

Exploring Rewards Systems and Turnover Intention among Malaysian Private University Academics: The Role of Continuance Commitment as a Mediator

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Abstract: This research employed an empirical approach in overviewing the relationship between five independent variables namely, remuneration, work-life balance, supervisor support, and employee recognition and the intention of turnover by means of employees' continuance commitment. The study comprises a total of 331 academics from the four private universities that were selected. This study utilized a structured survey to collect data, drawing on publicly available literature to inform the survey's design. Building upon a comprehensive review of existing literature, the survey instrument was tailored to address the specific research objectives of this study, incorporating modifications as deemed necessary. The analysis presented in this chapter offers a detailed examination of both the measurement and structural models employed in the study. The measurement model rigorously assessed the reliability and validity of the measurement instruments, ensuring that indicators met established criteria for accuracy and precision. Subsequent Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analyses revealed that neither direct nor mediated paths achieved statistical significance, indicating a lack of empirical support for the hypothesized relationships among the variables under investigation. This comprehensive evaluation provides valuable insights into the methodological rigor of the study and highlights avenues for future research exploration.

Keywords: *Turnover intention, Academics, Continuance Commitment, Rewards System, Malaysian Private Universities.*

1. Introduction and Problem Statement

In this day and age of professionalism, reward programs have been demonstrated to be highly effective in raising employees' commitment and job satisfaction across the board. Employee needs and desires for ego and self-actualization may be satisfied by a number of non-financial incentives in addition to monetary compensation. Even though the number of students attending private universities in Malaysia has increased over time, it has been observed that most of these institutions continue to struggle with dwindling levels of academic satisfaction and enthusiasm because of the inadequate rewards provided, which drives up attrition rates (Zhou and Xie, 2019). Despite earning excellent financial rewards, workers continue to consider other important factors that can protect them. Therefore, companies must create and maintain settings that can support desired results. Financial rewards must also be connected to other intrinsic components to foster employee happiness, which will also help them deepen their emotional bonds with the business. According to Paul and Kee (2020), the educational system in Malaysia has experienced a notable decrease in the number of tenured faculty members. Due to an increased rate of academic staff turnover, most departments at Malaysian universities are experiencing a labor shortage (Nguyen et al., 2020).

Private universities in Malaysia have a significantly higher turnover rate than public universities (GuiXia and Rashid, 2019). Approximately 26% of academic staff members at private universities depart annually, while only 11% do so at public universities. Similarly, Badiozaman (2021) found that private universities had academic staff turnover rates that were more than twice as high as those of public universities. Furthermore, the average turnover rate for academic staff at private universities was reported to be 25% by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) in 2019. Furthermore, fewer academic staff members are employed by private universities than by public universities, according to data from the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia Statistics (2019). Since higher education is one of the most significant industries in the world, there is a great deal of urgency for this research. Within five years, there has been a nearly seventy percent increase in the number of students enrolling in Malaysian universities (Policy Planning and Research Division, Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2022). The rising enrolment rate over time indicates that universities have an even bigger task ahead of them. Salwa (2022) states that among the factors used to determine a university's success rank in the QS World University Ranking, academic reputation, employer reputation, and teacher-

student ratio add up to 70%. Thus, the time has come to take into account the fundamental importance of academic turnover intention for the prosperity of universities.

Furthermore, of the 104 private universities registered in Malaysia, only four were included in the ranking. Therefore, by examining the impact of reward systems on academic turnover intention, this study aims to make a substantial contribution to the literature already available in the Malaysian higher education sector. The research aims to investigate the intricate relationship between various types of reward systems and turnover intention among academicians within Malaysian Higher Learning Institutions. Furthermore, the study seeks to ascertain the mediating role of employees' continuance commitment in the relationship between different types of reward systems and turnover intention among academicians in Malaysian Higher Learning Institutions. Through empirical analysis and exploration, the study endeavors to shed light on the dynamics of reward systems, turnover intention, and continuance commitment within the context of Malaysian Higher Learning Institutions, offering insights that contribute to the understanding of organizational behavior and human resource management in academic settings.

Research Questions

- i. What are the relationships between extrinsic and intrinsic rewards used in Malaysian Higher Learning Institutions and turnover intention among academicians?
- ii. How does an employee's continuance commitment mediate the relationship between reward systems and turnover intention?

2. Literature Review

Rewards System: Total rewards is a reward management strategy that emphasizes the importance of considering all aspects of the work experience—rather than just a few, such as salary and benefits—that are valuable to employees. It aims to create a cohesive whole by fusing the material and immaterial aspects of reward (Armstrong & Brown, 2007). The following figure illustrates the various components of reward systems in accordance with the previously defined concept of reward systems.

Figure 2: The Components of Total Reward System (Armstrong & Brown, 2007)



Remuneration: As stated by Martono et al. 2018 has a great deal of attention focused on an organization's reward management system as a defining characteristic of exceptional employee welfare and performance; nevertheless, compensation has been demonstrated to have a positive impact on employees' intentions to leave. Additionally, research by Bibi et al. (2020), which sought to investigate how compensation affected workers' commitment, clearly indicated that compensation positively affects workers' commitment and, consequently, has an impact on turnover intentions.

Work-Life Balance: As per Kakar et al. (2022) A person's job fit is greatly enhanced by work-life balance which reduces the likelihood of academic turnover intention. Additionally, according to Berber et al. (2022) to attract, motivate, and retain employees in such conditions, businesses need to create work environments by 2022. One possible strategy is to offer employees Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs) as an additional means of preserving work-life balance. Also, within the framework of a university, Sajuyigbe et al. (2021) work-life balance and turnover intention in the framework of private universities were found to be significantly correlated.

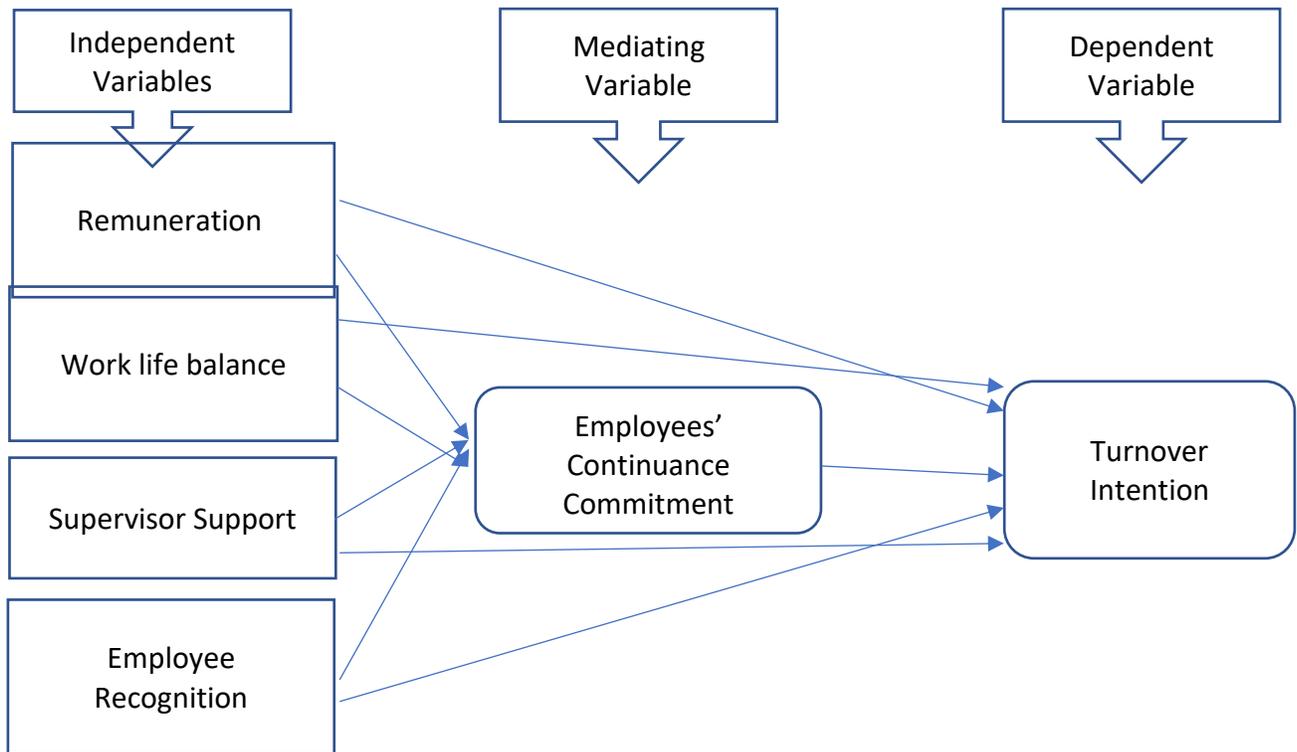
Supervisor Support: Ong, Khan, and Adib (2022), on the other hand, concluded that when it comes to lowering teachers' stress levels, supporting colleagues outperforms supervisor support. Additionally, Ong et al. (2022) found a direct correlation between the teachers' stress levels and their intention to leave. All the same, Jabeen et al. (2022) research aimed at improving comprehension of sustainable employability indicates that attaining sustainable employment can be accomplished through specific personal and social support networks. Jabeen et al. (2022) instigate that some examples of personal resources include career competencies, psychological capital, mindfulness, basic self-evaluations, and emotional intelligence. Support from co-workers and supervisors is another type of resource that is shown as a social cue to start long-term employability.

Employee Recognition: Ng et al. (2020) also made the case that the relationship between employee recognition and financial compensation can have a big influence on the intention to leave and the level of ethical leadership. Furthermore, Koundinya et al. (2019) held that one of the components of job satisfaction is employee recognition, which also has a strong positive correlation with organizational commitment, reducing the likelihood that employees will leave. However, Balasingam et al. (2019) thought that role overload, support from workgroups, and employee recognition all had a significant influence on academics' intentions to leave their positions in the setting of private higher education institutions.

Continuance Commitment: Kasogela (2019) posits that a higher level of motivational factors results in a higher level of continuance commitment, which in turn produces high-performing human capital. Based on Gilbert et al. (2020) turnover intentions are significantly influenced by employees' commitment to their work, so management should consider improving the organization's reward system to mimic greater employee commitment. According to Meyer and Allen (1991), workers whose primary bond with the company is a continuance commitment do so out of obligation. This demonstrates how affective commitment and continuance are not the same. In the latter case, the employee must remain employed by the company purely out of self-interest. Continuance commitment may be viewed as an instrumental attachment to the business, in which a person's decision to remain affiliated with the organization is determined by how well they are compensated and treated. Employees are considered to stay with their organization not only when they feel an emotional attachment to it, but also when they perceive a cost associated with leaving (Humayra and Mahendra, 2019). As a result, there is a significant correlation between continuance commitment and turnover intentions.

Turnover Intention: Due to the element of emotional attachment and its contributing factors, such as the organization's facilities, the workplace building infrastructure, and conflicts at work, previous literature in the context of organizational commitment primarily focused on the affective commitment when predicting turnover intentions (Kuhail et al., 2018). The components of both the intrinsic and extrinsic reward systems are established in this study, which sets it apart in terms of forecasting turnover intention. According to prior research, turnover intentions can be predicted by maintaining commitment, which is based on social and economic factors (Alzamel et al., 2020). Furthermore, studies conducted over the past ten years in Malaysia's various education-related industries, especially in the private sector, have shown a sharp increase in intentions to leave. According to Laulié and Morgeson (2021), employee turnover intention can be ascertained by calculating the probability of employees quitting the company. Hence, when employees' experiences at work don't live up to their expectations, Park and Johnson (2019) suggest that they may become more inclined to consider leaving their jobs.

Figure 3: Conceptual Framework



Hypothesis: This study is geared towards answering the following hypotheses:

H1: There is a positive relationship between remuneration and turnover intention.

H2: There is a positive relationship between WLB and turnover intention.

H3: There is a positive relationship between supervisor support and turnover intention.

H4: There is a positive relationship between employee recognition and turnover intention.

H5: There is a positive relationship between employees' continuance commitment towards turnover intention.

H6: Employees' continuance commitment negatively mediates the relationship between remuneration and turnover intention.

H7: Employees' continuance commitment negatively mediates the relationship between WLB and turnover intention.

H8: Employees' continuance commitment negatively mediates the relationship between supervisor support and turnover intention.

H9: Employees' continuance commitment negatively mediates the relationship between employee recognition and turnover intention.

3. Methodology

The study aims to investigate the impact of reward system variables on academicians' intentions to leave their positions within Malaysian private universities, with continuance commitment serving as a mediating factor. The examination considers both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. Drawing from Mar et al. (2020), understanding how intrinsic and extrinsic rewards influence turnover intention significantly shapes human resource management strategies within organizations. Moreover, the interplay between reward systems and turnover intention is mediated by continuance commitment. This study is structured to empirically test hypotheses derived from these established relationships. Furthermore, given its core objective of assessing the relationship between variables and the role of the mediating factor, this research is characterized as correlational in nature. Data collection employs naturalistic observation to obtain insights from the sample populations. Online questionnaires are distributed to participants, allowing them to respond within their natural environments without researcher intervention.

In terms of research design, the time horizon delineates the relevant period during which the investigator observes the population (Alamgeer, 2022). Due to its short duration and observational approach, this research is categorized as cross-sectional. Consequently, exposures and outcomes are measured concurrently in a cross-sectional study (Wang and Cheng, 2020). In this study, demographic information will be gathered through the administration of a questionnaire consisting of five questions. These questions will inquire about respondents' gender, age, position grade, monthly salary, and length of service with their current institution. The distribution of 370 questionnaires will be facilitated through Google Forms, inviting potential participants to engage in the online survey. It is anticipated that a total of over 300 respondents will complete the questionnaires, indicating a favorable response rate. Each participant will receive one set of questionnaires accompanied by a cover letter delineating the study's objectives and providing instructions for completing the questionnaire.

Table 3: Total Population of Academician in Malaysian Private Universities

Institution	Taylor's University	UCSI University (University College Sedaya International)	Management and Science University (MSU)	Sunway University	TOTAL
No. of Academicians	590	500	700	516	2306

In the selected Malaysian Private Universities, a total of 2306 academics constitute the academic total population. In determining the appropriate sample size for the study, the researcher employed the methodology presented by Krecie and Morgan (1970), utilizing their prescribed table for sample size calculation. According to the referenced table, a sample size of 331 was identified as suitable for a population of 2400 academics. Consequently, this investigation adopted the specified sample size for its research endeavors. A structured survey was developed and used to collect data. Publicly available literature served as the model for the survey's questions. In addition, understandable question ordering, a clear layout, and simple questions are necessary for a questionnaire survey to be successful. The questionnaire should also be able to convey the required information in an interesting way to prevent the respondent from becoming bored. In the end, it must strive to reduce response errors. A thorough evaluation of the literature provided the basis for the questionnaire created specifically for this study. Thus, to meet the purpose of the research interest, some modifications were made to the questionnaire used in this study. A five-sectioned, structured questionnaire served as the study instrument. Part A gathered information regarding the demographic profile, while Part B focused on the independent variables, Part C addressed the mediator, and Part D addressed the dependent variable.

This research used a five-point Likert scale to evaluate all of its components. Strongly Disagree (Likert scale: 1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), and Strongly Agree (5). Data analysis involved summarizing, applying statistical inferences, and dividing the raw data into digestible portions. The following procedures were followed to analyze the data for the analysis. Following the administration of questionnaires, all data were carefully cleaned and then coded using a five-point Likert scale, except the demographic information. For a response that was strongly agreed upon, the respondent scored five points. Additionally, a strongly disagree response receives a response intensity of 1 point. After that, three different levels of data analysis will be conducted. The initial level of analysis for the respondents' demographic information was conducted using a simple frequency distribution table. Employing descriptive analysis as a method for data analysis provides valuable insights into the characteristics, patterns, and trends present within the dataset. Through graphical representations like frequency distributions, this approach visualizes the distribution of variables and discerns any notable trends or outliers present within the dataset. These visual representations facilitate the identification of key insights and aid in the interpretation of the data.

4. Findings and Discussion

Demographic Profile of Respondents: Most of the respondents of this study were female (62.7%) and male 37.3%. A significant majority (74.2%) fell within the 20-30 years age range while 13.6% of respondents aged 31-40 years and 12.1% of respondents age was 41-50 years old.

Table 4: Demographic Profile

Demography	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
male	123	37.3
female	207	62.7
Age		
20-30	245	74.2
31-40	45	13.6
41-50	40	12.1
Academic Rank		
Lecturer	219	66.4
Senior Lecturer	53	16.1
Associate Professor	13	3.9
Assistant Professor	22	6.7
Professor	23	7.0
Salary		
Rm1800-Rm3000	134	40.6
Rm3000-Rm4500	105	31.8
Rm4500-Rm6000	26	7.9
Rm6000-Rm8000	37	11.2
Rm8000 and above	28	8.5
Experience		
2-5 years	223	67.6
6-10 years	47	14.2
11-15years	43	13.0
16-20years	17	5.2

The demographic composition of respondents, delineated by academic rank, unveils a heterogeneous representation across the academic landscape. Predominantly, the cadre of respondents occupies the position of Lecturer, embodying 66.4% of the total cohort, underscoring a substantial presence of nascent academics entrenched in pedagogy and scholarly pursuits. Following this, Senior Lecturers emerge as the next conspicuous segment, encompassing 16.1% of the participants, while Associate Professors, Assistant Professors, and Professors collectively comprise the residual respondents, constituting 3.9%, 6.7%, and 7.0%, respectively. A noteworthy proportion of respondents quantified at 40.6%, disclosed salaries within the RM1800 to RM3000 bracket, implying a substantial contingent occupying the lower echelons of the income spectrum. After this, 31.8% of participants reported salaries ranging from RM3000 to RM4500, while a discernible but smaller cohort, comprising 7.9% of respondents, declared earnings within the RM4500 to RM6000 range. Moreover, 11.2% of participants revealed incomes between RM6000 and RM8000, with an additional 8.5% indicating salaries exceeding RM8000, underscoring a minority garnering higher pay within the academic domain. Regarding tenure, the preponderance of respondents, constituting 67.6%, cited experience spanning 2 to 5 years. After this, 14.2% of participants reported tenure ranging from 6 to 10 years, while 13.0% disclosed involvement in academic pursuits for 11 to 15 years. A lesser contingent, comprising 5.2% of respondents, indicated a tenure of 16 to 20 years.

Descriptive Statistics: Descriptive analysis was undertaken to scrutinize the attributes of the dataset. Mean values were stratified into three tiers: 1-2.33 designated as low, 2.34-3.67 as moderate, and 3.68-5.00 as high. The findings reveal that five constructs manifested a moderate degree of concordance: namely, remuneration, cash incentives, employee recognition, continuance commitment, and turnover intention. Conversely, the remaining two constructs evinced a high level of consensus: work-life balance, and supervisor support.

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation Result

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation
Remuneration	3.43	1.12
Cash Incentives	3.45	1.11
Work-life balance	3.75	1.02
Supervisor Support	3.68	1.00
Employee Recognition	3.53	0.85
Continuance Commitment	3.62	1.01
Turnover Intention	3.49	1.10

Variance Inflation Factor: The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) serves as a valuable instrument in discerning multicollinearity, a scenario characterized by high correlations among two or more predictor variables, as delineated by Thompson, Laible, Padilla-Walker, and Carlo (2019), and Senaviratna & Cooray (2019). In the presence of multicollinearity, disentangling the individual impact of each variable on the dependent variable becomes arduous, as underscored by Zhang (2020). VIF quantifies the extent to which the variance of the estimated regression coefficient for a predictor variable is inflated owing to multicollinearity, as posited by Bayman & Dexter (2021). Consequently, VIF is derived by juxtaposing the variance of the estimated regression coefficient against the actual regression coefficient variance, assuming all other predictor variables are encompassed in the model. As advocated by Ramayah et al. (2018), the VIF value should fall below 3.3.

Table 6: Assessment of inner Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

Construct	CC	TI
CC		2.148
ER	1.216	1.871
RE	2.429	2.646
SS	3.581	3.686
WB	2.935	3.017

The term "coefficient of determination" explicates the manner in which independent factors contribute to latent dependent variables. Represented as R^2 , the coefficient of determination functions as an indicator of the predictive accuracy of the model and encapsulates the cumulative influence of exogenous variables on endogenous variables. In simpler terms, R-squared denotes the proportion of variance in the endogenous construct that can be elucidated by all connected exogenous constructs. This measure ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicative of heightened predictive accuracy. Following the interpretation delineated by Pandey and Pandey (2021), values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 are regarded as substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively. The findings presented in Table 7 unveil that the Coefficient of Determination (R^2) for CC and TI are 0.534 (moderate) and 0.385 (weak), respectively.

Table 7: Assessment of Coefficient of Determination (r^2)

Construct	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
CC	0.534	0.529
TI	0.385	0.375

This chapter comprehensively examines the analyses conducted on both the measurement and structural models. Initially, the measurement model meticulously evaluates the accuracy and precision of the measurement instruments employed in the study. The loadings for all indicators are carefully scrutinized to ensure they do not exceed 0.7, while the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values surpass the acceptable threshold of 0.5. Additionally, all constructs meet the established criterion of 0.7 for both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, affirming the measurements' reliability. Subsequently, the chapter transitions into the testing of hypotheses within the structural model framework. The findings derived from Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analyses reveal that neither the direct nor the mediated paths attain statistical significance, indicating a lack of empirical support for the proposed relationships among the variables under investigation.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings presented it can be concluded that the measurement instruments utilized in this study demonstrate adequate reliability and validity. The loadings for all indicators, although not exceeding 0.7, suggest satisfactory levels of accuracy and precision in measurement. Moreover, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeding 0.5 and the satisfactory levels of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (both above 0.7) further confirm the reliability of the measurements employed. However, upon the examination of the structural model and testing of hypotheses, the results from the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis indicate that the direct and mediated paths are not statistically significant. This implies that the hypothesized relationships between the variables under investigation were not supported by the data. Based on these findings, several recommendations can be made for future research endeavors. Firstly, researchers should consider exploring alternative models or variables that may better explain the phenomena under study. Additionally, future studies could benefit from employing different methodologies or data collection techniques to gain deeper insights into the relationships among the constructs examined in this study. Furthermore, it may be valuable for researchers to replicate this study using larger and more diverse samples to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Finally, researchers should continue to refine and validate measurement instruments to ensure the robustness of their studies' findings. In conclusion, while the present study provides valuable insights into the reliability of measurement instruments, the lack of significant findings in the structural model suggests avenues for further exploration and refinement in future research efforts.

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