

Employee Turnover Intention:

The role of perceived organizational support and stress

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Abstract—Managing turnover is quite difficult these days. Organizations competing with each other to hire the best available employees. They also need to keep their best performers from leaving. That is why organizations should identify their employee intention to leave. This study examines the relationships among perceived organizational support (POS), job stress, and turnover intention among plantation employees in Irian Province. Operating in remote area and facing cultural differences organization has its own challenges to manage their human resources. A total of 117 participants from various jobs in one organization participated. Job stress was found to be a mediator of the POS and turnover intention relations. Surprisingly, we found no significant relation of POS and turnover intention. However, the study found a positive relation between POS and job stress while job stress and turnover found to had a negative relationship. Results of the study suggest that organizations should provide enough support for their employees in order to reduce the level of stress which then would decrease the intention to leave.

Keywords—*perceived organizational support; work stress; turnover intention*

I. INTRODUCTION

Human resources plays important part in the organization's success [1-3]. Human resources who perform well not only affect the organization performance but also will support its sustainability. Employees who had various skills and well-committed to organization were known to become great competitive advantage for the organization [4]. They will make organization run smoothly and effectively. Such employees worth to retain if organization want to thrive in the harsh business environment. Getting the best out of the human resources and retaining them is certainly crucial tasks faced by management. Organization works in plantation especially which operate in remote areas such as Irian Province need better and comprehensive strategy to manage their human capital. Harsh environment, different culture, diverse personality, limited access, under-educated employees were some of problems they must tackle. One of the challenge they have to deal is how to retain the employee. In such challenging working environment organization need to do better in keeping their best assets. The level of employee turnover need to maintain as low as possible in order to avoid unnecessary cost of recruiting and training new employees. Turnover negatively affects organization performance. Discussing employee

turnover can start by identifying are there any intention from them to leave. The level of intention to leave will predict their leaving behavior. It is important for organization to check their internal condition regarding whether this intention exist and how high. According to Fah et al, turnover is a serious problem [5]. While Sanborn noticed the costs for healthcare industry regarding turnover estimated 27 million of US Dollar [6].

We need to identify what cause the employee to leave. Previous articles discussed various antecedents of turnover intention (TI). Sanborn argued that recruitment and selection method applied by organization could affect TI [6]. The negative association also found between organizational justice (distributive & procedural), employee tenure, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) with turnover intention [7]. Employee who feel well-treated by organization will show less intention to leave. Organizational commitment, whether as global measurement or by dimension (affective, continuance, normative) found to have negative relation with TI [8-10]. Career and remuneration growth could also impact the intention to leave [11]. Furthermore, there is a negative relation between job satisfaction and TI [12,13]. The examination regarding the impact of perceived organizational support on TI and found the negative relation [14,15]. Work stress also found as TI antecedent [13,16,17]. The direction was positive mean that the higher stress level will incur in higher intention to leave organization. Other factors which could affect the turnover level were compensation, ethical value, work family enrichment, and human resources practices inside the organization [18-21].

The study aimed to analyze the indirect impact of perceived organizational support (POS) on TI and also to investigate the mediation role of work stress in the relation. Organization operating in remote areas face challenges to recruit talented employees. They need to focus on how to retain their best people. On the contrary, for the employee working in such place also had certain challenges such as feeling isolated and limited time to deal with family matters. In terms of compensation, organization seems to provide quite enough. But, since work was not only a matter of financial pay and bonuses, organization should conduct more survey on how to reduce or lessen the turnover intention. This study was expected to benefit the organization by identifying the most important aspect which could help them to reduce turnover.

With the right target, then they can develop strategies to manage TI.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. POS and Turnover Intention

POS defined as general beliefs regarding the extent to which employees perceive that their organization pays attention to their well-being and values their contributions [22]. Other scholars regard POS as the degree to which employees believe an organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being [23]. POS is the magnitude to which employees believe that their organization appraises their services and cares about their roles and the degree to which their needs are met by the organization [24]. In short, it is the perception of the employee whether the organization treat the well or not. When employee perceived higher POS they will conduct in positive behavior to reciprocate. Types of support were varying from providing well pay and bonuses, time to take care family matters, adequate tools and resources to conduct their jobs, fair policies, clear career advancement, and even just providing parking space. POS believed to affect the work behavior. Higher perception of POS will increase job satisfaction and commitment, while lower POS will result in stress, lower productivity, and turnover. Turnover according is the level of employee resignation [25]. Others defined turnover as the movement of employee out of the organization [26]. High turnover will inflict significant costs such as recruitment and selection, training costs, and loss of human capital [27]. Turnover differ from turnover intention because the later still had tendency factor. By understanding the intention to leave we can identify the strength of their voluntary intention to pursue outside opportunity. To study the relationship of POS and TI, social exchange theory highlights the importance of understanding employees' motivation to achieve organizational objectives [28]. Previous studies [29,30] supported negative direction in the relation between POS and employees' intentions to quit. Others studies showed negative direction and various correlation value [28,31-36]. While the majority of the findings reveal negative association, at least there were three studies which found no relation between POS and TI [37-39]. For the hypothesis of this study, we refer to the majority findings.

H1: Perceived organizational support will have significant and negative effect on turnover intention.

B. POS and Stress

POS also can affect employee attitude and behavior at work. Employee who felt adequate support from organization will perform better. On the contrary, lack of support can result in dissatisfaction. Organizational support is necessary to help employee coping with stressors [24]. Work stress can occur when employee perceived discrepancies between the demands and the reality of the organizational support. There are many things that can raised the perception of the absence of organizational support. For example, employees need proper tools to carry their jobs but company did not provide; they expect the leader will give clear direction, in reality their supervisor did not explain what was the expectation; employee

expect fair treatment but in reality their supervisor conduct unfair appraisals. POS defined as the employee perception regarding appreciation about their work and well-being from organization [40]. When they felt supported they will less stress. Previous literature examined the relationship between POS and stress and most of them found negative association. Studies from India revealed negative relation between POS and stress ranging from -0.112 to -0.658 [41-43]. Meanwhile, studies from United States also support the negative relation [44,45]. Two studies from Jordan examine employee in healthcare and hospital and the finding support the negative relations [24,46]. Other studies also support the negative relation [32,47-50]. The cultural diversity in these studies showed that in most cases, POS will affect work stress in a negative direction. However, there were some studies which show the different result. One study in various industries and found positive relation [51]. Previous studies discussed the relationship of stress and POS but studies that investigated organizational support as antecedents of stress among plantation workers were rare. We haven't found literature which discussed the relationship between plantation worker stress and the organizational support in Indonesia. We follow the previous study in establishing the hypothesis.

H2: POS will have significant and negative effect on work stress.

C. Stress and Turnover Intention

One of the main reason for employee to leave the organization or to quit their job is that they did not experience satisfaction in doing it. Low appreciation, unsupportive co-workers, bad leadership can have caused discomfort which might trigger the intention to leave. Work stress believed by some to have significant influence in developing the uncomfortable work situation. The current study examined the relation of work stress on the turnover intention (TI). Employees who experienced greater stress level were likely to change organization. Study in South Africa found positive association between stress and TI [17]. Other study from China using manufacture employees found that participants had a high level of burnout will develop higher tendency of turnover intention [13]. In Iran, job stress had significant relation with turnover intentions [52]. Role ambiguity will increase stress level of retail workers which in the end affect the TI [12]. Other studies from Korea using participants from hotel and hospitals support findings that work-related stress can predict employee intentions to quit [53,54]. Other studies also had found the same result [55-58]. A positive relationship underlies the relation between work-stress and TI. Although most previous studies found a positive relationship. Based on the findings from various studies, we set the hypothesis for the relationship between stress and IT is; H3: Stress will have significant and positive effect on turnover intention.

The uniqueness of this study compared to previous studies is that discusses the direct relationship between POS and TI and indirectly through the mediation of work stress. Research that examined these three variables is still rare. Regarding the mediation, we determine the fourth hypothesis as follow; H4: Stress have a mediation effect in the relationship between POS and turnover intention.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

This study used convenience sampling technique to recruit participants from a private plantation in Irian Province. The total sample size of the current study was 117. Table 1 showed the demographic aspect of the participants. The gender ratio of the participants was 68% of male and 32% female. Age

distribution was spread evenly with the range between 25 – 30 has the largest portion. 92% of workers only graduated from high school which is normal for plantation company. The percentage regarding marital status was quite even between married and unmarried employee (50 – 45%). Almost similar percentage also found regarding the children (50 – 50%). Most workers have been work between 1 – 3 years (56%) and 76% of them work up to 9 hours per day.

TABLE I. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage	Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender			Length of Service		
Male	80	68%	<1 year	43	37%
Female	37	32%	1-3 year	65	56%
Age			>3-5 year	8	7%
<25	37	32%	>5-10 year	1	1%
25-30	39	33%	Work Hours		
>30-35	16	14%	Up to 9 Hours	89	74%
>35-40	15	13%	More than 9 Hours	28	24%
>40-45	5	4%	Position		
>45-50	4	3%	Officer	106	91%
>50	1	1%	Supervisor	10	9%
Marital Status			Manager	1	1%
Married	59	50%	Education		
Unmarried	53	45%	High School	92	79%
Divorce	5	4%	Diploma	14	12%
Having Children					
Yes	58	50%			
No	59	50%			

B. Data Analysis

The current study examined the relation between POS and TI with the mediation of stress. Process Macro was used to test the mediation [59]. This macro is known as common method to test mediation currently. It provides a simple way to analyze complex model. Process Macro using bootstrap approach to identify the mediation. This technique is considered appropriate to analyze the direct effect between variables as well as determine the presence of mediation elements because it avoids the necessity of fulfilling the normality assumptions regarding the distribution of samples through the application of bootstrapping confidence intervals [60]. The mediation of stress will be determined based on the Upper level and Lower Level Confidence Interval values that do not contain 0 value.

C. Measurement

The research data was obtained by conducting direct survey of the location of the organization. The data was collected using a questionnaire containing 22 items related to POS, stress, and TI. The question of POS consists of 6 items [40]. There are 8 questions to identify stress and 6 questions to measure TI [61]. The Cronbach alpha values for each variable were 0.832 (POS), 0.802 (stress), and 0.773 (TI). Based on the Likert scale, each item is given 6 alternative answer options from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). This study used 6 scales to avoid the middle answer from the respondents. The middle answer option was divided into 2 parts, hesitant tends to disagree (3) and hesitantly tend to agree (4).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 shows descriptive statistic and correlation for all variables and the demographic characteristics. Age was positively correlated with tenure, position, and stress. It means that older participants have longer tenure, higher position, but also higher stress level. Tenure positively related with position, work hour, stress, and TI. Employee with longer tenure have higher position, longer work hour, and higher stress. Strangely, such employees have higher TI as well. Boredom can be suspected to be one of the reason. Position positively related with education and work hour. Employees with higher education get higher position in the organization and also work more than normal hours. Work hour also positively related with stress and turnover. People who worked more than 9 hours experience more stress and higher intention to quit. Regarding the correlation between variables, POS have negative relation with stress and turnover, which mean the higher perception that organization give support with lessen stress level and the intention to quit. Lastly, stress positively related with turnover.

TABLE II. MEAN, STANDAR DEVIATION, & CORRELATION (N = 117)

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Age	Tenure	Position	Education	Work hour	POS	Stress	Turnover
Age	2.3846	1.40716	1							
Tenure	1.7179	.62761	.426**	1						
Position	1.1026	.33178	.321**	.306**	1					
Education	1.3077	.63601	-.008	-.148	.258**	1				
Work Hour	1.2393	.42850	.132	.317**	.372**	.075	1			
POS	3.7384	.71542	-.009	-.131	.175	.037	-.060	1		
Stress	2.4550	.56544	.297**	.415**	.049	-.004	.420**	-.312**	1	
Turnover	2.5179	.69302	.144	.340**	.055	-.078	.314**	-.216*	.579**	1

*Correlation is significant all the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant all the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Our discussion turns to the mediation analysis of stress in the relation between POS and TI. For this purpose, we refer to Macro Process [59]. Table 3 display the result of regression analysis

TABLE III. REGRESSION COEFFICIENT, STANDARD ERROR, & MODEL SUMMARY

	Strees			Turnover		
	Coeff	SE	p-value	Coeff	SE	p-value
POS	-0.246	0.070	0.000	-0.038	0.078	0.625
Stress	-	-	-	0.695	0.098	0.000
Constant	3.376	0.267	0.000	0.956	0.435	0.032
	R-Square		0.100	R-Square		0.58
	F =		12.374	F =		28.905
	p =		0.000	p =		0.000

Based on the above result, hypothesis H1, perceived organizational support will have significant and negative effect on turnover intention was not supported. Coefficient value (β) = -0.038; SE = 0.078; $p > 0.05$. POS did not predict the turnover intention. Hypothesis H2, POS will have significant and negative effect on work stress was supported, which mean employees who perceive strong support from organization will have less stress ($\beta = -0.246$, SE = 0.070; $p < 0.01$). Our finding regarding the effect of stress on TI (hypothesis H3) was also supported. Higher occupational stress will lead to the increasing turnover intention ($\beta = 0.695$, SE = 0.098; $p < 0.01$). Regarding the hypothesis H4 the test reveals that POS affecting the stress level and stress will predict turnover intention. There was an indirect effect of POS on turnover intention mediated by stress. Therefore, H4 was supported. Figure 1 show the complete model.

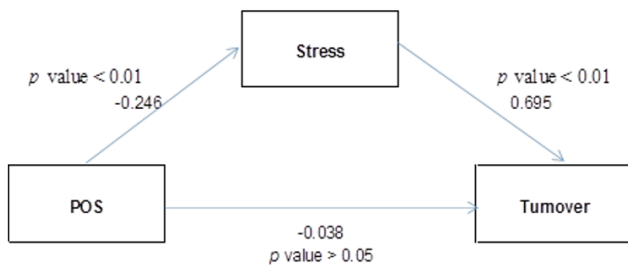


Fig. 1. Hypothesized mediation model.

Analyzing the presence of a mediating element from a variable using PROCESS was done by identify whether the

Lower Level Confidence Interval (LLCI) and Upper Level Confidence Interval (ULCI) were contain 0 value or not. If contain 0 then the variables analyzed were not have mediation role. Thus the value of LLCI and ULCI must be positive or negative. A positive value means the corresponding variable has a positive role (unidirectional), otherwise the negative value shows an opposite role. Table 4 shows the results of the calculations performed and also the basis for answering the fourth hypothesis H4. There was no 0 value between LLCI and ULCI, thus the hypothesis was supported. Stress has mediating effect in the relationship of POS and IT.

TABLE IV. INDIRECT EFFECT THROUGH MEDIATION OF STRESS

Indirect Effect of POS on Turnover Intention				
	Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	BootULCI
Through Stress	-0.171	0.054	-0.283	-0.073

Our study aimed to understand how POS can affect employee turnover intention and is stress can become a mediation in the relationship. In general, employee perception regarding the support from the organization was on average but tend to get higher. Employees might felt that the whole organization policy was not felt satisfying or they felt the support from organization was not match their need. Meanwhile, the stress level and turnover intention were low. Although organization can feel satisfy with the number, they should not overlook the reason for the low stress and TI. Further research can be done to explore what is the true reason for such behavior. Are they committed to the organization or they simply did not have other options? As the result showed to us, POS was unrelated with TI, but POS negatively predict stress while stress positively predict TI. It appears that employees with higher perception of POS feel less stress in their job and tend to stay in the organization.

The contribution of this study is the models of relationships involving stress which has been shown to mediate relationships between POS and TI. We have not found similar overall model in previous studies but we found individual relation between variables to build such model. Previous literatures support the negative relation between POS and TI [28, 30-36,62]. These result different from our finding which found no significant relation. Regarding the relation of POS and stress previous studies found negative relation which is in line with our finding [32,41-47]. Finally, we also have previous studies regarding stress and TI which most of them found positive relationship

[12,13,53-58]. Our model based on these studies. Our result regarding the relation of POS and TI was different. We found that POS has no significant relation with TI. Nevertheless, our result in line with other studies [37-39]. The results of this study confirmed that stress was a strong mediation for POS and TI because directly both variables did not have significant relationship. This mean stress plays vital part in managing employee's TI.

The findings of this study contribute to human resources practice in the plantation industry in general. We suggest that management should put more effort to provide employee with more support. Also they must be aware factors which can causes stress. Organization can enhance their support by creating great working environment which allows employees to maximize their potential, provide them with necessary tools, care for their well-being, develop strong empathy, provide better career, listen and consider their suggestion for improvement, and allowing them to express themselves. Of course such support did not mean that employee can do whatever they like. Organization still have control, but they provide employees with the room to extend their competence, knowledge, ability, and creativity to finish the job. The flexibility and empathy will boost employee confidence and performance. Strong perception that organization support their job will decrease the stress. We all know that stress is part of the job. Management also have to manage stress level. In doing so, they can look out what are the causes. Strict deadline, harsh environment, and especially in remote areas, the quality of internet connection, job safety, and the thought of family who live far away can become antecedents of stress. Although it is difficult to eliminate all of them, organization can help to reduce them. For example; regarding the family who live far away, organization can help them by providing domestic help and provide benefit for the family to visit the workers. Sincere care policy like these will lessen employee stress level and make them felt obliged to support the organization in return. This is the way of social exchange theory that employee will reciprocate what they get from the organization. In this case, when organization support them, they have lower stress level, and they tend to stay longer in the organization.

V. CONCLUSION

Three hypotheses were supported while one was not. POS was not significantly affect TI, while it has affect stress. Stress however, has significant positive effect on TI. The current study found that stress mediate the relation between POS and turnover intention. This study has some limitations; use of cross-sectional data, self-reported surveys, and sample limitation from one company. Our sample was drawn from the population of employees work in a private plantation in Irian Province which is quite remote from big cities. Therefore, not all plantation workers represented. This could cause the limitation for generalization. Future research need to obtain a nationwide representative sample of plantation workers in Indonesia. Data collection procedure also has limitation since we depend on human resource departments to distribute and collect the questionnaire which might affect participants respond. Future study should consider longitudinal data which are collected over repeated observation, using more objective

indicators such as supervisor reported questionnaire and further replication of the study using various industries. With the improvement the result of the study could benefit more for HR practitioners.

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