Yamashita, 2008; Lavoie-Tremblay, O'Brien-Pallas, Gelinas, Desforjes & Marchionni, 2008; Jennings, 2000) and can help organizations increase employees' intention to stay when they consider differences of generational needs into their retaining efforts (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

### **Factors Influencing Intention to Stay in the Malaysian Manufacturing Organizations**

Intention to stay in the Malaysian manufacturing organizations can be explained both by theoretical and practical reasonings. Herzberg's Two-Factor theory, known as motivation-hygiene theory or dual-factor theory (Herzberg, 1968) was formulated to understand motivation at the workplace. Herzberg's Two-factor theory highlights the importance of understanding the workplace motivation as determined in Herzberg's study done on work-related motivations involving more than 200 Pittsburgh-based accountants and engineers (Baylor, 2010).



Herzberg's Two-Factor theory consists of two underlining factors known as hygiene factors and motivator factors. The boundaries between these two factors allowed this study to help manufacturing organizations understand deeply which factor is more influential in their efforts to motivate and increase their executive employees' intention to stay. Since employees' intention to stay in the workplace is motivated by the organizational level, this study selected three human resource practices that are anchored with the Herzberg's Two-Factor theory.

The selected three factors are known as pay and compensation, career advancement, and performance appraisal. All of these selected factors are the existing human resource practices in the organizational level to ensure that the specific efforts are effective in motivating their employees to achieve desired results. Thus, the three related factors were grouped as human resource practices in this study.

Besides that, General Strain theory developed by Robert Agnew (Broidy, 2001) explains the role conflict and role ambiguity relationship with employees' intention to stay. This theory views strain in terms of the feeling of dislike to particular conditions or circumstances by an individual which can cause frustration, depression, irritation, and aggressiveness in emotion-coping behaviors. All of these negative behaviors can result from role conflict and role ambiguity. These two stressor roles are the basis of dysfunctional workplace situation that negatively correlated to intention to stay. Employees' intention to stay increases when they have higher interest and a sense of meaningfulness in performing their roles.

Decreased employees' intention to stay fundamentally caused by these two stressor roles restricts them to perform well in every job dealing. This dysfunctional condition endangers employees' career growth and organizational success when there is high level of withdrawing behaviors among employees in the internal work pool. This theory is being deployed in the recent research of predicting intention to leave among police officers in South Korean (Shim, Jo & Hoover, 2015). Little is known about the capacity of this theory to explain the influence related to employees' intention to stay when the organizations rectify these two stressor roles effectively. Role conflict and role ambiguity were grouped as job-related factors since both roles are regarding jobs at the workplace.

Generational Cohort theory (D'Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008; Edmunds & Turner, 2005) emphasizes that values, attitudes, beliefs, and preferences of people within the cohort labels are imprinted for life by defining their historical events and experiences in social changes in society. Subsequently, it will largely guide the attitudes and behaviors of the members within the cohort labels as suggested by Giancola (2006). This study used Tung and Comeau's (2014) Malaysian Generational labels to help understand the moderation effects of multi-generational workforce between the selected independent variables (human resource practices and job-related factors) and intention to stay. In short, this theory allows the study to further understand the most influential factors on the generation, in particular cohort labels.

## Problem Statement

Issues related on the efforts in increasing employees' intention to stay have become more critical when younger generations such as Generation Xers (Festing & Schafer, 2014; Cordeniz, 2002) and Generation Yers (Gursoy, Maier & Chi, 2008) or Millennial's employees (Selden, Schimmoeller & Thompson, 2013) are likely to quit their jobs more frequently (D'Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008) compared to Baby Boomers (Benson & Brown, 2011; Crampton & Hodge, 2007; & Burke, 2004). Lim (2001) found that Malaysian employees are willing to remain in their current organizations only for less than three years.

Apart from that, high voluntary turnover rate in the Malaysian manufacturing organizations can destroy their competitiveness in the marketplace. The survey conducted by Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) on 143 manufacturing organizations across various sub-sectors between July 2010 and June 2011 reported a high average yearly turnover rate of executive employees (Goh, 2012). The highest turnover rate is 23.88 percent and the lowest is 7.08 percent. The second highest executive turnover rate is in the electrical and electronics manufacturing organizations with 23.04 percent. Frazee (1996), in the study of fast growth companies, found that 47 percent out of 434 chief executive officers (CEOs) declared that lack of valuable employees could limit the development of their companies.

The leaving of valuable employees in executive positions would surely continue to plague Malaysian manufacturing organizations. Scullion, Caliguiri, and Collings (2008) postulated that organizations are still facing difficulties in recruiting and retaining skilled human resources. Educated employees have been receiving low increment based on the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) in 2010 (Queiri, Wan Yusoff & Dwaikat, 2015), and this may possibly prompt them to become less loyal to their current employment. Career advancement starts to become an issue when employees have negative experiences concerning their capabilities to grow especially among performing employees (Rodriguez, 2008), and thus, they will search for new job opportunities. The ineffectiveness of performance appraisal process can also reduce the degree of trust and acceptance from the appraisees (Harrington & Lee, 2015; Kim & Rubianty, 2011). Studies done by Fakharyan, Jalilvand, Dini and Dehafarin (2012), and Ahmed, Hussain, Ahmed, and Akbar (2010) found that when employees are not satisfied with the results of their performance appraisal, their staying intention decreases.

In addition, role conflict and role ambiguity are significantly interrelated with each other (Udo, Guimaraes & Igbaria, 1997) as it is the basic concern for every employee in the workforce. These two role stressors are always able to drive employees into frustration and depression. Ultimately, they are prone to display retaliatory behaviors that greatly decrease their intention to stay within the present organizations (Shim, Jo & Hoover, 2015). These organizations will then face with costly business problems

when their employees leave for other organizations (Taylor, 2002). This is definitely a loss in human capital investment as some positions are more critical than others.

The visible costs may be derived from replacing these valuable employees that involve substantial amount of resources, time, and great efforts to develop them. The undetectable costs may begin from the increased workload of existing employees due to reorganization of resources which can lead to extreme work pressure, decrease in employees' morale, and finally, the failure to meet the desired results (Mobley, 1982). Similarly, as the managerial ranks retire, the challenges for organizations become more critical when there are no suitable successor human resources available for replacement.

Most of the studies have been conducted on the intention to leave (Tett & Meyer, 1993; Igbaria & Greenhaus, 1992; Kirschenbaum & Weisberg, 1990); however, only few have been conducted on intention to stay (Ing, Hao & Chih, 2006; Govaerts, Kyndt, Dochy & Baert, 2011; Naim & Lenkla, 2015; AbuAlRub & Nasrallah, 2017). Research on retaining valuable employees is still lacking (Armstrong-Stassen, Freeman, Cameron & Rajacich, 2015; Joseph, Sahu & Khan, 2014; Ghosh, Satyawadi, Joshi & Shadman, 2013; Kontoghiorghes & Frangou, 2009) especially in emerging markets (Devine & Syrett, 2014; Tymon Jr, Stumpf & Doh, 2010) such as Malaysia.

While it is essential to manage human resources in order to constantly influence them to stay with the organization, their preferences, needs, and expectations still require more thorough research works (Thunnissen, Boselie & Fruytier, 2013; Tansley, 2011) as research on individual employees belonging to different generations is scarce (Tarique & Schuler, 2010). Findings of a number of studies conducted on employees tend to generalize that all continuous employment strategies fit into the different generations in the workforce (Mitchell, Holtom & Lee, 2001).

Since there is a multi-generational workforce in Malaysia, the understanding of Generation Xers and Generation Yers needs to be strengthened to significantly help organizations determine the influential factors for them to continue to stay in the organizations. Selden, Schimmoeller, and Thompson (2013) emphasized that organizations' failure to identify differences between the different generations will result in having limited skilled human resources and low commitment among employees.

Generation cohort identity varies across countries. In particular, there is a difference in personality traits and attitudes between people raised in Japan and the United States (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Therefore, there is a research gap when the result of previous studies on employees with different generations based on Western contexts such as (Head, 2014; Johnson, 2014; Duvendack, 2010; Igel, 2005; Daves, 2004) rendered low relevance and applicability in the Asian societal contexts such as in Malaysia. Unrealistic judgments can happen when using the wrong generational

cohort labels, although the born year periods sometimes appear to be slightly different (Festing & Schafer, 2014).

This study explores employees' intention to stay using a combination of selected independent and moderator variables in the Malaysian context as the setting of the study. Data collected from 738 managers worldwide found that the relationship between employees and their on-going employment issues is different depending on the geographical regions (Castellano, 2013). The number of studies on employees' intention to stay in the Malaysian manufacturing organizations incorporating the selected moderator variable, however, is still limited.

### **Research Objectives**

The general objective of this study is to examine the predictors of intention to stay and the moderating roles of multi-generational workforce among executive employees in the Malaysian manufacturing organizations.

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- (i) To determine the levels of intention to stay among executive employees in the Malaysian manufacturing organizations.
- (ii) To determine the levels of human resource practices (pay and compensation, career advancement and performance appraisal) and job-related factors (role conflict and role ambiguity) among executive employees in the Malaysian manufacturing organizations.
- (iii) To determine the relationships between human resource practices (pay and compensation, career advancement and performance appraisal) and job-related factors (role conflict and role ambiguity), and intention to stay among executive employees in the Malaysian manufacturing organizations.
- (iv) To determine the factors contributing towards intention to stay among executive employees in the Malaysian manufacturing organizations.
- (v) To determine the moderating effect of multi-generational workforce on the relationships between human resource practices and job-related factors (independent variables), and intention to stay (dependent variable) among executive employees in the Malaysian manufacturing organizations.

### **Significance of the Research**

This study is significant since it will provide a complete understanding of intention to stay by employing multi-generational workforce as the moderating variable which impact the relationships between the expected research outcome and the predictors. This study is also complementary to previous studies in Malaysia that examined the



relationships in manufacturing organizations and focused less on the work values carried by younger generation cohorts, specifically Generation Xers and Generation Yers.

From the field of human resource development (HRD) in general, and employee retention in specific, the study is expected to generate rich perception as it integrates all the selected dimensions of independent and moderator variables within a single framework on intention to stay. In particular, this study incorporates theories and assumptions from Herzberg's two-factor theory, Robert Agnew's general strain theory and generational cohort theory (D'Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008; Edmunds & Turner, 2005; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Strauss & Howe, 1991; Ryder, 1965) in a single model.

A new theoretical framework emerged from this added value of multidisciplinary approach to the research of selected independent variables with moderating effects of the selected moderator variable that stimulate executive employees to stay in the Malaysian manufacturing organizations. Therefore, this has given another perspective to the HRD and employee retention strategies especially when the study is based on non-Western perspectives and away from the previous studies which were developed on job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006; Besich, 2005; Holtom & O'Neill, 2004; Lee, Mitchell, Sablinski, Burton & Holtom, 2004).

From a practical viewpoint, this study facilitates the management in the manufacturing organizations to focus on the efforts to fully utilize the human resource practices and job-related factors with the moderating effect of the results from a multi-generational workforce as a practical means to effectively facilitate and increase executive employees' intention to stay. The knowledge built based on the critical position in organizations may help the management create a more efficient and effective retaining strategy.

This research finding can help the Malaysian manufacturing organizations to retain a higher number of executive employees within their internal work pool. This may further help the Malaysian manufacturing organizations to become more productive in the competitive marketplace. Possibly, it will improve the country's global competitiveness ranking in accordance with the Malaysia Third Industrial Master Plan (2006 – 2020) that aims to move into a position as a major manufacturing hub and service provider in the global supply chain. Alternatively, the vision of the Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011 – 2015) would be realized when more valuable human resources are able to be retained in the organizations.

Overall, this study should be able to provide an understanding on the impact of the selected moderating effect on the relationships between intention to stay and the predictors, and how these identified values of differences will tie executive employees in the Malaysian manufacturing organizations. It can be suggested that the impact of

the direct effects on each of the independent variables towards intention to stay is small, and they produce another recent perceptions to the managements in the manufacturing organizations. When these relationships are moderated, they can prioritize the selected independent factors in their decision-making process in creating a competitive advantage strategy.

### **Assumptions**

A number of primary assumptions are taken into account in this study. The fundamental failure in increasing executive employees' intention to stay tends to drive into scarcity of valuable human resources in critical positions in the Malaysian manufacturing organizations. This can endanger its competitiveness and affect Malaysia's continuous economic growth in the long run since manufacturing organizations are the main contributors in the output of GDP (Tang, Yahya & Lim, 2013). This study is also aware of the main concern faced by the Malaysian manufacturing organizations which is the difficulties they face in increasing valuable human resources' staying intention as this will affect their ability to produce high technology and quality products and achieve the Malaysia Third Industrial Master Plan (2006 – 2020) which aims is to move into a position as a major manufacturing hub and service provider in the global supply chain.

The Western instrumentations used in this study are assumed to be suitable and applicable for use. Minor modifications of the instrumentations may be necessary in order to accommodate the settings of the study. The investigation of the relationships between the selected independent and moderating variables assumed in this study would potentially be helpful for the manufacturing organizations in their efforts to increase executive employees' intention to stay through a better understanding of the benefits of adopting human resource practices and job-related factors. Finally, this study assumes that the results of the moderator will provide another new perceptions on intention to stay to the managements in the Malaysian manufacturing organizations.

### **Limitations**

This study confines itself to the understanding of increasing employees' intention to stay among executive employees as valuable human resources in critical positions in the Malaysian manufacturing organizations only. Issues concerning employees' intention such as whether they are planning to remain or leave the current organization are sensitive, and employees may be concerned with their self-image of personal growth, career development, and promotion opportunities will get affected. Thus, not all employees who were the respondents in this study demonstrated willingness and honesty in answering all the questions due to issues related to confidentiality.

However, complete instructions and statement of confidential declaration assurance were given in each section of the questionnaires to gain a better trust from the respondents while ensuring greater confidence in the results. Moreover, to minimize the effect of sensitivity and assure high anonymity and confidentiality, this study used self-administered questionnaires in collecting the data. Spector (1992) indicated that surveys using self-reported data are usually accurate. Therefore, this method was adopted as the research design for this study.

Another limitation of this study is when the researcher found some other variables such as organizational citizenship behavior (Lam, Chen & Takeuchi, 2009), perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, and organizational commitment (Nasyira, Othman & Ghazali, 2014) from literature review to be significantly related to employees' continuous employment relationship. Nonetheless, this study is limited to investigating the selected independent and moderator variables. All of these variables were selected because of their significant contributions in explaining executive employees' intention to stay. At the same time, this study excluded several variables in order to limit the length of the questionnaire.

### **Definition of Terms**

The operational definitions in the terms used in this study are as follows:

**Intention to stay** refers to the employee's foreseeing to continue working in the present organizations and is fully aware of his or her decision after considering other attractive options available.

**Executive** is defined as a white-collar individual employee who is well-trained in his or her position level and is capable to perform his or her job. The position levels can range from executives, supervisors, and managers.

**Human resource practices** include the pay and compensation, career advancement, and performance appraisal. All of these related factors that are current practices by the organizations are operationalized as human resource practices in this study.

**Pay and compensation** refers to employees' financial and non-financial satisfaction and understanding of the remuneration system offered by the organizations in rewarding and recognizing their efforts accordingly.

**Career advancement** refers to the learning experiences related to individuals' work life as provided by organizations in terms of equal opportunities to all levels of employees for the purpose of fulfilling their growth and promotion needs. It is an organization's commitment to the employees.

**Performance appraisal** refers to the feedback communication and fair evaluation along with the process indicating individuals' happiness and appreciation regarding the performance appraisal system in the organization. It is to generate greater work improvement instead of becoming an appraiser channel to execute personal bias and punishment.

**Job-related factors** refer to role conflict and role ambiguity. Naturally, both roles take place when an employee performs his or her job. They are operationalized as job-related factors in this study.

**Role conflict** refers to the two or more roles being executed at the same time which can trigger increased feeling of stress when compliance to one demand leads to the failure to meet the other. Employees' stress increases if the work condition lacks manpower, resources, or materials to perform their jobs while at the same time they have a tendency to work on unnecessary tasks.

**Role ambiguity** refers to the multidimensional uncertainty of obtaining clear information about organization position, job, and instruction which leads to the decline in stressed employees' ability to perform situational experiences.

**Multi-generational workforce** refers to the Generation Xers (*born in 1961 to 1981*) and Generation Yers (*born in 1982 to 2004*) in the Malaysian workforce. It is operationalized based on the birth year of individual employee working in the present organization.

**Generation Xers** in the Malaysian workforce are also referred to as the Builders (*Pembina*) based on Malaysian Generational labels.

**Generation Yers** in the Malaysian workforce are also referred to as the Developers (*Pemaju*) based on Malaysian Generational labels.



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## LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

### Journal

Yong See Chen, Roziah Mohd Rasdi, Maimunah Ismail & Azizan Asmuni. (2017). Understanding the Influence of Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity on Intention to Stay, *International Journal of Information, Business and Management*, 9(4), 72-78.

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### Paper Presentation

Yong See Chen, Roziah Mohd Rasdi, Maimunah Ismail & Azizan Asmuni (26 - 27 July 2017). *Why Employees Stay? Does Gender Play a Role?* Paper presented at the International Conference on Educational Research and Practice 2017 (ICERP 2017) at The Everly, Putrajaya.

Yong See Chen & Roziah Mohd Rasdi (21 December 2014). *Talent Retention in Organization: A Review of Predictors and Moderator*. Paper presented at the Graduate Research in Education Seminar (GREduc 2014) at the Faculty of Educational Studies, UPM.



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