

A conceptualization of the role of organisational learning culture and organisational citizenship behaviour in reducing turnover intention

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Turnover intention, organisational learning culture, organisational citizenship behaviour, social exchange theory.

Abstract

Employees' turnover is a critical issue for many companies around the globe. This international phenomenon considered as one of the big obstacles for the organisations in achieving their strategic plans and gaining competitive advantages. Therefore, there is a big need to conduct more studies and investigations to provide a better understanding of the factors affecting this phenomenon in different settings and contexts of research, particularly in the non-western perspectives such as Malaysia who is facing big challenges toward the employees' turnover in many sectors. Thus, this paper aims to study the relationship between organisational learning culture (OLC), organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) (benefiting the individual OCB-I and benefiting the organisation OCB-O) and turnover intention (TI). Due to that, this study proposed framework to study the effect of organisational learning culture on turnover intention via the mediation role of organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB-I, OCB-O). In addition, the direct effect between the variables has been discussed. Hence this paper is expected to fill the research gap and contribute to the body of knowledge in this area of research.

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1. Introduction

Considering employees are the most valuable assets, most companies nowadays give lots of effort and capitalize vital resources to preserve them (Govaerts, Kynndt, Dochy, & Baert, 2011). The turnover of those employees will affect the achievement of the organisations' goals as well as the maintaining of the competitive advantage (Chib, 2016; Kim & Hyun, 2017; Lin, Tsai, & Mahatma, 2017). Therefore, there is a necessity for organisations to manage and preserve their workforce (Hamid, Reihaneh, & Siroos, 2016; Lin et al., 2017; Parasız, Koç, Ilgar, & Şahin, 2017). Moreover, employees' turnover considered as costly phenomena to the organisations, and this cost will appear in several faces such as termination, advertisements, recruitment, selection and training (Wang et al. 2015; Abid & Butt, 2017; Labrague, Gloe, McEnroe-Petitte, Tsaras, & Colet, 2018; Long, 2016; Pirgaip, & Tasdemir 2017; Parasız et al., 2017; Sumaira Khalid, Ch. Abdul Rehman, & Muqadas, 2018). In order to get better solutions to the problems related to high turnover rates, examining the fundamental reasons is very important to be considered by the organisations, which they have to ask a vital question, why some employees leave, and some remain? The motives may appear difficult and interconnected to the favourites and needs of the individuals. This study focuses on turnover intention instead of turnover (the actual behaviour) because the intention is the very strong predictor of turnover (prevention is better than cure) (Lin et al., 2017). One of the valid indicators of positive outcomes and performances is the employee producing extra role behaviour which is not included in the compensation system, which is called organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) (Deery, Rayton, Walsh, & Kinnie, 2017; Rurkkhum & Bartlett, 2017). Companies should ensure producing and maintaining a good level of this kind of behaviour (Deery et al., 2017; Patiraj & Shivani, 2017; Rurkkhum

& Bartlett, 2017; Kabir & Aftab 2017), as it has a very important effect on different organisational outcomes such as employees' turnover. The reasons behind having a low level of OCB and high intention of turnover among employees are assumed to be due to many factors.

Therefore, investigating these factors such as organisational learning culture which influences OCB and turnover intention is important. Furthermore, Saoula, Johari, and Bhatti (2016) in their proposed research on the mediating effect of OCB on the relationship between personality traits and turnover intention recommended that future researchers should engage factors such as organisational learning culture in similar models and contexts of research. Among the different known Organisational citizenship behaviour models, this study will use Williams and Anderson (1991) conceptualization of OCB that consists of two dimensions (OCB to benefit the individuals OCB-I and OCB to benefit the organisation OCB-O).

In Malaysia, one of the big and taught challenges and obstacles that facing development process in the human resource management is the continues increasing rates of turnover rates. It became a critical and crucial issue as it is costly and confusing which makes a dangerous warning to call the government for taking serious actions to prevent and defeat this phenomenon. According to study entitled "APAC Year on Year Attrition Rate (2009-2011)" conducted by a human capital consulting and outsourcing firm (AON Hewitt), in the Asia Pacific region, Malaysia was placed sixth in 2011 for employees' turnover with attrition rate of 15.9% (Langove, Isha, & Javaid, 2016). Moreover, according to the Malaysia Employers Federation (MEF), Information and Communication Technology (ICT) service sector in Malaysia is the most confronting with the challenge of turnover issue with turnover rate of more than 75% (Nasyira, Othman, & Ghazali, 2014), which is deeply the most affected than other sectors. Therefore, there is a need for more investigations to understand the reasons behind it in this context. The majority of the past studies on the effect of OLC on OCB and turnover intention have been conducted in the western contexts (developed countries) which have differences in national cultures compares to non-western contexts (developing countries) which make the finding not generalized and applicable to the different settings of research. Therefore, more investigations on the relationship between OLC, OCB and turnover intention will contribute to the body of knowledge and support the literature review in this filed and fill the research gap in Malaysia particularly and Asia and the world in general.

2. Review of the literature

2.1 Turnover intention (TI)

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 any plan by the employee to leave the organisation means turnover intention which considered being the direct precursor to the actual behaviour of quitting. Due to its damaging effects on the organisation, the phenomena of employees' turnover became the main interest of professionals, academicians, practitioners and organisations' managers who have spent enough attention for it (Abid & Butt, 2017; Muqadas, Rehman, & Aslam, 2017; Peterson, 2004; Sumaira Khalid et al., 2018; Ton & Huckman, 2008).

2.2 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 despredading its learning capability and supporting sustainable development and positive changes within the organisation to ensure the competitive advantage (Banerjee, Gupta, & Bates, 2017). In this respect, important cultural features are identified to describe the learning organisation.

2.3 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, Tetrick, Lynch, & Barksdale, 2006). There are recent empirical studies proven the negative relationship between OLC and turnover intention (Ahmed, Nawaz, Ali, & Islam, 2015; Islam, Ahmad, & Ahmed, 2013; Islam, Anwar, et al., 2012; Islam, Khan, Bukhari, Tuggle, & Chauvel, 2016; Islam, Khan, Aamir, & Ahmad, 2012; Mukhtar et al. 2017).

Contrariwise, some researchers revealed different results that OLC does not have a relationship with the turnover intention (Egan, Yang, & Bartlett, 2004; Emami, Moradi, Idrus, & Almutairi, 2012). These findings are inconsistent with the results of many previous studies, which mean that there are mix 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 more 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:

P1: Organisational learning culture has a significant negative effect on employees' turnover intention.

2.4 Organisational learning culture and organisational citizenship behaviour

Since the 90s, the concept of learning organisations became fashionable in the management field, the link between learning in organisational contexts and the positive outcomes of the organisation has been elevated (Rebelo & Gomes, 2017). Most of the past studies on the effect of organisational learning culture on organisational citizenship behaviour relate to the employees' perception of supportive organisational culture, organisational learning and how it can the organisation predict the employee's citizenship behaviour. This relationship was mostly constructed from the guidelines of social exchange theory. This theory suggests that when employees perceive the support from their organisations, they display citizenship behaviours. Although little empirical evidences are supporting the association between OLC and OCB, previous studies have proven this relationship (Islam, Anwar, et al., 2012; Islam et al., 2016; Jo & Joo, 2011). Contrariwise, there is a study by Mohammad Zakaria Kiaei et al. (2014) revealed that OLC does not have a significant relationship with OCB.

There are limited studies on the organisational learning culture as a clear and complete concept and its effect on organisational citizenship behaviour. The available findings on this relationship showed inconsistency in the results on the relationship between the variables. Furthermore, the main studies on the relationship between OLC and OCB were conducted in anon-western context. Very limited studies on the relationship between the aforementioned variables have been conducted in the Malaysian context, particularly in the service sector. Thus, more studies are needed to investigate the relationship between the variables and to fill the literature gap. Based on the above discussion, this study assumed that OLC has a significant and positive effect on OCB's two dimensions (OCB-I, OCB-O). Based on this assumption, the following proposition was formulated:

P2: Organisational learning culture has a positive effect on organisational citizenship behaviour (benefiting the individual OCB-I and benefiting the organisation OCB-O).

2.5 Organisational citizenship behaviour and turnover intention

According to Harrison, Newman, and Roth (2006), OCBs can be observed as one of the primary stages of the withdrawal process. This process encompasses a variety of behaviours, each reflecting a practice of intentional reaction by an employee to deal with a disagreeable work environment. Therefore OCB is considered as one of the behaviours that are related to the quitting process (Berry, Lelchook, & Clark, 2012). Recent empirical studies have shown the effectiveness of OCB in predicting employees' turnover intention and proven the negative association between OCB and turnover intention (Barzoki & Rezaei, 2017; Berry et al., 2012; Coyne & Ong, 2007; Iftikhar, Shahid, Shahab, Mobeen, & Qureshi, 2016; Li, Kim, & Zhao, 2017; Mazlum Çelik, 2013; Paillé & Grima, 2011; Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Blume,

2009). Contrariwise, some studies showed different results on the relationship between OCB and turnover intention (Koys, 2001; Lau, McLean, Lien, & Hsu, 2016; Paillé, 2013; Saraih, Aris, Sakdan, & Ahmad, 2017; Edeme & Nkalu 2016). For instance, Koys (2001) did not find proves to suggest that OCB is a predictor of employee turnover. Also, Paillé (2013) found that OCB is positively related to turnover intention, which was the unexpected result, and he suggested that more investigations are required to extend the understanding of the association between OCB and turnover intention. Similarly, Lau et al. (2016), indicated that self-rated OCB increased turnover intention positively, which means self-rated OCB did not influence turnover intention. Furthermore, Saraih et al. (2017), found that OCB does not have any association with turnover intention.

According to the findings of the previous studies on the effect of OCB on employees' turnover intention, mix results have been reported on the relationship between the two variables. Thus there is a need for more investigations on the effect of OCB on TI, particularly in the Malaysian Context. 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 OCB and turnover intention. Based on the above discussion, this study assumed that OCB' two dimensions (i.e., OCB-I, OCB-O) have a significant negative effect on employees' turnover intention. Accordingly, the following proposition was formulated:

P3. Organisational citizenship behaviour (benefiting the individual OCB-I and benefiting the organisation OCB-O) has a negative effect on employees' turnover intention.

2.6 Organisational citizenship behaviour as a mediator

OCB is a term includes any constructive and positive action done by the employees, based on their own willing, which help colleagues and support the organisation, supports co-workers and benefits the company (Chib, 2016; Patiraj & Shivani, 2017). For great deal of time, organisational citizenship behaviours (OCB) have taken the attention of both practitioners and academicians, because it is recognized as one of the serious issues that should be investigated in the area of organisational behaviour (Martinez & Podsakoff, 2016; Patiraj & Shivani, 2017; Podsakoff et al., 2009; Rurkkhum & Bartlett, 2017). Therefore, the organisations should be aware of the importance of OCB through engaging it in the performance appraisal. Furthermore, they should support it among employees and pay attention to this behaviour due to its importance in improving the effectiveness of the organisational operations and its vital role in decreasing the level of employee turnover (Khan & Rashid, 2012; Patiraj & Shivani, 2017). Hence, it is a significant issue of investigation for both researchers and practitioners to understand the working mechanism of OCB in the organisations (Patiraj & Shivani, 2017; Purba, Ostrom, Van Der Molen, & Born, 2015; Rurkkhum & Bartlett, 2017; Wang & Bowling, 2016). Yadav and Punia (2013) argued that, although investigating OCB has improved the body of knowledge in this field, OCB still a new area of research displaying issues related to new theory development (Rurkkhum & Bartlett, 2017). In addition, Islam, Ahmed, and Ahmad Ungku (2015) recommended OCB to be considered as a mediator in the future studies on turnover intention researches. Furthermore, Saoula and Johari (2016) in their proposed research framework on the mediating effect of OCB on the relationship between perceived organisational support and turnover intention recommended that future researchers should engage factors such as organisational learning culture in similar models and contexts of research. Additionally, the existing literature on the relationship between OLC and turnover intention showed mix results (Egan et al., 2004; Emami et al., 2012).

Even though the past literature highlighted reviews on the relationship between organisational learning culture and turnover intention, but the nature of the relation still unclear due to limited studies on the relationship between the variables. Thus there is a need for more reviews and investigations on the connection between the variables with the support of engaging other variables such as OCB in testing the effect as it is expected to play a significant role in mediating the relationship between OLC and turnover intention. As per the best knowledge of the researcher, in the literature of turnover intention in the ICT sector in Malaysia, OCB does not used before to mediate the relationship between OLC and turnover intention. Therefore, adding OCB as a mediator variable in the model of this study will fill the literature gap as proposed by the researchers in the literature. On this score, the present study argues that OCB will have a theoretical mediating effect in predicting and reducing turnover intention when organisational

learning culture is taken into account. This study assumed that OCB's two dimensions (i.e., OCB-I, OCB-O) play a role in mediating the effect of OLC on turnover intention. Based on this assumption, the following proposition was formulated:

P4. Organisational citizenship behaviour (benefiting the individual OCB-I and benefiting the organisation OCB-O) mediates the effect of organisational learning culture on turnover intention.

3. Proposed conceptual framework

Initial research framework (Figure 1) has been developed base on the extensive and comprehensive review of the literature and the support of social exchange theory (SET). This theory suggested that when employees perceive that their organisation supports them in term 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 show high level of citizenship behaviours and will be unlikely to intend to leave the organisation. It can be said that SET clearly explains the effects between organisational learning culture, organisational citizenship behaviour and turnover intention.

This research contributes to the body of knowledge via developing a conceptual framework (Figure 1) that hypothesized the direct effect of OLC on OCB's two dimensions (OCB-I, OCB-O) and turnover intention as well as the effect of OCB's two dimensions (OCB-I, OCB-O) on turnover intention. Furthermore, this research proposed the investigation of the mediations effect of OCB's two dimensions (OCB-I, OCB-O) on the relationship between OLC and turnover intention to bring more insights into these effects particularly in the Malaysian context.

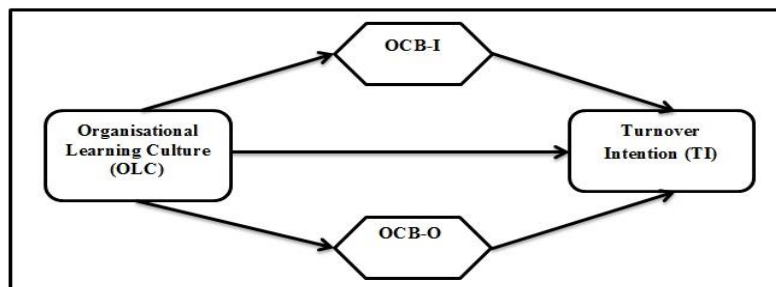


Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework

4. Methodology

This paper highlights a proposed framework on important factors affecting turnover intention. Quantitative approach has been proposed by the researcher to test the phenomenon. The population of this study is the full-time employees working in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) service sector in Klang Valley area (Malaysia), as this area contains the highest number of employees working in this sector (96%). Therefore the population of this study is 128,859 employees working in the ICT service sector in the Klang Valley area in Malaysia (Department of Statistic, 2014). Based on the sampling table suggested by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the number of samples required to represent this population (128,859 employees) is 382. The survey questionnaire will be distributed among the targeted employees to collect important data. The measurement will be adapted from existing literature. To test the proposed model, the Structural Equation Modeling -Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) will be employed to establish the validity and reliability of the measurements and to test the postulated hypothesis.

5. Conclusion

As aforementioned, this study is to investigate the effect of OLC on turnover intention, and the mediating role played by OCB in the relation. By providing empirical evidence on these perceptions, this research is expected to support managers, practitioners and decision makers in their organisations to identify the real sources of turnover intention. The past researchers have tried to link organisational learning culture with turnover intention, but they have ignored the role of OCB as a vital predictor of turnover intention in this relation. As the aims of the organisations are to prevent the turnover from happening. The better way of doing that is increasing the level of citizenship behaviour among

employees. Thus, the use of OCB in the relationship between organisational learning culture and turnover intention will help in the early prediction of turnover intention and provide a better understanding of the relations between the variables and fill the research gap raised by previous researchers.

6. Research limitations and directions for further studies

The current study acknowledged having some limitations. This research proposed a conceptual framework to investigate the effect of only one variable (OLC) on TI directly and indirectly through the mediation role of only one variable (OCB). Moreover, this study proposed to be examined in ICT service sector in Malaysia. Also this research proposed to use only one theory (SET) to be tested. Therefore, some recommendations for future research will be worthy. It is strongly recommended that future studies should test this research model empirically. Furthermore, future researchers are encouraged to consider adding other job outcomes such job embeddedness and employee engagement as important constructs in the retention strategies of companies. Moreover, future researchers should also consider any possible role of other mediators and moderator such as organisational justice and personality traits 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 and using other theories rather than SET.

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