

**ANTECEDENTS OF INTENTION TO LEAVE
AMONG ACADEMIA IN UNIVERSITI
MALAYSIA SABAH**

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for the Degree of Master of Business
Administration**

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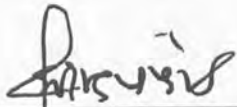
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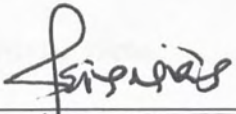
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DECLARATION

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

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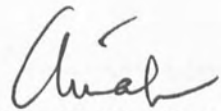
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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the impact of human resource practice on the intention to leave among academia in Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. This research identifies five salient independent variables, namely workload satisfaction, job autonomy, promotion opportunities, salary satisfaction, and external extrinsic rewards that were found to have significant impact on intention to leave from previous studies. Review on the literature also recognizes the impact of moderating variables towards academia intention to leave, which is gender, career age, and rank. An additional moderating variable, namely, state of origin was included based on the observation of the researcher. Survey done on 121 permanent lecturers in the university discovered that all the internal independent factors were found to have no significant relationship with intention to leave, while the only pull factor, external extrinsic rewards was proven to be positively significant with the intention to leave. Also in this research, no moderation effect of gender, career age, rank and state of origin were found in this relationship. The result of this study provides important insight to the management of the university pertaining to issues to improving their delivery system in term of employee compensation strategy.



ABSTRAK

JUDUL: SEBAB-SEBAB KEPADA NIAT UNTUK MENINGGALKAN UNIVERSITI DI KALANGAN AHLI AKADEMIK DI UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

Kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengetahui kesan amalan sumber manusia ke atas niat untuk meninggalkan pekerjaan di kalangan pensyarah di Universiti Malaysia Sabah. Kajian ini telah mengenalpasti lima pembolehubah tidakbebas yang penting, iaitu kepuasan beban kerja, autonomi tugas, peluang kenaikan pangkat, kepuasan saraan, dan faedah saraan dan faedah oleh pekerjaan luar, yang telah didapati mempunyai impak yang positif terhadap niat untuk meninggalkan pekerjaan daripada kajian terdahulu. Kajian literatur juga mendapati terdapat kesan pembolehubah moderator terhadap niat untuk meninggalkan pekerjaan, iaitu, jantina, umur karier, dan pangkat. Satu moderator tambahan lagi telah dimasukkan, iaitu negeri asal, berdasarkan pemerhatian penyelidik. Kajian yang telah dijalankan ke atas 121 pensyarah tetap di universiti ini telah mendapati bahawa semua pembolehubah tidakbebas dalaman tidak mempunyai kesan yang signifikan terhadap niat untuk meninggalkan pekerjaan, dan hanya satu-satunya faktor penarik, faedah saraan dan faedah oleh pekerjaan luar didapati mempunyaikesan yang positif terhadap niat untuk meninggalkan pekerjaan. Kajian ini juga mendapati pembolehubah moderator, jantina, usia karier, pangkat dan negeri asal, tidak mempunyai kesan terhadap niat untuk meninggalkan pekerjaan. Hasil kajian ini amat penting kepada pengurusan universiti untuk meningkatkan sistem penyampaian dari segi strategi saraan.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MARA	-	Majlis Amanah Rakyat
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for Social Science
UMS	-	Universiti Malaysia Sabah
VK	-	Malaysia Civil Service grade for Civil Service Primary Post in academic line
VU	-	Malaysia Civil Service grade for Civil Service Primary Post in management line



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Turnover had been the issue of concern in Human Resource departments. Due to the heightened competition among organization and the recruitment budgets under pressure, it is imperative to retain employees. Turnover involved direct and indirect costs to the organization, namely, the total cost of acquiring new employee, expenditure required to train new employee, cost generated by the process of socialization of the newcomer, excess over-time pay to substitutes, financial value of loss of production/service, and the effect on morale of the remaining employee should a good performer left (Tziner and Birati, 1996).

Specific research on academia had highlighted similar distress on employee turnover. Faculty turnover has been a practical and research concern in higher education due to the costly monetary and academic consequences that the institutions have to bear (Zhou and Volkwein, 2004; Ambrose et. al., 2005; and, Xu, 2008). In a research on faculty turnover in the United States done by Rosser (2004), it was pointed out that high turnover rate has a strong undesirable consequences including lost return on previous investment, disruption of research and teaching programs, discontinuity in student mentoring, as well as the monetary cost of recruiting new employee.

In the specific Malaysian context, it was reported that higher education institutions have suffered from a high labor turnover amongst academic staff for many years (Morris et. al., 2004). One of the significant causes of high staff turnover, as reflected by Morris et. al. is low employee commitment, and pay and promotions as the underlying key factors.



1.2 Brief Profile of Universiti Malaysia Sabah

Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) was established on 24th November 1994. It is the ninth university in Malaysia, with its main campus located in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, and a branch campus in Federal Territory of Labuan. Currently it has about 14,500 undergraduates and post-graduates students studying in both campuses.

The university employed 1415 employees, in which 687 are academicians. The primary tasks of academicians in Universiti Malaysia Sabah are teaching, research, community services and some of them hold an additional administration and management position. The number of academic staff based on their placement in the university is illustrated in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Number of Academician in Universiti Malaysia Sabah

School/Institute/Centre	No. of Staff
School of Science and Technology	67
Borneo Marine Research Institute	15
Tropical Biology and Conservation Research Institute	20
Biotechnology Research Institute	10
School of Engineering and Information Technology	90
School of Food Science and Nutrition	19
School of Sustainable Agriculture	15
School of International Tropical Forestry	30
School of Medicine	52
School of Business and Economics	81
School of Social Sciences	53
School of Psychology and Social Work	29
School of Education and Social Development	34
School of Art Studies	32
School of Informatics Science Labuan	33
School of International Business and Finance Labuan	37
Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning	70
Total	687

Source: Human Resource Division, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, 10 April 2008.

The academicians of the university are divided into different ranks of position. The number of academic staff based on their rank and status of employment is depicted in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Number of Academician in Universiti Malaysia Sabah according to Academic Ranks and Status of Employment

Ranks	Status		Total
	Permanent	Contract/Temporary	
Professor	18	17	35
Associate Professor	27	28	55
Senior Lecturer	55	26	81
Lecturer	382	31	413
Language Teacher	4	11	15
Nursing Instructor	0	1	1
Tutor	0	87	87
	486	201	687

Source: Human Resource Division, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, 10 April 2008.

1.3 Problem Statement

Retaining employees has been the objective of the Human Resource department due to the additional costs the organization has to bear in the event of employee turnover. In the case of the higher learning institution, the impact of employee turnover goes beyond the incremental cost of the human resource department but the greatest impact is on the teaching and learning aspects, which is the achievement of its students.

Universiti Malaysia Sabah, as the tagline connotes, strives to excel in its students' achievement and its research products. It must compete with other 19 public universities nationwide and more than 20 other private universities and colleges.

As the researcher is working in the Human Resource Division in the institution concerned, the trend of intention to leave and the actual turnover among academicians is constantly observed. The record in the Human Resource Division shows a

gradual increase in the number of turnover among permanent academician as depicted in Table 1.3. In 2005, 1.20% academicians of this category had voluntarily left the university, 2.51% left in 2006, and 3.04% in 2007. Between January and March 2008, 1.03% had already left the University.

Table 1.3: Number of Academician Leaving Universiti Malaysia Sabah between 2005 and 2008

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008
No. Academician	416	438	461	486
Compulsory Separation	11	12	12	0
Voluntarily Separation	5	11	14	5

Source: Human Resource Division, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, 10 April 2008.

1.4 Research Questions

The study aims to understand the prevalent factors leading to the intention to leave among academia in Universiti Malaysia Sabah. Accordingly, three main research questions are examined in the research:

1. What is/are the antecedent(s) that influence(s) the intention to leave among academia in the university?;
2. To what extent the independent variables (workload satisfaction, job autonomy, promotion opportunities, salary satisfaction, and external extrinsic rewards) influence the dependent variable (intention to leave)?
3. To what extent moderators (gender, career age, rank, and origin) affect the relationship between the independent variables (workload satisfaction, job autonomy, promotion opportunities, salary satisfaction, and external extrinsic rewards) influence the dependent variable (intention to leave)?

1.5 Research Objectives

The study aims to understand the prevalent factors leading to the intention to leave among academia in Universiti Malaysia Sabah. Accordingly, four main research questions are examined in the research:

1. To identify the prominent antecedent(s) that influence(s) the intention to leave among academia in Universiti Malaysia Sabah;
2. To investigate the relationship between the independent variables (workload satisfaction, job autonomy, promotion opportunities, salary satisfaction, and external extrinsic rewards) and the intention to leave among academia in Universiti Malaysia Sabah;
3. To determine whether the moderating variables, gender, career age, rank, and origin will affect the relationship between workload satisfaction, job autonomy, promotion opportunities, salary satisfaction, and external extrinsic rewards, and the intention to leave among academia in Universiti Malaysia Sabah; and,
4. To make recommendations on improving the worklife in the university in order to retain good academia.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study will look into the most salient factor predicting the turnover intention among academia. The research is set in Universiti Malaysia Sabah. Population for the research will involve the permanent academicians attached with the university.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The research intends to contribute to help the management of Universiti Malaysia Sabah to improve its human resource practice, particularly in terms of retaining good academia.

It is the aspiration of the researcher that the data collected in the research could help the human resource managers in the university find some useful solutions to impact factors on the intention to leave, thus retain good performers and reduce the turnover rate. By retaining the good performers, the university could continue to increase its productivity in the teaching and learning activities, as well as enriching research capability of the university academia.

1.8 Definitions of Key Concepts

For the purpose of this study, the following terms need to be clarified as to avoid confusion and on what it mean in the context of this study.

1.8.1 Intention to leave

Intention to leave is defined as the academia's intent to leave their current position for another position in either an academic or nonacademic setting (Smart, 1990).

1.8.2 Academia

Employees who are paid for their services (Price, 2001) for teaching in the higher education were referred by different term by researchers in their studies. Some are referred as faculty member (e.g., Cohen, 1974; Smart, 1990; Matier, 1990; Gmelch, 1986; Dee et. al., 2000; Zhou and Volkwein, 2004; and Xu, 2008), academe (Gmelch, 1984), Academics (Barnes et. al., 1998; and Morris et. al., 2004), university teacher (Oshagbemi, 1997), and university staff (Manger and Eikeland, 1990). For the purpose of this research, the term academia and faculty member will be used and refers to the same meaning.

1.8.3 Academic Workload

Academic workload includes teaching and advising student, research, academic and community service (Johnsrud and Heck, 1998), and administrative and management job (Oshagbemi, 2000). Committee and service works refers to the number and percentage of time an academician contributes in service activities the academician participates in as a chair or committee member (Rosser, 2004) in the university (Rosser, 2004).

1.8.4 Job Autonomy

Job autonomy is described as the freedom of faculty member "to determine what and how they teach, the topic and method of their research, and their nature of their service" (Johnsrud and Heck, 1998, p. 540).

1.8.5 Promotion Opportunities

Promotion is defined as upward movements in an organization's hierarchy (Madsker and Berger, 1990, cited in Bagdadli et. al. 2006)

1.8.6 Career Age

The term career age in this study refers to the length of service. Length of service as the number of years an individual has spent working (Oshagbemi, 2000). The term career age had been adapted from Smart (1990) and for the purpose of this study, it is referred as the average number of experience as academicians and the number of years they had been working with the university.

1.8.7 Academic Ranks

Oshagbemi (1997) defined rank as an individual's job status in an organization. In this study, the academic rank is the job position and grade for academic scheme in the university as prescribed in the Malaysian Remuneration Scheme.

1.8.8 Salary Satisfaction

Salary satisfaction is the degree reflecting satisfaction with academia's current institutional salary (Smart, 1990).

1.8.9 External Extrinsic rewards

Extrinsic rewards include the salary and benefits and opportunities for advancement that one's seek from another position (Zhou and Volkwein, 2004).

1.9 Summary

This study proposal will be presented in six chapters. Chapter 1 concerned on the research overview, describing topic in general as well as the research problem, its objectives and scope, and the rational to do the research. Chapter 2, the Literature Review will focus on the previous similar research. It will look into details the various

studies carried out on the issue of job satisfaction and intention to leave. Chapter 3 represents the research methodology, in which it will explain how the research is designed in terms of its sample size, data collection method, and instrument and data analysis technique.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The chapter will elaborate the significant research studies which act as a basis for this study. A review of some research studies on turnover intention, particularly on job satisfaction will be outlined and discussed. This chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section will define intention to leave and its relationship with turnover or actual leaving. The second, third, fourth, section describes the dependent variables used in the study. Finally, the summary of the literature discussion will be presented.

2.2 Intention to Leave and Turnover

The causal relationship between intention to leave and actual turnover is well established in the literature. Many researchers had strongly argued the underlying premise that behavior intent is a practical proxy of actual behavior. Smart (1990) defines intent to leave as faculty members who intent to leave their present position for another position in either an academic or nonacademic setting. Price (2001) defined turnover as the movement of members across the boundary of an organization to another organization.

Morrell et. al. (2001) and Mobley (1977) (cited in Zhou and Volkwein, 2004) had conceptualized that intent to stay with/exit the organization is the final stage in the psychological decision-making process of a person before leaving. Since then, intention to leave has become the precursor to actual turnover in many turnover models and has been regarded as the predictor of actual turnover (Hartman and Perlman, 1980; Ariff and Tan, 1988; Smart, 1990; Matier, 1990; Manger and Eikeland, 1990; Borda, 1997; Lambert et. al., 2001; Price, 2001; Rosser, 2004; Zhou and Volkwein, 2004; Coomber and Barribal, 2006; Castle et. al., 2007; Xu, 2007;



and, Chen et. al., 2008). This knowledge had prompted organization to find measure as to lower intention to leave among employees, as lowering this behavior could reduce actual separation (Hsu et. al., 2003).

2.3 Intention to Leave in Academia

Intention to leave and turnover had been a subject of interest in the academic organization. Higher institutions strive to keep a low turnover rate in order to minimize the monetary loss and disruption in teaching and research programs (Xu, 2008). Zhou and Volkwein (2004) noted that "some faculty departure is a natural part of professional advancement within academia" (p. 140). Career exploration, whether international or confined to national boundaries, involves activities that enhance knowledge of the self and the external environment (Richardson and Zikic, 2007). According to Richardson and McKenna (2002), there is few reasons lead to academia mobility; academia's career is a "boundaryless" career, academics are less dependent on a single employer for their career development, academic careers depend to some extent on extra-organizational networks, and some academics are rejecting career opportunities for personal and particularly family reasons. Faculty departure also occurs when an academia leave higher education entirely other another career (Zhou and Volkwein, 2004).

Many studies have focused on specific push elements that contribute to a faculty turnover intention. One of the significant turnover intention causal models in higher institutions is presented by Smart (1990). He identified three blocks of determinants of faculty turnover intention, i.e., exogenous variables (*career age, gender, marital status, research time, teaching time, organizational decline, campus governance*), work environment variables (*governance participation, governance influence, research productivity, salary*), and job satisfaction variables (*organizational satisfaction, salary satisfaction, career satisfaction*). Smart (1990) had suggested faculty administrators have the capacity to minimize turnover through paying attention to the organizational and career satisfaction of their faculty. In a same year, Matier (1990) included 33 factors in his three dimensions of perceived desirability of moving factors – tangible, intangible and nonwork-related benefits. For the faculties in question, it was concluded that "the internal push factors appeared to

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