The Influence of Career Adaptability and Work Happiness on ICT Professionals’ Intention to Leave

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ABSTRACT

Studies on intention to leave are important to distinguish between stayers and leavers in the organization. This article assesses whether career adaptability and work happiness can be the factors that may have influence on intention to leave among ICT professionals in Malaysia. Samples consist of 393 participants who work in ICT related companies and data were analyzed using structural equation modelling (SEM). The results indicate that individual will have lower level of intention to leave due to higher level of career adaptability and work happiness.

KEYWORDS

Career Adaptability, ICT, Intention to Leave, Work Happiness

INTRODUCTION

Studies on employee intention to leave have been one of important field for employment research including within the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) industry (Cho & Xu, 2012; Hoonakker, Carayon, & Schoepke, 2006; Joseph, Ng, Koh, & Ang, 2007; Rouse, 2001; SamGnanakkan, 2010). Intention to leave is worth investigating apart from the real turnover as it reflects the employees’ behavioral outcomes because of its relation to actual leaving behavior of an individual (Sommer & Haug, 2010). As according to the theory of reasoned action (Azjen, Czasch, & Flood, 2009; Fishbein & Azjen, 1975), having intention to engage in a behavior can directly influence an individuals’ decision to engage in that behavior. This indicates that assessing intention may reflect individuals’ actual future behavior.

In ICT industry, the rate of employment turnover is increasing due to high competitions among rivals (TINYPulse, 2016). Particularly in South East Asia, the turnover rates for ICT is expected to be high starting from year 2016 due to the sheer number of opportunities available to qualified candidates (MichaelPage, 2016). Resulting from the high growth of technological advancement around the world, the impact causes the industry to face such shortages in skill supplies because the human skills growth related to ICT is slower as compares to the technological growth itself (McLaughlin et al., 2012).

In order to investigate such turnover issues, assessment on intention to leave would be relevant for researchers as it can be one of the determinant for actual leaving (Azjen et al., 2009; Manlove & Roe, 1997). Although several criticisms argued that intention to leave will not necessarily end up with the real turnover (Firth, Mellor, Moore, & Loquet, 2004), studies on intention to leave can benefits

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in determining the current state of individual who is working at the particular organizations. This is
due to previous findings that found individual with high level of intention to leave often have lower
level of work performance and high level of absenteeism (Hayes et al., 2006; Kivimaki et al., 2007).

Many studies have been conducted related to factors that contribute to intention to leave and the
most factors investigated are job satisfaction (Creed & Supeli, 2016; Muhammad Masroor Alam &
Jamilha Fakir Mohammad, 2010; Tett & Meyer, 1993; Wright & Bonett, 2007), and organizational
commitment (Cho & Xu, 2012; Ponnu & Chuah, 2010; Yalabik, Swart, Kinnie, & Van Rossenbreg,
2016). Apart from that, there are other antecedents for intention to leave such as higher performance
work systems (Kundu & Gahlawat, 2016), psychological contract (Behery, Abdallah, Parakandi, &
Kukunuru, 2016), working conditions and psychological states (Neve & Devos, 2016). In this research,
the assessment for the factors of intention to leave are within the work nature of ICT industry.

A study found that the key to survive in ICT industry is substantiated from the skills of adaptability
due to the fast pace of changes related to technological upgrading (Van DerVyver, 2009). In Malaysia,
one of the pertinent issues regarding turnover in ICT is due to lack of ability to cope with changes
and the lack of flexibility in terms of unsatisfactory working hours by shift (JobStreet.com, 2010).
The work nature in ICT industry requires individual who can adapt quickly to the changes and able to
work independently especially in making critical decisions related to their work. This is not surprising
as the demand for advanced technologies are huge covering from the aspects of communications,
vehicles, transportations, medical, as well as educations.

Under the line of employee retentions’ studies, there is emerging under researched areas related
to positive state-like constructs as over the more established positive traits in predicting work attitudes
and behaviors (Avey, Luthans, & Youssef, 2010). Researchers have found that the existence of positive
emotions at work may have important roles especially in reducing the intention to leave (Omar &
Noordin, 2015; Siu, Cheung, & Lui, 2015). This can be explained by the broaden and build theory
which predicted that positive emotions will influence positive behavioral outcome due to broader
thought action repertoires (Fredrickson, 2004). Studies on positive emotions related to work well-
being and/or happiness derived from the call for positive psychology that was initiated by Seligman
(2000). Studies area on positive psychology recently spreads widely across the field of social, work,
and educations which trigger the urgency for researchers to investigate within this study matter.

This study aims to answer two (2) questions; whether career adaptability and intention to leave
are related, and whether work happiness mediates the relationship between career adaptability and
intention to leave among the ICT professionals in Malaysia.

CAREER ADAPTABILITY AND INTENTION TO LEAVE

Career adaptability is defined as the psychological construct of ability to cope with changes related
to occupational transitions and personal traumas (Savickas, 2005). It also denotes the capacity to recover
quickly from unforeseen events related to career plans and the ability to maintain the level of comfort
with new work responsibilities (Rottinghaus, Day, & Borgen, 2005). Savickas (2005) developed a
career construction theory’s model of self-regulation for social and developmental with a set of specific
attitudes, beliefs, and competencies which is known as the ABCs of career construction. These four
syndromes of attitudes, beliefs, and competencies constitute career adaptability and represent resources
for self-cultivation. The adaptive individual is conceptualized as “(a) becoming concerned about the
vocational future, (b) taking control of trying to prepare for one’s vocational future, (c) displaying
curiosity by exploring possible selves and future scenarios, and (d) strengthening the confidence to
pursue one’s aspirations” (Savickas, 2005, p. 52). Career adaptability has been suggested as a key
competency in career success generally (O’Connel, Mcneely, & Hall, 2008) which enable individuals
to effectively implement their self-concepts in occupational roles, thus creating their work lives and
building their careers.
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