

**THE AFFECT OF WORKPLACE STRESSOR
TOWARDS THE TURNOVER INTENTIONS
AMONG HOTEL EMPLOYEES IN KOTA
KINABALU**

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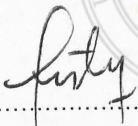
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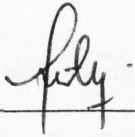
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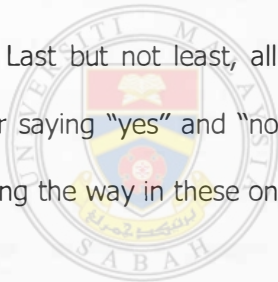
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ABSTRACT

THE AFFECT OF WORKPLACE STRESSOR TOWARDS THE TURNOVER INTENTIONS AMONG HOTEL EMPLOYEES IN KOTA KINABALU

This study aims to examine the relationship between the workplace stressor towards the turnover intentions among hotel employees in Kota Kinabalu. The workplace stressors are the role conflict, role ambiguity, intra-group conflict, organizational culture and organizational politics with gender as the moderator. The study took place in star rated hotels in the city of Kota Kinabalu. Data collection were done among operational hotel employees which are from food and beverage department, front office department and house keeping department by handing out 310 sets of questionnaire. The data was then analyzed using the multiple regressions and hierarchical regressions to test the relationship between the workplace stressors and the turnover intentions among the operational hotel employees. Results showed that there was little effect of workplace stressors towards the turnover intentions among the hotel employees with only two independent variables was having a significant relationship. The two variables were intra-group conflict and organizational culture. Meanwhile, gender also moderates the relationship between workplace stressors and the turnover intentions. The research provides a better understanding for employers to understand the workplace stressor effects towards the turnover intentions of their employees especially in the hotel industry. The finding is useful guide to develop strategies to overcome workplace stressors among hotel employees especially those who directly engaged with the guests.

Abstrak

Kajian mengenai stress di tempat kerja dan kesannya terhadap niat untuk berhenti kerja seseorang itu masih lagi jarang dilakukan di Malaysia. Oleh itu, kajian ini akan mengupas lebih lanjut tahap stress di tempat kerja ke atas niat untuk berhenti kerja bagi seseorang pekerja dengan menggunakan jantina seseorang pekerja itu sebagai penyederhana dalam kajian ini. Stress di tempat kerja terdiri daripada konflik peranan, konflik ketidak pastian, konflik dalam kumpulan kerja, budaya organisasi dan politik organisasi berdasarkan tiga peringkat iaitu peringkat individu, kumpulan dan organisasi. Kajian ini dilakukan di bandar Kota Kinabalu terhadap hotel-hotel bertaraf satu hingga lima bintang. Data-data bagi kajian ini pula diambil dari pekerja-pekerja hotel dari bahagian operasi sahaja. Terdapat sebanyak 310 orang responden terlibat dalam kajian ini dan data diperolehi melalui boring kaji selidik yang diagihkan kepada pekerja-pekerja hotel tersebut. Data yang dikumpulkan dalam kajian ini dianalisis menggunakan perisian SPSS versi 17.0. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa terdapat hubungan yang lemah antara konflik kumpulan dan budaya organisasi terhadap niat untuk berhenti kerja di kalangan pekerja hotel. Kajian ini diharapkan dapat membantu untuk memahami stress di tempat kerja dan hubungannya terhadap niat untuk berhenti bekerja di kalangan pekerja di hotel.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TITLE	
DECLARATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ABSTRAK	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	
1.0: Overview	1
1.1: Introduction to Stress in Hotel Industry	3
1.2: Problem Statement	4
1.3: Research Questions	6
1.4: Objectives of the Study	7
1.5: Scope of Study	7
1.6: Significance of the Study	7
1.7: Key Terms Definition	9
1.7.1: Turnover Intentions	9
1.7.2: Workplace Stressor	9
1.7.3: Role Conflict	9

1.7.4: Role Ambiguity	9
1.7.5: Intra-group Conflict	9
1.7.6: Organizational Culture	9
1.7.7: Organizational Politic	10
1.8: Summary	10
 CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.0: Introduction	11
2.1: Turnover Intentions	12
2.2: Role Conflict	13
2.3: Role Ambiguity	15
2.4: Intra-group Conflict	17
2.5: Organizational Culture	18
2.6: Organizational Politics	21
2.7: Gender	23
2.8: Summary	23
 CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
3.0: Introduction	35
3.1: Research Framework	36
3.2: Research Hypotheses	37
3.3: Population	38
3.4: Sample	38
3.4.1: List and Total Number of hotel employees in Kota Kinabalu	39

3.4.2: Hotels Participations	40
3.5: Data Collection	40
3.6: Measures	41
3.7: Data Analysis	42
3.8: Summary	43

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.0: Introduction	44
4.1: Respondents Profile	44
4.2: Response Rate	44
4.3: Demographic Data	45
4.3.1: Gender	45
4.4: Reliability Test	45
4.5: Descriptive Statistic	46
4.5.1: Descriptive Statistic of Variables	47
4.6: Hypotheses Testing	48
4.7: Summary of Findings	52

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.0: Introduction	54
5.1: Discussion	54
5.2: Recommendation	57
5.3: Limitations and Contribution of the Study	59
5.4: Suggestion for Future Research	61

5.5: Conclusion	62
REFERENCE	64
APPENDICES	76



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LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	Page
3.1: The Total of Population of Operational Employees in Star Rated Hotel, Kota Kinabalu.	39
3.2: The Total Number of participate hotels involved in this study	40
3.3: Data Analysis Methods	43
4.1: Response Rate	44
4.2: Gender Percentage	45
4.3: Reliability Test	45
4.4: Descriptive Statistics	47
4.5: Multiple Regressions	48
4.6: Hierarchical Regressions	51
4.7: Summary of Findings.	52

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	Page
3.1: The Framework of the affect of workplace stressor towards turnover intentions among hotel employees in Kota Kinabalu.	36

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

Stress has become an important issue nowadays. It is the fact of life which everyone had experienced throughout their lives in any kind of situations. According to Skeat (1958), the word stress derived from Latin words *stringere* which means draw tight. It has become a serious matter of discussion among workers, managers, parents, students and even the professionals. Due to stress, it is believed that it has a great impact on peoples' lives. Therefore, it is important to have an understanding on what causes stress, the outcomes of stress and how can people reduce the stress.

There are various definitions stated for stress and most of the definition can be grouped into three categories which are the stimulus definition, response definition and stimulus-response definition (Ivancevich and Matteson, 1980). The stimulus definition simply explain stress as the forces acting by individual that resulted in response of strain; while the response definition views stress as the psychological response an individual displays due to an environmental stimulus and the stimulus-response definition views stress as the consequence of the interaction between an environmental stimulus and the personal response of the individual.

As noted by Webster (2002), stress can be described as constrain and pressure which occur when an individual failed to reach their satisfactory level in achieving something that they do and this can contribute to the cause of diseases like heart attack, mental illness and others. Besides that, according to Selye (1976), stress is a reaction towards demands that occur in the surrounding either it is the nature of job, personal achievement and many other stressors. Meanwhile, Levi (1972) stated that stress can occur in both pleasant and unpleasant situation and only come out with negative impact when the situation is uncontrollable, at which the person failed to adapt with the situation, thus contribute to the cause of health problem. In this situation, stress person will become unsettled and lost for.

Many have realized that stress also occur at the workplace as people spent most of their time on working to earn for their living and stress at workplace may have occurred due to the nature of job itself as well as the environment of the job (Faulkner and Patiar, 1997). At workplace, employees have their own commitment towards their job and also the organization's goals. They are also given the opportunity for their career advancement together with the financial security which highly depends on the performance of the employees themselves (Hart and Wearing, 1995; Kelley, 1993; Near et al., 1983). Moreover, the workplace environments which involve social relationship also contribute to the stress among employees when there are communication barriers and also misunderstanding among peers and the management (Faulkner and Patiar, 1997). This will definitely affect how the employees' abilities to efficiently communicate and cope with the existing environment as well as the organization's culture.

Occupational stress is also known as job stress, workplace stress and stress in organizations. As stated by Beehr and Newman (1978), occupational stress is the situation at which the work-related factors interact with the worker to change, either interrupt or enhance his or her psychological or physiological conditions such that the individual's mind and body are enforced to diverge from normal functioning. This means that stress can give either the good impact which will develop the job performance of an employee or the negative impact which can demoralize the employees to perform better in their working condition within an organization.

Work stress has also becoming pervasive problems not only to the employees, but to the manager or the employers as well, who face the same situation as all the activities revolve around both parties. There are many factors which contribute to the causes of stress in a workplace especially in the vast changing economic world (Porter, Kraft and Claycomb, 2003). The rapid changing of technologies, customers' expectation, maintaining service standard, working long-hour and many other work-related factors contribute to stress among employees at work places (Jones, Chanko, Rangarajan and Roberts, 2007). This can lead to various harmful impacts like decreased motivation, lowered job performance level, mental and physical illness which will lead to poor judgments and lowered overall organizations performance (Menon and Akhilesh, 1994).

1.1 Introduction to Workplace Stress in Hotel industry

The growth of tourism industry has contributed to the great emerging complex organizations which involve in the tourism development, marketing tourism product, production and services to serve the needs of the tourists during their travel which is also known as the hospitality industry (Choy, Gee and Makens, 1997). Hospitality industry serves the tourists who are the guests with accommodation, food and beverage, transportation and many other services. According to Reulan, Choudry and Fage (1985), hospitality is a process of transferring the product like meal and bed, transferring the behavior of employees and the environment of restaurant or hotel. Meanwhile, Hepple, Kipps and Thomson (1990) reviewed hospitality as a "feeling at home" at which the service providers offer the tourists, who are also the guests, almost similar environment to the origin country of the tourists at their holiday destination. The products/services offered to the guest must include a friendly staff, admission procedure, information about daily routine, plain cooking and menu choice, privacy, comfortable furniture, recreational facilities and attractive décor to make the guests feel at home even when they are away from their home country (Hepple *et.al.*, (1990).

Arguably, the nature of job in the hotel industry contributes to the cause of stress to the employees in the hotel. Although hotel's employees engage with the relax and pleasure services, they are indeed facing stress and burnout due to the demands of pleasant and courteous services as well as the poor management in the area of communication and receiving feedbacks from the managers (Lang, 1991; Wood, 1992). These resulted in high turnover rate among hotel's employees which will make it harder for the employers to maintain the quality of their hotel's services. Moreover, Chappell and Henry (1991) suggested that the issue of workplace stress in the hotel should be addressed effectively because the stress issue will not be rectified. It is also important for the employers to improve their management practices as well as the working conditions and provide educational opportunities to the employees (Chappell and Henry, 1991). This means that a proper training and education should be provided to the employees so that they will be able to effectively cope with the job stress and thus decrease the labor turnover rate among hotel's employees.

Furthermore, stresses occur among hotel's employees especially during the peak season like school holidays, events/festive seasons and other occasions. The immediacy of the service demands make the hotel's operations difficult to be handled during busy period because usually the hotel will keep a minimum level of labor due to high turnover rate and this will leaves the staff working under stress because of influx of guests. Besides that, Varca (1999) stated that in the fast moving nature of service environment, it is hard to carry on a thorough supervision on the employees' performance. Therefore, employers tend to look at the employees fault at that moment rather than assessing the overall's performance of the employees. This will eventually leaves the employees in a stressful condition at work.

1.2 Problem Statement

The problem statement in this study is "What are the workplace stressors that affect the turnover intentions among hotel employees?" This problem statement derived from the issues discussed below based on previous literature.

Working in the hotel industry requires the employees to deal with various types of guest and a very demanding job which can cause stress among employees especially those who work in the operational department like the front desk employees, restaurant employees and the room service employees. Pavesic and Brymer (1990) have found out that most of the talented hospitality employees leave the industry due to several factors that include stress from the demanding duties. Many studies on stress have been done in terms of decreasing staff morale and low productivity, but less is focused on the hospitality industry especially in the hotel business (Ross, 1995). The study of stress originally done with people working in human services and education (Cordes and Daugherty, 1993) such like in the airlines industry, health service and teaching. Therefore, to understand the issues of stress in hotel industry, further research must be done especially in the developing countries like Malaysia and specifically in the state of Sabah.

The previous studies of workplace stress have contributed in identifying the sources of stress in general such as the five major stress categories by Cooper *et.al* (1988) and Hedge *et.al* (1992) which consists of; factors intrinsic to the job, role in the organization, video display terminal stress, relationships at work and career

development. However, the factors of stress might vary among people especially those who work in hotel industry. The study will specifically help in identifying the sources of stress among employees in the hotel industry. Besides, Manshor (2000) has stated that the study on stress in the Malaysian working environment is limited and it is necessary to work on the study to help in improving the stress management programs in Malaysian organizations as well as in the hotel organizations in Malaysia.

Besides, Mullins (1992) has contended that hotel production and services are essential to the quality standard. This makes the employees stressful because they have to deliver the service beyond the guests' expectations and at the same time maintaining the quality of services which highly portrays the image of the hotel. So, it is important for the employers to help their employees in the operational departments to cope with stress and reduce their stress level at workplace. Moreover, work stress is now regarded by many researchers as one of the most vital issues that the management has to handle (Ross, 1997). Ross (1997) also stated that stress has the potential to affect the performance of all levels of staff due to the prolonged exposure to stress. The affect of stress also found to produce serious dysfunctional effects in a person that can affect job performance and the overall organization effectiveness (Cooper and Payne, 1988). Therefore, careful and well-planned implementation strategies have to be produced in order to help reduce stress among employees especially the operational employees of hotel organization.

Apart from that, not all hotels' manager or the hotel management really come out with suitable coping strategies that can help the operational employees reduce stress and cope with it to maintain their service quality. According to Rowley and Purcell (2001), ineffective coping strategies for stress will lead to negative consumption of foods especially among chefs where they consume foods with high level of sugar, drinking alcohol, fat and caffeine contain and also drug abuse. Stress and burnout is a serious matter that need attention among managers as poor coping strategies will also result the employees to be in ignorance of stress and develop smoking habit which is very bad for employees health (Murray-Gibbons and Gibbons, 2007).

Besides that, experiencing extensive burnout due to work-related stress among hotel employees is not good for health. Burnout is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that includes emotional, physical and cognitive exhaustion, depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment (Hock, 1988; Maslach and Jackson, 1984; Pines and Aronson, 1981). Burnout affects the employees where the individual holds negative and cynical attitudes towards their colleague, and or towards those individuals they deliver the service. It somehow makes them feels that their works have no longer give any contributions to the hotel and personally would feel that they are not able to perform the job as required.

Stress while working in the hospitality industry also results in high worker turnover rate which contributes to the high labor cost in the hotel (Ross, 1995). It is believed that the nature of hotel's job requires the employees especially those in the operational departments to serve the hotel guests who come from different countries, have different cultures, and have demands that sometimes troublesome to the employees. Besides, Mullins (1992) has contended that the hotel production and services are essential to the quality standard. This makes the employees stressful because they have to deliver the service beyond the guests' expectation and at the same time maintaining the quality of service which highly portrays the image of the hotel. So, it is important for employers to help those employees in the operational department to cope and reduce the stress at the working place.

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions for the study are very important in order to help the investigation stay in the correct direction in reaching the objectives of the study. The following research questions should be answered in order to reach the objectives in the research.

1. To what extent workplace stressor affect the turnover intentions among employees in hotel?
2. Does gender moderate the relationship between workplace stressors and turnover intentions?

1.4 Objective of the study

From the above literature, this study is conducted to achieve few objectives from the point of view of a hotel manager to help to find the suitable solution in reducing stress among his or her employees especially among the operational staff in the hotel. The study also done try to find out the cause of stress experienced by the employees. This main objective is followed by the intermediate objectives as below:

1. To investigate the relationship of workplace stressors on the turnover intentions among hotel employees.
2. To investigate the moderating effect of gender in the relationship between workplace stressors and turnover intentions among hotel employees.

1.5 Scope of Study

The scope of study of this research paper includes the operational employees in the hotel industry. The operational employees in the hotel are consists of the housekeeping department, food and beverage department and the front office department. Besides, the scope of study in the research paper covers the star rated hotel within the Kota Kinabalu area as the city has become one of the major tourist attractions in Malaysia. Even though hotel business consist of activities like relaxing and pleasure, Lang (1991) and Woods (1992) had stated that such working environment do contain stressors for workers who in the industry. In the research paper also, random employees were distributed questionnaire to carry out the research and come out with a significant result.

1.6 Significance of the study

Nowadays, the hospitality industry has become more professional as it becomes a major international business (Ingram, 1999). As a large industry, the hospitality practice has become more complex and widespread nowadays because the world is changing as well as the customers profile that set up the trends in the hotel service. It has touched the lives of everyone in all over the world and has developed over time from a domestic to a commercial activity.

Due to the dynamic changes in today's economics, a service industry like hotel are facing such a great challenge to maintain the quality of their service to stay competitive in the industry itself. Moreover, the only factors that differentiate the products offered by hotels are the quality of their service. Therefore, it is very clear those employees in the hotel need to directly engage to the guest to deliver the service and it involve emotional wise from the employees. Jobs that emotionally demanding such as dealing with difficult customers at all time can contribute to the high level of stress to the employees and it will lead the employees to experience burnout (Hochschild, 2003). Working in the hotel also believes to make the employees to experience more stress than experience (Williams, 2003).

By conducting this study, it is looking forward to help the hotel manager or the hotel management to foreseen the workplace stressors and identifying the most suitable stress management approach that can be use in order to help the employees especially operational employees of the hotel to cope with stress and be able to maintain the job performance. It is belief that, many parties will beneficial from this study as below:

1. The study can be use by the hotel management team to help their employees coping with their stress. This is very important as the operational employees of the hotel because product offered by the hotel really depends on the service given by the employees to the hotel guests.
2. Besides, the study can help the hotel management to identify the weaknesses of their employees and try to overcome the possible stressor from the hotel environment.
3. The study may also help the hotel management to provide a much better facilities in the hotel for their employees to make them more efficient and effective in their service to the hotel guest.
4. The study also can help the hotel management to identify advancement training for their employees in order to maintain their job performance as well as the overall organization's performance.

1.7 Key Terms Definition

1.7.1 Turnover Intentions

- based on various definitions by scholars, it is best to describe turnover intentions as the thought of employees to voluntarily leaving the organization (Whitman, 1999).

1.7.2 Workplace Stressor

- also known as occupational stress or job stress which can be defined as situation where the work-related factors interact with the employees to change, either interrupt or enhance his or her psychological conditions (Beehr and Newman, 1978).

1.7.3 Role Conflict

- Employees perceives that there is incompatibility between expectations and demands from various workgroups and conflicting role to be carried out by individual employees (Harris et. al., 2006)

1.7.4 Role Ambiguity

- Employees lacking of knowledge about job function and unclear expectations of superior which important to perform the job (Rizzo et. al., 1970).

1.7.5 Intra-group Conflict

- Disagreement between group members on job related matter like aims and how things should be done (Abdulla, 2005).

1.7.6 Organizational Culture

- Learned product from group experience where the group is definable with an important history, the ideas, beliefs and attitudes towards organizational goals and process (Wilson, 2001).

1.7.7 Organizational Politics

- Power game, control tactics or social influence which purposely designs to maximize self interest (Ferris et. al., 1989).

1.8 Summary

This chapter presents the introduction about the title of the study itself which is 'The Affect of Workplace Stressor towards the turnover intentions among hotel employees in Kota Kinabalu'. This chapter explained the problem statements that emphasized on the needs to study this subject. It explained the significance of the study which is beneficial to take into considerations as employees are valuable to the organizations and there is a need to reduce turnover among hotel employees. This chapter also briefly explained the operational key terms that are used in this study for better understanding. Besides, this chapter also includes the main objectives and the research questions which lead the study to find useful results.



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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the literature review of the dependent and the independent variables of the study which are the turnover intentions and workplace stressor that include role conflict, role ambiguity, intra-group conflict, organizational culture and organizational politic. The purpose of this chapter is to review the previous literature on which the variables used is related and how it impact one another. Besides, this chapter discusses more in-depth understanding on each variables use in the study and the relationship of the variables to the subject of the study which is the turnover intentions.

As noted by LaGreca (1985), stress is the mental and physical condition that results from a perceived threat or demand that cannot be dealt with readily. For example when facing a potential to get retention from the employer, the employees would feel stress because they are not ready to live the organization and worried about the future. Other researchers also have defined stress as a general term applied to the pressure people feel in life (Mathur *et. al.*, 2007). The researchers believe that when pressure begins to build up it can cause damage on ones emotions such like the feeling of anxiety, damaging how the brain processes like making the wrong decision in job situation and would effect the physical condition of a person like tiredness. Meanwhile, Statt (2004) stated that stress has two opposite effect on individuals which include positive and the negative effect. This is broader explain by Statt (2004) where the acceptable amount of stress can lead individual to improve performance while the excessive amount of stress would lead to physical and mental illness towards the individuals.

Meanwhile, stressor can be defined as the external or internal force that brings about the stress (LaGreca, 1985). Cooper (2000) also stated that stressors are those actions, situations, or events that place special demands on a person. This means, stressor is what cause the stress on individuals. Referring to the framework above, stressors in this study will examine only the individual level stressors which are the role conflict and role ambiguity as both stressors has been generally used to

explain sources of workplace stress (Jackson and Schuler, 1985; Tubre and Collins, 2000) as cited by Tuten and Neidermeyer (2002). These stressors will be used to study the turnover intentions among employees in the hotel industry.

2.1 Turnover Intentions

As describe earlier in the previous chapter, the employees' intention to leave is the primary interest for this study. The study examined how stress factor can influence the intentions of hotel employees to leave their organization. Employees' turnover is a well known issue and it is critically important issue to managers (Siong, et.al. 2006). This is due to the high cost involved in the recruitment process like induction and training of new staff. Turnover also affect the organizations productivity because the lack of continuity and organization stability of workforce. In the hospitality industry like hotel, employees plays important role in producing service to the hotel guests. The tourism and hospitality industry is heavily dependent on human involvement because of the intensive labor characteristic (Arasli et.al., 2006)

Turnover intentions can be define as the thoughts of employee regarding voluntarily leaving the organization (Whitman, 1999). Usually, turnover refers to the separation between the individual employees from the organization (Lee and Liu, 2006). Besides, turnover behavior has been widely define in many study and for the sake of present study, turnover will be define as voluntary, individually chosen exit behavior or movement across the organizational boundaries (Bluedorn, 1978; Dalton and Todor, 1979; Jackofsky, 1984; Price, 1977) as cited in McBey and Karakowsky (2001). The issue of employees' turnover has become recent subject of much research (Mitchell et al., 2001; Lambert, 2000; Trevor, 2001) and most of these research has try to study the factors associated with the turnover culture in various industry which can help managers to institute measure to reduce it (Siong et al., 2006). Some of the factors that have been examined are the relation of stress, job performance and job satisfaction towards employees' turnover intentions. However, there are still less study on the matter in different scope like hospitality industry and mostly research were done in retail industry as well as the manufacturing industry.

It is not surprising that many researchers or business study concentrated on the issue of employees' turnover intentions which indeed have produces and

proposed many models of workforce turnover. It is one of the most discuss issue in organizational behavior which main concern is to reduce stress and reduce the turnover culture among hotel employees. By having a severe turnover rate, service industry like hotel will have decreased experienced employees which is vital to maintain the service quality that the hotel offers just like the previous study done by Firth et al. (2004) of retail store setting and study done by Siong et al. (2006) of call centre setting. There are also models of workforce turnover proposed over the recent years by many researchers (e.g. Armstrong-Stassen et al., 1994; Igbaria and Greenhaus, 1992; Koeske and Koeske, 1993; Tinker and Moore, 2001). These models proposed different variables to study the turnover intentions such like the job performance, job satisfaction, stress, organizational commitment, supervisor support and along with some other variables as the moderator like the demographic factors (Siong, 2006).

Besides, Mobley (1977) has stated that negative evaluations of employees' present job decrease job satisfaction which then resulted in the increasing turnover intentions among employees. Based on the model of stress by Cooper (2000), one of the outcomes of stress at work is turnover which falls under the behavioral outcomes of individual employees. The reasons for the turnover intention might vary towards individual employees as they are different in the background like gender, age, marital status and many other factors related.

2.2 Role Conflict

Role conflict can be referred as when the employees perceives incompatibility between expectations and demands from various workgroups (Harris et.al., 2006). Besides, role conflict also relates to the perceptions of an individual employee that the expectations of two or more members of their role set are unable to get along (Singh, 1998). It is frequently found in the business setting where in this study will be the hotel business setting which involve the operational employees.

One of the early study about role conflict also explain that it occurs when conflicting role are required to be carried out by an individual member within an organization. The member experience role conflict and cannot make proper judgments when faced with a mutually exclusive expectation and confused about