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The Impact of Positive Psychological Personalities on Employee's Attitude and Turnover Intention

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The hospitality and tourism industry is recognised as a potential service sector in contributing to the Malaysian economy and thoroughly associated with the hotel industry to sustain economic growth. One of the most significant problems for hotel managers is employee turnover. The issue of high voluntary turnover is a matter of grave concern at the national level that it is poorly affecting Malaysia's competitiveness. The present research investigates the impact of positive psychological personality traits in predicting employee's attitude towards the hotel industry and, consequently, reducing turnover intention. Data were collected from hotel employees in Malaysia (n = 200) and analysed using partial least structural equation modelling (Smart-PLS). Specific findings reveal that employee resilience, hope, and optimism increase employee's positive attitude towards the hotel industry and consequently reduce the turnover intention. This study has important implications for hotel managers interested in the determinants of employees' positive attitude towards hotels and employees' turnover intention in the hotel industry in Malaysia.

Key words: *Positive psychological traits, personality, attitude, turnover intention, hotels, hospitality and tourism.*

Introduction

The Malaysian government implemented many strategies to improve tourism and the service sector to increase the economic growth of the country (Tourism Malaysia, 2016). The development of the hotel sector has been comprehensively associated with the hospitality and tourism industry to sustain the government strategy and develop the economic growth of the

country. Considering so many developments in the hotel industry, one of the most significant problems for hotel managers is employee turnover (Albattat & Som, 2013; Tan, 2015). The hotel industry is highly dependent on human resources. Employees play an important role in hotel operations (Ahmad & Scott, 2014) and customer satisfaction (Chaichi, 2012). The issue of high voluntary turnover is a matter of grave concern at the national level that it is poorly effecting Malaysia's competitiveness. The Malaysian hotel sector has been challenging with the shortage of workforce at various skill levels. Thus, multiple researchers have investigated this issue from many different angles and identified various strategies to overcome this problem, but recent research showed that turnover issue still exists in Malaysia (Aminudin, 2013; Ahmad & Scott, 2014; Chaichi & Salem, 2019; Tan, 2015) . Moreover, for this paper, authors conducted short interviews with the front office manager and staff office managers from a few hotels in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia. Based on the short interviews, staff turnover and employees' bad attitude were the significant problems mentioned by the managers in the hotels.

Human resource in tourism and hospitality are critical assets for organisational performance, service quality, customer satisfaction and competitive advantage. The role of hotel employees is critical in customer's evaluation of their experience in the hotels. Personal-psychological resources can lead to improved employee job-related outcomes. Employee positive psychological personality has a significant impact on employee mental health and wellbeing. These employees continuing in the profession mostly have high psychological well-being and provide a healthy positive environment for their clients through their positive psychological personality (Koller & Hicks, 2016).

Critical Role of Positive Personality on Turnover Intention

Employees' psychological resources, attitude, and behaviour are essential as they exert critical influences on an employee's job-related outcomes (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). Individuals with positive personalities would be able to minimise negative situations and have strong control of stressful situations, which in turn would reduce the absence of intentions. It is well documented that such employees, regardless of the working conditions, do not develop burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001) and consequently remain working in the organisation. Having positive personalities is specifically useful for the hotel industry since, in comparison to the other industries, the working condition in the hotel sector is considered as unfavourable due to the following reasons. There is no routine holiday in the hotel sector. The inadequate working situations of the industry such as low wages, uncompromising job features (Ahmad & Zainol, 2011), extensive working hours, seasonality of job, low job position (Allen, Bryant, & Vardaman, 2010), low job security, limited training and opportunities and over-time workloads result in the dissatisfaction of the job. These features raise the turnover rate among hotel employees. Therefore, possessing

special personalities, which aid employees despite facing difficult situations, to remain in the organisation, can be very useful to reduce employee turnover. An employee's positive personality possibly will have notable implications as a source for their satisfaction. However, the lack of personal resources leads to undesired job outcomes, since individuals want to protect their limited resources by exhibiting turnover intentions (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999).

Nevertheless, employee's personalities as an antecedent of turnover (Mobley, 1977) is meagrely researched and not well understood in the hospitality and tourism industry (Karatepe & Olugbade, 2009). In the insufficient condition of the hotel industry mentioned above, there is a need for employees with particular personalities who can adjust themselves to the situation, provide acceptable performance, show a more positive attitude towards the organisation, and remain in the organisation. Furthermore, psychological theories clarified that individuals with different personalities show different intentions in various situations and behave differently (Penney, David, & Witt, 2011). There is a limited study on the consequence of personality on turnover in Malaysia, especially in the hotel context. Personality traits are fundamental to understanding the reason why, in the same situation, some employees who intend to quit do, and others do not. Therefore, applying the theory of reasoned action, the current study scrutinises the critical role of "positive psychological personality traits " on employee's attitude and consequently on "turnover intention," in the hotel context.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Theory of Reasoned Action

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975): Fishbein and Ajzen argued that behaviour is directly determined by a person's intention to engage in the behaviour. Subsequently, according to the TRA, attitude towards the behaviour is the determinant of intention to involve in the behaviour. According to Ajzen (1991), the attitude has clarified the grade which display an individual has an approving or disapproving assessment of the behaviour in the inquiry. The TRA theorises attitude as a significant predictor of intention. In the present study, attitude is looked upon as the evaluation measure of employees' attitudes, as being either favourable or harmful towards the hotel they are working. Employees will show less intention to leave if they have a highly favourable attitude towards the hotel industry. Many studies support the impact of attitude on turnover intention (e.g., Mobley, 1977; Prestholdt, Lane, & Mathews, 1987). Hence, this study hypothesised:

H1. Employee attitude towards the organisation will negatively affect turnover intention.

Positive Psychological Traits

According to McCrae and Costa (2003), personality traits are considered basic tendencies. These basic tendencies, in conjunction with environmental influences, lead to original adaptations, such as beliefs, attitudes, and interest (McCrae & Costa, 2008). Personality is an active and systematised set of characteristics possessed by individuals that exclusively impact their attitude and behaviours in countless situations (Ryckman, 2012). Emerging studies on psychological literature (Stajkovic, Lee, Greenwald, & Raffiee, 2015; Youssef & Luthans, 2007) have emphasised several personality traits, namely "Positive Psychological Traits (PPT)" (hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy), with significant roles in the organisational outcome. Subsequently, several studies suggested that the investigation of these personalities (PPT) in various work-related issues, would be worthy for forthcoming research and would open the avenue for future research (Stajkovic et al., 2015; Youssef & Luthans, 2007).

Resilience

Resilience is the ability to deal with stressful life situations (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). Studies found that resilience yields favourable outcomes in stressful psychological stages and constructive organisational attitudes such as commitment and satisfaction (Youssef & Luthans, 2007). Consistently, researchers found that high-resilience individuals are less probably to develop burnout signs in stressful situations (Cooke, Doust, & Steele, 2013). Furthermore, Cooke et al. (2013) emphasised that employees with less resiliency mostly implement indifferent attitude towards their job. Consequently, it is reasonable to suggest that individuals who have an adequate level of psychological resilience will respond more sufficiently to undesirable working conditions in the hotel industry and develop a favourable attitude towards their job, which results in the following hypothesis:

H2: Resilience will positively influence employee attitude towards the organisation

Hope

Snyder (2002) defined hope as personality trait-like disposition and perceptions concerning an individual's expectations and capability to achieve significant goals. Empirical studies found "hope" to be associated with several outcomes, for instance, organisational profitability (Adams et al., 2002), and less burnout (Yavas, Babakus, & Karatepe, 2013). Individuals with a high level of hope can handle more tough life situations and are less defenseless to distress conditions. In line with this, Peterson and Byron, (2008) underlined that hopeful employees generate better quality resolutions to a career-related problem compared to employees with low levels of hope. Therefore, authors assume that hope as a

personality trait, can help individuals seek ways to improve the undesirable working conditions in the hotel industry, have faith that the existing problems are impermanent, develop a more favourable attitude towards the organisation, and remain in the organisation; which leads to the following hypothesis:

H3: Hope will positively influence employee attitude towards the organisation

Optimism

Optimism is the stable personality trait that reflects the degree to which one believes that his or her future will be prosperous and favourable (Scheier & Carver, 1985). Luthans (2002) mentioned that optimism is being effortlessly inspired to work harder, be more satisfied, show better morale, and endure difficulties. More specifically, optimists tend to handle hostile situations by emphasising the positive aspects of the situation. Optimism has been related with an extensive range of positive outcomes such as job satisfaction (Youssef & Luthans, 2007), less burnout (Gustafsson & Skoog, 2012), and organisational commitment (Kluemper, Little, & DeGroot, 2009). Many of these outcomes, such as commitment and satisfaction, are considered as organisational attitude and can lead to lower turnover. Therefore, it is conceivable to assume that these individuals show optimism in continuing with the same job, even if there are no other alternatives or even if they have to make significant sacrifices in the present organisation and are expected to develop a favourable attitude towards the organisation. This results in the subsequent hypothesis:

H4: Optimism will positively influence employee attitude towards the organisation

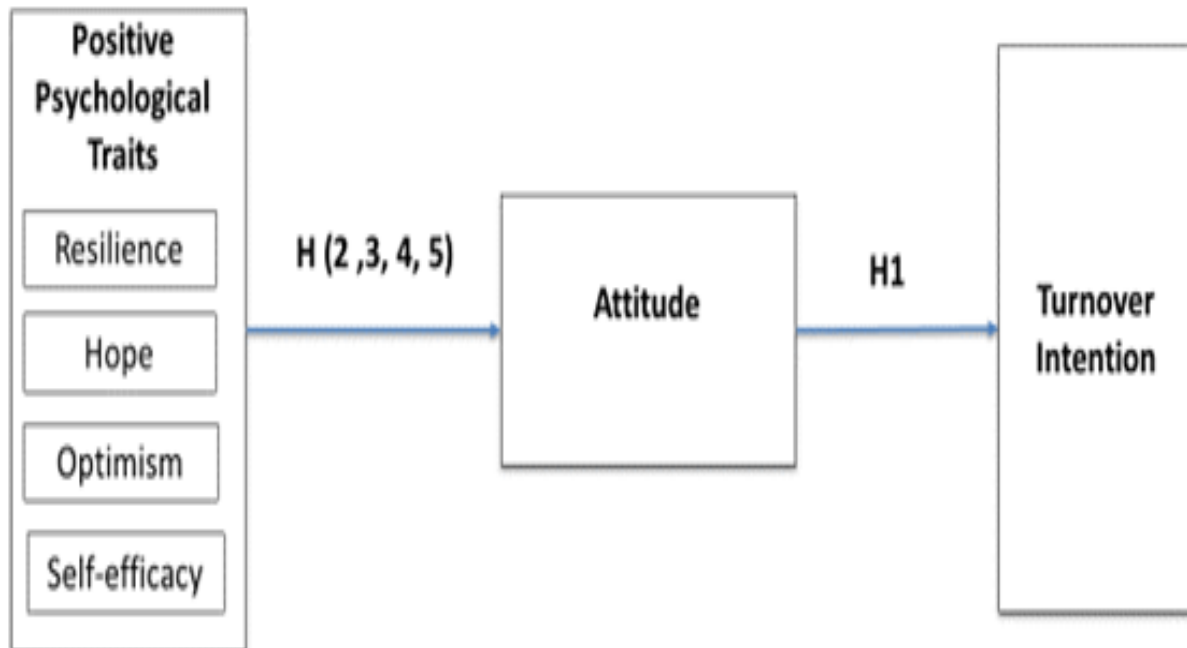
Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is a person's appraisal of what they are able of accomplishing (Bandura, 2001). According to Bandura (1986) individuals with a high level of self-efficacy display a constructive attitude about their capability to steer obstacles and complete their goal in tough circumstances. Past studies initiated a positive association between self-efficacy and other positive organisational outcomes such as organisational commitment and job satisfaction (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman, & Combs, 2006). Job satisfaction (Brief, 1998) and organisational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991) are considered attitudes in past literature. Moreover, self-efficacy makes employees self-assured to resolve struggles, to overcome obstacles, to stay in a proper disposition, and originate more satisfaction from their job (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, it is conceivable to assume that individuals with high self-efficacy are self-assured in their capabilities and aptitude to perform a task, and develop a more favourable attitude towards their jobs. The resulting hypothesis will be as follows:

H5: Self-efficacy will positively influence employee attitude towards the organisation

Figure 1 demonstrates the proposed framework of turnover intention in Malaysia's hotel industry.

Figure 1. Proposed Framework



Research Methodology

A survey was conducted to explore the impacts of positive psychological traits on employees' attitudes and consequently on turnover intentions, to assess the proposed research model. The instrument development, sampling process, data collection and reliability and validity of the instrument were explained as below.

Instrument Development

Regarding the construction of the instrument, all scales were selected from formerly published research with essential changes in wording. The survey instrument used the 7-point Likert scale extending from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. The questionnaire covered the primary variables, namely attitude, turnover intention, resilience, hope, optimism, and self-efficacy. Some items were kept in a negative form to ensure the dynamic contribution of the respondents. The items which were negatively phrased were later inverted before data process. Attitudes (ATT), comprising seven scales, were extracted from the research by Chen and Tung (2014). Turnover intention (TI) included three items suggested by the study of Emiroğlu, Akova, and Tanrıverdi (2015). Resilience, comprising twenty-five items, was

extracted from the works of Leontjevas, Beek, Lataster, and Jacobs (2014). Stajkovic et al. (2015) provided a trait optimism scale, with twelve items. The “hope” scale was extracted from Snyder et al. (1996), which includes twelve items. Finally, the self-efficacy trait was taken from Chen, Gully, and Eden (2001) scale, which consists of eight items. Demographic data comprising gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, and tenure was added to the instrument.

Sampling and Data Collection

Through personally administered questionnaires, the data were collected, from employees of the hotel industry in the Kuala Lumpur area in Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur as a capital city in Malaysia is a major tourism destination with the highest number of hotels compared to other cities. Due to the high employee turnover rate in the hotel industry, there was no exact number of employees available in any government organisations. Therefore, convenient non-probability sampling was applied. For the sample size of the study, the potential 300 employees who were working in the hotels were targeted to deliver an acceptable level of confidence in the current research, whereas only 230 employees agreed to fill in the questionnaire. Employees in each hotel were randomly selected and enquired to complete the questionnaires and return it to our research team to certify the privacy and confidentiality of the respondents. The questionnaires with more than 15% missing values were removed from the responses. Finally, a total of 200 valid responses were attained from the employees in the hotel industry. According to the researchers (Salem & Chaichi, 2018; Hair et al., 2016) the sample size between the range, 30-500 can be affective and Smart-PLs software doesn't require the large sample size to deliver effective results. Therefore, the collected sample size seemed adequate for the current research.

Demographic Results

The following section presents the general demographic characteristics of the participating respondents of this study, which are tabulated in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Results

| Demographic Variables | Description | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------|-----------|------------|
| | | (N=200) | 100% |
| Gender | Male | 95 | 47.5 |
| | Female | 105 | 52.5 |
| Age | <20 | 36 | 18 |
| | 21-30 | 88 | 44 |
| | 31-40 | 48 | 24 |
| | 41-50 | 23 | 11.5 |
| | > 50 | 5 | 2.5 |
| Marital | Single | 120 | 60 |
| | Married | 71 | 35.5 |
| | Divorced | 7 | 3.5 |
| | Widowed | 2 | 1 |
| Race | Malay | 91 | 45.5 |
| | Chinese | 44 | 22 |
| | Indian | 22 | 11 |
| | Others | 43 | 21.5 |
| Tenure | < 1 year | 98 | 49 |
| | 1-3 year | 58 | 29 |
| | 4-6 year | 26 | 13 |
| | 7-10 year | 17 | 8.5 |
| | >10 year | 1 | 0.5 |

Reliability, Validity

The Cronbach's alpha value is analysed to check the internal consistency and reliability of the data collected. According to Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2016), a proper principle for internal consistency is the value above 0.70 which considered appropriate. Authors confirmed the construct validity by investigating convergent validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliability. In the current study, the reliability was tested for all the constructs (Table 2). The internal consistency was approved by demonstrating high reliability specified that all measures invariably signify the same construct. Convergent validity is detected employing the average percentage of variance extracted (AVE). AVE is an immediate indicator of convergence and ought to be greater than 0.50 to propose acceptable convergent validity. The current study verified the AVE is higher than 0.50 for the entire constructs. Fornell and Larcker (1981) defined discriminant validity, as the construct which shares more variance with its indicators than with any other construct in a specified model (Hair et al., 2016). The full overview of the matrix showing values for discriminant validity can be found

in Table 3. The discriminant validity was confirmed since the matrix indicated that all AVE of each construct is greater than the maximum squared correlation with other constructs.

Table 2: Reliability, Convergent Validity, VIF, R²

| | Cronbach's Alpha | Composite Reliability (CR) | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) | Collinearity (VIF) | R ² |
|---------------|------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Turnover | 0.715 | 0.836 | 0.630 | | 0.22 |
| Attitude | 0.903 | 0.925 | 0.642 | 1.000 | 0.68 |
| Self-Efficacy | 0.830 | 0.868 | 0.525 | 1.710 | |
| Hope | 0.926 | 0.942 | 0.731 | 1.652 | |
| Optimism | 0.911 | 0.926 | 0.557 | 2.065 | |
| Resilience | 0.923 | 0.932 | 0.517 | 2.290 | |

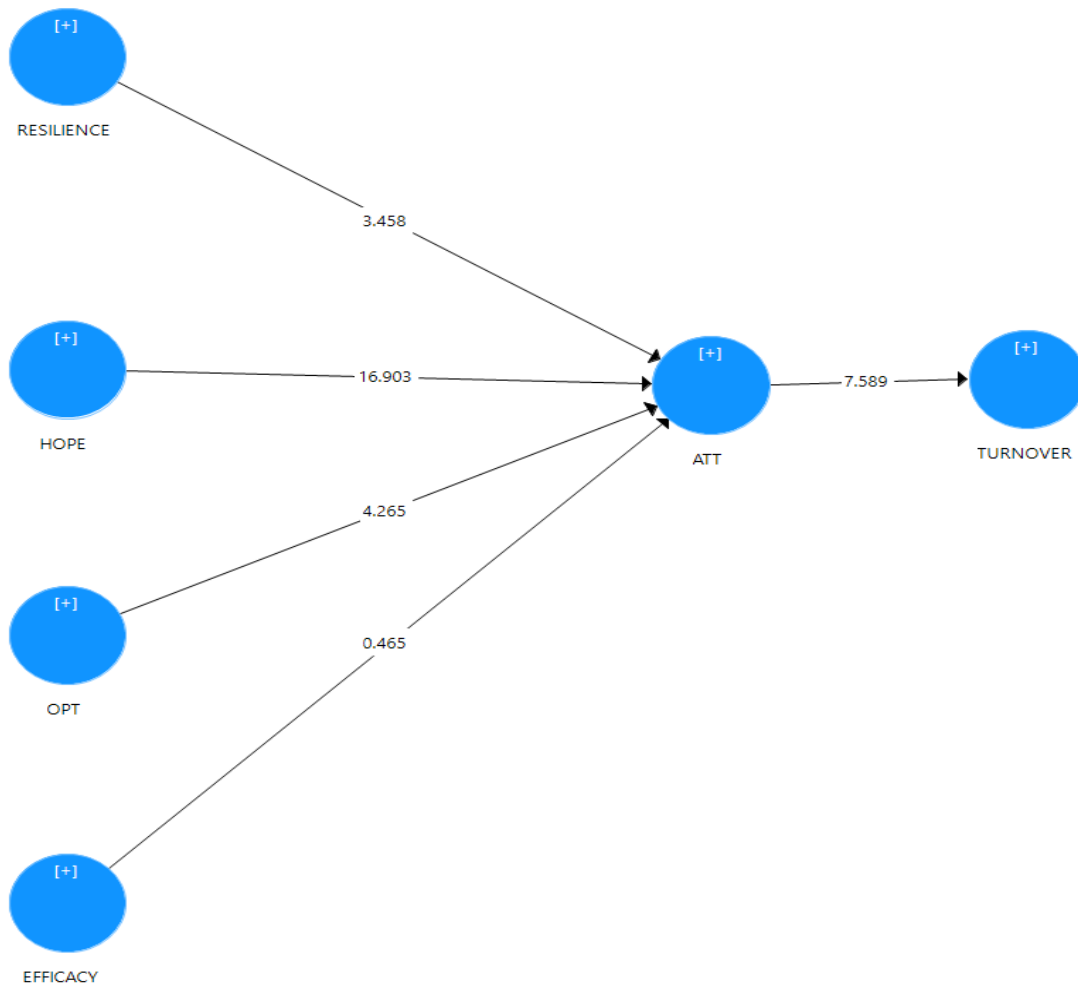
Table 3: Discriminant Validity

| | Attitude | Self-Efficacy | Hope | Optimism | Resilience | Turnover |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Attitude | 0.801 | | | | | |
| Self-Efficacy | 0.449 | 0.725 | | | | |
| Hope | 0.792 | 0.507 | 0.855 | | | |
| Optimism | 0.555 | 0.566 | 0.507 | 0.747 | | |
| Resilience | -0.433 | -0.574 | -0.586 | -0.681 | 0.719 | |
| Turnover | -0.464 | -0.627 | -0.373 | -0.567 | 0.404 | 0.794 |

Structural Model Analysis and Results

After removing the lower outer loadings, Figure 2 illustrated all causal relations between constructs running by a PLS-SEM algorithm.

Figure 2. Structural Model Analysis



The indicator's outer loadings between the value of 0.40 and 0.5 should be deliberated for removal if the removal makes a rise in AVE above the value (0.5) and the composite reliability. Coefficient determination (R^2) was used to classify the value of the structural model (Hair et al., 2016). According to Cohen (1988), in consumer behavioural studies, R^2 varies from the values of 0.02, 0.13, and 0.26, which establishes poor, modest, and strong values, although exploratory studies assume higher R^2 values (Hair et al., 2016). As described in Table 2, 68% ($R^2= 0.68$) of variances in attitude are explained by positive personality traits, and 22% ($R^2= 0.22$) of variances in turnover are explained by the attitude which is a considerable number.

Moreover, the predictive relevance value (Q^2) by using the blindfolding process, was extracted to confirm the predictive accuracy of the proposed model. The amount of Q^2 should be higher than zero (Hair et al., 2016). The predictive relevance Q^2 of turnover has a value of 0.12, and for the attitude value of 0.40, which implies that the model has predictive relevance for these constructs. Researchers considered tolerance levels (VIF) for evaluating collinearity

issues. The acceptable construct's tolerance's (VIF) value for each predictor is more than 0.20 and less than 5 (Hair et al., 2016). The VIF results are demonstrated in Table 2. No collinearity issues were found among the predictor constructs in the structural model. The results of the hypothesised relationships are organised in Table 4. It revealed that H1, H2, H3, and H4 are supported except for H5, which is rejected.

Table 4: Path Coefficient, T statistic, P value for Hypotheses Result

| Relationship | Path coefficient | Sample mean | Standard deviation | T statistic | P values | Hypothesis support |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|----------|--------------------|
| ATT -> TURNOVER | -0.464 | -0.471 | 0.064 | 7.222 | 0.000 | H1 supported |
| RESILIENCE -> ATT | 0.245 | 0.238 | 0.065 | 3.754 | 0.000 | H2 supported |
| HOPE -> ATT | 0.760 | 0.759 | 0.049 | 15.592 | 0.000 | H3 supported |
| OPT -> ATT | 0.324 | 0.319 | 0.070 | 4.612 | 0.000 | H4 supported |
| EFFICACY -> ATT | 0.021 | 0.028 | 0.048 | 0.446 | 0.656 | H5 not supported |

Hypothesis 1 which states that individual attitude towards their organisation will negatively affect the turnover intention, is supported through a p-value of (0.00), and pass coefficient of (-0.4640). Hypothesis 2 is proven in that employee resilience positively affect employee's attitude towards the organisation, display p-value of (0.00) and path coefficient of (0.245). Hypothesis 3 is proven in that there is a positive association between "hope" and employee's attitude towards the organisation, through the p-value of (0.00) and path coefficient of (0.760). Hypothesis 4, which suggests that formulated optimism positively affects employee's attitude towards the organisation, through p-value of (0.000), the coefficient of (0.324), is also supported. Only H5 is rejected with the p-value of (0.656) and path coefficient of (0.021), which shows there is no significant association between self-efficacy and employees' attitude towards the organisation.

Conclusion

Turnover is a big concern for the hospitality and tourism industry since it is costly. The study was conducted to determine if positive psychological traits of employees (resilience, hope, optimism, and self-efficacy) influence their attitude towards the hotel industry in Malaysia and consequently reduce turnover intention. An examination of the internal consistency revealed satisfactory reliability with the alpha measure between 0.71 to 0.92. The total variance in employee attitude explained by the predictors is 68% which shows the significant negative relationship with employee turnover intention. Theoretically, the more favourable

the attitude a person shows towards the hotel industry, the greater the likelihood for him/her to reduce the intention to quit. The research disclosed that all the positive psychological traits except self-efficacy trait had a substantial positive impact on employees' attitude towards the hotel industry and consequently reduced turnover intention. Among all the personalities, "hope" appeared as the sturdiest predictor of employee attitude towards the hotel industry. Overall, the structural model analyses found that attitude has significant adverse effects on turnover intention among the employees in the hotel industry.

Theoretical and Practical Contribution

The results of the present study support the efficacy and predictive ability of the model of turnover intention. Based on the literature, four positive psychological traits were chosen for inclusion in the turnover model of the current study. Thus, this study supports the argument that turnover models have placed too much emphasis on situational sources and not enough on individual differences which interact with and define the situations (Staw, Bell, & Clausen, 1986). Traditional employee turnover research, especially in Malaysia, has focused primarily on organisational factors (e.g., pay, promotion, job stress), work attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction), and economic factors, as determinants of intentions to quit. Including personality in a model of employee intentions to quit, bridges the gap in research where personality has mostly been ignored in multivariate turnover models. In contrast, the current study includes positive personality traits and explicitly predicts the process through the TRA theory, which would influence turnover intentions in the hospitality and tourism industry in Malaysia. The additional link between positive personality traits and attitudes is now showing that personalities have played an important part in predicting attitudes of employees in the hotel industry.

The practical implication of the study is that human resource strategies aiming at employee's attitude would undoubtedly decrease individuals' turnover intentions. Personalities are predictors of attitude in the hotel industry and consequently, the practical implication of this research. Findings indicate that three of the four positive personality traits are substantial predictors of the attitude, which are hope, resilience, and optimism. These personalities need to be considered by hotel managers when developing their strategy. Hotels should be aware of possible personality differences between their employees. There are explicit strategies and applications in the literature related to positive psychology for improving the level of hope, resilience, and optimism among individuals (Youssef & Luthans, 2007). As discussed, these employees demonstrate high psychological well-being and provide a healthier environment for their customer through their positive psychological personality (Koller & Hicks, 2016) and consequently develop more customer satisfaction and organisational success. It is vital that hotels recognise the importance of positive personality traits and advance training agendas to assist employees to enhance and preserve the positive personalities at excellent



levels. Avey, Luthans, and Jensen (2009) emphasised that even slight training programs can improve all aspects of personality traits. For instance, managers need to learn how to boost employees' positive personality traits through successful training programs and create an environment for healthy competition among employees.

Furthermore, hotel management in Malaysia should deliberate the beneficial influence of positive psychological traits on hotel employees in their recruitment and selection procedure. The hotel organisations can use a more systematic selection procedure, which intends to hire workforces with more significant levels of positive personality traits (through developing an instrument survey which evaluates candidates' personality traits' levels). Additionally, attention to personality traits throughout the recruitment procedure would display to potential hotel employees that positive personality is an essential characteristic for the hotel employees. This will encourage the hotel employees to make constant effort to uphold and grow their positive personality while they start working in the hotels.

Limitations and Future Research Direction

There were limitations encountered during the implementation of this study. This research was restricted to the demographic space within the hotels in the Kuala Lumpur area mostly due to time and financial restraints. It is recommended that future study should replicate the current research to other areas in Malaysia since this study was done in the Kuala Lumpur area, which is very populated. Another limitation involved the use of self-reported survey measures. Although respondents were assured of privacy and confidentiality, potential common desirability may have artificially inflated the replies. Moreover, the future study may consider adopting the qualitative method so that more in-depth insights can be obtained in understanding other possible antecedents of employee's attitude towards the hotel industry. Furthermore, adding other concepts of positive psychological personalities such as core confidence, core self-evaluation, spirituality, etc. may enhance the prediction of turnover intention and attitude towards the organisation in the hotel sector in Malaysia.

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