

PERSONALITY AND TURNOVER INTENTION AMONG HOTEL EMPLOYEES IN SARAWAK: ROLE OF FLOW AS MEDIATOR

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Abstract

Purpose of the Study: In the hotel industry, personality brings an impact on the perception of turnover intention among employees. The lack of past studies makes this present study become important to ensure employees' performance and productivity are at highest level while reducing their turnover intention. Secondly, exhaustive review of past literature revealed that lack of studies that examined flow as mediator between personality and turnover intention in eastern phenomena, the element of positive psychology of flow necessary to be investigated. This study aims to determine whether employees' personalities have significant relationship with the turnover intention, with mediating variable of flow which was underpinned with the person-environment fit theory to investigate the outcomes.

Methodology: This study implemented a quantitative method whereby the questionnaires were given out to the hotel's employees in Sarawak. All data were analysed using SPSS software version 23.

Results: This study provides contributions to the hotel industry that are interested to identify prominent elements that influence, correlate and contribute to the possible outcomes of personality, flow and turnover intention among hotel employees in the context of eastern understanding.

Implications: The flow associated with an employee personality and turnover intention. Meanwhile, the hotel's human resource practitioners advise to always implement better working practices in recruitment or training functions to ensure the right personality to work on specific tasks are being employed and lead to lower turnover intention.

Keywords: *Flow, Personality, Turnover Intention, Hotel industry, Hotel Employees, Mediator.*

INTRODUCTION

To meet the needs of current competitive hotel business environment, employees in the hotel industry is expected to do job for extended hours and set their job as first precedence over their personal life ([Simpson, 2000](#); [White, 2003](#); [Perrons, 2003](#)). Therefore, it is obvious that the hotel industry's demand for higher working performance and high employee commitment. In this sense, the employees' behavior such as attitude (i.e. job satisfaction, organizational commitment), absenteeism, turnover intention, and productivity are typically studied in business cases in order to implant and develop program that could increase motivational level while lowering down the turnover intention among hotel employees. From these past studies, it could be concluded that ineffective programs or policies may lower flow experience and cause those who are in upper managerial and professional's positions to have higher turnover intentions ([De Cieri & Bardeol, 2009](#)).

As for behavior influences, individual factors play important roles in this current research. The individual factors may be described as personality of an individual which can be one of the factors affecting them to act and think. Personality traits best described by utilizing the Five-Factor Model (FFM). According to [McCrae and John \(1992\)](#), this model comprises five (5) basic constructs namely agreeableness, neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness. [Parasuraman and Greenhaus \(2002\)](#) asserted that the five basic dimensions can help to shape the environment as it might be influenced by interaction and responsiveness of individuals and situations. Past researchers are certain that personality disposition might bring to different level of engagement, as to found out whether the highly neurotic individuals are more likely become burnout ([Langelaan, Bakker, Doornen & Schaufeli, 2006](#)) or may experience flow orientating through personality traits, which is the aspect as a personal matter which some of the hotel employee willing to provide a priority for being engaged in their work tasks. Engagement is deemed to have the closest agreeable construct with flow experience ([Bakker, 2005a](#); [Kasa & Hassan, 2013](#)). This situation happens when the employees are said to be totally immersed in performing the task for their personal objectives rather than for extrinsic rewards ([Bakker, 2005b](#)) is still limited study conducted among employees with the influence of personality traits in Malaysian context.

On the contrary, past studies on personality traits from the Western context brought up to the different understanding of flow phenomena which may lead to different outcomes ([Robinson, Perryman & Hayday, 2004](#); [Bakker & Leiter, 2010](#)). This is because individual biographical factors and environment to experience flow are different as compared to eastern context ([Gallup, 2006](#)). Thus, the limited literature in describing that personality disposition might bring to different level of organizational outcomes have yet to be found among the hotel employees in Malaysian context. Thus, to bridge the lacking in literature, this study proposed that (**H1**): personality is related to flow.

As mentioned by [Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi \(1988\)](#), flow is claimed as a positive psychology movement that has a powerful impact on fulfilling the routine life with more positive productivity as it could promote a sense of accomplishment and intense enjoyment. Furthermore, flow contributes to the sense that it will increase work productivity, innovation and employees' career development ([Csikszentmihalyi, Abuhamdeh, & Nakamura, 2005](#)). In short, workplace's

flow refers an absolute absorption of an activity or a state of focus ([Csikszentmihalyi, 1997](#)). The past study revealed that the employees are able to be more efficient in carrying out specific tasks, more creative and more positive in their thinking when they experience flow in their workplace ([Kasa & Hassan, 2013](#)).

Meanwhile, turnover intention refers to as the workers' thought of exiting the present job and aims to find other jobs from different companies. According to [Halpern \(2005\)](#), the employees with turnover intention are likely to be less productive at work and this could be costly to the respective organization. Numerous studies in western countries found out that the work in the hotel setting was typically correlated to a variety of negative outcomes ([Takahashi, Tanigawa, Tachibana, Mutou, Kage, Smith & Iso, 2005](#); [Akerstedt, Ingre, Broman & Kecklund, 2008](#); [Wirtz, Giebel, Schomann & Nachreiner, 2008](#)). The hotel setting, in this sense refers to night shift working hours and irregular work schedules. In saying this, the negative outcomes such as job dissatisfaction, burnout or even having the intention to quit the job tend to be experienced by those workers' who are highly committed towards their work roles ([Anderson, Coffey & Byerly, 2002](#)). Thus, in view of challenging working environments in the hotel industry, uncertain and unstable working stations and even facing problematic customers situation may or may not influence the flow experience of the hotel employees toward turnover intention. Although the most recent study revealed that the flow is correlated with turnover intention ([Kasa & Hassan, 2016](#)), it may not imply this present study as the time past and the result finding may be different. This is due to challenging and demanding hotel business, along with recent development of hotel software and technologies that are no longer require excessive manpower. Thus, the lacking in literature explaining flow is related to turnover intention in the hotel industry has been constructed based on previous study by [Kasa and Hassan \(2016\)](#) is proposed: (H_2): flow is related to turnover intention.

An exhaustive review of the literature revealed that the lacking of studies that examined flow as mediator between personality and turnover intention. Past study on flow as mediator in Malaysia reported that flow mediates the relationship between burnout and OCB among bank employees ([Kasa & Hassan, 2017](#)). Consequently, it leads to the development to (H_3): Flow mediates the relationship between personality and turnover intention.

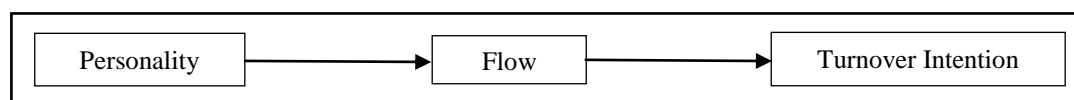


Figure 1: The Research Framework

UNDERPINNING THEORY

The theory of person-environment fit describes that the personality characteristics affect the way a person communicates with the surroundings and vice versa, ([Pervin, 1989](#); [Swartz-Kulstad & Martin, 2000](#); [Tinsley, 2000](#); [Walsh, Craik & Price, 2000](#)). Personality characteristics consist of a person's personal needs, values, objectives, capabilities, or identity, while environmental characteristics comprise of internal and external rewards, job or roles' demand, values of culture, or attributes of other persons and cooperation in the individual's social context ([French, Caplan & Harrison, 1982](#)). In relation to its imperative impacts in the job environment, the theory of person-environment fit has been chosen as underpinning for this present study. The focus is more on the role of the individual, whose motivations scenario may guide and direct the selection of the best working environment. This theory explains how the hotel employees' personalities will have a relationship with flow experience and turnover intention. The goal of this theory is ideal for the development of the current framework as hotel's employees with challenging working environment which exists within a challenging hotel business environment in which they feel that their task goals and searching for attainable and achievable; in this case they having low intention to quit.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the quantitative method approach for data collection with purposive method sampling that targets the full-time hotel employees who currently work in Sarawak hotels. The minimum sample size derived from G*Power with effect size value of 0.15, 0.05 probability error as well as 0.95 of parameter power value. Meanwhile, the G*Power generated a total of minimum sample size of 89 which this present study met the minimum sample. As recommended by [Copper and Schindler \(2008\)](#), this study has conducted a pilot study before the actual survey. Thus, the pilot study indeed imperative in this study as the researchers need to know about any potential errors or weaknesses in the questionnaire design or instrumentation apart from ensuring the validity and reliability of each variable. The questionnaires were also given out to the chosen hotel employees after the Human Resources Manager has approved and were gathered within one-month period from 5 hotels in Sarawak. All of the respondent's identities and answers were secured as private and confidential. The questionnaire was designed in Bilingual languages (English and Bahasa Melayu).

Research Instrument

An exploratory factor analysis had been performed to validate all the instruments used. A total of 250 valid questionnaires were collected to confirm the validity as well as reliability aspects on the instrument used through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23 software. No major issue emerged with regard to the normality and outlier as each item factor loading exceeded 0.40 ([Hair, 1998](#)). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) met the benchmark of 0.7, while Bartlett's

Test of Sphericity values was below 0.5. All the items displayed significantly varying correlation matrix in comparison to the matrix identity (Hair, 1998). All the instruments demonstrated exceptionally good results in validity and reliability scores (Nunnally, 1978), as tabulated in Table 1.

Table1: Validity and Reliability Scores

Measure	Items	Sources	Factor Loading	KMO	Bartlett Test of Sphericity	Cronbach Alpha
Personality	25	Yoo & Gretzel (2011)	.405 to .816	.841	649.335, p=0.000	0.86
Flow	13	Bakker and Demerouti (2008)	.568 to .838	.887	1792.092, p=0.000	0.89
Turnover Intention	04	Kelloway, Gottlieb, and Barham (1999)	.568 to .838	.887	438.878, p=0.000	0.83

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Demographic Findings

From the total of 250 respondents consists of 141 females and 109 males. The majority of the respondents, which are 127 persons (50.8%) categorized under the Chinese race, followed by Malay respondents, 48 persons (19.2%), Iban, 24 respondents (9.6%) and others race of respondents were 51 persons. For the age-wise, majority of them fall under the age group of 21 to 30 years old (36.4%). In terms of educational level, the largest group of respondents holds a certificate under Diploma /STPM/HSC (33.2%). The majority of the respondents are single (65.2%) and followed by 34.8% respondents being married. Due to majority of respondents are still single, so the total of dependents for respondents mostly group under 1 to 2 members (38%).

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1 suggested the relationship between personality and flow. Pearson Correlation Coefficient was implemented to test the correlation between personality and flow which shows the result that these two variables are significantly related [$r = 0.533$, $n = 250$, $p = .000$].

Hypothesis 2 proposed that the relationship between flow and turnover intention. A Pearson Correlation Coefficient was computed for this hypothesis, then revealed that flow is related turnover intention [$r = 0.582$, $n = 250$, $p = .000$].

Hypothesis 3 determined that flow mediates between the relationship of personality and turnover intention. The [Preacher and Hayes \(2004\)](#)'s approach was computed through the SPSS macros for this research, which showed that the result of indirect effect of flow as mediator has stronger effect on personality and turnover rather than its main effect. According to the study's result, the indirect effect held the effect value of 0.3461 [LLCI 0.2562, ULCI 0.4576] with the indirect effect value should be above zero or positive value ($>0/+$ value) and the bootstrap upper and lower bound value must above zero or positive value to determine the significant indirect correlation between the variables ([Preacher & Hayes, 2004](#)). Therefore, it can be concluded H3 was supported.

DISCUSSION

This research supported the relationship between personality and flow. This aligned with previous researches done by [Bakker \(2005a; 2005b\)](#) as well as [Kasa and Hassan \(2013\)](#) who asserted that both personality and flow offer comparative ascribes to one another. This is because engagement is conceded to have the nearest agreeable construct with flow experience. Numerous studies revealed that personality has the capability to predict the engagement level ([Macey & Schneider, 2008](#); [Voydanoff, 2005](#); [Robinson et al., 2004](#)). Furthermore, engagement is been reported significantly related to attitudes of an individual and their personality traits, which otherwise called traits engagement. In this manner, [Macey and Schneider \(2008\)](#) trusted that having a 'constructive effect' can be connected by engagement in which it prompts an autotelic and proactive identity, for example, performing exercises or employment errands drove by their own advantages rather than remunerations or being ethical. There is one aspect of an employee who prone to give them a predilection for being engaged, which is personality trait orientated by engagement. These personality traits have the probability of making a worker experience the ill effects of encountering flow.

The second hypothesis discovered that flow has a significant positive association with turnover intention. Hence, the study able to deduce the flow experience which poses a vital function in illustrating a significant relationship to turnover intention among the hotel employees in Sarawak. Not only that, this study found out that the existence of positive flow could bring an impact on turnover intention among the hotel employees in Sarawak. According to previous studies, experiencing flow in the work environment could signify that the hotel employees are having a positive and satisfying job-related mental condition characterized by vitality, commitment, and absorption ([Schaufeli, Bakker & Rhenen, 2009](#); [Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter & Taris, 2008](#)). Under this circumstance, the hotel employees would experience a more motivated workforce thereby reducing the turnover intention among them ([Kasa & Hassan, 2016](#)). Nevertheless, this present study also revealed that the flow experience among the employees still exists even though in a challenging, complex, and complicated working environments, i.e. the hotel.

The current study found out that the third research hypothesis is supported, in which it argued that the flow mediates between the relationship of personality and turnover. It has been shown in the past research that personality is recognized to be related to turnover intention (Robinson et al., 2004). In addition, the impacts of personality towards a change in hotel employees' attitude and behaviors are also discussed in this study, in which it caused them to vary in decision making as well as their thought to quit or continue working in the company. Besides, the flow experience among hotel employees at the workplace can differ between each person from time to time, which is prone to change on a day-to-day basis within a person's personality characteristic (Kahn, 1990; Sonnentag, 2003). Robinson et al. (2004) further revealed that the personality impacts on engagement can be varying depending on the person's gender, age, and marital status. The result indicated that women (the majority were female; n = 141, 56%) show a high mean score (mean range between 4.10 - 6.00) of flow (n = 126, 50.4%) as compared to men. Meanwhile, majority are single (n = 163, 65%) as they not experiencing high demand in family life as compared to married employees therefore, the single marital status employees are able to experience flow while majority of respondents are below the age of 30 (n= 160, 64%) under the generation Y category. Generation Y is currently in the working life and this category of generation is expected to experience high level of motivational tendency as well because they possess high level of education level and knowledge in a specified field (White, 2003) before they are being employed in the industry.

Table2: Direct, Indirect, and Total Effect

Variables	Direct	Indirect	Total	Lower Limit (LLCI)	Upper Limit (ULCI)
Job Demands	-.0446	.0366	-.0080	-.0093	.0914
Job Resources	.2753	.1925	.4677	.1072	.3039
TOTAL	.2307	.2291	.4597		

LIMITATION AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATION

Since this study only concluded through one-off data collection technique (survey questionnaire) within 14 days (2 weeks), it possesses the drawback as the researcher unable to persuade the respondents due to no direct contact with the respondents. In addition, the absence of appearance by the researcher to manage the questionnaires had led to unwilling of the respondents to answer the questionnaires. It is recommended that future study should be conducted effectively by giving approval to the researcher to be personally managing the questionnaires at the target venue.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

As in past research studies have stated that the personality of an employee can affect their perception and also the engagement level to the organization, together with the turnover intention (Felstead, 2002). These research results can be concluded that flow associated with employee personality and turnover intention. Meanwhile, the hotel's human resource practitioners advise to always implement better working practices in recruitment or training functions to ensure the right personality to work on specific tasks are being employed and lead to lower turnover intention. There are numerous strategies can be done such as revisit the recruitment and selection policy of the organization to include mandatory personality and flow test to each potential candidate. Thus, this will determine the drive and vibe of each personality trait of employee candidates in experiencing flow while reducing the potential intention to quit. As to retain the valuable asset of organization, human resource practitioner should ensure that the superior level such as managers should have assigned work task or job to the employees according to their expertise and capability in work, which to avoid lay back of work productivity, as well as employees work overloaded.

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