

# Investigating the Role of Motivational Factors and Job-Hopping Attitudes on Turnover Intentions of Gen Y Hotel Employees

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## Abstract

Employees leave organizations for many reasons; often these reasons are unknown to their employers and are costly. Generation Y (Gen Y) currently constitutes the majority of the total workforce in Malaysia, and it is believed that this group of employees lacks in loyalty aspect due to different life commitments and work attitudes. Hence, the objective of this study is to investigate the influence of motivational factors and job hopping attitude on Gen Y hotel employees' intention to leave. Responses from 201 Gen Y operational employees were analyzed. Results showed that intrinsic factors (recognition and achievement) and extrinsic factors (company condition and supervision) negatively and significantly influenced the intention to leave. The job-hopping attitude was found significantly moderate the relationship between motivational factors and intention to leave. This study significantly contributes to the advancement of knowledge on Gen Y intention to leave as well as provide practical solutions for hotel practitioners to overcome high turnover rate.

**Keywords:** Gen Y, Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, Job Hopping

## Introduction

The high turnover rate had great impacts on the hospitality industry in Malaysia (AlBattat & Som, 2013; Chan & Dar, 2014). In fact, the hotel industry in Malaysia currently faces difficulties in retaining and recruiting talented employees (Shah & Beh, 2016). Additionally, in a survey carried out by Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) between the year 2010 and 2011 on 143 companies from different sectors in Malaysia revealed that hotel and restaurant sectors recorded 32.4% annual turnover rate. Further, Awee, Cheah, Cheng, Hong, Ling and Tan (2014) mentioned that Malaysian are placed at the sixth position in the Asia Pacific region with the attrition rate of 15.9%. Chan and Dar (2014) and AlBattat and Som (2013) affirmed that turnover crises, unfortunately, had great impacts on the hospitality industry in Malaysia. High voluntarily turnover, labor shortage and job-hopping that occurred

in hospitality industry certainly affected Malaysian competitiveness and which had to bear a high cost in replacing the employees (Chan & Dar, 2014).

Many organizations in the hotel industry face difficulties in retaining employees since they are unable to identify the factors that contribute to both employee satisfaction and loyalty (Abdullah, Karim, Patah, Zahari, Nair & Jusoff, 2009). The employee turnover phenomena are the consequence of various impulsive factors (Guha & Chakrabarti, 2015). As the job market has shifted over the past several decades, job-hopping is becoming the norm for the average twenty-something. Job-hopping is more of a “Generation Y” (Gen Y) phenomenon (Yew, 2007). In the case of Malaysia, Gen Y currently constitutes over 50% of the total workforce (Queiri, Yusoff, & Dwaikat, 2015). Gen Y is believed as a group of employees that lacking in loyalty aspect due to different life commitment and work attitude compared to the previous generations. Gen Y employees also reported having excessive needs in extrinsic factors from their jobs (Yusoff, Fauziah, Tan, & Rajah, 2013). Yew (2007) exclaimed that behavior of frequently switching employer or termed as job-hopping attitude is representing the character of Gen Y. Based on the above conjectures, this study aims to investigate the influence of motivational factors, job-hopping attitude and intention to leave among Gen Y hotel employees in Malaysia.

## **Literature Review**

### **Generation Y**

Generation Y (Gen Y) is a cohort of people who born after Generation X. Gen Y, also known as “Millennials”, “Net Generation”, “digital natives” and “Generation C” (or Connected Generation), are individuals aged 18–34 years at the time of publication (Bruwer et al., 2011; Nielsen, 2012; Nusair et al., 2013). Being the first generation to grow up with technology and the Internet, Gen Y is highly sociable, tech literate, and media/tech savvy (Bilgihan, 2016). Diversify assumptions have been made according to the specific and exact years of Gen Y were born (San, Omar, & Thurasamy, 2015). Most of the studies had claimed Gen Y was born somewhere between 1980 until 2000 (Solnet & Hood, 2008).

Gen Y is believed to have distinct personality traits that can distinguish them from the previous generational workforces. For example, Gen Y can be classified as optimistic, high self-confident and tend to oppose the mainstream values by acting and thinking differently compared to other generations. Moreover, they also placed a high value on freedom, relaxation, high pay, material possessions, and status more important than intrinsic values in work. The Gen Y employees are described as more demanding and are unafraid of expressing their opinions (Earle, 2003; Knight 2000). With a low tolerance for boredom, Gen Y thrives on new challenges and expects to be shown respect and given responsibility from early on in their employment (Glass, 2007; Martin, 2005). This new generation is extremely technologically literate, self-reliant, independent and looking for instant rewards (Martin, 2005; Paul, 2001). They are looking to make a contribution to something worthwhile, to have their input recognized from the start, and are not willing to put in years of service to gain any significant reward from their employer (Martin, 2005). In the workplace, they seek constant feedback, even on a daily basis (Glass, 2007; Martin, 2005). On the whole, they dislike menial and repetitive work and seek new challenges regularly (Saba, 2006; Martin, 2005). Solnet and Hood (2008) study on Gen Y on work needs found that Gen Y has an unrealistic sense of

entitlement such as demand for a high salary and work position. Kong (2015) agreed that job satisfaction and professional growth are important, and a clear path for career advancement is a concern among Gen Y employees.

A study by Queiri et al. (2015) on Gen Y Malaysian employees revealed that intention to leave from an organization was not entirely depended on Human Resource strategies but cultural and economic factors also played important predictors. Gen Y also reported to have a different kind of work expectations and work values and prefer to keep career options open and not very loyal to the organization (Smith & Galbraith, 2012). Further, Gen Y also found to have a heavier need in extrinsic motivations from the job (Yusoff, Fauziah, Tan, & Rajah, 2013). The following section will review the literature about motivational preferences pertaining to Herzberg's Two Factor Theory, job-hopping attitude, and intention to leave among hotel employees.

### ***Herzberg's Two Factor Motivational Theory***

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory suggests that humans have two different sets of needs and that the different elements of the work situation satisfies or dissatisfies these needs (Wright, 1989). The first set concerns the basic survival needs of a person – the hygiene factors (Herzberg, 1971; Herzberg, Mausner, & Bloch Snyderman, 2005). These factors are not directly related to the job itself, but concern the conditions that surround performing that job. The factors are company policy such as a reward system, salary, and interpersonal relations (Herzberg, 1971; Herzberg et al., 2005). According to Herzberg, these factors can cause dissatisfaction when not satisfied. However, when satisfied these factors do not motivate or cause satisfaction, they only prevent dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1971; Herzberg et al., 2005). The second set of needs is growth needs, which refers to factors intrinsic to the work itself, for example, recognition of a task completed, achievement, responsibility, advancement and work itself. These factors are according to Herzberg, the motivating factors, which implies that humans try to become all that they are capable of becoming and when satisfied they work as motivators (Herzberg, 1971, Herzberg et al., 2005). According to Herzberg, the content of work, (e.g. opportunities for responsibility and advancement) is the only way to increase satisfaction and thereby enhance work motivation (Wright, 1989). However, when the growth factors are missing this does not cause dissatisfaction, simply an absence of satisfaction (Herzberg, 1971; Herzberg et al., 2005; (Kermally, 2005). Several studies using Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory have been adapted to specific context studied such as charity shop (Parsons & Broadbride, 2006), hospitality industry (Balmer & Baum, 1993), and hotel employees (Hemdi & Nasurdin, 2004).

### ***Job Hopping Attitude***

Ghiselli (1974) termed the tendency of workers to engage in job-hopping as a "hobo syndrome," that is, the periodic itch to move from a job in one place to some other jobs in some other places. Khatri et al. (2001) defined job-hopping as an attitude or behavior where employees migrate from one job to another irrespective of better alternatives or other apparently rational motives. It may originate from either characteristic of individuals (such as itch of impulsiveness) or social influences (such as turnover culture). Prior scholars have put forth the notion of turnover culture to explain job-hopping tendency. For instance, Iverson and Deery (1997) defined turnover culture as a normative belief held by employees

that turnover behavior is quite appropriate, and the acceptance of turnover as part of the workgroup norm. If an employee has not changed his or her job for a long time, he or she feels increasingly pressured to do so because of social influences. This phenomenon can be observed from the findings made by Pizam and Thornburg (2000) who reported that 69.5 percent of middle-managers in the Central Florida hotels quit their organization during their first year of employment. Job-hopping attitudes have been used to explain employees' turnover behaviors by previous researchers. Simons (1995) in a study among hotel employees found that the high turnover rate among younger workers is manifested through their job-hopping behaviors. According to Simons (1995), most hospitality workers in their early portion of their career expect to move from job to job, which could explain the low desirability placed on commitment. Riley (1980) argued that labor mobility is an important factor in the development of skills among managers and that turnover is encouraged. Harbourne (1995) suggested that it is unrealistic to expect a talented employee to stay too long in any one organization, even if he or she is satisfied with his or her current job and institution. An ambitious employee needs to move on to gain experience and make progress in his or her career. Chew (1996) in his study of job-hopping occurrences within selected Asian countries postulated that in the past, employees are more likely to look for alternative jobs before resigning the current one. However, employees of today resign from their jobs even before securing another one. Also, Khatri et al. (2001) in their study within the Singaporean context provided empirical evidence on the role of job-hopping attitude as an antecedent of turnover intentions. According to Khatri et al. (2001), the job-hopping attitudes among managers were found to be highly significant in the hotel and retail businesses as compared to the marine and manufacturing sectors. Khatri et al. (2001) concluded that migrating from one job to the other may provide some ego satisfaction to job-hoppers. This literature on job-hopping attitude seems to imply that this variable has a critical impact on turnover intentions. Given the fact that Singaporean ethnics composition and culture are quite similar with that of Malaysia (Fontaine & Richardson, 2003; Abdullah, 1992), the findings made by Khatri et al. (2001) and Hemdi and Nasurdin (2004) may apply to the Malaysian scenario.

### ***Intention to leave***

Intention to leave refers to an individual's perceived probability of staying or leaving an employing organization (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986). Tett and Meyer (1993), on the other hand, referred to turnover intentions as a conscious and deliberate willfulness to leave the organization. Studies on turnover have shown that intention to turnover is the best immediate predictor of voluntary turnover (Price, 2001; Lambert et al., 2001; Griffeth et al. 2000). This relationship is supported by the attitude-behavior theory (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), which holds that one's intention to perform a specific behavior is the immediate determinant of that behavior. Since significant positive relationships have been found between turnover intentions and actual turnover (Hemdi, 2011; Price, 2001), turnover intentions have been recommended as a proxy for measuring actual turnover (Price, 2001). This is because the actual behavior is more difficult to predict as there are many factors such as employment alternatives that affect turnover behavior. Thus, it is possible that, despite high turnover intention, actual turnover is low because of high unemployment in industry. In this case, the low actual turnover may mask poor management practices. Scholars argued that employee's intention of leaving an organization will have an impact on productivity and long-term succession plan (Keni, Muthuveloo, Ping, & Rahman, 2013).

### Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

From the preceding literature reviews on Herzberg motivational factors, job hopping attitude, and intention to leave, the following research framework and hypotheses are proposed.

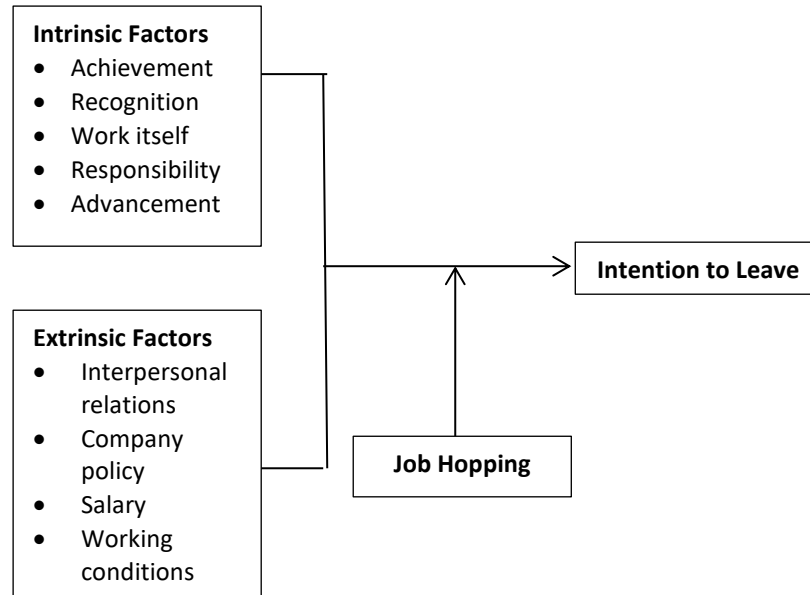


Figure 1: Research Framework

From the above conceptual framework, the following hypotheses are proposed:

$H_{01}$ : There is a significant negative relationship between intrinsic factors and intention to leave.

$H_{02}$ : There is a significant negative relationship between extrinsic factors and intention to leave.

$H_{03}$ : Job hopping attitude moderates the relationship between motivational factors and intention to leave.

### Methodology

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether motivational factors affect hotel employees' intention to leave. Additionally, the moderating effect of job hopping attitude on the relationship between motivational factors and intention to leave will also be examined. This study was correlational in nature, and the unit of analysis was individual Gen Y operational employee working in three and four rated star hotels (medium sized) located in the state of Selangor and Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Gen Y from Malaysian context can be defined as a citizen that born from years between 1980 to 2000 (16 years old until 36 years old). Only 17 out of 30 medium-sized hotels have agreed and responded to participate in this study. 250 questionnaires were distributed in which 201 usable questionnaires representing a response rate of 80.4% were coded and analyzed for this study.

The majority of respondents were from Food & Beverage Service (38.8%) and Front Office (31.8%). In term of age, the sample can be considered relatively young considering the fact that the mean age was 28.1 years (SD = 7.09 years). Additionally, 40.8% of the respondents



have been working in their present hotels for about one to three years, while 33.8% of the respondents have been in the same current job position within one to three years.

## Results

### *Factor Analyses of Study Variables*

Principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted to validate the dimensionality of each construct used in this study. Rules as suggested by Igbaria, Livari, and Maragahh (1995) were followed. Factor analysis conducted on intrinsic motivation factors resulted to four-factor solutions, explaining 62.94% of the total variance in intrinsic motivation factors (KMO = 0.860, Chi-square = 2393.46,  $p < .01$ ). These factors were named recognition (5 items), achievement (4 items), work itself (4 items), and responsibility (3 items) respectively. Advancement, however, was not loaded and was dropped from the subsequent analysis. Principal component factor analysis on five dimensions of extrinsic motivation resulted to three factors loading, explaining 62.19% of the variance (KMO = 0.893, Chi-square = 2265.32,  $p < .01$ ). The factors were named company condition (combination of company policy and working condition - 8 items), supervision (5 items), and interpersonal relations (4 items). Salary was not loaded and was dropped from further analysis. A similar factor analysis was undertaken to unveil the dimensionality of the moderating variable (job hopping attitude). A single factor solution emerged explaining 58.98% variance (KMO = 0.748, Chi-square = 2265.32,  $p < .01$ ). Additionally, a single factor solution was also revealed explaining 64.24% of the variance in intention to leave.

### *Means, Standard Deviations and Reliability Coefficients of Study Variables*

Table 1  
*Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliability Coefficients*

Variables	Mean	SD	Reliability
1. Recognition	3.61	0.75	0.87
2. Achievement	4.28	0.55	0.82
3. Work Itself	4.76	0.58	0.85
4. Responsibility	4.47	0.68	0.75
5. Company Condition	4.59	0.67	0.86
6. Supervision	3.87	0.66	0.83
7. Interpersonal Relation	3.89	0.64	0.77
8. Job Hopping	2.74	0.74	0.81
9. Intention to leave	3.20	0.70	0.73

Note:  $N = 201$ ; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

As shown in Table 1, the mean value for the motivational factors for the sample was considered moderate to high (range between 3.61 to 4.76). Intention to leave was considered moderate with a mean score of 3.20. However, job hopping attitude was considered low with a mean score of 2.74. The standard deviations for these variables ranged from 0.55 to 0.75. All the reliability coefficients for the measures were acceptable since they exceeded the minimum recommended level of 0.60 (Sekaran, 2000).

### Hypotheses Testing

To test for H1, intrinsic factors were regressed on intention to leave. Table 2 presents the regression results of this analysis.

Table 2  
*Model Summary for Intrinsic Factors on Intention to Leave*

Predictors	Model 1 Std. $\beta$
Recognition	-.380**
Achievement	-.297*
Work Itself	-.046
Responsibility	-.040
R <sup>2</sup>	.096
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.078
F-Change	5.208**

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

Based on the results presented in Table 2, the regression model was able to explain 9.6% ( $R^2 = .096$ , F-Change = 5.208\*\*,  $p < .01$ ) of the total variation on intention to leave. Of the four intrinsic motivation factors, recognition ( $\beta = -.380$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and achievement ( $\beta = -.297$ ,  $p < .05$ ) negatively and significantly contributed to the prediction of intention to leave. The other variables, namely the work itself and responsibility did not significantly predict Gen Y employees' intention to leave. These results provided partial support for H1.

Table 3 presents the regression results of extrinsic factors on the intention to leave.

Table 3  
*Model Summary for Extrinsic Factors towards Intention to Leave*

Predictors	Model 1 Std. $\beta$
Company Condition	-.504**
Supervision	-.515**
Interpersonal Relation	-.073
R <sup>2</sup>	.217
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.205
F-Change	18.176**

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

From Table 3, the regression model was able to explained 21.7% ( $R^2 = .217$ , F-Change = 18.176\*\*,  $p < .01$ ) of the total variance on intention to leave. Extrinsic factors such as company condition ( $\beta = -.504$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and supervision ( $\beta = -.515$ ,  $p < .01$ ) negatively and significantly contributed to the prediction of intention to leave for Gen Y employees. The interpersonal relationship did not significantly predicted intention to leave. These results provided partial support for H2.

Table 4 presents the moderating results of job hopping attitude on the relationship between intrinsic factors and intention to leave.

Table 4

*Moderating Test of Job Hopping Attitude on the relationship between Intrinsic Factors and Intention to Leave*

Predictors	Model I Std. $\beta$	Model II Std. $\beta$
Intrinsic Factors	-.264**	-.160*
Intrinsic * Job Hopping		-.361**
R <sup>2</sup>	.070	.189
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.066	.182
F-Change	17.031**	26.357**

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

As shown in Table 4, the interaction between job hopping and intrinsic factors was able to explain an additional 11.9% ( $R^2 = .189$ ,  $p < .01$ ) variance on intention to leave and the interaction term has a significant negative effect on intention to leave ( $\beta = -.361$ \*\*,  $p < .01$ ). Hence, job hopping attitude significantly moderates the relationship between intrinsic factors and intention to leave.

Table 5 presents the moderating results of job hopping attitude on the relationship between extrinsic factors and intention to leave.

Table 5

*Moderating Test of Job Hopping Attitude on the relationship between Extrinsic Factors and Intention to Leave*

Predictors	Model I Std. $\beta$	Model II Std. $\beta$
Extrinsic Factors	-.177**	-.065
Extrinsic * Job Hopping		-.388**
R <sup>2</sup>	.031	.170
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.027	.162
F-Change	7.353*	23.084**

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

As shown in Table 5, the interaction between job hopping and extrinsic factors was able to explain an additional 13.9% ( $R^2 = .170$ ,  $p < .01$ ) variance on intention to leave and the interaction term has a significant negative effect on intention to leave ( $\beta = -.388$ \*\*,  $p < .01$ ). Hence, job hopping attitude significantly moderates the relationship between extrinsic factors and intention to leave.



## Discussion and Conclusion

The two objectives of this study were: 1) to investigate the linkage between motivational factors and intention to leave, and 2) to test whether job-hopping attitude serves to moderate the relationship between motivational factors and intention to leave among Gen Y hotel employees. The statistical results obtained in this study showed that intrinsic factors, particularly those relating to recognition and achievement, and extrinsic factors, specific relation to company condition and supervision have significant and negatively effects on Gen Y intention to leave. Subsequently, the job-hopping attitude was found to have a significant moderating effect on both relationships between intrinsic, extrinsic and intention to leave. These findings are consistent with those of previous researchers (Kong, 2015; Martin, 2005; Yusoff et al., 2013). When Gen Y hotel employees perceived that their organization show concern for their achievements and provide appropriate recognition in the form of promotion or higher salary, they will experience positive emotional state and subsequently would want to stay longer with the organization. Similarly, a conducive company environment that provides working flexibility and encourages creativity would minimize intention to leave among Gen Y hotel employees. Additionally, the job-hopping attitude was found to moderate the relationship between intrinsic, extrinsic and intention to leave. This finding is in tandem with previous researchers (Hemdi & Nasurdin, 2004; Khatri et al., 2001; Queiri et al., 2015;). The findings from this investigation provide practical application for hotel organizations. Gen Y employees are more willing to stay longer with their organizations provided that they were given appropriate recognition on their achievements, conducive work environment and proper guidance in the form of effective supervision. Hence, hotel authorities should continuously provide training and development to their supervisors and managers on effective supervision as well as performance management so that they would be able to guide and recognize subordinates' achievements and give appropriate rewards. Lastly, the compensation system adopted should be fair and lucrative as well.

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