

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH
BORANG PENGESAHAN STATUS TESIS

JADUAL : **PENYIASATAN FAKTOR-FAKTOR YANG MENYUMBANG KEPADA PENGEKALAN PEKERJA UNTUK WARGA EKSEKUTIF DI SABAH ELECTRICITY SDN. BHD. (SESB)**

IJAZAH : **MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**

SESI PENGAJIAN : **2009 - 2012**

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**THE INVESTIGATION OF MOTIVATING
FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTES TO STAFF
RETENTION OF EXECUTIVE LEVEL IN
SABAH ELECTRICITY SDN. BHD. (SESB)**

ALPHONSO JULIAN TUINING

**SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH
2012**

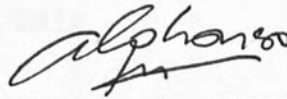


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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the material in this dissertation is my own except for quotations, excerpts, equations, summaries and references, which have been duly acknowledged.

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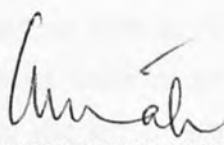


CERTIFICATION

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like convey my deepest gratitude to my academic supervisors, Puan Roslinah Mahmud and Associate Professor Dr. Hjh. Arsiah Hj. Bahron, my Research Methodology Lecturer, Mr. Rosle @ Awang Mohidin as well as the Postgraduate Coordinator, Dr. Stephen L. Sondoh Jr., for their precious counsels as well as time in affording me the much needed guidance and help during the period of this research undertaking. With their kind advice and encouragement I was able to complete this dissertation which is the culmination of my research project.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to the staff and management of Sabah Electricity Sdn. Bhd. for allowing me to conduct this study. Special dedication goes to the Manager of the HR Planning Department, Miss Saira Datali, as well as the General Manager of Human Resource Division, Mr. Osman Hassan, for their backing, collaboration and forbearance during the course of my project. I am also much obliged for the aid provided to me by the staff of HR Planning Department, Miss Fazirah Ismail, Mr. Refdin Ulak, Puan Sanial Haseng and Puan Sitalinah Tahir for their valuable feedback and assistance during the development and dissemination of the survey forms. My sincere appreciation also goes to Mr. Abdul Aziz Patail and Puan Esther Masulah for their priceless insights and knowledge sharing in carrying out the research project. I would also like to raise my salute of gratefulness to all the respondents of the study, the executives of SESB; for without their invaluable input in honestly answering the questionnaires, this research would not have been able to yield any kind of meaningful result.

Last but not least, my most intimate affection and acknowledgement go to my darling wife, Lisa, adorable kids (Joshua, Moira, Theodore, Noah and Liam) including my cherished mom and dad for their enduring patience, moral support and inspiration from the beginning of my Masters Study right up to the conclusion of this research project.



ABSTRACT

THE INVESTIGATION OF MOTIVATING FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTES TO STAFF RETENTION OF EXECUTIVE LEVEL IN SABAH ELECTRICITY SDN. BHD. (SESB)

This paper is to identify the motivating factors contributing towards employee retention who are working in a privatized Malaysian power utility company (SESB) based in the state of Sabah as well as the neighboring Federal Territory of Labuan. A survey method was implemented. The survey questionnaire consisted of two parts, respondents' personal information that is to be obtained through Part A while in Part B, they were asked to evaluate three (identified earlier by the researcher) motivating factors in terms of human resource management (HRM) practices (person-organization fit; remuneration and recognition; training and development) on their perceived effectiveness in retaining employees. The motivating factors were compiled from the existing literature and refined through consultation with academicians who are working closely with the author as supervisor or lecturer. The findings were an ordered set of motivating factors (HRM practices) relevant to employees working in SESB based on the level of significance proven via statistical analysis. The study found out that remuneration and recognition was negligible for SESB's case and this is expected to provide useful guidelines to managers in developing further the employee retention programs or policies.



ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal-pasti faktor-faktor motivasi yang menyumbang ke arah pengendalian terhadap kakitangan yang bekerja di Sabah Electricity Sdb. Bhd. (SESB) yang mempunyai operasi di negeri Sabah serta Wilayah Persekutuan Labuan. Satu kaedah tinjauan telah dilaksanakan. Soal selidik telah digunakan yang terbahagi kepada dua bahagian: maklumat peribadi responden yang diperolehi melalui Bahagian A dan Bahagian B, di mana para responden telah diminta untuk menilai tiga faktor-faktor motivasi (yang telah dikenal-pasti terlebih dahulu oleh pengkaji) dari segi amalan-amalan pihak pengurusan sumber manusia (PSM) (iaitu kesesuaian organisasi-seseorang; ganjaran dan pengiktirafan; latihan dan pembangunan) berdasarkan kepada tanggapan mereka mengenai tahap keberkesanan di dalam usaha pengendalian pekerja. Faktor-faktor motivasi tersebut telah dikenal-pasti melalui rujukan kesusasteraan yang sedia ada dan diperbaiki melalui perundingan dengan ahli-ahli akademik yang bekerja rapat dengan penulis sebagai penyelia atau pensyarah. Penemuan yang dihasilkan telah dikumpulkan sebagai satu set yang berkenaan dengan faktor-faktor motivasi (amalan PSM) yang berkait-rapat dengan warga kerja SESB. Ini adalah berdasarkan kepada tahap kepentingan yang telah dibuktikan melalui penganalisan secara statistik. Kajian ini telah mendapati bahawa ganjaran dan pengiktirafan tidak mempengaruhi niat pergantian maka ia dijangka dapat menyumbang kepada pembangunan garis-garis panduan yang boleh diguna-pakai oleh pihak pengurusan dan pada masa yang sama terhadap pembentukan program atau polisi mengenai pengendalian pekerja.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-------------|
| TITLE | i |
| DECLARATION | ii |
| CERTIFICATION | iii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENT | iv |
| ABSTRACT | v |
| <i>ABSTRAK</i> | vi |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | vii |
| LIST OF TABLES | x |
| LIST OF FIGURES | xi |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS | xii |
| LIST OF APPENDICES | xiii |
| | |
| CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.1 Overview | 1 |
| 1.2 Problem Statement | 1 |
| 1.3 Research Questions | 4 |
| 1.4 Research Objectives | 5 |
| 1.5 Scope of Study | 6 |
| 1.6 Significance of the Study | 6 |
| 1.7 Definition of Terms | 7 |
| 1.7.1 Motivation | 7 |
| 1.7.2 Human Resource Management Practices | 7 |
| a. Person-Organization Fit | 7 |
| b. Remuneration and Recognition | 7 |
| c. Training and Development | 8 |
| 1.7.3 Employee Retention | 8 |
| 1.7.4 Intention to Stay | 8 |
| 1.8 Organization of the Chapters | 9 |
| 1.9 Summary | 10 |
| | |
| CHAPTER 2: COMPANY BACKGROUND | 11 |



| | | |
|--|---|-----------|
| 2.1 | Introduction | 11 |
| 2.2 | SESB's Business | 11 |
| | 2.2.1 The Business Description | 11 |
| | 2.2.2 Vision, Mission and Shared Values | 14 |
| | 2.2.3 Core Business and Supporting Division | 16 |
| 2.3 | Conclusion | 17 |
| CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW | | 18 |
| 3.1 | Introduction | 18 |
| 3.2 | Definition of Concepts | 18 |
| | 3.2.1 Motivation Theories | 18 |
| | a. Maslow Hierarchy of Needs Theory | 19 |
| | b. Herzberg's Dual Factor Theory | 19 |
| | c. Expectancy Theory | 19 |
| | d. Equity Theory | 20 |
| | 3.2.2 Human Resource Management (HRM) Practices | 21 |
| | 3.2.3 Person-Organization Fit | 22 |
| | 3.2.4 Remuneration and Recognition | 24 |
| | 3.2.5 Training and Development | 25 |
| | 3.2.6 Employee Retention | 26 |
| | 3.2.7 Intention to Stay | 30 |
| 3.3 | Previous Research | 32 |
| 3.4 | Conclusion | 34 |
| CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY | | 35 |
| 4.1 | Introduction | 35 |
| 4.2 | Research Framework | 35 |
| 4.3 | Definition of Variables | 36 |
| | 4.3.1 Dependent Variables | 36 |
| | 4.3.2 Independent Variables | 36 |
| | a. Person-Organization Fit | 37 |
| | b. Remuneration and Recognition | 37 |
| | c. Training and Development | 37 |
| 4.4 | Hypotheses | 37 |
| 4.5 | Type of Study | 38 |
| 4.6 | Unit of Analysis | 38 |
| 4.7 | Instrument | 39 |

| | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| 4.7.1 | Measurement for Demographics | 40 |
| 4.7.2 | Measurement for HRM Practices | 40 |
| 4.7.3 | Measurement for Intention to Stay | 41 |
| 4.8 | Population of Samples | 42 |
| 4.9 | Data Collection Method | 43 |
| 4.10 | Data Analysis | 44 |
| 4.11 | Conclusion | 46 |
| CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS | | 47 |
| 5.1 | Introduction | 47 |
| 5.2 | Profile of Respondents | 47 |
| 5.3 | Reliability of Measures | 49 |
| 5.4 | Validity of Constructs | 50 |
| 5.5 | Descriptive Analysis | 52 |
| 5.6 | Correlation Analysis | 53 |
| 5.7 | Regression Analysis | 54 |
| 5.8 | Summary of Findings | 55 |
| CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION | | 56 |
| 6.1 | Introduction | 56 |
| 6.2 | Discussion of Findings | 56 |
| 6.3 | Implication of the Study | 59 |
| 6.4 | Limitations of the Study | 60 |
| 6.5 | Suggestion for Future Research | 61 |
| 6.6 | Conclusion | 62 |
| REFERENCES | | 63 |
| APPENDIX A – QUESTIONNAIRE SAMPLE | | 70 |
| APPENDIX B – RESPONDENTS’ PROFILE | | 75 |
| APPENDIX C – RELIABILITY ANALYSIS RESULT | | 84 |
| APPENDIX D – FACTOR ANALYSIS RESULT | | 88 |
| APPENDIX E – DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS | | 94 |
| APPENDIX F – REGRESSION ANALYSIS RESULT | | 95 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | Page |
|---|-------------|
| Table 4.1: Distribution of measurement variables | 40 |
| Table 4.2: Operational Definition and Items for independent variables | 41 |
| Table 4.3: Operational Definition and Items for dependent variable | 42 |
| Table 5.1: Profile of respondents | 49 |
| Table 5.2: Summary of Reliability Tests | 50 |
| Table 5.3: PAF Analysis of HRM practices | 51 |
| Table 5.4: Segmentation of Mean scores on a 4-point Likert scale | 52 |
| Table 5.5: Summary of Means and Standard Deviations | 53 |
| Table 5.6: Summary of Correlations (POF, RR, TD & ITS) | 54 |
| Table 5.7: Regression results between HRM Practices on ITS | 55 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | Page |
|--|-------------|
| Figure 2.1: Sabah Grid Interconnection and Power Stations Location | 13 |
| Figure 2.2: SESB's Shared Values (plus the respective guiding principles). | 15 |
| Figure 3.1: Effective Employee Retention Practices Used by Organizations | 29 |
| Figure 4.1: Employee Retention Model | 36 |

LIST OF ABRREVIATIONS

| | |
|------|--|
| GLCs | Government Linked Companies |
| HR | Human Resource |
| HRM | Human Resource Management |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| IPPs | Independent Power Producers |
| ITS | Intention to Stay |
| POF | Person-Organization Fit |
| RR | Remuneration and Recognition |
| SESB | Sabah Electricity Sdn. Bhd. |
| TD | Training and Development |
| TNB | Tenaga Nasional Berhad |
| USD | United States Dollar |

LIST OF APPENDICES

| | Page |
|---|-------------|
| Appendix A: Questionnaire Sample | 70 |
| Appendix B: Respondents' Profile | 75 |
| Appendix C: Reliability Analysis Result | 84 |
| Appendix D: Factor Analysis Result | 88 |
| Appendix E: Descriptive Statistics | 94 |
| Appendix F: Regression Analysis Result | 95 |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter offers an introduction to the issues being identified in this study and as to what are the general problem area and its specifics that will be examined. A clarification of the problem is also made here as to why a study on it is required as well as its potential worth to organizations and the academia for future research work.

1.2 Problem Statement

One of the important occupations of management is to encourage employees to work toward organizational goals and so the presence of motivation is essential in order to achieve such endeavors. Motivating factors are basically a kind of incentives that an organization can use to great effect to retain its employees. Presently, globalization impact on organizations' economic situation necessitates the need to become ever more competitive than before thus is making it even more pertinent to retain employees as long as possible. Employees who are especially high in skills or knowledge (or even both) can be the critical sources of the firm's competitive advantage. Through them the firm is able to gain the confidence to meet the progressively increasing demands and expectations of its customers. Companies' understanding of employees' motivation will become a vital part towards formulating effective retention strategies.



Employees nowadays are also more mobile than before, again thanks to the globalization phenomena, so companies may be vulnerable to substantial employee turnover. According to Fitz-enz (1997) the turnover cost for exempt employees is very expensive. It is estimated on average to be approximately USD \$1 million for every ten executives who are in the managerial and professional category. How this comes about is through the combination of direct and indirect costs where an executive's turnover cost is translated into one to two years' worth of pay and benefits. Too much focus has been made in numerous studies in examining the negative side of employee turnover, which is intention to leave, but it is in the opinion of the author that employers should be more concerned about the retention efforts, that is intention to stay.

The trends of employees who regularly move from one organization to another can pose a serious problem to an organization in terms of rising management costs. As an example, SESB's human resource management functions are divided into six core areas of practices, namely personnel management, training and development, compensation and benefits, internal affairs, human resource planning and finally administration and welfare. One can then imagine just how much the amount of money, time and effort needed to be spent in order to replace staffs that have left the company. The cycle typically restarts from recruiting, advertising, screening, interviewing, hiring, assigning placement, training and the list goes on but also not to forget the resulting detriment of employee turnover like reduced productivity, loss of valuable organizational experience and knowledge (Mobley, 1982). In line with Ramlall (2004), motivation theories can be linked to retention of workers by utilizing human resource management practices like recruitment and selection, compensation and benefits, career and planning

development, training and development as well as supervision and management. This in effect makes human resource management practices the motivating factors that utilized motivation theories. As a consequence it can be said that if these practices are properly made use of, they can instigate employee retention to come about.

Relating to SESB, there is close to none on the availability of any kind of retention strategy being employed in the organization. One exception however exist in the case of bonding those executives who are sent for training or development courses that cost the company a lot of money in terms of the training and examination fees as well as the expenses for travelling, subsistence and accommodation. This exercise requires the affected employees to sign a legally binding agreement that upon completion of their training or development course, are required to work for SESB for a number of years corresponding to the expenses incurred by the company or else a full reimbursement by the employee will be the alternative outcome. This example, although a major deterrent for employee on rampant exploitation of company resources as well as turnover, demonstrates only a portion of a wide-ranging employee retention tactic and is only applicable in specific scenarios. However according to some researchers, organizations that rely on a variety of human resource management practices can lead to better overall retention (Beck, 2001; Clarke, 2001).

Taking into account of the situation where SESB is lacking of a solid retention policy, the author decided to investigate whether SESB's current human resource management practices indeed have any influence on the perception of its executives towards their intention to stay. Identifying those human resource management

practices would be more suitable as the initial stage before embarking on the more extensive work of developing SESB's employee retention strategy. This research project eventually came to the resolution of using human resource management practices such as person-organization fit, remuneration and recognition as well as training and development. The decision to do so was because these variables can be readily perceived and measured internally by the employees of SESB due to the fact that there are existing departmental units (personnel management, training and development as well as compensation and benefits) that were well established since the privatization of SESB fourteen years ago in 1998. The other three remaining management functions (internal affairs, human resource planning as well as administration and welfare), are only less than three years old and so the researcher decided to exclude them from the study in an effort to reduce partiality or biasness in the respondents' input. Thus the three chosen practices will go nicely hand in hand with intention to stay in producing the end result of this study, as to what are the employees' opinion on the predictors (human resource management practices), their relationship between the outcome (intention to stay) as well as which one of those practices strongly influence such intention.

1.3 Research Questions

As such, the following question will try to answer the predicament stated previously with the following key issues from the standpoint of intention to stay that are caused by well-established human resource management practices applied in SESB while at the same time are closely linked to certain motivation theories: -

- a. What is the employees' perception of the human resource management practices that exist in SESB, namely person-organization fit, remuneration and recognition as well as training and development?

- b. Are there any relationships between the three human resource management practices, specifically person-organization fit, remuneration and recognition as well as training and development towards employees' intention to stay in the company?

1.4 Research Objectives

This study aimed to firstly ascertain and then narrow down the motivating factors in SESB from the viewpoint of human resource management practices. Consequently person-organization fit, remuneration and recognition as well as training and development were distinctively identified and targeted as the independent variables of the employee retention research where the dependent variable is intention to stay. The author chose to conduct the research in SESB's organization due to the ease of accessibility for being an employee there himself as well as the realization that employee retention in SESB is not yet well recognized. Therefore this study will first concentrate on finding out the executive workers' perception on SESB's human resource practices, namely person-organization fit, remuneration and recognition as well as training and development. Next, the research will try to find out if there are any relationships between those human resources practices mentioned before with the executives' intention to stay.

1.5 Scope of Study

While endeavoring to find solutions to the research question, the primary purpose of this investigation was to evaluate the factors that motivate employees to stay in a firm, in this research scope, within SESB's organization and its corresponding human resource management practices. The research was conducted through analysis of information gathered from a selected group of employees in SESB for a more manageable sample population thus making this dissertation mainly a quantitative exercise. The research instrument applied used a survey form or more commonly known as questionnaire as the primary source of data collection. The author was very fortunate to have the opportunity of obtaining an extensive co-operation from SESB's Human Resource Division in distributing the questionnaires to the target population of the research as well as gaining support in terms of consultation and feedback during the questionnaire's development prior to its dissemination.

1.6 Significance of the Study

In the current economic situation organizations are struggling to retain their best employees while facing overwhelming competition. The findings that this study hope to unearth will shed a light on or at the very least suggest that certain variables on human resource management practices which are critical in influencing intention to stay, that is, the employee's decision to remain in an organization. The identification of such variables would enable firms to re-evaluate or update their human resource policies that would ultimately results in a better staff retention as well as a decreased employee turnover through strategic intervention.

1.7 Definition of Terms

This section briefly introduces the key terms associated with this study to facilitate the readers' understanding of it.

1.7.1 Motivation

Enthusiasm of the staff is linked to the mental activity that produces excitement, direction and persistence of voluntary but goal-oriented activities (Bartol & Martin, 1998).

1.7.2 Human Resource Management Practices

Human resource management relates to the organization-wide undertakings involving all of its policies, practices and systems to carry out the human resource aspect of management so these practices are the culmination of all the administrative undertakings from the investment of staffing, managing performance, training, development, compensation and benefits and so on (Boxal & Purcell, 2003; Dessler, 2008; Noe, 2008).

a. Person-Organization Fit

Person-organization fit describes how people are chosen for a certain job based on their matching personal traits as well as how their personal values are compatible to the organization's own set of values (Abbott, White & Charles, 2005; Edwards, 1991).

b. Remuneration and Recognition

Remuneration is a compensation system given to employees as long as they are still working in the company but recognition on the other

is the non-monetary version or known as reward (Dessler, 2008; Stewart & Brown, 2009).

c. Training and Development

Training is what the company gives to aid its employees in learning skills that are needed to perform their jobs through various formal and informal means while development is more focused on improving the future performance in terms of knowledge, attitude or skills (Dessler, 2008; Noe, 2008).

1.7.3 Employee Retention

Employee retention is a deliberate action by the organization to hold on to its employees on a long term basis via engaging environment and so on (Chaminade, 2007).

1.7.4 Intention to Stay

Intention to stay is concerning the worker's awareness and premeditated readiness to working with the company (Hewitt, 2004; Tett and Meyer, 1993).

Motivation theory by itself has little practical use for organization but connecting them to human resource management practices like what Ramlall (2004) cleverly did, this research is thus able to gain insights on the motivating factors that can influence employee retention. This study in the end narrowed down the human resource practices into three things, which are, person-organization fit, remuneration and recognition as well as training and development. For SESB, the author found out

that there is a lack of a sound retention plan and so decided to refocus the study in finding out about employees' perception on their turnover intention but explicitly only on intention to stay along with the three human resource management practices mentioned previously. The scrutinizing of intention to stay along with person-organization fit, remuneration and recognition as well as training and development will serve as the preliminary guideline to developing a future and more all-encompassing employee retention policy for SESB.

1.8 Organization of the Chapters

Chapter 1 introduces to the reader the issues this study aimed to explore and why it was important to do so as well as its potential contribution.

Chapter 2 will illustrate briefly the company background of SESB to the audience in terms of its early history, business operations, vision, mission statement, shared values as well as its direction.

Chapter 3 has elaborations on the literatures reviewed and used by other academic researchers in other studies regarding to motivation theories, employee retention, intention to stay and human resource management practices.

Chapter 4 is where methods used for the research is talked about which also includes how sampling of the data population, selection of sample size and types, how and where the questionnaires used in the study came about as well as all the necessary procedures needed to be conducted prior to data collection via a survey.

Chapter 5 will be the most interesting portion of this project where all the performed analysis are discussed in detail as well as a synopsis on the collected data, demographic profile of the respondents and the data's goodness value. A result brief is also present for all questions used in the investigation.

The final part of this study, Chapter 6 will comprise of a discussion on the research findings and lastly some recommendations and conclusions based on the findings of this research.

1.9 Summary

This chapter discussed various aspect of the study from the problem statement, purpose and significance of the study that are the fundamental blocks for a successful preparation and completion of the research project. The next chapter will go into the company background of SESB.

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