

Individual Learning in Reducing Stress Level and Intention to Leave: Empirical Evidence in Indonesia

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Numerous research has been carried out to test the effect of individual learning which may increase positive behaviour, however the complexity and individual pressure could cause negative behaviour which would eventually would be harmful to the organisation. Therefore, the main contribution of this research is to check the effect of the role of individual learning towards stress and especially in reducing the intention to leave. Using modelling analysis of structural equation on 191 samples with a response rate of 52%, The results show that individual learning has a significant negative influence on stress and intention to leave. Stress has also become the mediation variable between individual learning and intention to leave. The finding is aligned with the job demand-control model, where individual learning is the resource that plays a role in evaluating imbalance between environmental demand and personal capacity in overcoming such demand. The limitation of this research consists of the fact that the data of this research came from the self-report questionnaire, where it increases the possibility of general method variant effects. Therefore, for future research it is recommended that the learning size is seen from other sources than the employees involved, such as mentors or supervisors.

Key words: *Individual Learning, Stress, Intention to Leave.*

Introduction

Individual learning is a theme that is rarely raised, especially in terms of Human Resource Management (HRM) even though it is admitted by a number of previous researchers that individual learning is they key factor in improving the competitiveness of an organisation

(Appelbaum & Gallagher, 2000; Shipton, 2004; Oyarce, 2009), especially in facing the level of increasingly intense business competition. Increasing business competition needs a learning human resource, as organisations are placed in a complex situation, where critical factors influence an organisation's capacity to become competitive (Bartell, 2001; Beer, Voelpel, Leibold, & Tekie, 2005; Menon & Menon, 1997; Osland & Yaprak, 1995; Rastogi, 2000). Organisations are expected to have a dynamic business scenario, so that they are ready to face unexpected problems that may have a potential to damage their market position in the industry (Oyarce, 2009).

To face such dynamic situations, employees, as individual learners, are expected to develop the learning within the organisation through their interaction with other members of the organisation (Panayides, 2007). According to Redding (1994), individual learning is very important for a sustainable transforming organisation to prepare everyone for the future. Learning experience of each member directs individual/employee capability that shows that individual learning is the most important competence for organisational success (Mehrabi et al., 2013). Learning includes behaviour related to knowledge, attitude and emotional response (McKenna, 2006).

Weiss (1990), illustrates learning as relatively permanent change in both knowledge and skill produced by experience, which shows that one must calculate the potential of behavioural change represented within learning. Furthermore, according to cognitive learning theory (Duncan & Kelly, 1983; Stammers & Patrick, 1975) individual learning supports actual behavioural change or potential as far as the process encourages adaptation towards the environmental condition. The individual may be more motivated (Maier, Prange & von Rosenstiel, 2001; Sonnentag et al. 2004) or on the contrary the existence of such a change may increase exposure to stress due to work, affecting health safety (Cox et al., 2000; Kasl, 1998; Theorell and Hasselhorn, 2005; Kompier, 2005). Stress due to working not only causes loss indirectly to the organisation but is also the source of indirect loss, especially in terms of absence and intention to leave (Wagner and Hollenbeck, 2010). Stress can cause increasing employee absence in terms of decreasing organisational commitment, soon followed by intention to leave or actual turnover, which would be harmful for the organisation (Luthans, 2007).

Research testing stress and individual learning have not been thoroughly explored (Panari, et al., 2010). Research development has been carried out by Lankau & Scandura (2002) as well as Karasek and Theorell, (1990) regarding the job demand-control model. The results state that most adverse job-related strain reactions are to be expected in jobs characterised by high job demands and low control. By contrast, other authors maintain that, on equal terms, high control increase of workers' levels of motivation and learning development has a positive effect on well-being (Panari et al., 2010). The main contribution of this research is to examine the

effect of the role of individual learning towards stress, especially in reducing intention to leave. This research needs to be carried out since most researchers have highlighted that individual learning could increase positive behaviour, however the complexity and pressure towards the individual could cause negative behaviour which eventually would be harmful.

Development of Hypothesis

The Influence of Individual Learning towards Stress and Intention to Leave

Environmental change demands employees to continuously adapt. They are demanded to have the skill required for current needs and such skills must be sustainably developed (Panari et al., 2010). Employees who have high individual learning capacity, usually have the capability to maintain stress so that they can produce positive behaviour such as improvement on productivity which leads to creativity, thus varying from those with low individual learning capacity (Lankau & Scandura, 2002; Panari et al., 2010). The ability to absorb material puts them in a high pressure condition due to the high demand placed on them. This may cause a negative effect, since experiencing such a condition would be exposed to stress which would cause either psychological or physical health problems.

Employees who are completing personal learning are less likely to leave an organisation (Lankau & Scandura, 2002). The environment which encourages such development could decrease individual's motivation to find a new job should they gain new skills and competence which enable them to increase their self-efficacy (Gouillart & Kelly, 1995). Individual learning through the development of competence and information sharing would reduce employees' intention to leave (Pare and Tremblay, 2007; Lee Kelley et. al., 2007 and Moshoeu and Geldenhuys, 2015).

H 1. Employees with high individual learning have negative effect on stress.

H 2. Employees with high individual learning have negative effect on intention to leave.

The concept of individual learning could be related to the theory of self-determination which focuses on the social-contextual condition facilitating the process of self-motivation and healthy psychological development (Deci and Ryan, 1985). There consist of three needs - competence, autonomy, and connectedness - which, when one is satisfied, increases their self-motivation and mental health while when one unfulfilled decreases motivation and welfare (Deci Dan Ryan, 2000). In this case, individual learning may enable employees to determine their own faith and consequently more able to handle increasing work load as well as using the controlling opportunities available within the environment as an antidote to stress. Stress occurs when an individual is threatened to lose his/her mental or physical resources (Mansour & Tremblay, 2016). Employees may try to minimise their loss and maintain their resources by

choosing defensive strategy, including self-releasing from the workplace, which can cause increasing intention to leave the organisation (Mansour & Tremblay, 2016). Numerous research has found evidence that stress due to work is the main predictor for intention to leave an employee (see Kuria, Alice, & Wanderi, 2012; Arshadi and Damiri, 2013; Ogungbamila et. al., 2014 and Mansour & Tremblay, 2016).

H 3. Employees with high stress would relate positively to intention to leave.

H 4. Stress mediates the influence of individual learning towards intention to leave.

Methodology

Population and Sample

Cross-sectional research was carried out for three months between September and December 2018. The research took place in Southern Jakarta, since the area has been rapidly developing which affected the needs of a number of notary offices as well as the complexity of certificate creating problems. In addition, Southern Jakarta had been appointed as the pilot project in terms of administration. The population was set using multi-stage sampling technique. First, the sub-districts with the most number of notary offices included Setiabudi, Kebayoran Baru, Cilandak, Tebet and Mampang. Secondly, it included permanent employees with at least 3 years of tenure. 367 questionnaires were distributed directly to respondents, through HRM staff in order to achieve high levels of response. Short instructions were given to fill out questionnaires correctly. All respondents in each sub-district were given around one month to fill out the questionnaire. One month after the questionnaires were distributed, a reminder was sent to the officer in charge. The completed questionnaires were received from all representatives after about two months. The number of questionnaires filled out which could be used consisted of 191, showing a response level of 52%.

Measures

Demographic Information. *Detailed* respondents consisted of gender, education, marital status, age and tenure.

Individual Learning. Measures of individual learning using a Likert scale of 5 points were adopted from Ames and Archer (1988); Sujana, et. al. (1994); Chan (2003); and Oyarce (2009), measured using the dimension of seeing, finding and being aware of learning opportunities, obtaining and applying new knowledge, learning to be independent and sustainable learning.

Stress. Robbins and Judge (2008)'s three dimensions were used, including behavioural, psychological and physiological symptoms. Likert scale of five points was used to measure the level of stress from "very stressed" to "not very stressed."

Intention to Leave. Intention to leave adopts research by Dress and Shaw (2001), Jeffrey (2007), and Saeed et. al. (2014). The dimension consists of stopping thinking and changing work and the possibility of looking for a new job using the Likert scale of 5 points.

Data Analysis

Regarding the demographic item, data was analysed using a frequency test descriptive statistic, while for testing the hypothesis, the data on this paper was analysed using the technique Structural Equation Modelling with Generalised Structured Component Analysis (GSCA). GSCA is a new approach as an alternative for two conventional approaches to SEM, co-variant structural analysis, and partial smallest square (Hwang and Takane, 2004). Baron and Kenny (1986)'s traditional mediation analysis was used to confirm the existing mediation in the model.

Results

Demographic Information

Table 1 shows that gender has a balanced proportion between males (49.7%) and females (50.3%). Most notary employees had a Bachelor degree (43%), while 37% graduated from high school while 12% completed their Master's degree. The age of employees working in notary offices mostly ranged between 26 - 35 (49%), while only 1% were over 55. Respondents were asked to show if they were married or single. The response showed that there was a balanced composition between single (49.2%) and married (50.8). In the category of professional experience, 83% of respondents had less than 10 years of experience while 3% had over 15 years of experience in the same profession.

Table 1: Demographics

Characteristics	Frequency (N = 191)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	95	49.7
Female	96	50.3
Education		
Elementary School	-	0
Secondary School	5	3
High School	71	37
Diploma	9	5
Bsc	83	43
Msc	23	12
Marital Status		
Single	94	49.2
Married	97	50.8
Age		
< 25	50	26
26-35	94	49
36-45	29	15
46-55	16	9
> 55	2	1
Professional Experience		
< 5 years	90	47
5 - 10 years	68	36
11 - 15 years	27	14
> 15 years	6	3

Reliability and Validity

Evaluation of measurement model was carried out using convergent validity test and discriminant validity. Convergent validity test was carried out in two stages: testing on the first order to measure the item, moving on to the test on the second order to measure the dimension.

The results of analysis including all items and indicators produced a loading factor which was bigger than 0.60. Construct reliability test was carried out using construct reliability size (Cronbach's alpha) or using the amount of all variants in the indicator explained by construct latent (Average Variance Extracted (AVE), commonly called discriminant reliability). The test results show that the indicator from each variable had AVE which was bigger than 0.5 and Cronbach's alpha which was bigger than 0.6, therefore all indicators were declared as reliable.

Along with Hair et. al., (2014) when the value of Cronbach's alpha was bigger than or equal to 0.6 and the value of discriminant reliability (AVE) bigger than or equal to 0.5 then it could be declared that the test criteria construct had been reliable.

Table 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Construct Reliability, and AVE

Variable	Notation/ Indicator	Item	Convergent Validity 1st Order (Items)		Convergent Validity 2 nd Order (dimensions)		AVE	Cronbach' s Alpha	
			Loading Factor	CR	Loading Factor	CR			
Individual Learning	Seeing, Finding, and being Aware of learning opportunity	Seeing and finding new things	0.898	60.38*	0.791	27.46*	0.807	0.760	
		Learning new things from work	0.898	60.38*					
	Gaining and Applying New Knowledge	Learning new things	0.943	90.95*	0.894	61.69*	0.889	0.873	
		It is important for employees to learn	0.943	90.95*					
	Learning to be independent	Learning a new approach	0.903	72.89*	0.816	30.53*	0.816	0.773	
		Satisfied if one managed to make decisions	0.903	72.89*					
	Sustainable Learning	Improvement of sustainable working skills.	Employees take lessons outside the organisation	0.899	65.73*	0.827	31.0*	0.809	0.742
				0.899	65.73*				
	Stressed due to work	Physiology symptom	Health Problems	0.85	35.15*	0.704	12.48*	0.722	0.614
			Physically exhausted	0.849	35.14*				
Psychologic al symptom		Anxiety	0.776	19.45*	0.888	58.17*	0.601	0.667	
		Tension	0.806	24.77*					
		Fatigue	0.742	16.98*					
Behavioural symptoms		Productivity decreases	0.861	28.23*	0.828	15.77*	0.713	0.799	
		Absent	0.837	23.22*					
	Turnover	0.835	25.74*						

<i>Intention to Leave</i>	Intention to leave and change job	Intention to leave	0.964	161.79*	0.966	97.66*	0.929	0.924
		Frequently thinking of changing jobs	0.964	161.79*				
	Looking for a new job	Looking for information about a new job	0.966	126.69*	0.947	83.14*	0.933	0.928
		Applying for a new job should there be an interesting offer	0.966	126.69*				

Goodness of Fit Model

This identification is addressed to evaluate the entire model. The test result shows that FIT value was in the range of 0 - 1 (0.593), which shows that the diversity of competitiveness benefit is able to be explained by the model as much as 59.3%. Optimisation of global index GFI was 0.990, SRMR value was 0.008 equal to cut off value, so it could be declared that Goodness of Fit had been acquired and the model could be declared as feasible.

Structural Model Evaluation

Structural model is used to test the hypothesis, whether the exogenous variable influence exists directly towards endogenous variable. According to the testing criteria, if the value of CR is larger than 1.98, it could be declared that there is a significant influence of exogenous variable towards endogenous.

Table 3: Hypothesis testing

Structural Parameter	Estimate	SE	CR
Individual Learning → Stressed from work	-0.148	0.074	2.01*
Individual Learning → Intention To Leave	-0.151	0.073	2.07*
Stressed from work → Intention To Leave	0.329	0.103	3.19*

The analysis result show that hypothesis H1 and H2 were accepted. Individual learning had a significant negative influence towards stress from work (CR = 2.01, $t_{table} > 1.98$) and a significant negative effect on intention to leave (CR = 2.07, $t_{table} > 1.98$). Based on the analysis results, it could be explained that improvement on individual learning could decrease the level of stress of employees working in a notary office, and will reduce intention to leave from the organisation.

Hypothesis H3 testing the influence between stress from working towards the intention to leave found supporting evidence towards H3 ($CR=3.19$, $t_{tabel} > 1.98$), therefore the increasing stress level would also increase employee intention working in a notary office to leave.

Baron and Kenny (1986)'s traditional mediation analysis was used to test the effect of mediation on hypothesis 4. Three stages were used to check the stress mediation effect using hierarchical regression analysis. The first step had two stages, first stage having two steps, the first being individual learning influence to test the influence and intention to leave (stage 1) and the second tested with stress (stage 2). Step 2 tested the influence towards stress and intention to leave. Step 3 was developed to check the effect of stress mediation from individual learning and intention to leave.

Table 4: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Model	β	t	ρ	Summary
Step 1				
Stage 1				
Individual learning	-.150**	-2.091	.038	R .150 R ² .023
				F 4.371 $\rho < 0.05$
				Dependent : Intention to leave
Stage 2				
Individual learning	-.160**	-2.235	.027	R .160 R ² .026
				F 4.994 $\rho < 0.05$
				Dependent: Stress
Step 2				
Stress	.482**	7.572	.000	R .482 R ² .023
				F 57.341 $\rho < 0.00$
				Dependent: Intention to leave
Stage 3				
Individual learning	-.075	-1.161	-.247	R .488 R ² .023
Stress	.470	7.295	.000	F 53.216 $\rho < 0.05$
				Dependent: Intention to leave

The analysis results show stress with full mediation between individual learning towards intention to leave, thereby supporting hypothesis 4. The result of the analysis showed that the influence of stages 1 and 2 in the first step showed a level of significance of ($\rho = .038$, $\rho = .027$, $\rho < .05$), similar to second step of the analysis which showed positive significant results ($\rho =$

.00, $\rho < .00$). Meanwhile in the third step, the results indicated that individual learning insignificantly influenced intention to leave ($\rho = -.247$, $\rho < .05$), however stress had a significant influence towards intention to leave ($\rho = .00$, $\rho < .05$), which showed stress mediation as a full variable between individual learning toward intention to leave.

Discussion

The main contribution of this research is the effect of the role of individual learning towards stress, especially in reducing intention to leave. This study also explained the role of stress as an individual learning mediation variable and intention to leave. The finding revealed that individual learning was a significant predictor in reducing stress levels. Meanwhile, the result on the influence of individual learning towards intention to leave confirmed that individual learning had a significant negative effect on intention to leave.

The findings show that employees with a high capacity of individual learning would be able to reduce the effect towards stress. Employees who had high control over their job combined with the high work load produced active jobs marked by growth, higher motivation for learning and less pressure (Karasek dan Theorell, 1990). Furthermore, according to cognitive learning theory (Duncan & Kelly, 1983; Stammers & Patrick, 1975), individual learning supported actual or potential behavioural change as far as the process supported adaptation towards the environmental condition (as felt by the individual), so that people who had a higher capability of individual learning could control behavioural change due to the presence of the learning experience (Shipton, Dawson, & West, 2010). This is consistent with research carried out by Parker et. al. (2010), where employees with a high skill of learning were able to overcome high demand. They were also more able to “take the benefit” from competitive work and high demand, with a positive consequence on their health. On the contrary, the individual who did not have any learning opportunities seemed to suffer more from the work load.

Other researchers have emphasised that a safe workplace was marked by a situation where there are real opportunities for learning and development of competence that was developed during working hours (Lee, 1998). Individual learning provided an effect towards reducing intention to leave. Intrinsic interest of the individual in individual learning was psychological which had a positive influence on the result of employees including productivity, commitment and turnover (Au et. al., 2008; Rowold, 2007). Individual learning is related to self-determined work motivation and has a positive implication towards employee involvement (Parker, Jimmieson, & Amiot, 2010). The need to learn individually showed a representation of involvement of higher work (Parker et. al., 2010). Such finding patterns along with the findings by Mauno et. al. (2007) and Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) showed the involvement of work through working control function to provide positive energy instead of being negatively related to health complaints or anxiety/depression (Parker et. al., 2010)

In the context of Indonesia (Rousseau and Fried, 2001; Whetten, 2009), employees gained knowledge about what they do from their partners and environmental learning became important for them. Indonesian cultural values such as '*gotong royong*' (mutual aid) which emphasised togetherness, motivated employees to stay in a more intimate environment and avoid uncertainty in a new organisation. The same applies to this research, where a notary office employee gained new knowledge mostly through interaction with their colleagues. Informal learning would be easier to learn and applicable to the condition of work. The ability to overcome emerging issues would be easier by sharing peer experiences. Such convenience could reduce negative effects such as stress that make employees feel more comfortable in working and reducing the level of intention to leave.

The result of mediation analysis showed that stress was a mediation variable influencing individual learning toward intention to leave, co-existing with the job demand control model by Karasek and Theorell, (1990) who explained that the interaction of working demand and latitude decision caused psychological tension. The demand of the changing era causes employees to have to own a skill that can be effective in such conditions. Employees with higher individual learning would have low intensity levels and better able to adapt to changes (Lankau & Scandura, 2002; Panari et. al., 2010) and the ability to adapt well means that employees are less likely to leave their organisation (Parker et. al., 2010).

Such findings extend the concept of Lankau & Scandura (2002) and the job demand-control model of Karasek and Theorell, (1990), where individual learning with resources play a role in evaluating the imbalance between environmental demand and the personal ability to overcome it. This factor could activate the strategy of employees coping and reducing the negative effect from environmental demand which prevents the emergence of a negative psychological effect. In particular, the findings show that the opportunity to develop skills and learn something new from working activity enables people to avoid the effect of negative change, and prevent the stress of occupying and reducing intention to leave.

Conclusion

This research highlighted the importance of individual learning in maintaining stress from the high demands of a job thereby decreasing the intention to leave. The results show that there is a significant negative relationship between individual learning towards stress and intention to leave. The results show significant influence from stress on individual learning in reducing notary employees' level of intention to leave.. Environmental change required employees working for a notary to continuously develop their skills. Individual learning is one of the ways to overcome such demand for employees who have the need to learn and the capability to maintain stress levels.. More specifically, individual learning through opportunities to learn in the workplace is a process involving knowledge, capability and employee attitude that

enables them and the organisation to positively adapt towards change without causing stress. Support and respect of the culture of learning in the workplace is important since sustainable learning is needed to survive when the competition gets intense, with a positive consequence for employees' welfare.

Managerial Implications

In a highly competitive employment market, the challenge to maintain satisfied and productive employees has become the main priority (Lankau & Scandura, 2002). The result of the study shows that individual learning could be related to the ability to maintain stress for high demand jobs which causes the reduction of intention to leave. There are two managerial implications based on these finding. First, the organisation needs to check the mechanism and opportunities in their working environment which facilitate learning through learning from others. Cross function working team, quality improvement team, peer discussion group, guidance circle, and the program of work rotation are some of the ways in which they can be implemented by the organisation to encourage personal learning. Through such a model, it is expected that employees could develop their skills without the risk of stress.

Secondly, support from supervisors to provide autonomy or control of work for the individual. Research by Leiter and Maslach (2000) shows that burnout (as the demotivation for employees) and intention to leave were the main issues in modern organisations. . Amongst the strongest factors encouraging de-motivation and release, are the presence of meaningless jobs or a job that reduce the autonomy and control of employees. Therefore, autonomy based individual learning provides a very useful way to overcome such a tendency, especially when the change is rapid. The work and the redesign of an organisation can be carried out by considering that personal learning and development could make a difference for employees' satisfaction and performance.

Limitation and Future Research

Limitations cannot be excluded from a research. In this research, the first limitation consists of the source of data being questionnaires of self-reports increasing the possibility of general methods of variants effects (Crampton & Wagner, 1994). Therefore, for further research, learning measurement could be examined from resources other than where employees are involved, such as mentors or supervisors. The data collection using other sources enable related variable control with specific working context, especially related to the opportunities to learn and to develop.

Secondly, the design of cross-sectional research, limits each conclusion of the relationship between variables. Individual learning is a sustainable process that cannot be separated from



the development or demand of the changing era, therefore for further research, a longitudinal study is required in order to understand the dynamic individual learning and stress maintenance related to change of attitude in understanding the relationship between learning and attitude.

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