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**MEDIATING ROLE OF JOB EMBEDDEDNESS IN THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED ORGANISATIONAL
SUPPORT, PERCEIVED CO-WORKER SUPPORT AND
EMPLOYEE RETENTION IN MALAYSIAN PRIVATE
UNIVERSITIES**

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Abstract:

The shortage of academic staff in private universities is at an alarming stage and would have a huge-impact on educational quality. This study aims to examine the mediating role of job embeddedness (JE) in the relationship between perceived organizational support (POS), perceived co-worker support (CWS) and employee retention (ER) in Malaysian private universities. Numerous studies have been conducted to examine POS, CWS and turnover with on-the-job factors such job satisfaction and job commitment. These two on-the-job factors are the two attitudinal constructs most frequently studied by the researchers. However, the mediating role of JE plays in understanding ER has yet to be completely specified. Stratified sampling technique was used to collect data from 482 academic staff. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to test all the hypotheses. The findings indicated that JE mediates the relationship between POS and ER partially. However, there is no direct relationship between CWS and ER. ER cannot be increased by providing high CWS directly. It should go through JE as a mediator. This study could contribute fresh-insight for human resource practitioners from private universities to get more effective retention strategies on how to retain staff even if an opportunity arises by emphasizing JE.

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This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)**Keywords:**

Employee Retention, Perceived Organisational Support, Perceive Co-Worker Support, Job Embeddedness, Malaysian Private University.

Introduction

In today's world, retaining personnel appears to be a major challenge for every organisation. Talented employees will make a significant contribution to the organisation in order to increase their competitive advantage. Having high employee retention is vital to a successful business (Aman-Ullah, et al., 2020). Employee retention (ER) can be defined as the initiative in developing the strategies by an organization to avoid its employees resigning from the organization. It is the ability of an organisation to encourage its employee to remain in the organization (Das, 2013). In retaining employee, it can be measured by using Employee Retention Rate or Employee Turnover Rate. Similarly, for Malaysian private universities, high retention of academic staff plays a significant role in contributing the success and high quality of education. The government of Malaysia acknowledges the importance of higher education in producing a pool of high quality and skilful professional (Azman, et al., 2016). In order to keep high standard of quality, the university should always be proactive to keep the high quality of teaching and their professionalism among academic staff because they are in the core process of the university (Arokiasamy, et al. 2011).

However, Malaysian private higher education institution, the turnover rate of the talented employees is surprisingly high for faculty heads, senior lecturers and also new lecturers (Manogharan et al., 2018). The pressure on academic staff increases continuously due to their primary focus being not only on teaching, but also research, publication, projects, grant, consultancy and other elements such as work of administrative and marketing as well as services of community (Manogharan et al., 2018; Mukosolu, et al., 2015). According to human resource personnel of certain private universities, turnover is about 18%. (Ramasamy, et. al., 2020). This retention issue would significantly affect the quality of education (Ansari & Bijalwan, 2017). Therefore, the effort to retain talented academic staff must be prioritized by Malaysian private universities to get more effective retention strategies which can ensure that academic staff could be retained even there is an opportunity available.

Many studies have been conducted on the impact of perceived organisational support (POS) and perceived co-worker support (CWS) on employee retention (ER). According to He et al. (2011); Ladd and Henry (2000), organization support and co-worker support are the two main supports received by the employee in the workplace. According to Kurdi et al. (2020), the supports received from organisation is one of justifiable factor that affecting ER. However, Bohassan and Muhammad (2021) reported different results. The result shown POS is not significantly affecting ER. Furthermore, Clercq, et al. (2020) have found that CWS has an influence on ER significantly. Past studies revealed that employees with good sense of belonging and connectivity due to strong CWS will have high tendency to stay in the organization at longer time (Cooke at al., 2019). However, Mossholder et al. (2011) argued that there is no significant impact of CWS on retention. This is supported by Chung et al. (2021); Mutsuddi et al. (2020) who found that CWS did not have significant effect on the willingness of employee to stay in their organization.

Due to the contradict results, there is an uncertain conclusion on the relationship between POS, CWS and ER. Thus, the other potential intervening factor is anticipated to explain the different result. Apart from this, numerous studies have been conducted in the field of ER in various industries such as banking industry in Indonesia (Permatasari & Zona, 2021), telecommunication industry in Africa (Jacqueline & Nafula, 2021), aviation sector in Turkey (Abdullah & Kavraz, 2021), hospitality sector in India (Chawla, 2021), oil and gas industries in Oman (Al Habsi et al., 2021) and fast-food industry in US (Umezurike, 2021). However, lacking information in Malaysian Private Universities. With high turnover rate of academic staff, attention should be increased to study ER in Malaysian context (Fauziah & Kumaruzaman, 2009; Yusoff et al., 2012).

Hence, this is the gap to be explored and to be filled by this study where the mediating factor should be examined to have better understanding on the relationship between POS, CWS and ER. By understanding the relationship could help the HR practitioners from Malaysian Private Universities to make a significant improvement in strategizing their staff retention plan. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to examine the mediating role of job embeddedness (JE) between POS, CWS and ER among academic staff in Malaysian Private Universities.

Literature Review

Social Exchange Theory

The research framework of this study is done mainly based on social exchange theory (SET) which was developed by Blau (1964). According to SET, when the other party suggests something that is good and beneficial to another party, another party is obliged to respond with favorable offer equally (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Ye et al., 2015). He et al., (2011); Ladd and Henry (2000) claimed that the main supports received by the employees in the workplace are the POS and CWS. According to Eisenberger et al. (1990), POS can be defined as an individual belief in the extent to which the organization values their well-being and contribution. Referring to SET, high POS can create the feeling of obligation to the organization and negatively related with turnover. Apart from this, CWS is another important social-exchange resources for employees in the working-place. It plays a vital role in understanding social behaviour in organisation (Yusliza et al., 2021). According to Susskind et al. (2003), CWS is referring to the degree of employees' feeling on the coworkers' willingness to help their work-related tasks. If they received support from their co-workers when facing difficulties, this will make them feel that they are appreciated and respected, which cause them have higher embeddedness (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Singh et al., 2018). Boonparkob(2019) argued that perceived co-workers support is an important factor yet often neglected.

SET has been criticized by many researchers. Dwyer et al. (1987) pinpointed that the relationship development process proposed by SET is not very effective in explaining the nature of long-term relationship exchange. SET lack of consideration of opportunism and also it is limited in its ability to explain the development of long-term exchange relationship. Though, exchange partners have achieved positive exchange relationship, but this relational governance still can be breach if there are any other opportunities are available elsewhere. Based on SET, the most frequently tested attitudinal constructs are job satisfaction and organizational commitment. For instance, while some employees feel satisfied and committed

with their work, but they will still leave their institution when opportunities arise. Lee and Mitchell (1994) argued that many occurrences of turnover cannot be explained from the traditional model. For off-the-job factors, this is an unexplained aspect in social exchange theory.

Perceived Organisational Support and Employee Retention

Referring to SET, high POS can create the feeling of obligation to the organisation. It would be expected that POS is negatively related with turnover. High POS may lead to low turnover (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019; Eisenberger et al., 2001). Zan et al. (2021) have studied the relationship between POS and ER. They are significantly positively related. Choy et al. (1993) found that if academic staff perceived lack of support from their institution, they will put less effort in doing their work. Kurdi et al. (2020) concluded that the talented employees can be retained by providing supportive working environment to make sure they can stay in the organisation for a longer period of time. Bergiel et al. (2009); Zan et al. (2021) also indicated the support, such as recognition and feedback to employees, is positively related to valuable employees retention. Thus, it is expected that POS has significant relationship with ER.

H1: There is a significant impact of POS on ER

Perceived Coworker Support and Employee Retention

The support of co-worker can be received through their co-worker behaviour of caring, encouraging and taking care of peers' well-being (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). The open communication and support from co-workers can build a sense of belonging and strong teamwork environment. The connectivity among the co-workers can be increased by sharing feeling and giving the supports to each other. This can lead to high interpersonal trust, motivation and inspiration among co-workers (Bamel et al., 2013; Yusoff, 2012;). Besides, if always receiving a lot of support from co-workers, this can help them to obtain new knowledge and skills regarding the task so that they can have a better dealing with their challenging task (Uddin et al., 2021). Several studies highlighted that non-supportive behaviour of co-worker can lead to strong feeling of upset and displeasure in an organization (Eisenberger et al., 1990). The university's academic staff are expected to work harder to increase the ranking of university to get high recognition. They are working in high stress working environment (Mukosolu et al., 2015). The level of stress and job burnout can be reduced if sympathy and guidance always giving to them from their co-worker (Bruan & Peus, 2018).

H2: There is a significant impact of CWS on ER

Perceived Organisational Support and Job Embeddedness

Employees who feel that they are valued and supported tend to show a positive attitude and become more embedded in their organisation and community. Management support will encourage employee to invest more time and money. They would put more efforts to do their task (Rahimnia et al. 2021). Giosan (2003) argued that people who seem to be more likely to become embedded are those who perceive that the organisation supports them. One of the possible ways to increase embeddedness is by increasing organisational support. If the organisation can give greater POS, the individual may try to change their behaviours to better suit the environment or by changing their personal priorities or work values, so that they will become more embedded in their organisation and community. In other words, if academic staff

feel that they are supported by the university, they will have better attitude towards their work and the level of their job embeddedness will be increase to show their appreciation (Akgunduz, & Sanli, 2017). Therefore, it is expected that Perceived Organisational Support (POS) has significant relationship with Job Embeddedness.

H3: There is a significant impact of POS on Job Embeddedness

Perceived Coworker Support and Job Embeddedness

According to Rahimnia et al. (2021), CWS can be seen as a significant factor affecting and has impact on JE. The support of co-worker can be obtained through their co-worker supportive behaviour such as caring, encouraging and taking care of peers' well-being. If employees have favorable perception on their co-worker support, they will obtain stronger feeling of empathy, mutual respect and mutual trust. Then, employees will become more enmeshed and lead to greater job embeddedness (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2015; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Singh et al., 2018). Some studies found that greater in perceiving the support of co-worker in the workplace environment, the greater the job embeddedness in the self-employees (Self et al., 2020). If academic staff can receive more support from their co-worker, such as caring and encouraging from their co-workers, this can help to reduce their stress level because they can actively look for peers to socialize with them (Cooke et al., 2019). Then, the academic staff will become more enmeshed and lead to greater job embeddedness

H4: There is a significant impact of CWS and JE

Job Embeddedness and Employee Retention

Mitchell et al. (2001) have found that JE positively related to ER, for those employees who are embedded in their jobs have higher retention of employees if compared with those who are not embedded. The reasons why people stay can be better explained by JE rather than job satisfaction as well as organizational commitment (Holtom et al., 2020; Tanova and Holtom, 2008). JE can capture a more comprehensive view of predictor for turnover. The results of Afsar and Shahjehan (2018); Ferreira and Martinez (2017) study show that JE is negatively related to intent to leave as well as voluntary turnover and increase employee retention. This new theory of turnover, namely JE, explicitly includes both on-the-job and off-the-job factors that influence staying (Mallol et al. 2007). To retain staff despite external opportunities, the organisation should make their staff embed to organisation and also the community (on and off the job factors) (Lee et al., 1999). Therefore, it is expected that Job Embeddedness has significant relationship with Employee Retention.

H5: There is a significant impact of JE and ER

Job Embeddedness (JE) as a Mediator

Mitchell et al. (2001) defines JE as the totality of forces which include fit, links, and sacrifice that keep people in their current employment. JE emphasizes on those peoples who do not change their job even when it might be advantageous to do so. JE consist of two dimensions: On-the job embeddedness (JEon) and off-the-job embeddedness (JEoff). JEon refers to how enmeshed a person is in the organisation. Whereas, JEoff refers to how entrenched a person is in the community. There are three sub-dimensions for each JEon and JEoff (fit, links and sacrifice). Fit describes the extent of an individual's perceived compatibility with the settings

within and outside of work. Link refers to the connections an employee has with their work and nonwork activities. Sacrifice is the individual's perception on the psychological benefits that will be forfeited if they leave their organisation and community. JE is to explain the reason why even when there are plentiful opportunities, people still do not change their job to other organizations. Due to the previous studies have provided contradict results for the impacts of POS and CWS on ER, it provides a reason to believe that the relationship is mediated. There is evidence to suggest that these effects are mediated (Guchait et al., 2014). Many models of turnover have identified that organisational commitment (Albalawi et al., 2019) and job satisfaction (Li et al., 2020) mediate relationship with withdraw and they are two of the most important constructs in turnover research (Hom & Griffeth, 1995). Nevertheless, the most interesting point here is that while some employees are happy, satisfied and committed to their job, when opportunities arise, they will still leave their organisation. Research from scientific journals indicate that work attitudes, such as organisational commitment and job satisfaction, only retain a relatively minor role in preventing employees from leaving. These attitudinal variables control about 4-20 percent of the variance in turnover (Do, 2021; Griffeth et al., 2000; Hom & Griffeth, 1995). Therefore, Maertz and Campion (1998) conclude that some other variables which are important in explaining and predicting turnover that have been left out. Prasetyo et al. (2021) suggested to there is a need to explore further some other factors in reducing the turnover. Tanova and Holtom, (2008) suggests JE is a better predictor of retention if compared with traditional constructs such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment because they are only cover on-the-job factor. However, JE capture a more comprehensive view of predictors for turnover in which it covers both on-the-job and off-the-job factors. The possible ways to increase JE is by increasing POS and CWS cannot be ignored. Therefore, it is expected that the relationship between POS and ER as well as CWS and ER are mediated by JE.

H6: JE mediates the relationship between POS and ER

H7: JE mediates the relationship between CWS and ER

Research Framework

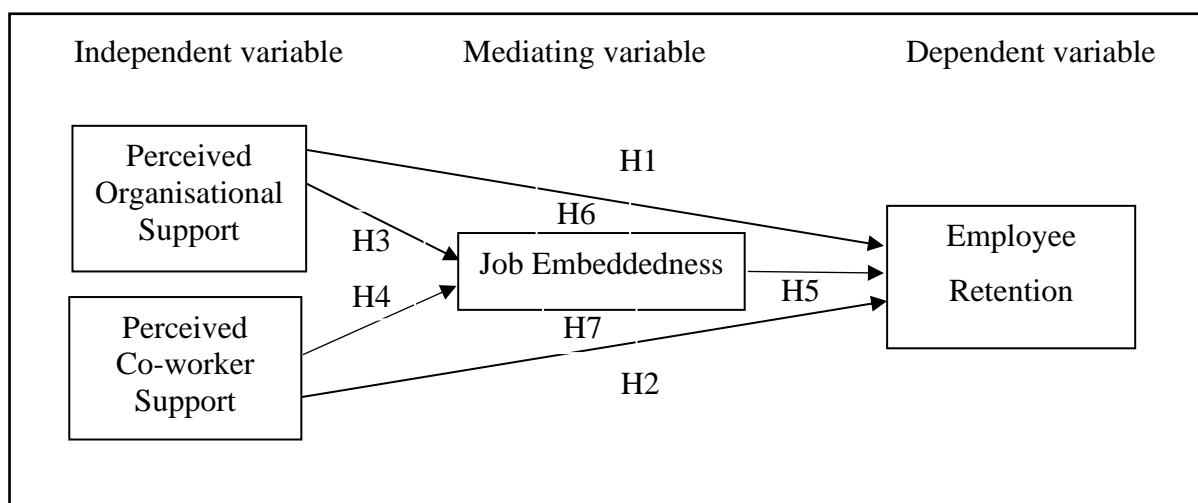


Figure 1: Research Framework

Based on the literature review described above, as can be seen in Figure 1, the research framework for this study essentially suggests that POS and CWS have an impact on ER through the mediating variable of JE. JE capture a more comprehensive view of predictors for turnover (Mitchell et al. 2001).

Methodology

Population and Sample

Stratified sampling techniques is adopted in this study because it is the most efficient sampling technique which all subgroups are sufficiently sampled (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). The population for this study is formed from the full-time academic staff from top six Malaysian Private Universities based on QS world University ranking (2021-2022). This is due to the top universities have taken a proactive role by benchmarking itself to other universities (Yaakob et. al., 2009). There are 3688 academic staff (from tutor to senior professor) in the population. Total 2793 sets of questionnaires were distributed through email. Total there is 482 usable questionnaires (17.1% response rate) in which it has met sample size 351 based on Table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Based on 482 respondents, the majority of the respondents are female (57.7%). Many respondents are from the age group 31-40 years old (43.4%) and followed by the 41-50 years of age group (32.4%) and those from above 50 years old is 19.1%. Then, only 5.2% is 30 years of age and below. In terms of ethnic groups, Chinese comprise the highest proportion (44.8%). Malay and India respondents are 35.5% and 13.9% respectively.

Measure

In this study, POS was measured by using 8-items scale (shortened-version). Many studies have been done by using shortened-version measurement and they found high reliability (Eisenberger et al, 2002; Wong & Wong, 2017). For CWS, it was measured by the 5 items which was developed by Hammer et al. (2004). The higher the values, the greater support received from co-workers. Furthermore, JE, as the mediating variable, was measured by using new measure which was developed by Clinton et al. (2012). This new measure is good in reliability and validity (Clinton et al., 2012). It can resolve the original measure's limitation, such as the mixed format and long format. It covered both JEon and JEoff and also keep the sufficient level of conciseness to make it easy to be used. For every sub-dimensions (Fit, link and sacrifice), there are two items have been designed by Clinton et al. (2012). There are total of 6 items for each JEon and JEoff. They are under reflective-measurement. According to Mitchell et al. (2001), the lower-order-constructs (fit, link, and sacrifice) have formed the dimensions of JEon and JEoff as formative-higher-order-constructs. All of the sub-dimensions are not interchangeable. Moreover, ER was measured by using 11 items which were adopted from Kyndt et al. (2009). Total there are 4 items are negative. The rest are positive items. All items of POS, CWS, JE and ER are measured by seven (7) points of likert-scales.

Data Analysis

In this study, The Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) is the most suitable technique to be used by reason of it is able to deal with the combination of reflective and formative-measurement in the same model (Hair et al., 2019a). JE construct is formed by two formative-dimensions called as JEon and JEoff (formative-second-order-construct). They are not interchangeable. Subsequently, JEon and JEoff are formed by three formative-subdimensions named as fit, link and sacrifice (first-order-construct). If remove any

subdimensions, it changes the meaning of JEon and JEOff (Mitchell et al., 2001). In this study, all the constructs of this study consist of only one order of construct under reflective-measurement except JE construct is measured as multidimensional third-order-construct. For fit, link and sacrifice of JEon and JEOff are reflected by the first-order-reflective-indicators (Clinton et al., 2012). They are reflective-measure and interchangeable.

Reflective Measurement

By using two-stage-approach, the reflective-constructs in first-order-level could be validated in stage one (Figure 2 shows the model in stage one). For examining the quality of reflective-measurement, it involves four criteria in assessing the indicator loading, internal consistency, convergent validity and discriminant validity (Hair Jr et al., 2014; Hair Jr et al., 2017).

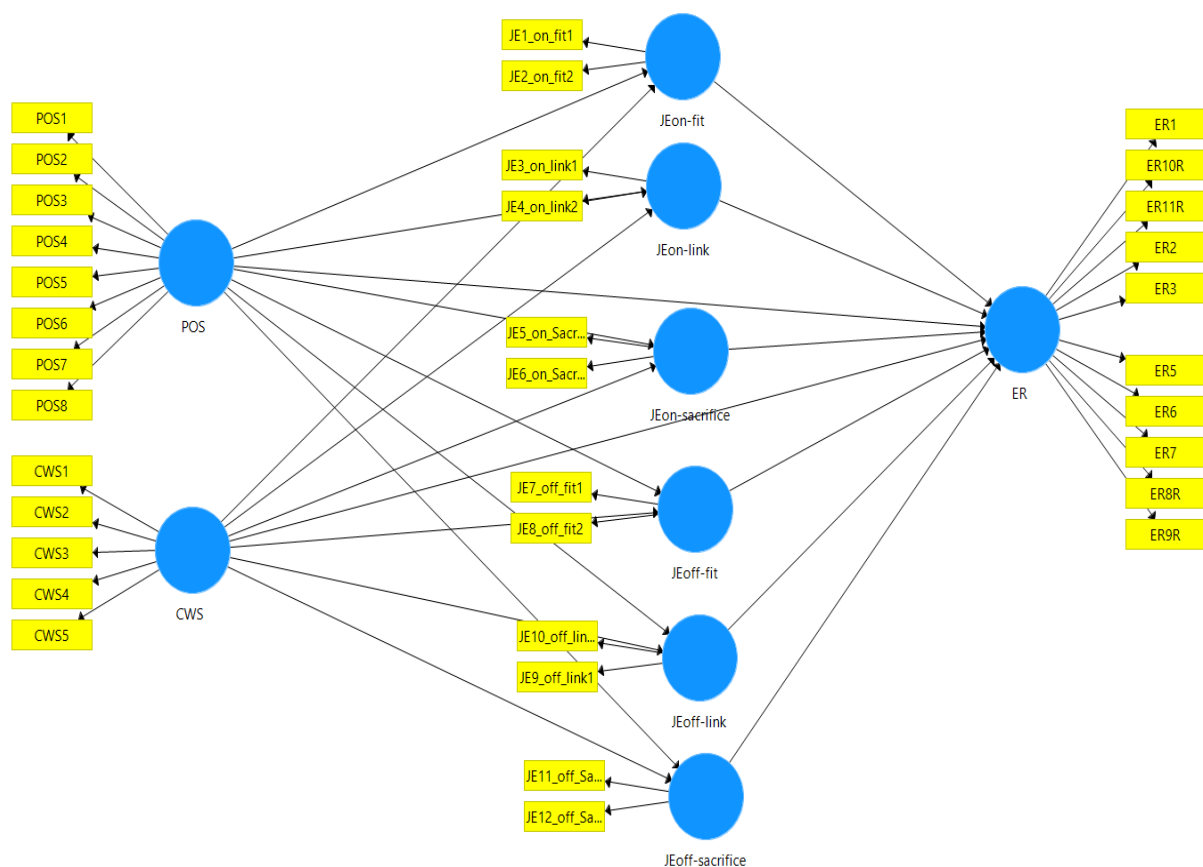


Figure 2: Outer Model (Reflective-first-order-construct): Stage One

For the measurement of indicator reliability, ER4 has been deleted from measurement model due to the low value of outer loading (0.127). For the rest, the loading values are greater than 0.5 as proposed by Reinartz et al. (2009). After deletion of ER4, the latent construct (ER) measure is able to meet the minimum threshold of AVE (>0.5). Thus, all 35 reflective-items can be retained for further analysis. The results show that the value of Cronbach alpha and composite reliability for all items are higher than minimum threshold 0.7 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair Jr et al., 2014). The AVE values for all constructs are greater than 0.5 as proposed by Hair et al. (2019b). Thus, convergent validity is not questionable. Besides, according to Henseler et al. (2015), Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) could be used to examine the

discriminant validity. For criterion test, results shows that all the values of HTMT can meet the threshold value <0.85 (Kline, 2011) except JEoff-sacrifice and JEoff-link. Despite the fact that they fail to achieve value of $HTMT < 0.85$, there is alternative approach for testing discriminant validity called statistical testing by running bootstrapping procedure to bootstrap the confidence interval. The confidence interval (CI, 0.855 – 0.965) for JEoff-sacrifice and JEoff-link still lower than 1 value, it indicates discriminant validity is established (Franke & Sarstedt, 2019; Henseler et al., 2015).

Formative Measurement

By using two-stage-approach, the second-order-construct and third-order-construct of JE can be validated in stage two (Figure 3 & Figure 4 show the model in stage two). Formative-construct could be assessed based on outer weight (construct validity), outer loading (indicator reliability) and the issue of multicollinearity (Hair Jr et al., 2014).

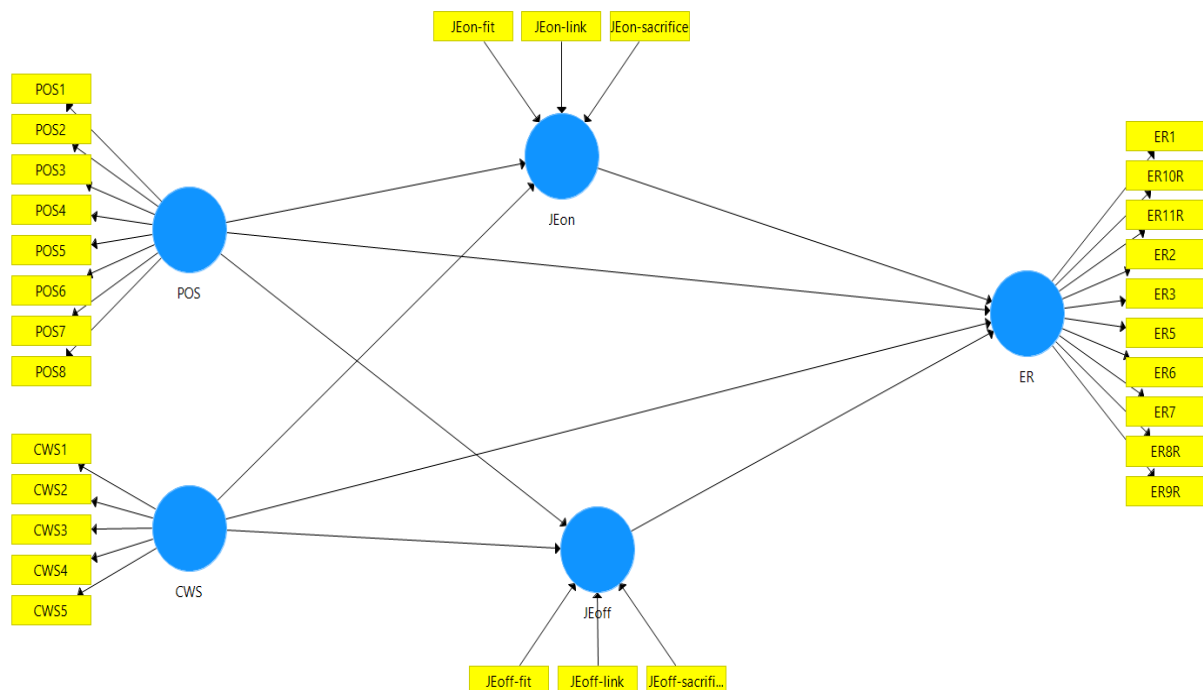


Figure 3: Outer Model (Formative-second-order-construct): Stage Two

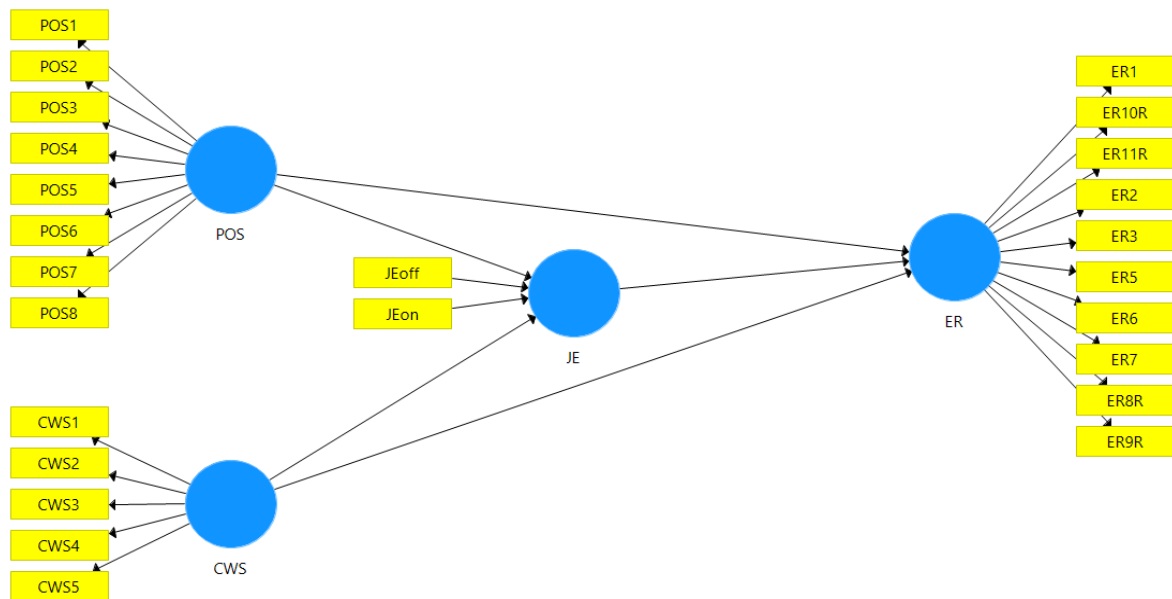


Figure 4: Outer Model (Formative-third-order-construct): Stage Two

The outer VIF values for second-order-construct (JEon and JEoff) and third-order-construct (JE) < 3.0 as proposed by Hair et al. (2019b). It indicated that there is no multicollinearity issue. Furthermore, outer weights for fit, link and sacrifice are significantly related to JEon and JEoff (p -value < 0.05). Besides, the value of outer loading for each first-order-construct is greater than 0.5. The construct validity and indicator reliability are established for the formative-measurement in second-order-construct. Moreover, for third-order-construct, outer weight for JEon is significant related to JE (p -value < 0.05). The value of outer loading for JEon is greater than 0.5. The construct validity and indicator reliability are established for JEon in the formative-measurement of third-order-construct (JE). However, the outer weight for JEoff is not significant related to JE due to p -value is 0.244 (p -value > 0.05). According to Hair et al. (2012); Hair et al. (2019b), if the outer weight is insignificant, but if outer loading is greater than 0.70, the item should be remained. Thus, JEoff has to be kept in formative-measurement of third-order-construct (JE) due to the value of outer loading for JEoff is 0.759 which greater than 0.7. It can be concluded that JEon and JEoff can be accepted as formative-indicators and both have to be kept in the formative-measurement of JE which serve as third-order-constructs.

Structural Model

There are seven hypotheses in this study. Before evaluating the structural model, it is important to run the multicollinearity analysis. The value of inner VIF of CWS and POS to ER are 1.753 and 2.674 respectively. The inner VIF values for CWS and POS to JE both also are 1.423. However, the inner VIF value for JE to ER is 3.283 which greater than the cutoff point of 3.0 (Hair et al., 2019b), but it is still acceptable because the value still less than the value of 5.0 as proposed by Ringle et al. (2015). Thus, there is no multicollinearity among CWS, POS and JE to ER in the structural model. Subsequently, structural model could be assessed by five standard criteria: i) significance of the structural model relationship, ii) coefficient of

determination (R²), iii) effect size (f²) and iv) prediction relevance Q² (Chin, 2010; Hair et al., 2019b).

Table 1 shows that R² value for ER is 0.720 which indicating 72% of the variance in ER can be explained by the predictors of POS, JE and CWS. In addition, in term of POS and CWS towards JE, the value of R² is 0.695. In other words, POS and CWS are able to explain 69.5% of JE variances. Both values of R² also exceed the value of 0.26 which are under level of substantial as proposed by Cohen (1988). For the direct relationship, based on Table 1, POS has significant impact on ER (H1) with p-value=0.000 (p-value<0.05). However, CWS has no significant impact on ER (H2) with p=0.512 (p-value>0.05). Furthermore, POS and CWS affecting JE (H3 & H4)) significantly due to p-values=0.000 for both also less than 0.05. Besides, JE has significant impact on ER (H5) (p=0.000). Thus, H1-H5 are supported except H2.

Table 1 indicates that the effect size for the paths H3 (0.880) and H5 (0.488) are considered at large level of effect size (f²>0.35) as proposed by Cohen (1992). For paths H4 and H1, the values of effect size are 0.232 and 0.072 which can be classified at medium to large level (f²>0.15) and small to medium level (f²>0.02) respectively as proposed by Cohen (1992). Moreover, the effect size for paths H2 (0.001) is less than small level 0.02 due to the insignificant direct relationship between CWS and ER. For predictive relevance (Q²), based on the default setting, the omission distance (D) 7 was used in this study. Table 1 shows that Q² value of POS, CWS and JE on ER is 0.364. The value is greater than 0.35 which indicated that the predictive relevance level of exogenous constructs on endogenous construct are considered under the level of large predictive relevance as per proposed by Chin (2010).

Table 1: Structural Model Results

Hypotheses (Path)	Beta	SD	t-Statistics	P-value	Results	R ²	F ²	Q ²
H1: POS -> ER	0.232	0.057	4.074	0.000	supported		0.072	
H2: CWS -> ER	-0.027	0.041	0.655	0.512	not supported	0.720	0.001	0.364
H5: JE -> ER	0.671	0.058	11.622	0.000	supported		0.488	
H3: POS -> JE	0.617	0.031	19.986	0.000	supported	0.695	0.880	NA
H4: CWS -> JE	0.317	0.035	9.141	0.000	supported		0.232	

Note: R²=Explanatory Power, F²=Effect Size, Q²=Predictive Relevance, SD=Standard Deviation, POS = Perceived Organisational Support, CWS = Perceived Co-worker Support, JE = Job Embeddedness, ER = Employee Retention.

Based on the results (Table 2), it showed that significant mediating role of JE in the relationship between POS and ER (p <0.05). The total effect (p=0.000) and the direct effect (p=0.000) of POS on ER were also significant. Thus, JE partially mediates the relationship between POS and ER. Besides, the result also showed that significant mediating role of JE in the relationship between CWS and ER with p=0.000 (p <0.05). The total effect of CWS on ER was significant (p=0.000), but the direct effect is not significant due to p=0.512 (p>0.05). Thus, JE completely mediates the relationship between CWS and ER. Therefore, H6 and H7 are supported.

Table 2: Mediation Results

Total Effect		Direct Effect		Indirect Effect				
	Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value		Coefficient	p-value	Results
POS -> ER	0.646	0.000	0.232	0.000	H6: POS -> JE->ER	0.414	0.000	supported
CWS -> ER	0.186	0.000	-0.027	0.512	H7: CWS -> JE ->ER	0.213	0.000	supported

Note: POS = Perceived Organisational Support, CWS = Perceived Co-worker Support, JE = Job Embeddedness, ER = Employee Retention

Discussion

For the direct relationship, result shows POS has significant impact on ER (H1). This is consistent with Arasanmi & Krishna, (2019) and Kundu & Lata (2017) who suggests that employees who feel that their well-being are valued by the organisation display positive attitude towards their organisation. According to this finding, academic staff members with higher ER levels may receive feedback and acknowledgement from their university more frequently, and their university may respect their work. The academic staff may believe that their needs are being satisfied because of this strong support from their university. They are therefore more likely to consider paying their university back by continuing to stay at their current university (Kurdi et al., 2020).

Besides, the results indicated CWS has no significant impact on ER (H2). Academic staff cannot be retained directly by providing good support from the co-worker which is consistent with the study of Chung et al., 2021 and Mutsuddi et al., 2020. Based on the findings of this study, the academic staff believes that their coworkers' support is not as important as their leader's support. This is due to their perception that their leader, who serves as the university's spokesperson, has a greater influence on how they work (Sawyer, 2019). They could not trust the motives of their coworkers and thought they were incompetent (Bolino & Thompson, 2018). Therefore, the desire of academic staff in Malaysian Private University to stay is not directly influenced by the support received from their co-worker. However, the relationship between CWS and ER might be mediated.

Furthermore, the results indicated POS affecting JE significantly (H3). This supports the study of Akgunduz and Sanli (2017) and Rahimnia et al. (2021) who argue that JE can be improved by providing higher level of POS. This finding points out that academic staff members with higher POS may try to change their behaviour to better fit the surroundings or by changing their personal goals or workplace values in order to become more embedded in the activities (Akgunduz & Sanli, 2017; Chang et al., 2013; Rahimnia et al. 2021). Hence, for those academic staff with higher level of POS, they would tend to be more embedded in their organisation as well as in the community.

In addition, results shows that CWS has significant impact on JE (H4). This result consistent with Cooke et al. (2019) and Rahimnia et al. (2021). Based on this result, academic staff members who are deeply embedded and have high JE may have received greater help and support from their coworkers (Chang et al., 2013; Qian et al., 2022). Their coworker might genuinely care about, support, and show concern for them at all times. More trust, respect, and empathy would develop between them. For this reason, academic staff will feel good to get

advice and help from their colleagues to solve their problem either work-related or nonwork-related. This makes them more embedded in their university as well as the community.

Moreover, the results of this study indicated JE significantly affecting ER (H5). This supports the study of Afsar and Shahjehan (2018), Holtom et al. (2020) and Mitchell et al. (2001) who argue that JE is a better predictor of employee retention. The results of this study show that academic staff with greater levels of JE are embedded in both their working and non-working environments, such as their families and local communities. The greater the social network support from neighbours, which can act as a stress buffer and provide emotional support for them (Boren, 2013). Thereby, strongly embedded academic staff members are more likely to stay with their current university (Abubakar et al., 2022).

For indirect relationship, H6 and H7 are supported. In the model of mediation, the findings indicated that the total effect and direct effect of POS on ER are significant. It can be concluded that JE mediates the relationship between POS and ER partially. This means that if university provide high POS for academic staff, they may have higher level of job embeddedness, then it would have significant impact on retaining them working in the university. Although POS can directly affect ER, JE still play a certain level of importance role to increase ER. Otherwise stated, academic staff members with higher levels of POS may adapt their behaviour, work values, and priorities to fit the situation and become more embedded in the activities. As a result, they can connect with and fit well into their university and community. They might feel as though leaving would mean giving up considerable benefits (Mitchell et al., 2001), and this usually leads to a high retention rate among employees (Huning et al., 2020; Mitchell et al., 2001; Sindhu et al., 2023; Vanitha, 2022; Zhang et al., 2019).

Besides, the total effect of CWS on ER is significant, but the direct effect is not significant. It can be concluded that JE mediates the relationship between CWS and ER completely. It seems ER among academic staff cannot be improved by providing high CWS directly. It must go through JE as a mediator. This means that the support given by co-worker can lead to increase the level of JE among academic staff, which in turn leads to high ER. That is to say, academic staff members with higher levels of CWS may have close relationships with their coworkers and consistently receive support from them in handling complex tasks or challenges in teaching, publications, supervising, research grants, or other non-work matters. Consequently, individuals feel obligated to pay it forward by altering their behaviour, fully embedding into the activities, and continuing to work for the university (Chang et al., 2013; Self et al., 2020; Self & Gordon, 2019; Tews et al., 2013).

Implications

Theoretical Implication

The research model in this study provides some new insights regards to the mediating role of JE in the relationship between POS, CWS and ER. Based on previous empirical research, many studies have been carried out on on-the-job-factors as the mediating variables in the study of ER, such as job satisfaction (Bufquin et al., 2017; Hassan et al., 2021), organisational commitment (Agus & Selvaraj, 2020; Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019), psychological empowerment (Ratau, 2021), organizational identification (Bharadwaj et al., 2021), psychological contract (Nayak et al., 2021), motivation (Mata et al., 2021), employee engagement (Ekhsan et al., 2021), work engagement (Fernando & Nishanthi, 2021) and

person–organisation fit (Yusliza et al., 2021). Besides, SET only study on-the-job-factor and does not give enough explanation of the reason why people stay in their organisation even better opportunity arise. In this study, off-the-job factor has been taken into consideration by using JE in which it does not only cover on-the-job-factor, it also covers off-the-job-factor. This study found that academic staff cannot be retained by providing high CWS directly. But it should go through JE as a mediator. Besides, ER also can be increased by providing high POS through JE as mediator. JE, which consist of on-the-job and off-the-job factor, seems to be an attractive factors that increase staffs' desire to continue stay even there is better opportunity arise. Hence, this study is able to capture a more comprehensive view of turnover predictors. This study breakthrough and explore the unexplained aspect and added to the evidence in which JE could be one of the important mediating variables in ER literature. From the theoretical point of view, the study has contributed to the existing body of knowledge and give further insight in SET.

Practical Implication

This study's results would provide several practical implications for the HR practitioners from Malaysian Private Universities. First, the HR practitioners should design the policy which can increase organizational-link by providing more POS and facilitate the academic staff in their teaching, research and admin task which can make their individual values fit well with the university. Academic staff status also should be respected and get recognition from the university. This can make staff perceive that their individual value is aligned with the value of the university to enhance organisational fit. Second, the HR practitioners should also trigger CWS by implementing mentor-mentees system, especially in research. The guidance from senior-professors, as per peer modelling, is needed for young academics to build close connection with colleagues and enhance the organization-link. Trust should be built to strengthen the member-link. Third, it is not sufficient if just emphasize on giving support (POS) and trigger CWS which are enable to increase academic staff's JEon. JEoff also play a vital role in ER. This aspect is always overlooked by the scholars and practitioners. In order to increase the willingness of staff to stay when other opportunity arise, HR practitioners should make all the staff feel that they are not only just working as colleagues but rather than also to be part of a member in community. Therefore, staff should be trained and given encouragement to speak and learn from each other the different national language and regional dialect outside of work. This would lead to closer relationship among the staff. They would feel more comfortable with the nonworking environment and perceived they can fit well with the community (community-fit). Lastly, the support obtained from the co-worker, such as counselling, caring their needs as well as listening to the problem. Managers and staff are encouraged provide their caring do not only limit to work- related, but also non-work-related issues. In view of all the staff play a critical role in community organising, HR practitioners should take the initiative to encourage staff to organise and join the social activities outside of work to build close relationship and know more different friends in order to expand the social networking in the community-link.

Research Limitation and Future Research

There are several limitations for this study. Firstly, the scope of this study is mainly only focus on the academic staff who are currently working in Malaysian private universities, which has played a crucial role in Malaysian economic development. Therefore, the overall picture of the mediating role of JE in the relationship between POS, CWS and ER among academic staff cannot be obtained completely. Therefore, future research can be conducted in other higher

education institutions such as public institutions, colleges, university colleges, international branch campuses for comparison purpose. In view of different people may have different perception towards something across different culture and country.

Conclusion

Based on the finding, all the hypotheses are supported except H2. This study shows that the relationship between POS and ER is mediated partially by JE. However, the relationship between CWS and ER is mediated completely by JE. CWS has no direct effect on ER. Based on the results, discussion on finding as well as the khan of theoretical and practical have been done in this study. Limitation and direction for future research also have been discussed in this study. This study provides further insight for HR practitioners from Malaysian private universities to formulate more useful strategy on how to retain the academic staff even there is an opportunity arise by emphasizing job embeddedness.

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