

# ROLE CLARITY, AUTONOMY, WORK ENGAGEMENT AND VOLUNTARY TURNOVER INTENTIONS: THE MODERATING ROLE OF PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

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## ABSTRACT

*The main objective of this study was to examine the relationship between the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement, personal circumstances and voluntary turnover intentions. Data were collected from 322 employees of an Information and Communication technology industry in Malaysia. A partial least square structural equation modelling approach was used to analyze the data. The results showed a significant relationship was found between role clarity, autonomy and work engagement predict the voluntary turnover intentions, with personal circumstances moderating the relationship. The findings from the study will help to develop further theory and managerial understanding on issues relating to voluntary turnover intentions.*

**Keyword:** Role Clarity (RC), Autonomy (AU), Work Engagement (WE), Personal Circumstances (PC), Voluntary Turnover Intentions (VTI)

## INTRODUCTION

Employees' turnover is treated as a critical issue as it can influence the overall productivity of a company, and subsequently the organizations success. Employee turnover issue has become a continuous managerial concern in work organizations (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2010). There are two types of turnover, namely voluntary and involuntary (Watrous, Huffman & Pritchard, 2006).

Voluntary turnover refers to decisions made by employees to stay or leave the organization, while involuntary turnover refers to employers' decision whether the employees may stay or leave the organization (McPherson, 1976). For example, between the two, the rate for voluntary turnover shows 10.4% higher than the rate for involuntary turnover which was only 4.7% in 2013 (CompData Survey, 2013).

Malaysia is one of the countries which experiences higher rate of voluntary turnover. The employees' voluntary turnover increased from 20% in year 2010 to 79% in year 2014 which was more than 50% (Department of Labour, 2014). Information and communication technology (ICT) actually contributes to the rate of voluntary turnover among manufacturing sector in Malaysia. Therefore, information and communication technology employees will be selected as the unit of analysis in this study.

Based on the above information, voluntary turnover is considered as a challenging issue that needs to be given priority. Due to the nature and its importance to the organization, this study

focuses on the voluntary turnover issues. Voluntary turnover can be divided into two; avoidable and unavoidable turnover. Avoidable turnover represents quitting employees which an organization can avoid. Organization's actions such as pay raise or a new job assignment may bring down avoidable turnover (Barrick & Zimmerman, 2005). From this perspective, it shows that voluntary turnover can be avoided if an organization manages to deal with the problem of talented employees. However, the organization cannot do anything except let the employees go because of unavoidable reason such as not fit to work anymore due to health problem. This situation can be called as unavoidable turnover which represents quitting employees which an organization could not avoid. An example of reason for quitting for unavoidable turnover can be because of retirement (Abelson, 1987).

The issue of employee turnover is treated as a thoughtful issue and brings more negative consequences than positive one (Watrous et al., 2006). Between the voluntary employee turnover and involuntary employee turnover, the earlier gives more negative impact to the organisation such as the loss of talented and skillful employees (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000) which in turn can lead to organizational dysfunction. Voluntary turnover may occur because of some reasons such as the low job satisfaction (Emberland & Rundmo, 2010; Choi et al., 2012), favorable labour market condition (Pamu 2010) and personal reasons (Ng & Feldman, 2009; Jung et al., 2010; Berthelsen et al., 2011; Siti Aisyah et al., 2012). They proposed that the internal alternative factor could be one of the precursors to create intentions among employees to quit or stay in the organization. Previous research has shown that lack of internal alternative factor is detrimental to both the individuals and organizations in a variety of ways at it occurs across regions, industries, occupations and genders (Boyar et al., 2012; Mohamad Abdullah & Abdul Rahman, 2011; Agarwal et al., 2012; Ng & Feldman, 2009). They also proposed that the additional antecedents of internal factors are important as they can lead to a better understanding of the issue. Role clarity, autonomy and work engagement will be selected as the reasons that will create job satisfaction and influencing factors for employees in making decision to stay with or quit from organization.

Since the late 1980s, literature on the role clarity has proliferated in the scholarly database. Early work emphasizes the nature and impact of role clarity (Kelly & Hise, 1980). This stream of research continues with more scholars extending their studies to see the role clarity as a mediating variable between employees' perception on service quality and turnover intention (Slatten et al., 2011) as well as a moderating variable (Tamara, 2015). The literature on autonomy has thrived since 2011, which emphasizes on autonomy as moderator (Shih et al., 2011; Runhar et al., 2013). In the scholarly database, the literature on work engagement has prospered since the early 2000s. The work emphasizes the influence of work engagement, (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003; Salanova, Agut & Peiro, 2005; Schilling, 2014) and measurement of work engagement (Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006). The research continues with more scholars extending their studies to see work engagement as a mediating variable between the innovative work behaviour (Agarwal et al., 2012), and moderator variables such as the generational differences (Park & Gursoy, 2012).

In order to have better understanding of the relationship between the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement and voluntary turnover intention, it is important to examine the moderating factor that strengthens these relationships. According to the image theory, a 'shock' or feel surprised or upset faced by employees could affect their decision on the voluntary turnover intentions (Beach & Mitchell, 1987). This theoretical assumption implies that internal alternatives such as the role clarity, autonomy and work engagement may be a predictor to a particular shock. For example, when an employee who is clear on job responsibilities and independent in completing work task, and feels happy at work suddenly faces bad personal circumstances such as health problem, he or she will tend to make negative decision. As a result of experiencing such shock, individuals' intention on voluntary turnover may be altered. Previous researchers also have suggested including the additional antecedent on individual, organizational and contextual factors in the study of

voluntary turnover (Jung et al., 2010) and the moderator (Shih et al., 2011) will extend the understanding. This study is more interested on individual factor, which is a personal circumstance.

This study would like to see the voluntary turnover intention based on the voluntary turnover model specifically in the internal alternative category. As mentioned earlier, the examples of the internal alternatives found in previous studies are affective commitment (Mohamad Abdullah & Abdul Rahman, 2011), management support (Choi et al., 2012), organization support (Newman et al., 2012) and innovative work behavior (Agarwal et al., 2012). Thus, this study would like to introduce three new antecedents in the internal alternatives which are the role clarity, autonomy and work engagement. Additionally, this research also incorporates a moderating effect of the personal circumstances that will bring better understanding of internal alternative factors on the employees' voluntary turnover. There are three personal circumstances involved in this study which are financial security, health, and experience levels.

The methods used by previous researches are the quantitative method (Russo & Buonocore, 2012; Gachter et al., 2013; Hill, Chenevert & Poitras, 2015), qualitative method (Tyman & Stumpf, 2011) and both methods (Boyar, Valk, Maertz & Sinha, 2012; Poddar & Madupalli, 2012). However, this study is using the quantitative method.

Indeed, numerous theories were used in the area of voluntary turnover intentions. Some of the previous studies used the goal orientation theory and self-determination theory (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2010), psychological contract theory (Emberland & Rundmo, 2010), social exchange theory (Agarwal et al., 2012; Newman et al., 2012), theory of human capital (Quan & Cha, 2010), theory of planned behaviour (Russo & Buonocore, 2012), innovative work behaviour theory (Shih & Susanto, 2011), behavioural theory and job embeddedness theory (Boyar et al., 2012), conflict theory, turnover theory and role theory (Hill et al., 2015). This study combines the social exchange theory and image theory to have better explanation.

Overall, the intention of this study is to find a better way in contributing to the theory by looking into how the role clarity, autonomy and work engagement influence the voluntary turnover intentions and, furthermore, how the personal circumstances can interpret these relationships.

In summary, the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement may have effects on the voluntary turnover intention supported by the social exchange theory. In addition, the strength of the relationship between the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement and voluntary turnover intentions may depend on the personal circumstances. Therefore, this study will address the following research question: do the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement and personal circumstances influence voluntary turnover intentions?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **The Relationship between Role Clarity, Autonomy, Work Engagement and Voluntary Turnover Intentions**

Previous research has found many reasons as to why employees stay or leave an organization. The reasons are put under three categories based on the voluntary turnover model by March & Simon, (1958) which are the perceived desirability of leaving, the perceived ease of leaving, and alternatives available to the employees (internal and external).

In the perceived desirability of leaving, voluntary turnover can happen because of low job satisfaction (Emberland & Rundmo, 2010; Choi et al., 2012;), shocks to employee (Noraani, Aminah, Jegak & Khairuddin, 2010), or personal reason (Ng & Feldman, 2009; Siti Aisyah, Siti Khadijah, Azizah, & Rosman, 2012; Jung, Namkung & Yoon, 2010; Berthelsen, Lau & Einarsen, 2011; Gachter et al., 2013). Based on the factors or reasons studied by scholars, it shows that perceived desirability of leaving occurs when there are outgrowths of poor person or poor job or

organization mismatch. For example, mismatch occurs when the reward provided by the job and reward desired by employees are different which leads to job dissatisfaction (Newman, Thanacoody & Hui, 2012).

Next, the perceived ease of leaving may happen when there is lack of barriers to leave and at the same time employees are able to find a new job (Biron & Boon, 2013) such as favourable labour market condition (Pamu, 2010), and transferable knowledge, skills and attribute (Poddar & Madupalli, 2012). Based on such situation, it can be assumed that the organization may not give priority to the retention of loyal employees since it can easily get a replacement due to the nature of job. For example, in the job nature of education industry, teachers are easily moved from one school to another (Pamu, 2010) because the numbers of schools keep increasing and this brings high demand on teacher's profession.

The last reason is alternatives. Voluntary turnover model divides the alternatives into internal and external alternatives. Internal alternatives refer to any organization action that brings opportunities to the workers to feel motivated to perform better in their job such as new job assignment or any possibilities that can increase the employees' performance, in turn lead to less intention to quit (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Previous research on internal alternative factors are the mentoring by supervisor (Dawley, Andrews & Bucklew, 2010), intrinsic motivation, learning culture and learning motivation (Shih, Jiang, Klein & Wang, 2011; Islam, Khan, Ungku Norul Kamar, Ali, Ahmed & Bowra, 2013), perceived service quality (Slatten et al., 2011), innovative work behaviour (Agarwal, Datta, Blake-Beard & Bhargava, 2012; Shih & Susanto, 2011), affective commitment (Mohamad Abdullah & Abdul Rahman, 2011), career success and management support (Tymon & Stumpf, 2011) and external alternative such as external job offers (Quan & Cha, 2010). Based on the perspective, it shows that, there is room for an organization to improve in many ways especially in the organizational inertia (inside of organization) in order to retain the employees.

In another perspective, voluntary turnover may bring positive consequences to an organization in certain occasions, especially when the employees who are not talented and lacking in contribution and knowledge, keep coming for work and the organization keep paying the employees' salary without getting any returns (Price, 1989). However, as most scholars have discovered, voluntary turnover results in negative consequences to an organization rather than positive consequences (Pamu, 2010; Slatten, Svensson & Svaeri, 2011; Shih & Susanto, 2011; Choi, Cheong & Feinberg, 2012; Poddar & Madupalli, 2012; Gachter, Savarage & Torgler, 2013; Hofhuis, Van der Zee & Otten, 2014).

However, role clarity is important to avoid the high rate of voluntary turnover among employees. Previous studies (Slatten et al., 2011; Tamara, 2015) have mentioned the role clarity as one of the effects of voluntary turnover intentions. Employees tend to be more satisfied when the job fits their own interest and requirements. Employees who are clear about their job responsibilities tend to perform better (Slatten et al., 2011) and this will lead to the lower rate of voluntary turnover intentions. This argument was agreed by Gachter, et al., (2013), where role clarity is found to be an important factor influencing the decision to quit. Additionally, lack of role clarity is the primary reason for job dissatisfaction (Tamara, 2015) and leads to the voluntary turnover.

And for second dimensions namely autonomy, this is important as a motivation for the job characteristics that may influence the job quality. Previous studies mentioned that autonomy is related to the voluntary turnover intentions. Employees with higher perception of job autonomy are less likely to leave their jobs and companies (Volmer et al., 2012). Therefore, encouraging autonomy can substantially lessen the voluntary turnover intentions among employees (Shih et al., 2011). With job autonomy, employees feel satisfied with their jobs and lives, and this will lead them to stay in the organization (Croson & Minniti, 2012). However, a study by Lindsay (2015)

found that autonomy was not the influencers of the turnover decisions. It shows that there is a perspective that autonomy does not support the voluntary turnover. The hypothesis testing will be done in this study to see the relationship between autonomy and voluntary turnover intention.

Additionally, for last dimension, the work engagement happens when the employee in an organization has positive and fulfilling work-related state of mind. Work engagement was found to be related to the ethical climate (Yener, Yaldiran & Ergun, 2012), job satisfaction (Yeh, 2013) and voluntary turnover intentions (Agarwal et al., 2011; Park & Gursoy, 2012; Karatepe, 2013). The above studies mentioned that with a high level of energy while working, enthusiasm and full concentration on work will cause difficulties for the employees to detach themselves from work. Therefore, theoretically, there is a relationship between work engagement and voluntary turnover intentions.

Therefore, in this study the researcher measured three variables during the data collection namely, the role clarity, autonomy and work engagement as IVs and voluntary turnover intentions as DV. In supporting the relationship, the social exchange theory was used to examine the relationship between these variables and voluntary turnover. The theory explained that when the organization provides a positive and fulfilling work-related state of mind that involves high level of energy, strongly involved and happily at work, it will bring a working attachment among employees to the organization and this will lead them to stay in the organization. Thus, the research hypothesis was;

*H1: There is a significant relationship between role clarity and voluntary turnover intentions.*

*H2: There is a significant relationship between autonomy and voluntary turnover intentions.*

*H3: There is a significant relationship between work engagement and voluntary turnover intentions.*

## **Personal Circumstances as Moderator**

Personal circumstances represent the resources within an individual that affect their decision-making process and actions, which include skills and knowledge, financial security and physical and mental health (Cocklin & Alston, 2003; Lin, 2001 cited in Moon et al., 2012).

In studies related to the personal circumstances, previous researchers mentioned the age (Ng & Feldman, 2009; Goranson, Naswall & Sverke, 2009), gender (Ng & Feldman, 2009; Goranson et al., 2009; Groeneveld, 2011), organizational tenure (Ng & Feldman, 2009), educational level (Ng & Feldman, 2009; Goranson et al., 2009; Quan & Cha, 2010), financial security, personal and social norms preferred incentives (Moon et al., 2012), and family situation and profiles (Boyar et al., 2012). Previous researchers have allocated the antecedents of personal circumstances as the independent variables (Ng & Feldman, 2009; Quan & Cha, 2010; Groeneveld, 2011; Boyar et al., 2012; Moon et al., 2012; Lu, 2012).

The creation of this study was based on further research needed in getting more antecedents by analysing the influencing factors and to do further research on the moderators (Yang et al., 2011). Therefore, the current research aims to fill the gap in the available literature by incorporating personal circumstances as the moderators between the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement and voluntary turnover intentions, and supported by the image theory. Three personal circumstances selected to represent the personal circumstances item are financial security, health and experience levels. Financial security is selected due to the important factor in the employees' availability to earn that may affect their decision to continue working or leave a company. Meanwhile, health and experience level are selected based on the avoidable and unavoidable turnover. Health is a category of the unavoidable turnover while experience level is a category of the avoidable turnover.

Additionally, this study filled a gap by incorporating personal circumstances as the moderating effects between the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement and voluntary turnover intentions. The creation of this variable was based on the research needed to incorporate the

moderating effects to extend the understanding of the internal alternative factor influence on the individual's turnover intentions (Shih et al., 2011; Slatten et al., 2011; Hill et al., 2015). There are three personal circumstances chosen including the financial security, health and experience level.

Financial security refers to the alternative income or savings for employees that may affect their decisions as to whether to continue working for or leave the company. A previous study related to the voluntary turnover intention mentioned that employees with low financial obligations are more likely to leave the organization (Boyar et al., 2012).

Health and work are important for an organization (Goranson et al., 2009; Moon et al., 2012). Negative work-related health attribution is related to the lower job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and will lead to the higher level of turnover intentions (Moon et al., 2012).

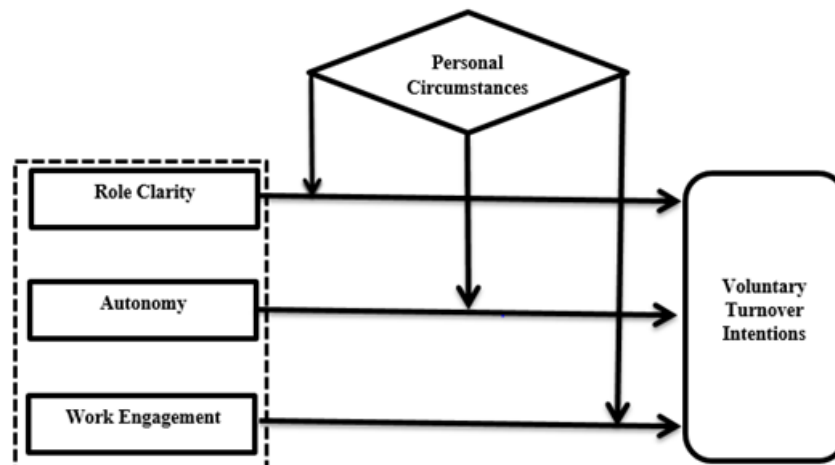
Finally, employees' experience level may influence their decision to stay with or leave the organization. Employees with a high level of experience tend to leave a company (Ng & Feldman, 2009; Quan & Cha, 2010). However, it was found that professionals with higher levels of experience have lower intention to leave their profession (Russo & Buonocore, 2012).

In this study, the internal alternative factors (role clarity, autonomy and work engagement) and personal circumstances (financial security, health and experience level) show the working attachment to the voluntary turnover intention. Therefore, to support this argument, the image theory was used to examine the relationship between the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement, personal circumstances on the voluntary turnover intentions. The theory explained how employees' personal decision making towards careful judgment may influence his or her internal alternative factors whether to stay with or leave the organizations. Therefore, personal circumstances will moderate the relationship between the role clarity, autonomy and work engagement on the voluntary turnover intentions. Thus, the research hypotheses were:

**H4a:** *Personal circumstances moderate the relationship between the role clarity and voluntary turnover intentions.*

**H4b:** *Personal circumstances moderate the relationship between autonomy and the voluntary turnover intentions.*

**H4c:** *Personal circumstances moderate the relationship between the work engagement and voluntary turnover intentions.*



**FIGURE 1**  
**RESEARCH MODEL**

## STUDY METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study examines the effects of the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement, personal circumstances on the voluntary turnover intentions through the hypothesis testing using quantitative data. A quantitative approach was chosen because the focus of this study is on the theory testing and not theory building (Alqershi et al., 2020; Hair, Money, Samouel & Page, 2007). Specifically, this study tests a predictive model developed on the basis of the existing theories.

In addition, this study will conduct a cross-sectional analysis among employees in the information and communication technology industry in Malaysia. Self-reported questionnaires were distributed to elicit responses from the participants (Alqershi et al., 2021). The use of the self-report measures in this study is appropriate and justifiable because the constructs examined are self-referential respondent perceptions.

### Sample and Procedure

The samples of this study were employees from the information and communication technology industry or organization. This selection was based on the high rate of voluntary turnover contributed by this industry. The list of companies registered under the Multimedia Super Corridor will be identified by looking into Multimedia Super Corridor, Malaysia Companies Directory. The samples consist of 405 employees (300 employees *via* personal administration questionnaire and 105 employees *via* web survey) around Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Putrajaya due to a high population of employees covered by these three areas.

Additionally, as agreed upon, 300 booklets were handed over to an appointed person-in-charge (five of them) to be distributed to the employees in the organization. Two weeks later, 242 booklets were received from the representatives. The researcher also sent the link to the representative or person in charge for six companies who agreed to participate *via* web survey. 105 workers should participate *via* the web survey, but only 65 workers responded. After a week, another 19 responses were received from the potential participants among friends and their colleagues who worked in the required industry. The total completed survey questionnaires received were 326 from the organizations, which accounts for an 80% response rate. Only data from 322 respondents were usable for the data analysis after excluding three cases of missing values and one case of suspicious pattern.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study was conducted in two stages using the SPSS (Version 20.0) and Smart PLS 3.0 (Ringle, Wende & Will, 2005) statistical software applications. The first stage involved conducting a preliminary analysis to screen the data for the incorrect entries and missing values, presence of univariate and multivariate outliers, and violation of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity assumptions. The second stage involved conducting the main analysis using the Partial Least Square path modelling to test the study hypotheses.

## STUDY RESULTS

This section presents the results of the main analyses of a Partial Least Square model. The results of the measurement model, structural model, and hypothesis testing are reported.

## Measurement Model Results

The internal consistency reliability of the measurement model was appropriate. The composite reliability values were 0.83, 0.88, 0.88 and 0.83 for the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement and voluntary turnover intentions, respectively. Also the results of the convergent validity as assessed by the average variance extracted (AVE) values. The AVE values for the four variables were above 0.50 thresholds, indicating that more than half of the respective indicators' variance was explained by its latent variable. In addition, at the indicator level, the results of the indicator loadings shown that all of the loadings are above the 0.70 thresholds value, suggesting that the indicators are reliable.

The Fornell-Larcker criterion, cross loadings and Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) were used to assess the discriminant validity at the construct level. Table 1 reveals that the AVE value of each of the latent variable is greater than the latent variable's highest squared correlation over the other latent variable. These results suggest that each latent variable above more constructs variance with its assigned indicators than with another latent variable, providing evidence of the discriminant validity at the construct level.

	<b>AU</b>	<b>RC</b>	<b>VTI</b>	<b>WE</b>	<b>PC</b>
AU	0.844				
RC	0.584	0.794			
VTI	-0.432	-0.531	0.845		
WE	0.649	0.769	-0.384	0.784	
PC	0.673	0.711	0.423	0.652	0.752

Also this study shown that the loading of each indicator on its assigned latent variable is greater (number with bold) than all of its cross-loadings. Hence, the discriminant validity at the indicator level was established. Another new method used to test the discriminant validity is the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). Table 2 shows that all of the ratios are less than 0.9 threshold value, suggesting that the ratios are discriminant.

	<b>AU</b>	<b>RC</b>	<b>VTI</b>	<b>WE</b>	<b>PC</b>
AU					
RC	0.784				
VTI	0.577	0.742	0.753		
WE	0.820	0.858	0.863	876	
PC	0.823	0.861	0.866	881	886

## Hypothesis Testing Results

To test the significance of the path coefficient, bootstrapping procedure was used (cases = 322, resample = 5000). The bootstrapping result of this study shown that all structural paths were statistically significant.

Overall, the results of the hypothesis testing show that all six paths were statistically significant at the 0.05 level as shown in Tables 3 and 4. The path coefficients were statistically significant for the relationship between the role clarity (RC) and voluntary turnover intentions



(VTI) ( $\beta=0.527$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 stated that there is a direct significant relationship between the role clarity and voluntary turnover intentions.

Hypothesis 2 stated that autonomy (AU) and the voluntary turnover intentions (VTI) were statistically significant in the path coefficients ( $\beta=-0.238$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 stated that there is a direct significant relationship between autonomy and the voluntary turnover intentions.

Hypothesis 3 proposed that work engagement (WE) and voluntary turnover intentions (VTI) were statistically significant in the path coefficients ( $\beta=-0.175$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was supported and stated that there is a direct significant relationship between the work engagement and voluntary turnover intentions.

Hypotheses	Path Coefficients	t value	p value
H1	RC→VTI	7.210	0.000
H2	AU→VTI	3.628	0.000
H3	WE→VTI	1.942	0.005

Hypothesis 4(a) proposed that the personal circumstances (PC) moderate the relationship between the role clarity (RC) and voluntary turnover intentions (VTI). Using the continuous moderating effect, the interaction term of the role clarity and personal circumstances was increase and the path coefficient between the interaction terms and voluntary turnover intentions was statistically significant ( $\beta=-0.365$ ,  $p < 0.03$ ). Therefore, Hypotheses 4(a) was supported.

Hypothesis 4(b) proposed that personal circumstances (PC) moderate the relationship between autonomy (AU) and the voluntary turnover intentions (VTI). Using the continuous moderating effect, the interaction term of autonomy and personal circumstances was increased and the path coefficient between the interaction terms and voluntary turnover intentions was statistically significant ( $\beta=-0.416$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, Hypotheses 4(b) was supported.

Hypothesis 4(c) proposed that personal circumstances (PC) moderate the relationship between the work engagement (WE) and voluntary turnover intentions (VTI). Using the continuous moderating effect, the interaction term of the work engagement and personal circumstances was increased and the path coefficient between the interaction terms and voluntary turnover intentions was statistically significant ( $\beta=0.511$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, Hypotheses 4(c) was supported.

Hypotheses	Path Coefficients	t value	p value
H4a	RC*PC→VTI	3.760	0.003
H4b	AU*PC→VTI	8.836	0.001
H4c	WE*PC→VTI	4.116	0.005

Finally, additionally, for this study the  $R^2$  value for voluntary turnover intentions was 0.315. Therefore, the model explained the endogenous latent variables moderately well (Chin 1998; Henseler et al., 2009). The change in  $R^2$  values was calculated to identify the effect size ( $f^2$ ) of the predictors. The results show that the effect sizes ( $f^2$ ) range from 0.016 to 0.19, indicating the presence of small to medium effects (Chin, 2010; Henseler et al., 2009). Specifically, the role clarity has a medium effect size ( $f^2=0.16$ ) on the voluntary turnover intentions, while the autonomy and work engagement have small effect size ( $f^2=0.046$  and  $f^2=0.016$ ) respectively. Also the research model significantly explains 31.5 percent variation in the voluntary turnover intention construct.

The sign in the research model was in the same direction as specified in the theory. This means that the theoretical arguments were fully supported.

Moreover, to further examine the model capability to predict, the blindfolding procedure with omission distance of six has been run. The blindfolding procedure generated the cross-validated communality index that measures the quality of the measurement model of each block of indicators and the cross-validated redundancy index that measures the quality of each structural equation. These two indices are different forms of the Stone-Geisser's  $Q^2$ . For the purpose of assessing the predictive relevance of the structural model, the cross-validated redundancy index was used (Alqershi et al., 2020; Chin, 2010). Table 5 provides the results of the blindfolding procedure. The cross-validated redundancy for voluntary turnover intentions indicates that the structural model has predictive relevance because the values were larger than zero. The collinearity assessment found that the inner and outer variance inflation factor (VIF) values are less than 5. Therefore, no collinearity exists.

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Cross-validated communality</b>	<b>Cross-validated redundancy</b>
Role clarity	0.263	-
Autonomy	0.416	-
Work engagement	0.386	-
Voluntary turnover intentions	0.163	0.216

## DISCUSSION

The main objective of the study is to examine the relationship between the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement and voluntary turnover intentions. Also, this study examined the moderator role of the personal circumstances on the relationship between the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement and voluntary turnover intentions. As expected, hypotheses regarding the direct effects relationship between all study variables (role clarity, autonomy and work engagement) and the moderating effect of the personal circumstances between the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement and voluntary turnover intentions were supported.

In the subsequent subsections, each hypothesized relationship is explained. Specifically, the finding for (a) the relationship between the role clarity and voluntary turnover intentions, (b) the relationship between autonomy and voluntary turnover intentions, (c) the relationship between the work engagement and voluntary turnover intentions, (d(i)) the moderating role of the personal circumstances on the relationship between the role clarity and voluntary turnover intentions, (d(ii)) the moderating role of the personal circumstances on the relationship between autonomy and voluntary turnover intentions, and (d(iii)) the moderating role of the personal circumstances on the relationship between the work engagement and voluntary turnover intentions, is discussed.

For H1, this study found a significant direct negative relationship between the role clarity and voluntary turnover intentions. This finding is consistent with the social exchange theory which stated that the relationship from both parties continues when both parties feel that they are receiving something valuable. Interestingly, in line with the theory of social exchange, this study shows that employees who experience the role clarity have less intention to quit from the organization. Also, this finding is consistent with the previous study by Tamara (2015) who found that lack of the role clarity was the primary reason for job dissatisfaction. When the employees feel dissatisfied, it will produce negative outcome such as quitting from the organization.

Additionally, the H2 to our study found a significant direct negative relationship between autonomy and the voluntary turnover intentions. This finding is consistent with the social exchange

theory (Blau, 1964) which agrees that the connection between two parties resulting in certain obligation may lead to the high-quality relationship. In line with the theory of social exchange, this study shows that employees who experience autonomy have less intention to quit from the organization. Also, this finding is consistent with previous study by Volmer, et al., (2012) who found that employees with high perception of autonomy are less likely to leave their jobs and companies.

And for last direct relationship, this study found a significant direct negative relationship between the work engagement and voluntary turnover intentions (*i.e.*, Hypothesis 3). This finding is consistent with the social exchange theory that stated when one party treats the other well the mutuality norms require the rewarded party to return the favour (Gouldner, 1960). In line with the theory of social exchange, this study shows that employees who experience work engagement have less intention to quit from the organization. Also, this finding is consistent with a previous study by Yeh (2013) who found that the work engagement will bring good environment among employees to perform better in workplace.

Also our study examined the moderating role of the personal circumstances on the relationship between the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement and voluntary turnover intentions, and found that hypotheses 4(a), 4(b) and 4(c) are supported which show that the personal circumstances moderate the relationships between the role clarity and voluntary turnover intentions, autonomy and the voluntary turnover intentions, and the work engagement and voluntary turnover intentions. In other words, personal circumstances are an important factor that can affect the relationship between the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement and voluntary turnover intention.

This finding is consistent with the image theory (Beach & Mitchell, 1987) which proposed the way how decisions are made by individuals. The connection between the image theory and working attachment is a 'shock' (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006) which will generate a person's belief and decisions. In line with the image theory, this study shows that employees who experience the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement in workplace, but facing any personal circumstance matters (e.g., financial, health and experience level) will bring interpretation on their job or to certain outcomes.

Despite the accumulated knowledge on the role clarity, autonomy and work engagement in these various aspects, previous researchers have given little attention to the possible factors that may influence the decision making, particularly by individual environment. In order for organisations to encourage loyalty and employees to share their intellectual capital, organisations must find ways to engage their employees (Boyar et al., 2012). Top management should recognize the importance of work engagement and incorporate the work preferences such as the meaningful and fulfilling jobs as well as their work values. Because not all work engagement can be specified in advance, Park and Gursoy (2012) suggested that psychological factor needs to investigate further to see the influence of work engagement. Similarly, it has been proposed that the role clarity reduces the voluntary turnover intentions (Tamara, 2015). The research testing of this proposition is, however, limited. The clarity of the job responsibility and job objectives should be defined prior to the beginning of the job to avoid any misunderstanding. This argument is supported by research showing that the role clarity is found to be an important factor influencing the decision to quit. Autonomy is another important factor that can be considered by an organization in a retention program. Autonomy will give employees the freedom and choice to shape their approach to suit the preferences of the organization. This will create the feeling of choice that is necessary to be intrinsically motivated. In other words, they enjoy what they are doing more and find it interesting; they feel more creative (Volmer et al., 2012) and can perform better. To establish such relationships, empirical investigation uses a measure of the role clarity, autonomy and work engagement are needed. In addition, on the basis of a social exchange theory, this study posits that intentions to stay with or quit from the organization is a more proximal outcome of the role clarity,

autonomy and work engagement than the actual voluntary turnover. Therefore, this study differs from previous studies by looking at the role clarity, autonomy and work engagement under internal alternative factors.

In general, the finding suggests that not only there is inverse relationship between the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement and voluntary turnover intentions, but with the personal circumstances that may strengthen the inverse relationship between the variables. Employees who are clear on their job responsibilities, and independent in completing work task, feel happy at work, but experience bad personal circumstances, tend to make negative decision making (e.g., quit). Employees who do not experience the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement, then experience bad personal circumstances, may decide not to quit because they need to overcome their personal circumstance matter. Therefore, consistent with the image theory, employees who experience personal circumstances may bring certain decision either to stay or quit although there are practices of the role clarity, autonomy and work engagement in work places.

### THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The present study sought to examine the effect of the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement and voluntary turnover intentions. Furthermore, it examined the moderator effect of personal circumstances on relationship between the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement and voluntary turnover intentions. Underpinned by the social exchange theory and image theory, a number of theoretical implications can be drawn from the findings of the study.

First, this study adds on the body of knowledge on the personal circumstances. Personal circumstance scholars have emphasized on the age, gender, organizational tenure, educational level (Ng & Feldman, 2009), financial security, personal and social norms, preferred incentives (Moon et al., 2012), family situation and family profiles (Boyar et al., 2012). Hence, little emphasis is given to the area of the voluntary turnover intentions. The present study, however, shows that the financial security, health, and experience level as the personal circumstances are important factors likely to occur when making the decision whether to leave or stay in the organization. This finding also supports the proposition within the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement literature that the role clarity, autonomy and work engagement are negatively related to the voluntary turnover intentions.

Second, two theories were used in this study to develop the conceptual framework. The social exchange theory explained that two parties treating each other well with mutuality norms, resulting in certain obligation that may lead to both parties receiving something valuable. The image theory, on the other hand, specifies the importance of decision making made by individuals, which is affected by the working attachment as a 'shock' and image that will generate the employees' belief. In the present study, both theories were combined to link the paths from an internal alternative factor (*i.e.*, role clarity, autonomy, work engagement) to an outcome factor (voluntary turnover intentions) moderated by the individual factor (*i.e.*, personal circumstances). The study found support for such links, which reveals that the two theories are corresponding to each other.

Finally, the finding of the study suggests the importance of examining the internal alternative mentioned in the voluntary turnover model. Previous researchers have called for a close examination of the internal alternative in the organization research (Choi et al., 2012; Tamara, 2015) because the internal alternative provides essential information in understanding why, how and when the voluntary turnover intention occurs. In the present study, the relationship between the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement and voluntary turnover intentions were explained under the internal alternative category. The study also revealed that the personal circumstances moderate

the relationship between the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement and voluntary turnover intentions.

## **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The findings of this study also have some practical implications for employees and managers. In order for an organization to succeed, employees and employer need to know their jobs and perform them well. In building a world-class workforce, it is important that the employees have a solid understanding of their role, organization expectation and behaviours that lead to success. Additionally, the key is that employees understand the roles of their manager and vice versa. With job roles clearly defined, each party knows what to expect from the other and understand how each role supports the other. Together, these elements promote the role clarity and support both individual and organizational high performance.

Secondly, the study revealed that autonomy is an important element because it will bring positive effects on employees and employer. Manager needs to allow their employees to decide how they will reach the goal and create the feeling of choice. Allowing employees to tailor their approach to their preferences and abilities will also give them heightened sense of control over the situation they find themselves in which can benefit performance.

Thirdly, the study also revealed that work engagement is an important element which brings high profit to organization. Therefore, managers should know their people; who they are, and not just what they do. Every interaction with an employee has the potential to influence his or her engagement and inspire the discretionary effort. Managers should find ways to communicate the engagement effect throughout the year and share the best practices across the organization. Managers should use every opportunity, touch-point and communication channel to reinforce and recognize the organization's commitment to the employee engagement. If employees truly are the company's best asset, then managers should make caring for them a priority.

Finally, another practical implication of the study is personal circumstances. Personal circumstance matters can affect employees' decision to stay in or quit from the organization. Employees with a personal issue may be eligible for certain types of leave, depending on the situation and the state of workplace. Manager can help the team member to get back on track by providing some resources like medical insurance, assistant program services and counselling session.

## **LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Although the present study has some important theoretical and practical implications, there are some limitations that merit further discussion. Firstly, the present study employed a cross-sectional design in collecting data from employees. Using this design allows researchers to collect data one point in time, as it is not possible to establish causal relationships among the study variables. Future research that replicates this study should employ a longitudinal design involving multiple waves of data collection or an experimental design for a more rigorous test of the directionality of the relationships between the variables explored in this study.

Secondly, data for study were collected using the single-source self-reports, which may be subjected to common method bias. That is, biases such as social desirability, leniency and acquiesce may be present when only employees rate on all predictor and criterion items (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003). Although Podsakoff et al., (2003) argued that such biases may threaten the validity of the relationships among variables when using self-report questionnaires, Conway & Lance, (2010) & Spector (2006) argued that the common method bias is often exaggerated and self-report questionnaires are relevant to be used in certain situations such as

when collecting information regarding employees' internal states (e.g., attitude, emotion, perception). In the present study, the self-report data are appropriate because it measured employees' perception, trait and intention. All these internal states information are best captured when employees are raters of the self-report questionnaire. To reduce the common method bias, respondents were assured of their anonymity and were told that there are no right or wrong answers and to answer the questions as honestly as possible.

Thirdly, data were collected from a convenient sample of 326 employees working in the ICT industry in Peninsular Malaysia. Thus, generalization of the study findings is limited to the sample being studied. Nevertheless, given that the hypotheses are forwarded on the basis of the sound theory and empirical evidence, there is no compelling reason why these findings should not be generalized to other organizations. Therefore, researchers are encouraged to validate the present findings in other organizational settings and use different samples of employees.

Fourthly, the present study examines the internal alternatives factors (role clarity, autonomy and work engagement) from the alternative category stated in the voluntary turnover model. Future studies can incorporate other internal factors (e.g., leadership style, job characteristics) in examining the effect of the internal alternatives on the voluntary turnover intention. Future studies also can examine other category mentioned in the voluntary turnover model such as the external alternative category, perceived desirability of leaving and perceived ease of leaving.

Fifthly, a simple framework involving moderator that was underpinned by the social exchange theory and image theory were used to examine the relationship between the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement, personal circumstances and voluntary turnover intentions. Although this framework shows that all hypothesized relationships are statistically significant, future studies can test further other theoretical relationships as specified in the social exchange and image theories. For example, the framework can be extended by examining a) the effect of the external alternative factors on the voluntary turnover intention, b) the effect of the innovative work behaviour on the voluntary turnover intentions and c) the effect of the leadership style on the voluntary turnover intentions.

Finally, the present study can be replicated and extended in the future by including the potentials mediator (e.g., learning motivation, coaching, perceived supervisor support). Future studies may examine the moderating effect of the emotional intelligence, type of generations among employees or job characteristics. In addition, examining the effect of moderators; other personal circumstances (e.g., education level, family commitment) on the relationship between the role clarity, autonomy, work engagement and voluntary turnover intentions may be an interesting avenue for future studies.

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