

THE EFFECTS OF YOUTHS' LIFE SATISFACTION AND JOB PERFORMANCE ON THEIR TURNOVER INTENTION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of youth life satisfaction and job performance on their turnover intention. Data were collected from 163 youths working in the private sectors in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. The Satisfaction with Life Scale, Staples' Measure (to measure an individual's job performance) by Staples (1999) and Turnover Intention Scale adapted from MacIntosh and Doherty (2010) were used in this study. Results indicated that youths' job performance and life satisfaction were the significant predictors of their turnover intention. Life satisfaction was positively related to job performance but negatively related to turnover intention. The results also showed that life satisfaction is no longer a significant predictor of turnover intention when both job performance and life satisfaction were entered into the regression equation. Life satisfaction did not play moderating role in the relationship between job performance and turnover intention.

Keywords: Job Performance, Life Satisfaction, Turnover Intention

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengaruh kepuasan hidup dan prestasi kerja belia terhadap kecenderungan mereka meninggalkan kerja. Seramai 163 orang belia yang bekerja di sektor swasta di Kota Kinabalu, Sabah terlibat dalam kajian ini. The Satisfaction with Life Scale, Staples' Measure yang direka bentuk oleh Staples (1999) untuk mengukur prestasi kerja pekerja dan skala kecenderungan meninggalkan kerja yang diadaptasikan MacIntosh and Doherty (2010) telah digunakan dalam kajian ini. Keputusan kajian menunjukkan bahawa prestasi kerja dan kepuasan hidup adalah peramal signifikan kepada kecenderungan belia meninggalkan kerja. Kepuasan hidup memberi pengaruh secara positif sementara prestasi kerja memberi pengaruh secara negatif terhadap kecenderungan belia meninggalkan kerja. Keputusan kajian juga menunjukkan kepuasan hidup tidak menjadi peramal kepada kecenderungan meninggalkan kerja apabila ia dianalisis bersama prestasi kerja dalam persamaan regresi. Kepuasan hidup tidak bermain peranan sebagai moderator dalam hubungan di antara prestasi kerja dengan kecenderungan meninggalkan kerja.

Kata Kunci: *Prestasi Kerja, Kepuasan Hidup, Kecenderungan Meninggalkan Kerja*

INTRODUCTION

Two important questions every employer need to ask are; what affects workers' job performance and how to prevent or reduce turnover within the organization. Job performance and turnover intentions are important, both to organizations and individuals as job performance is highly relevant to organizations in terms of overall effectiveness (Keeley, 1978, as cited in Jackofsky, 1984). As for individuals, they should understand the mechanisms of job performance and its importance to be able to get hired for a job, maintaining a job, and receiving rewards and awards (Jackofsky, 1984).

Job performance is defined as a relation with the willingness and openness to try and achieve new aspects of the job which will in turn bring about an increase in the individual's productivity (Sinha, 2004, as cited in Arman Abdul Razak et al., 2009). It was also a stem from a positive relationship between the status of the vocation and the job performance itself (Greenberg & Baron, 2000).

Past studies have shown that there are myriad of factors that affect a person's job performance. Wright and Cropanzano (2000) used psychological well-being and job satisfaction to predict job performance. Their findings indicated that psychological well-being was a predictor of job performance. But, Jones (2006) noted that many research have been conducted to study the relationship between job satisfaction and performance, and most of the findings have concluded that there was only a weak relationship between those two variables. Hence, Wright and Cropanzano (2000) suggested using a wider measure of happiness which encompasses satisfaction in various aspects of life. As defined by Shin and Johnson (1978), life satisfaction was how a person views happiness based on his or her chosen criteria. By using a measure of happiness or life satisfaction instead of job satisfaction, they found a stronger relationship with performance. Staw, Sutton, and Pelled (1994) also proved that employee's positive emotion was significantly related to job performance in the form of supervisor ratings of performance as well as pay.

On the other hand, turnover intentions were also described as a conscious and deliberate willfulness of a worker towards voluntary but permanent withdrawal from an organization (Hom & Griffeth, 1995). Employee turnover was arguably one of the well-recognized critical issues in organizations (Ali Shah, Fakhir, Ahmad, & Zaman, 2010) because if a company had a high turnover rate,

the company would have to spend more on recruitment, selection, and training all over again.

Knudsen, Ducharme and Roman (2009) conducted a study on turnover intention and emotional exhaustion amongst top leaders in an organization. It was found that emotional exhaustion mediated the association between performance demands and turnover intention, whereby employees in higher positions within the company were expected to perform better and contribute more to the organization and all these high expectations led to stress and some opting to quit as a result of it.

Past literature had found evidence for positive, negative, and no relationship conclusions between performance and turnover (Bluedorn, 1982, as cited in Allen & Griffeth, 2001). A negative relationship between performance and turnover occurred when performance was high and turnover was therefore low. However, Lance (1988) argued that there might also be a positive relationship between performance and turnover, where the better the performance, the higher the chances of leaving the job. Jackofsky (1984) argued that there was a curvilinear performance-turnover relationship, where performance directly influences the chances of finding alternative employment, hence affecting the chances of turnover as well.

Vitrocruz (2010) conducted a research to investigate the curvilinear relationship between job performance and voluntary turnover relationship. The samples used consisted of 539 employed and terminated employees from a major U.S.- based technology company. The author found that there was a U-shaped curvilinear job performance – voluntary turnover relationship, where the highest and lowest performing employees had the most quitting activity. The findings were consistent with many other past researches that produced similar results: the highest and lowest performers tend to leave, while the moderate performers stayed. Therefore, organizations need to develop strategies to keep the top employees and this can only be done if they first understand what motivates their employees to perform their best in their respective companies.

Greenhaus, Bedeian and Mossholder (1987) examined the interaction between job performance and specific work experiences based on three indicators of personal and family well-being (marital adjustment, work-family conflict, and quality of life). 336 accountants from the Association of Government Accountants and American Association of Women Accountants were used as the sample in this study. The researchers found that while high job performance did not detract from personal or family well-being as a whole, job performance was negatively related to marital adjustments and quality of life among females. They also found

that poor job performance may negatively affect marital adjustment and quality of life for employees who have long working hours. This study also suggested that more research should be conducted to examine the relationship between job performance and well-being in various occupational fields so that there would be an increased understanding of non work consequences of success in work domains.

Wright and Bonett (2007) used data from a two-year field study to investigate the relationships between psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and employee job performance and employee turnover, which included a sample of 112 management personnel from the West Coast of the United States. Findings of the research suggested that well-being was found to be a moderator of the relationship between job satisfaction and job separation, in a way that job satisfaction was most strongly (and negatively) related to turnover when well-being was low.

In this current study, it aims to investigate the effects of youth life satisfaction and job performance on their turnover intention. It is assumed that life satisfaction moderate the relationship between youth job performance and their intention to quit such that top performers were more likely to stay if they had higher life satisfaction, while low performers remained likely to leave regardless of their life satisfaction level. The study also hypothesized that there are negative performance – turnover intention and negative life satisfaction-turnover intention relationships, and positive life satisfaction-performance relationship.

METHOD

Research Design

A survey research using the correlational descriptive approach was applied in this study. The dependent variable in this study was intention of turnover. The independent variable comprised of job performance as well as life satisfaction.

Research Respondents and Location

The sample in the study consisted of 163 working youths which were selected randomly from the private sectors in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah; among which 94 (58%) were female and 69 (42%) were male. Their age range from 18 to 40 years. Regarding ethnicity, there were 17 (10.4%) Malay, 29 (17.8%) Chinese, 49 (30.1%) Kadazan Dusun, 29 (17.8%) Bajau and 39 (23.9%) were from other ethnic groups. As for their religious affiliation, 78 (47.9%) were Muslims, 13 (7.9%) were Buddhist and 72 (44.2%) were Christians.

Instruments

The study was based on a set of questionnaire responded by the sample of youths. Among the variables included in the questionnaire are socio-demographic information, Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), Staples' Measure (Staples, 1999), and turnover intention scale adapted from MacIntosh & Doherty (2010). The demography part contained variables such as gender, age, ethnic, religion, academic level, and occupational category.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) was developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin (1985) with the purpose of measuring a person's life satisfaction. SWLS contained five items, and answers were based on a seven point scale that represented an individual's outlook on life satisfaction as a whole. The scale ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) for each item, which meant that the higher the score a respondent gave, the higher the life satisfaction was. The test developer reported the test-retest reliability coefficient to be .82 and an internal consistency of .87 for the SWLS.

Staples' Measure was an instrument developed by Staples in 1999. It was used to measure an individual's job performance. There were three items that were self-reporting measurements and one item from Rego and Cunha (2008). Similar to the Satisfaction with Life Scale, the Staples' Measure was also answered based on a seven point scale, from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The level of reliability obtained for this instrument was very high with an alpha Cronbach reliability coefficient of .92.

The instrument used to measure turnover intention was adapted from MacIntosh and Doherty (2010). It contained three items where respondents did a self-report on how often they felt like leaving their job as well as how often they felt like leaving their organization? Answers were based on a seven point scale with (1) representing 'never' and (7) representing 'often', except for item 3 which was rated on a scale using 1 (will leave very soon) to 7 (will stay forever) and this item was a negative item. The Cronbach's alpha reliability for this scale was .737, indicating moderate internal consistency.

Data Analysis

The data in this study were analyzed by using SPSS Program for windows version 17.00. Descriptive analysis was used to report the frequency and percentage of the respondents' demographic characteristics. T-test analysis was used to investigate the differences in job performance and life satisfaction between those with turnover intention and those without turnover intention. Regression analysis was used to assess the relationship between life satisfaction, job performance and turnover intention.

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of youth life satisfaction and job performance on their turnover intention as well as the moderating effect of life satisfaction in the relationship between youth job performance and their turnover intention. The results based on the obtained data are presented in this part.

The Differences in Job Performance and Life Satisfaction by Youths' Level of Turnover Intention

The result of the independent samples t-test showed that there were significant differences between those with lower turnover intention and those with higher turnover intention in job performance ($t = -2.255, p < .05$). Those with low turnover intention ($M = 18.350, S.D = 5.380$) showed higher job performance than those with high turnover intention ($M = 20.150, S.D = 4.660$) (see Table 5).

The result showed that these two groups were also significantly different in life satisfaction ($t = -2.902, p < .05$) with the employees with low turnover intention ($M = 22.520, S.D = 5.890$) showing higher life satisfaction than the employees with high turnover intention ($M = 19.680, S.D = 6.490$) (see Table 1).

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations and t-test Results of Sample on Job Performance and Life Satisfaction

Dependent variable	Independent variable	N	Mean	s.d	T	Sig.
Job Performance	Those with low turnover intention	88	18.35	5.38	-2.255	.026
	Those with high turnover intention	75	20.15	4.66		
Life Satisfaction	Those with low turnover intention	88	19.68	6.49	-2.902	.004
	Those with high turnover intention	75	22.52	5.89		

* $p < .05$

The Effect of Life Satisfaction on Job Performance

The results showed that the regression model that contained the independent variable (life satisfaction) explained 40.3% of the variance in the dependent variable (job performance) significantly, ($F(1, 162) = 108.850, p < .05$). Results from the regression coefficient indicated that life satisfaction ($B = .635, t = 10.430, p < .05$) was found to contribute significantly and positively to the youths' job performance. The result explained that the employees who were highly satisfied with their lives would perform better in their jobs (see Table 2).

Table 2: Regression Model of the Relationships between Job Performance and Life Satisfaction

Independent Variables		Beta	t	Sig.
Life satisfaction		.635	10.433	.001
Constant	8.437			
R2	403			
F	108.847			
Sig. F	.001			

* $p < .05$

The Effect of Life Satisfaction on Turnover Intention

The regression model that contained life satisfaction explained significantly only 8.4% of the variance in the employees turnover intention ($F(1,162) = 14.810, p < .05$). Results from the regression coefficient indicated that life satisfaction ($B = -.290, t = -3.848, p < .05$) was found to contribute significantly and negatively to youths' turnover intention. This meant that employees who were highly satisfied with their lives had lower turnover intention (see Table 3).

Table 3: Regression Model of the Relationships between Life Satisfaction and Turnover Intention

Independent Variables		Beta	t	Sig.
Life satisfaction		-.290	-3.848	.001
Constant	13.650			
R2	.084			
F	108.847			
Sig. F	.084			

* $p < .05$

The Effect of Job Performance on Turnover Intention

The regression model that contained job performance explained significantly 10.4% of the variance in the youths' turnover intention ($F(1,162) = 18.65, p < .05$). Results from the regression coefficient indicated that job performance ($B = -.322, t = -4.32, p < .05$) contributed significantly and negatively to the youths' turnover intention. Thus, employees who performed well in their jobs would have lower turnover intention (see Table 4).

Table 4: Regression Model of the Relationships between Job Performance and Turnover Intention

Independent Variables		Beta	t	Sig.
Life satisfaction		-.3.22	-4.319	.001
Constant		14.709		
R2		.104		
F		.001		
Sig. F				

* $p < .05$

Life Satisfaction Moderates the Performance and Turnover Intention Relationship

The hierarchical regression analysis was used to study the moderating effects of life satisfaction on the performance – turnover relationship. Results shown in Table 5 indicated that job performance was a significant predictor of turnover intention and it can explain 10.4% of the variance in turnover intention, ($F(1, 162) = 18.651, p < .05$). The regression coefficient ($B = -.322, t = -4.319, p < .05$) showed that the job performance variable was negatively related to turnover intention. Hence, employees who performed well in their jobs will have lower turnover intention or poor performers will have higher turnover intentions.

The results also indicated that life satisfaction could contribute 1.2% of significance to the variance in turnover intention, ($F(2, 162) = 2.222, p < .05$). In model two of the regression analysis, the independent variables consisted of job performance and life satisfaction. Job performance ($B = -.231, t = -2.402, p < .05$) was still a significant predictor of turnover intention. Life satisfaction ($B = -.143, t = -1.491, p > .05$) however, was not a significant predictor of turnover intention.

Further analysis was conducted through model three, where the independent variables included job performance, life satisfaction and the new variable (job performance*life satisfaction). The analysis indicated that job

performance ($B = -.304, t = -1.291, p > .05$) was no longer a significant predictor of turnover intention. Both life satisfaction ($B = -.232, t = -.834, p > .05$) and NewVar1 (job performance * life satisfaction), ($B = .148, t = .339, p > .05$) were not significant predictors of turnover intention as well.

Table 5: Multiple Regressions of the Moderating Effect of Life Satisfaction on the Job Performance – Turnover Intention Relationship

Step and Independent Variables	Beta	t	Sig.
Model 1 Job Performance Constant 14.709 R2 .104 F. 18.651* Sig F 0.001	-.322	-4.319	.017
Model 2 Job Performance Life Satisfaction Constant 15.275 R2 .116 Sig F 2.222	-2.31 -.143	2.402 -1.491	
Model 3 Job Performance Life Satisfaction NewVar1 Constant 16.369 R2 .117 F .115 Sig F .001	-.304 -.232 .148	-1.291 -.834 .339	
-*p < .05			

The differences in Job Performance and Life Satisfaction by Youths’ Level of Turnover Intention

Branham (2005) suggested that stress due to overwork and work-life imbalance led to employees leaving their jobs. He mentioned that workers were stressed when they had to sacrifice family time to work extra hours, when they faced insensitive workers, or when their employers did not provide them with sufficient rest days. If the employers did not address these issues promptly, the workers reacted by leaving. On the other hand, happy people showed less burnout (Iverson et al., 1998, as cited in Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008), less emotional exhaustion (Wright & Cropanzano,

1998, as cited in Boehm et al.), and were less likely to quit their jobs (Van Katwyk et al., 2000, as cited in Boehm et al.). These were the stark differences between workers who were highly satisfied in life and those who were not in regards to level of turnover intention.

The results from this study showed that life satisfaction was positively related to job performance, and this was true to the fact that when an individual was generally satisfied in life, there was not much worry or stress that could negatively affect his job performance. In line with the famous connotation of “a happy worker is a productive worker”, Zelenski, Murphy and Jenkins (2008) used Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) to assess happiness and predicted that generally happy people will be more productive. Consistent with the finding of this present study, Zelenski et al. (2008) also found that happier people were indeed more productive, especially when happiness was conceptualized as the frequent experience of positive emotions.

Wright and Cropanzano (2004) also obtained similar findings from their research on a group of Master of Business Administration students. In that study, they found that participants who were high on well-being were more superior decision-makers, had better interpersonal behaviors, and received higher overall performance ratings. Similar findings were obtained from another study where employees who were higher in well-being had superior performance evaluations and received higher salary 18 months later (Wright & Cropanzano, 2004). More than that, workers who were generally highly satisfied with their lives went beyond their required duties at work and were more involved in their jobs (George, 1995, as cited in Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008).

The Effect of Youths' Life Satisfaction on Their Turnover Intention

Results from the current study also showed that life satisfaction was negatively related to turnover intention. An individual who was highly satisfied in life would have lesser intent to quit compared to those with lower life satisfaction. The results explained that youths who had a balanced family and work life, healthy and had a stable income were satisfied in life and therefore, were less likely to leave their jobs, especially if it paid well.

Another reason that could explain this negative relationship was youths used turnover as a source of withdrawal response. Rizzo, House and Lirtzman (as cited in Mayes and Ganster, 1988) suggested that turnover was a response to stresses experienced at work and it was consistently demonstrated through the linkages between role stress and job satisfaction and between job satisfaction and subsequent turnover (Porter & Steers, 1973, as cited in Mayes and Ganster, 1988).

A very good example that explained the negative relationship between life satisfaction and turnover intention was given by Boehm and Lyubomirsky's (2008) study on happiness and work. They explained that those who had a positive outlook in life were more likely to remain at their current job a year later. Pelled and Xin (1999) also added that longitudinal evidence supported the notion that happy employees were more likely to remain at their jobs. This finding was supported by a 15-year study on 24,000 German citizens who found that people who had lost their jobs had low life satisfaction before their unemployment (Lucas, Clark, Georgellis, & Diener, 2004, as cited in Boehm et al.).

The Effect of Youths' Job Performance on Their Turnover Intention

Results from this study indicated that job performance was negatively related to turnover intention. This meant that the respondents who were high performers and thus more likely to be rewarded through promotions, pay increment, or incentives had lower turnover intention. The opposite effect took place when a low performer was more likely to leave his current job due to lack of interest or not being satisfied with the job and pay.

The results obtained in this present study were consistent with the findings of Stumpf and Dawley (1981). They found that performance correlated negatively and significantly with voluntary as well as involuntary turnover. Keller (1984) conducted a study using performance and absenteeism to predict turnover. He found that low performance was indeed predictive of turnover. His findings were similar to that of Stumpf and Dawley (1981) as well as Dreher (1982), as cited in Keller, where low performance was the best predictor of turnover.

Life Satisfaction Moderates the Relationship between Performance and Turnover Intention

Results from this study indicated that job performance was an important predictor of turnover intention. Life satisfaction on its own had an effect on turnover intention. However, when analyzed along with job performance, life satisfaction did not have much effect on intentions to quit. This study found that when combined, life satisfaction and job performance did have an effect on turnover intention. When a worker was highly satisfied in life but had poor job performance, he or she had turnover intentions. Conversely, a worker who had lower life satisfaction but performed well in the workplace most likely remained in his or her current job, having lesser intention to quit.

There were not many past researches conducted that had findings similar to that which was found in this study, where the moderating effects of life satisfaction on the performance – turnover intention relationship was examined.

This study also suggested that life satisfaction did not moderate the performance – turnover intention relationship as hypothesized. A happy but unproductive employee may still choose to leave his or her current job whereas a high performing employee despite lower life satisfaction may still choose to remain in the current organization. An employee may be highly satisfied in life but if he was not performing well in his job, he might be faced with lesser opportunity for growth and advancement or feeling devalued and unrecognized by his employers, thus having intentions to quit finding greener pastures (Branham, 2005).

Another explanation for the findings in this study was job embedded. Job embedded was conceptualized as the totality of forces that constrain people from leaving their current employment, or the factors that kept an employee in his or her present position (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez, 2001). People who were more embedded work harder and perform better, thus less likely to leave the organization. Lee and Mitchell (1994), as cited in Mitchell et al. (2001) also noted that many people left their jobs for reasons other than dissatisfaction, such as shocks or specific events. Someone can have a low level of embeddedness yet be satisfied with their lives and jobs. This meant that when a sudden event occurs, he or she may just leave the job despite of how satisfied he or she is in his life.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this study provided evidence that life satisfaction had effects on job performance and on turnover intention. The results showed that there was a difference in job performance and turnover intention based on youths' level of turnover intention; employee with lower turnover intentions performed better at work and were generally more satisfied in life while the opposite was true for those who had higher turnover intentions. The results also showed that life satisfaction was positively related to job performance, whereby a highly satisfied worker would have performed better at the workplace. A negative relationship was found between life satisfaction and turnover intention. An employee who was highly satisfied in life would have lower turnover intentions.

Results also indicated that job performance was negatively related to turnover intention. The results suggested that employees who were high performers had lower turnover intentions. This study also showed that life satisfaction on its own had an effect on turnover intention but did not have much effect on intentions to quit if it was analyzed along with job performance. This study found that when combined, life satisfaction and job performance had effects on turnover intention. Life satisfaction was found to be not a moderator of the performance – turnover intention relationship as hypothesized.

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