

# Navigating Employer Perception of job Hopping among Generation Y and Z in Media Industry

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## Abstract

This study investigates employer perceptions of job-hopping behavior among Generation Y and Z journalists in Malaysia, addressing a significant methodological bias in existing talent management literature. While prior research has extensively documented employee-centric motivations and retention rates, there remains a critical dearth of inquiry into the cognitive and strategic frameworks of employers. Utilizing a qualitative approach, ten employers were selected via purposive sampling for in-depth interviews, with the resulting data processed through thematic analysis. The findings elucidate four primary themes regarding the implications of job-hopping, which are (a) the loss of human capital investment, (b) disruption to operational continuity and the workplace ecosystem, (c) the erosion of professional trust, and (d) the degradation of individual personality and credibility. These results provide an understanding of the divergence between job-hopping and traditional turnover, offering vital insight for organizational stability in an increasingly volatile labor market.

**Keywords:** Job-Hopping, Journalist, Generation Y and Z, Employer, Malaysia

## Introduction

Empirical evidence from Adkins (2016) indicates that approximately 50% of these cohorts engage in job-hopping, a behavioral pattern characterized by a lack of organizational loyalty and a propensity to exit at any given time. The crisis of talent retention poses a significant threat to national aspirations, particularly in meeting the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0) (Ghazali, Nashulli, & Othman, 2018). Failure to retain talent jeopardizes the human capital supply chain essential for digital innovation. This urgency is corroborated by 2025 statistics from Ministry of Human Resources of Malaysia, which validate a sharp increase in turnover rates among younger employees, nearly 43% exhibit a tendency to transition to new career opportunities within a short tenure.

Specifically, focus must shift toward how employers interpret behaviour, assess occupational risks, and formulate strategic responses to job-hopping. This involves exploring the construction of stigmas, such as the assumption that younger workers possess unrealistic expectations (Hyman, 2023) or are inherently prone to attrition (Robert Half, 2023). Despite

these conceptual differences, Ismail et al., (2018) observe that Malaysian employers often harbor a generalized negative stigma toward turnover, failing to differentiate between the underlying motives of employees. This ambiguity is exacerbated by Asian cultural norms, Ting-Toomey (2005) notes that in collectivist cultures, frequently transitions are viewed as a lack of loyalty rather than strategic skill acquisition.

Consequently, traditional values of organizational commitment often overshadow professional advancement in employer evaluations. This study aims to explore the extent to which employers in Sarawak can distinguish between job-hopping and turnover, while identifying the implications of such behaviors on both the organization and the employers themselves, through the lens of employer perception. The primary gap lies in understanding not only the perceptions held by employers but, more crucially, the 'why' behind the formation of these perceptions.

Consistent with global scholarly recommendations to pivot research focus (Ng & Parry, 2016; Twenge, 2019), this study employs cognitive interviews with employers within media organizations. This qualitative approach aims to unearth the 'red flags' identified during recruitment processes (Gateway Commercial Finance, 2025), by deconstructing employer narratives and offers contextual richness and a holistic understanding of complex workforce management issues.

### **Objective of Study**

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the employers' perceptions regarding modern workforce job-hopping. Specifically, the study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To understand the differences between job hopping and turnover from employers' perspective.
2. To explore the impact of job hopping on organizational stability from the employer's perspective.

### *Literature Review Distinguishing Turnover from Job-Hopping: A Conceptual and Operational Dichotomy*

The distinction between turnover and job-hopping transcends mere semantics, requiring a rigorous examination through distinct operational lenses. While both involve the cessation of membership within an organization, turnover is predominantly reactive, often lacking immediate subsequent career planning (Philio, 2017). According to Price (2001) and Yuen (2016), turnover is primarily driven by extreme 'push factors' such as toxic work environments or profound job dissatisfaction. This phenomenon aligns with the classic framework by March and Simon (1958), where the 'desire to movement'. Consequently, individuals in this category may resign without securing alternative employment to escape to escape persistent organizational stressors.

Theoretically, turnover is a multi-stage cognitive process. Hom and Griffeth (1995) assert that it originates from negative appraisals of the work environment, which eventually crystallize into turnover intentions. Factors such as interpersonal conflict and organizational misalignment act as primary catalysts. Furthermore, Mobley et al., (1979), emphasize a deep cost-benefit analysis, where employees evaluate the utility of alternative roles against current

satisfaction. This is reinforced by Steer and Mowday (1981), who suggest that individuals undergo a rigorous evaluation of organizational quality relative to personal goals before the intent to leave is finalized. This cognitive phase involves not only financial considerations but also psychological costs, such as the loss of social networks (Griffeth & Hom, 2001), and the risks associated with external uncertainty (Blau, 1964).

Conversely, job-hopping is a deliberate, proactive, and recurring phenomenon. Ghiselle (1974) characterizes it as a calculated strategy defined by logic, volition, and intentional repetition. Yuen (2016), defines job-hopping as a chronic and repetitive pattern of voluntary exit, characterized by tenures of less than two years. This repetitive nature suggests an individual disposition or a lack of long term organizational commitment, distinguishing it from involuntary turnover by placing full agency in the hands of the employee. Theoretically, job-hopping has been categorized through various lenses; as irrational behaviour in early literature (Ghiselle, 1974), as a strategic mechanism for achieving job satisfaction (Daming & Xiaoyun, 2010), and as a vehicle for dynamic career development (Woo, 2011). Utilizing the decision-making model by Maertz and Campion (2004), job hoppers do not act impulsively; instead, they weigh external '*pull factors*', such as superior remuneration or an accelerated promotion track, against current organization pressures. This behaviour is a strategic maneuver toward long-term security and ambition (Mobley, 1977). A pivotal differentiator identified by Khatri et al., (2001) is high external employability; job hoppers possess significant confidence in their market value and perceive frequent transitions as a professional norm.

#### *Job-hopping among Generation Y and Z*

The contemporary labor market is characterized by the distinct behavioral and psychological profiles of Generation Y and Z. Generation Y (Millennials, 1981-1996), in Malaysia was shaped by rapid urbanization, the IT revolution and the 1997-1998 Asian Financial Crisis, which instilled a sense of economic resilience (Goldring & Azab, 2021; Ibrahim, 2007). As digital natives, they prioritize operational efficiency and career agility through technological fluency (Bencsik et al., 2020). In contrast, Generation Z (1997-2012) represents the inaugural cohort socialized within a mature digital ecosystem, leading to profound pragmatism and a acute awareness of systemic issues such as mental health and social justice (Lanier, 2017; Francis & Hoefel, 2018). While generation Y navigated the digital transition, generation Z's total immersion has fundamentally altered their cognitive processes and social dynamics (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Consequently, talent management must address these nuanced motivations: generation Y seek innovative agility rooted in resilience, whereas generation Z demands transparency, ethical alignment, and mental well-being to mitigate job-hopping tendencies.

In the context of generational dynamics, Yuen (2016) and Shrestha (2021) argue that for generation Y and Z, job-hopping functions as a strategic mechanism for professional value accumulation. These cohort exhibit a markedly low tolerance for rigid career trajectories, viewing inter-organizational mobility as a form of self-investment to cultivate a sustainable competitive advantage. This behavioral shift is further facilitated by '*subjective norms*' as described by Ajzen (1991); social support from familial and peer networks acts as a psychologist catalyst, mitigating the stressors associated with career transitions. Such social reinforcement validates job-hopping as a normalized professional move, a sentiment echoed by Khatri et al., (2001). This transformation has been further accelerated by the post-COVID-

19 recalibration of the psychological contract, which precipitated global phenomena such as 'The Great Resignation' and "The Great Reshuffle".

According to Formica and Sfodera (2022), the motivations underlying job-hopping have transcended materialistic dimensions, with employees now prioritizing a holistic '*meaning of work*'. Consequently, the employer-employee dynamic has transitioned from a loyalty-based model to a transactional relationship that emphasizes talent development and flexibility.

The instability of the global economy has necessitated a fundamental shift from traditional organizational dependence toward a paradigm of individual self-reliance. This transition is increasingly substantiated by the emergence of 'career cushioning', a defensive mechanism whereby employees proactively cultivate external professional networks and expand their technical capabilities to offset the threat of sudden redundancy (Dandsen, 2024; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). In this volatile environment, frequent job transitions are increasingly recognized as a strategic necessity rather than a sign of professional inconsistency. Moving between different organizational cultures and industries facilitates the rapid acquisition of diverse skills and specialized knowledge that are rarely accessible within the confines of a single employer (Shrestha, 2021; Ng et al., 2005). As a result, the traditional bond between employer and employee has shifted toward a pragmatic, transactional arrangement. In this new paradigm, workers prioritize personal marketability and broad-based employability over long-term institutional loyalty (Rousseau, 1995).

### **Materials and Method**

To address the existing research gap, the study adopts a qualitative framework grounded in phenomenological design. This approach is uniquely suited to capturing the 'lived experiences' and authentic perspective of informants regarding the job-hopping phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2005). By prioritizing descriptive depth over statistical abstraction, this design facilitates the discovery of emergent insight into under-researched socio-emotional drivers of organizational perception (Creswell, 2003; Lim, 2014).

The phenomenological orientation aligns with Moustakas' (1994) emphasis on uncovering the essence of subjective realities. Despite inherent challenges, such as navigating participant stereotypes, this design remains the most efficacious for exploring the 'how' and 'why' of employer evaluations within the Malaysian context. Furthermore, the first researcher established rapport with informants served as a critical instrument for bridging the distance between researcher and subject, ensuring a transparent and profound exchange in insights.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth individual interviews to enhance the researcher's understanding of the informants' live experience and perception regarding job-hopping behaviour among their younger employees. In this study, the interview output was derived from a predetermined set of questions administered in a systematic sequences, with comprehensive note-taking serving as a primary instrument for data validation.

The interview protocol was structured around two pivotal research inquiries: Question 1 explored the informant's conceptual understanding of the distinction between job-hopping and turnover. Question 2, investigated the informants' perceptions concerning the

implications of job-hopping among Generation Y and Z journalists. To uphold research integrity, Informants were briefed on data security and privacy protocols, ensuring that the information gathered adhered to ethical standards to prevent any adverse consequences for the Informants (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Furthermore, a detailed briefing on the research objectives and the anticipated contribution of the findings was provided to each Informant. Upon obtaining informed consent, interviews were conducted, lasting approximately 30 to 60 minutes per session. During these sessions, responses were documented through both handwritten notes and digital audio recordings. These data sources were subsequently scrutinized and subjected to open coding to identify emergent ideologies, perceptions, and salient themes.

All interviews were audio-recorded before being transcribed verbatim for analysis using content analysis methods involving various stages like reading transcripts multiple times for meaning identification followed by coding units into categories leading ultimately towards drawing conclusions as depicted through Table 1 illustrating our analytical process.

Table 1  
Data Analysis Process

Meaning Unit	Condensed meaning units	Codes	Categories
<i>"..The difference is that the job-hopping is performed repeatedly...every two or three years without robust career advancement "</i> (M3,M6)	The recurrence of transitions with tenure of less than 3 years, are used as a benchmark to label job-hopping behavior.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Repetitive movement</li> <li>● Tenure benchmark</li> </ul>	Behavioral Frequency
<i>" Turnover typically stems from exigent circumstances..(whereas job hoppers are driven primarily by reward and marginal salary increment."</i> (M3,M5,M8)	Turnover is characterized as a reactive exit due to external pressures, whereas job-hopping is a proactive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Push factors (situational)</li> <li>● Pull factors (financial)</li> </ul>	Underlying Motive
<i>"Turnover is viewed as a full stop, while job-hopping involve a phased transition between organizations."</i> (M2,M3,M10)	Turnover is perceived as a conclusion of professional phase, while job-hopping is viewed as an active, based transition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Career mobility</li> <li>● Professional termination</li> </ul>	Strategic Career Trajectory
<i>"Departure..represent the loss of intellectual capital systematically cultivated through costly skill-building programs."</i> (M9, M5,M7)	Organization lose the value of trained expertise and strategic trade secrets before achieving return on training investment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ROI Intellectual leakage'</li> <li>● Failure: Hidden recruitment costs</li> </ul>	Loss of Human Capital Investment
<i>"Sudden vacancies force remaining staff to shoulder additional workloads, leading to mental exhaustion"</i> (M3,M6,M1)	Frequent vacancies destabilize newsroom workflows, exhaust remaining staff, and sever critical relationships with news sourcers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Functional Voids: Workforce burnout; Loss of social capital</li> </ul>	Disruption Operation Ecosystem

<p>“When trust is eroded, management may limit an employee’s access to confidential information..” (M2,M9,M8)</p>	<p>Employers lose confidence in employee integrity, leading to a defensive stance, where hoppers are excluded from strategic planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychological contract breach: defensive management; Reduced opportunity.</li> </ul>	<p>Erosion of Professional Trust</p>
<p>“We label the individual as an opportunist who is self-centered and lacks a sense of belonging..” (M4,M10,M6)</p>	<p>Short tenures are interpreted as indicators of emotional instability, opportunism, and a low tolerance for professional pressure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal Attribution: Character stigma; Low resilience proxy</li> </ul>	<p>Negative Personality &amp; Credibility Perception</p>

*Demographic Profile of the Informants*

Table 2 below display participants age, gender, and position in current organization. In this context, ten (10) Informant were selected through purposive sampling, comprising top management from six prominent media organizations in Sarawak, Malaysia, which encompass both mass and print media, namely mass media such as TV Sarawak and Cats Radio, while print media such as Suara Sarawak, Utusan Sarawak, Borneo Post and Utusan Borneo. The informants pool includes individuals with executive authority in newsroom human resource decision-making such as editors, sub-editors, chief reporters, and human resource managers. Their selections is critical to ensuring that the data gathered accurately reflects the managerial realities and organizational culture inherent in the journalism industry.

Table 2  
*Informants’ demographic*

No	Gender	Age	Position	Organization
M1	Men	50	Editor	TV Sarawak
M2	Women	52	Editor	Suara Sarawak
M3	Men	50	Sub Editor	TV Sarawak
M4	Men	48	Editor	Utusan Sarawak
M5	Women	54	HRM Manager	Utusan Borneo
M6	Women	35	Chief Reporter	Utusan Sarawak
M7	Men	44	Chief Reporter	Cats Radio
M8	Men	53	HRM Manager	Cat’s Radio
M9	Men	45	Chief Reporter	Suara Sarawak
M10	Women	42	Chief Reporter	Borneo Post

**Result**

Research Question 1: How do employers perceive the differences between job hopping and turnover?

Findings for the in-depth interviews reveal that the Informants possess a clear conceptual understanding in distinguish job-hopping from turnover. The majority of Informants asserted that the primary distinctions between these two concepts reside in three dimensions: (i), behavioural frequency, (ii), underlying motive, and (iii), the strategic implications for an individual’s career trajectory.

### *Behavioural Frequency*

The findings of this study reveal that employers maintain a sophisticated cognitive schema in distinguishing between the phenomena of organizational turnover and job-hopping. This differentiation is not merely superficial; rather, it is rooted in a multidimensional analysis of behavioral frequency, intrinsic motivation, and the perceived impact on professional maturity. Data analysis indicates that behavioral frequency serves as the primary indicator demarcating these two constructs. Informants M6 and M10 emphasized that turnover is typically characterized as an incidental or unique event signaling the natural conclusion of a service phase. Conversely, job-hopping is identified as a repetitive and phase pattern of organization movement. Informant M6 clarified this distinction, noting that “*job-hopping and turnover are almost similar concepts; while turnover is not.*”

This is further substantiated by Informant M3, who utilized tenure metrics as an objective benchmark, categorizing individuals who transition between organizations every two to three years without robust career justification as job hoppers. In contrast, turnover is viewed as a full stop, the organic conclusion of specific service phase before transitioning to a subsequent life stage (Informant M3). These findings align with Lake et al., (2018), who posit that a repetitive pattern of short-term employment constitutes the most robust empirical evidence for identifying job-hopping behavior. Theoretically, this suggests that employers do not merely evaluate the act of resignation, but rather the rhythm of movement as a proxy for a candidate’s long-term stability.

### *Underlying Motive*

Furthermore, the study identifies significant variance regarding the motivational dynamics of these behaviors. Turnover is generally categorized through the lens of push and pull factors, often stemming from exigent circumstances. Informant M8 argued that turnover frequently arises from situational pressures, such as familial obligations or a lack of organizational fit, rendering the resignation a reactive exit strategy rather than a pre-planned advancement. Informant M2 added that turnover does not always imply a transition to a new firm, it may serve as a mechanism to mitigate burnout or facilitate a career pivot. This finding is supported by Holtom et al., (2008), who suggest that the shocks leading to turnover, whether personal or professional, significantly influence how subsequent employers perceive a candidate’s credibility.

In contrast, job-hopping is perceived as a proactive, self centered strategy. Employers view this behavior as a deliberate maneuver to manipulate the labor market for marginal salary increments or rapid status elevation (Informant M5). Human resource managers scrutinize these transitions through the lens of financial intent; for instance, frequent movement for minimal pay raise (e.g., RM500.00) without a commensurate increase in skill sets is viewed as a definitive indicator of instability (Informant M4). This perspective finds theoretical grounding in Psychological Contract Theory (Rousseau, 1989), where job-hopping is interpreted as a breach of the implicit mutual commitment between employer and employee. When employers label job-hopping as a negative habit (Informants M6,M10), they highlight an erosion of professional trust, signaling that loyalty remains a vital ‘currency’ in the Malaysian labor market, despite the rise of the gig economy.

*Implications for an individual’s career trajectory.*

Additionally, the strategic implications of these two phenomena diverge significantly within the professional narrative of a candidate. Turnover is generally integrated into the trajectory of a stable professional evolution, often viewed as a legitimate transition between career milestones. Conversely, job-hopping is pathologized as a strategic gamble, that jeopardizes long-term professional credibility. In the context of the journalism industry, a field heavily reliant on cultivating long-term social capital and source networks, frequent movement is perceived as an erosion of reliability and professional integrity.

Ultimately, the divergence in employer perception reinforces the notion that job-hopping is not merely a statistical subset of turnover, but a distinct behavioral construct with profound psychological and operational consequences. While turnover represents a manageable phase of the organizational lifecycle, job-hopping is viewed as a systemic impediment to organizational ecosystem stability and a direct threat to the preservation of human capital. This study therefore concludes that the job hopper label acts as a socio-professional stigma in the Malaysian labor market, creating a significant barrier for younger generations who prioritize rapid mobility over traditional organizational loyalty.

In summary, this study establishes that employers within the Malaysian journalism industry maintain a sophisticated, non-monolithic conceptualization of employee departures. *“Rather than viewing all exist through a singular lens of attrition, there exists a discerning cognitive appraisal that distinguishes organic turnover is frequently met with institutional empathy, particularly when attributed to life stages or reactive environmental factors, job-hopping high risk behavioral manifestation.”* (Informants M2, M8). *“This distinction is empirically anchored in a temporal benchmark, where a service period of less than two to three years serves as a critical proxy for instability.”* (Informant M3). Consequently, employers engage in motivational attribution, a psychological process of discerning the underlying intent behind a resignation to mitigate future recruitment risks. This skepticism toward Generation Y and Z candidates is fundamentally rooted in the perceived erosion of Return on Investment (ROI), as frequent transitions prevent the organization from recouping the substantial costs associated with specialized journalist training and human capital development.

Research Question 2: What are the perceived implications of job-hopping among the generation Y and Z journalists from employers' perceptions?

Figure 1 illustrates the findings reveal that job hopping results in four primary thematic impacts on employers: (i) loss of investment in human capital; (ii) disruption to operation and the workplace ecosystem; (iii), the erosion of professional trust; and (iv), negative perceptions regarding personality and credibility. These four themes are critically examined in the following subsections to elucidate how the consequences of job hopping extend beyond material losses, fundamentally affecting the structural and psychological dimensions of the organization.

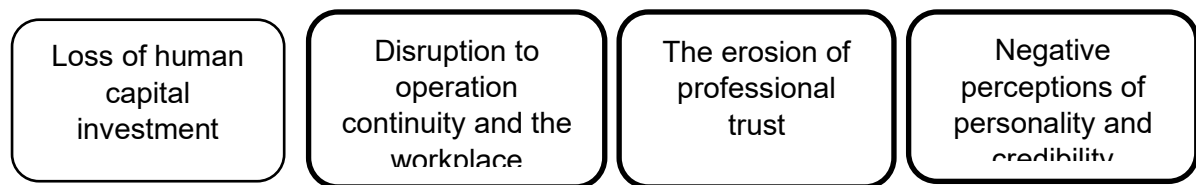


Figure 1. Organizational impact of job hopping from employer perception.

Note. Source: Developed by the authors for this research.

### *Loss of Human Capital Investment*

The primary theme identified in this study is the loss of investment in human capital. Fundamentally, organizations fail to achieve a satisfactory Return on Investment (ROI) for employees who have undergone meticulous training and development. Theoretically, this phenomenon aligns with Barney's (1991) Resource-Based View (RBV), which posits that organizational competitive advantage is contingent upon human resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. Consequently, job-hopping is perceived as critical leakage of strategic assets. This is corroborated by Informant M9, who remarked, "*The departure of an employee is not merely a physical loss, it represents the loss of intellectual capital systematically cultivated through costly skill-building programs.*" This sentiment is supported by Polyhart and Moliterno (2011), who argue that human capital emergence is a multilevel process, and its sudden withdrawal disrupts the collective knowledge base that is essential for organization specific performance.

Furthermore, this turnover triggers a systemic chain reaction that comprises overall organizational performance. Informant M5 noted that excessive turnover directly diminishes productivity, a view echoed by Cascio (2019), who asserts that the true cost of job-hopping far exceeds an employee's base salary. Organizations must absorb high hidden costs, including recruitment expenditures, orientation sessions, and the protracted '*gestation period*' required for new hires to achieve full functional competency. These findings are further reinforced by Hancock et al., (2013), who emphasize that the loss of skilled personnel creates structural disruptions in the workflow. Informant M4 explained "*When an expert leaves, the resulting skill gap forces the remaining team members to shoulder additional responsibilities.*" According to Park and Shaw (2013), this sudden surge in workload frequently leads to occupational burnout and a decline in morale among the remaining staff, psychological impacts, it directly impairs collective output quality as operational processes no longer function at optimal levels. Compounding this issue, Heaver et al., (2013), suggest that declining morale surviving employees begin to question organizational stability and contemplate their own exits. This creates a negative feedback loop that not only inflates operating costs but also erodes the organization's reputation as an 'Employer of Choice', complicating future talent acquisition efforts (Alshathry et al., 2017).

Beyond productivity, the study highlights critical threats to organizational secrets and strategic intellectual property. Informant M7 expressed concern that employees migrating to competitors might transfer trade secrets and specialized expertise. This mobility risk is consistent with Smith and Watkins (2020), who identify information security as a collateral impact of labor mobility. As Informant M8 highlighted, "*In niche industries, every departing employee carries away tacit knowledge that is difficult to document or replace swiftly.*" Campbell et al. (2012) further validate this by demonstrating that employee mobility to rivals

not only weakens the originating firm's innovative capacity but also grants an unfair competitive advantage through the unauthorized transfer of operational strategies.

In support of these findings, Joe et al., (2013) describe the loss of senior personnel as a catalyst for '*organizational amnesia*', where the organization loses the historical context behind strategic decision-making. Moreover, Agrawal et al., (2015) argue that turnover knowledge-intensive sectors acts as transmission channel for ideas, allowing competitors to bypass expensive Research and Development (R&D) phases. Consequently, job-hopping is no longer merely a human resource concern but a strategic security threat. This necessitates increased investment in restrictive covenants and robust knowledge management systems to mitigate the impact of "*talent poaching*" by rivals seeking to exploit the training investments of the focal firm. In conclusion, the habit of job-hopping traps organizations in a perpetual cycle of training without reaping long-term rewards, ultimately destabilizing organizational competitiveness in the global market.

#### *Disruption to Operational and the Erosion of Strategic Intellectual Capital*

The second theme identified in this study involves the severe disruption of daily operations resulting from high labor mobility. In the media industry, a seamless workflow is the cornerstone of high-quality news production, however, findings indicate that job hopping creates functional voids that destabilize established work systems, particularly within the newsroom. Informants M3 explained that in a deadline-driven media environment, sudden vacancies force remaining staff to shoulder additional workloads, leading to occupational burnout and a subsequent decline in editorial quality. This aligns with Shaw et al., (2005), who suggest that turnover dismantles the collaborative system within an organization. Furthermore, Bakker and Demerouti's (2007) supports the notion that an imbalance between high job demand (due to understaffing) and limited resources accelerates workforce exhaustion. Informant M1 corroborated this, "*asserting that in organizations prioritizing speed, the loss of team member disrupts not only technical tasks but also the rhythm of productivity cultivated over time.*"

Strategically, Informants differentiated general turnover from job-hopping through its implications for career trajectories and professional credibility. While turnover is often integrated into the narrative of stable professional evolution, job-hopping is scrutinized as a strategic gamble that jeopardizes long term reliability. Informant M9 noted that frequent movement is perceived as an erosion of professional loyalty, while Informant M7 added that in journalism, such patterns lead to negative employer perceptions regarding a candidate's character. This is supported by Lake et al., (2018), who argue that employers view frequent leavers as possessing a high turnover propensity, reflecting a lack of emotional stability or a failure to person-organization fit. Consequently, job-hopping is not merely a statistical subset of turnover but a distinct behavioral manifestation with profound psychological and operational consequences.

Moreover, Informant M6 emphasized that a journalist's expertise, specifically rapport with news sources and mastery of house editorial styles, takes years to cultivate. "*The frequent exit of staff results in the loss of critical social capital, paralyzing team coordination.*" (Informant M10). On a broader scale, Informant M1 asserted that this instability threatens the agency's reputation for swift and accurate reporting. These findings are reinforced by Adler and Kwon

(2002), who posit that social capital is an intangible yet crucial asset for information access. When a journalist departs, the external network built on trust often evaporates. Furthermore, Dess and Shaw (2001), demonstrate that the cost of turnover in knowledge based organizations is exceptionally high because it involves the loss of embedded knowledge. Unlike explicit knowledge, this tacit dimension includes deep understandings of organizational culture and the informal network that facilitates efficiency (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Informant M3 further highlighted that the departure of experienced staff leads to “*organizational amnesia*”, stripping the firm of the historical memory needed for rapid decision making during crises. Stoyanov (2017), reinforces this by arguing that the loss of skilled workers results in a permanent ‘*depreciation of intellectual capital*’ as knowledge transfer from incumbents to successors is rarely absolute (100%), particularly regarding creative and editorial judgment. Furthermore, Hsu et al., (2011), emphasized that in a creative industries, expertise is often firm specific. Thus, even if a new hire possesses equivalent academic credentials, they required a significant lead time to internalize the agency’s unique standards and language.

Urbancova and Linhartova (2011), argued that this turnover creates a risk of expertise leakage to competitors, undermining the focal organization's market position. Therefore, workforce stability in media is not merely a human resource issue but a strategic defense mechanism to maintain intellectual superiority and journalistic quality. Collectively, these findings suggest that workforce stability is the pulse of a media agency’s credibility; without it, momentum is lost, and the agency’s social responsibility to the public is profoundly compromised.

#### *The Erosion of Professional Trust*

The third theme reveals that the practice of job-hopping leads to a significant deterioration of professional trust between employers and employees. According to Informants M2, trust serves as an unwritten psychological contract that forms the bedrock of workplace harmony. Informants M9 noted, “*When employees transition between organizations too frequently, employers begin to doubt their integrity and long-term commitment.*” This finding mirrors Rousseau’s (1995) Psychological Contract Theory, which suggests that when this unspoken agreement is perceived as breached, employers become hesitant to offer promotions or strategic roles, fearing that their emotional and professional investments will yield no return.

These justifications are further reinforced by Allen et al., (2010), who assert that loyalty remains a cornerstone value in human resource management. Informant M8 emphasized that in the competitive newsroom environment, employers require an assurance of service longevity, particularly for high stakes projects such as investigative journalism. When trust is eroded, employers often adopt a defensive posture. As Informant M1 explained, “*Management may limit an employee’s access to confidential information or exclude them from future strategic planning.*” This is consistent with Guest (2004), who argues that the violation of the psychological contract creates a negative perceptual gap, where employers no longer view employees as strategic partners but rather as transient liabilities.

Furthermore, Informants M5 asserted that this breach creates a detrimental shift in perception, employees cease to view the workforce as a long term asset. Research by Lub et al., (2012) corroborates this, showing that, among younger generations, the failure to maintain

trust results in a decline in Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), where employees perform only the bare minimum requirements of their role without the willingness to contribute beyond their formal duties. This is further supported by Turnley and Feldman (2000), who argue that when the psychological contract is perceived as violated, or in the case of job-hopping, when the employer perceives a lack of commitment, it can trigger counterproductive work behaviors. Informants M9 highlighted that employees that employees tend to withdraw from voluntary organizational activities due to a fractured sense of belonging.

According to Informant M4, this environment fosters a mutual sense of cynicism, employers become skeptical of an employee's long term potential, while employees grow cynical regarding the career promises made by management. This phenomenon is defined by Robinson and Morrison (2000) as Organizational Cynicism, which shifts the professional relationship from a values-based social exchange to a rigid, transactional exchange. As Informant M4 noted "*The professional bond is reduced to a cold transaction*". Coyle-Shapiro and Shore (2007), through Social Exchange Theory, emphasize that organizational stability relies heavily on the principle of reciprocity. When frequent job-hopping disrupts this reciprocity, employers extrinsically limit investments in leadership training and mentorship, creating a negative feedback loop where talent fails to reach its full potential within the dynamic media industry.

Compounding this issue, Blau (1964) explains that stable employment relationships are built on mutual exchange, when job-hopping severs this chain, employers tend to reduce Perceived Organizational Support (POS) (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Ultimately, this erosion of trust does not only stifle career advancement opportunities for the individual but also creates a profound communication gap that damages the team oriented culture of media organizations. Such instability fundamentally impairs the collaborative quality necessary to produce high-impact credible journalistic reports.

#### *Negative Perception regarding Personality and Credibility*

The final theme emergent from this thematic inquiry elucidates the social construction of pejorative perceptions regarding the personality profiles of chronic job hoppers. The data indicates a systemic tendency among hiring authorities to interpret high-frequency organizational transitions as symptomatic of inherent characterological deficits rather than a mere deficiency in technical aptitude. This interpretive shift suggests that recruiters utilize tenure as a diagnostic tool for assessing psychological reliability. Dahling and Librizzi (2015) corroborate this, noting that hiring managers frequently utilize career history as a proxy for personality, often inferring lower levels of conscientiousness from fragmented employment records.

The skepticism voiced by Informant M4, who noted that "short service records often trigger skepticism concerning a candidate's emotional stability and long term commitment". In this context, job-hopping is perceived as a lack of 'trait persistence', rendering the candidate a high risk investment. Furthermore, the findings highlight a critical pivot from situational to dispositional evaluation. As informant M10 observed, the recruitment discourse has moved away from acknowledging external motivators, such as competitive remuneration, toward labelling the individual as 'an opportunist who is self-centered and lacks a sense of belonging.'

The justification align with the study by Lake et al., (2018), which found that hiring managers frequently utilize career history as a proxy to measure personality dimensions, specifically conscientiousness and emotional stability. In the high pressure environment of the media industry, employers require a workforce with robust psychological resilience. Informant M6 emphasized that frequent job changes are interpreted as an indicator of low tolerance threshold: *“Individuals who frequently job-hop are perceived as having a low tolerance threshold for work pressure or internal newsroom conflicts.”* Informants M6.

Furthermore, according to Doherty (2014), this stigma creates a negative halo effect, also known as the horn effect =, where one observed negative trait (a record of job-hopping) leads employers to make adverse assumptions about a candidate’s overall professional capability and technical proficiency. Research by Chung et al., (2010), supports the notion that within professional sectors, consistency in service is regarded as evidence of professional maturity, integrity, and organizational loyalty. This justification is further detailed by Informant M1, who argued that employers often use career stability as a proxy to assess “person-organization fit’ (P-O fit). As explained by Informant M6, *“Candidates with a history of short-term service are frequently labelled as high risk due to their perceived failure to adapt to organizational culture or an inability to manage interpersonal conflicts maturely.”* This perspective is supported by Biemann and Weckmuller (2018), who suggest that stable career patterns are often viewed by recruiters as a signal of a candidate’s ability to navigate complex social structure within a firm.

Additionally, Papadopoulou et al., (2012) state that this stigma triggers cognitive biases among interview panels, where they tend to seek out further negative evidence to confirm their initial impressions of a candidate’s instability. This results in a talent screening barrier, that is exceptionally difficult to overcome, even for candidates possessing extraordinary technical skills. In the context of the modern economy, Sullivan (2016) adds that while career mobility is increasingly accepted, in industries that prioritized confidentially and long term relationships, such at media, a stable service record remains the primary currency of professional credibility.

Consequently, employers are now more inclined to prioritize candidates with consistent service records as a guarantee of operational sustainability and the security of the organization’s intellectual property.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study underscore that job-hopping within the media landscape of Sarawak, Malaysia, functions as a multidimensional disruptor that destabilizes the structural economic, and psychological foundations of the organization. The evidence advantage is derived from resources that are rare and inimitable. The evidence suggests that frequent turnover acts as a critical ‘leakage’ of these strategic assets, where the departure of trained personnel results in a ‘depreciation of intellectual capital’ (Stoyanov, 2017\_ and the onset of “organizational amnesia” (Joe et al., 2013). This loss is particularly acute in the media sector, where tacit knowledge such as rapport with news sources and mastery of house editorial styles cannot be easily documented or transferred, leading to a permanent erosion of the agency’s historical context and decision-making capacity.

Furthermore, the study highlights a systemic chain reaction where the withdrawal of human capital triggers operational instability. This aligns with Social Exchange Theory (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007), and the concept of the Psychological Contract (Rousseau, 1995). As a job-hopping increases, the perceived breach of reciprocity prompts employers to adopt defensive posture, limiting investment in mentorship and restricting access to strategic information. This creates a negative feedback loop as management treats employees as transient liabilities, staff engagement and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) decline, further accelerating the cycle of burnout and exit. The resulting shift from a values-based social exchange to a rigid, transactional relationship suggests that job-hopping fundamentally alters the organizational culture, moving it away from collaborative synergy toward fragmented, short term survivalism.

Finally, the transition from situational to dispositional evaluation by hiring authorities reveals a significant socio-psychological barrier for mobile professionals. The findings indicate that tenure has become a diagnostic tool or a proxy for personality traits such as conscientiousness and emotional stability (Dahling & Librizzi, 2015). This 'horn effect' (Doherty, 2014) implies that the stigma of job-hopping creates a lasting 'talent screening barrier' that technical proficiency alone cannot overcome. In a collectivist professional environment like Malaysia, the perceived lack of professional loyalty and trait persistence not only diminishes an individual's professional brand but also prompts organizations to prioritize person-organization fit as a strategic defense mechanism. Consequently, workforce stability is positioned not merely as a human resource metric, but as the primary currency for maintaining intellectual superiority and ethical credibility in a globalized, deadline-driven market.

## **Conclusion**

Thematic research on employer perceptions in the Malaysian media landscape reveals that job hopping is not simply seen as part of employee turnover, but rather as a unique pathological behavioral construct with systemic implications for organizational stability. While employee turnover is often viewed through the lens of institutional empathy as the organic end of a phase of service, job hopping is perceived by employers as a deliberate, self-serving strategy that signals a breach of an implicit psychological contract. This behavior acts as a multidimensional disruption that results in a critical drain of strategic intellectual capital and triggers a state of organizational 'amnesia' that undermines the competitive advantage of media firms.

Furthermore, this study established that employer perceptions of the impact of frequent job hopping go beyond productivity losses, encompassing the erosion of deep-rooted professional trust and the formation of stigmatization of the individual. In the high-risk, network-dependent field of journalism, tenure serves as a diagnostic proxy for personality traits such as conscientiousness and emotional stability. As a result, job-hopping practices create a 'horn effect' that trumps technical competence, thereby positioning workforce stability as the primary currency of professional credibility. Finally, this study concludes that the label 'job hopper' functions as a socio-professional barrier in the Malaysian labor market, demanding a strategic shift in the way organizations manage human capital to reduce the long term risk of intellectual depreciation and operational instability.

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