

# Influence of Spiritual Intelligence towards Employee Engagement and Intention to Stay by Generation Y Employees in the ICT Sector in Malaysia

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**Abstract--***The ICT industry in Malaysia is one of primarily industry that contributes to the country's economy. In the year of 2017, a total of RM 247.1 Billion was contributed to the growth of the country. Gen Y, the Millennial accounts for 2.5 billion throughout the entire world and would form 75% of the employees by 2030. In Malaysia, the Generation Y population consist of 60% of the total employees which is increasing progressively. Nevertheless, Generation Y employees are hard to retain in an organization for a longer time period because their main concern is on short-term based job opportunities along with the higher anticipation of quick results. Hence, Generation Y employees generate a higher turnover rate which has been a challenge for organizations in retaining this workforce. The purpose of this research was to discover the Influence of spiritual intelligence towards employee engagement and intention to stay by Generation Y employees in the ICT sector in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This is a quantitative research, where a survey will be conducted through a questionnaire to collect the primary data from Generation Y employees in the ICT sector. Structural Equation Modelling will be utilized to assess the relationship by using the tool of SMART-PLS. The results are anticipated to provide new understandings on how Generation Y employees spiritual intelligence could emphasis on the engagement and intention to stay for a longer time period.*

**Keywords--** Gen Y, Spiritual intelligence, Employee engagement, Intention to stay.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is newly developed country and the government acknowledges the ICT industry as the foremost financial platform that would stimulate the production and ultimately upsurge the country's competence, in which Malaysia will accomplish the goal of becoming an intensifying nation by 2020 (Saleh and Ramasamy, 2013). Thus, the ICT industry has a higher dominance rate over the country's growth. ICT industry contribution to the country's economy amounted for RM 247.1 billion that amounted to a share of 18.3% in the year of 2017. The contribution towards the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was substantial with a growth of 8.4% giving a value of RM 178.2 billion (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2018). While the ICT industry has immensely contributed to the country's economy, it has also provided employment opportunities which accounted for 1.09 million or 7.6% to the entire employment in the year of 2017 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2018). The ICT industry is the leading

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sector in Malaysia, which is continuously booming. In 2016, Malaysia's first Digital Free Trade Zone (DFTZ) was launched (PIKOM, 2017). The informative statistical data indicates the importance of ICT industry in the development of the country's economy.

The Generation Y is the largest and most diverse generation which accounts for 2.5 billion worldwide. The Generation Y would represent 75% of the workforce by 2025 (The Malaysian Reserve, 2017). Generation Y is expected to make up more than half of ASEAN region's total population by 2030. With reference to Labour Force Survey Report Malaysia (2014) by Department of Statistics Malaysia, approximately 60% of the total labour force in Malaysia is generated by the Generation Y employees (Yahya, Tee and Johari, 2018). Generation Y is the initial cohort among others to exhibit the digital environment and are recognized as digital natives (Bolton et al., 2013; Prensky, 2001). Generation Y employees are emphasized as flexible and brilliant employees who are capable enough to fulfil the responsibilities in an innovative, creative and effective manner (St. Claire-Ostwald, 2012). Generation Y employees have become a challenge to companies because they expect fast career movement with diversified and exciting career paths provided with continuous feedback (PWC, 2011). Hence, millennials will be an influential generation among the employees but engaging and retaining Generation Y workforce in companies has become a challenge for the employers. Therefore, organizations need have an understanding about Generation Y requirements and expectations in order engage and retain them on the long-term basis. This study will be focussed on the engagement and intention to stay longer by generation Y employees.

There are various researches that have identified the factors that influence employees' engagement and intention to stay in companies. Joshi and Sodhi (2011) identified six critical determinants that would enhance employee engagement, which are job content, compensation benefits, work-life balance, top-management employee relations, scope for career advancement and career growth and teamwork. Tee, Yahya and Johari (2018) mentioned that compensation and work life balance are the factors that influence Generation Y employees' engagement in the manufacturing industry in Malaysia. Robinson (2006) also mentioned that employee engagement could be accomplished through generating an organizational environment where positive emotions like involvement and pride are encouraged which will ultimately improve the organizational performance and decrease the employee turnover. The determinants of employee engagement and intention to stay among generation Y can be different. A survey by Staronline (2018) found that career advancement is the most preferred driver of generation Y employees as opposed to salary (Staronline, 2018). Another survey undertaken by PWC (2011) explained fast advancement, a diversified and exciting career and consistent feedback were the factors affecting in retention of Generation Y employees. Othman and Lembang (2017) pointed out that Generation Y employees' intention to stay was influenced by training and development, compensation and benefits, performance assessment and career progression. A study by Hossain, Limon and Asheq (2018) stated that generation Y prefer worklife balance and expect flexibility and freedom. Therefore, there are numerous factors that affects generation Y employees to engage and remain longer in an organization. Therefore, organizations should provide opportunities for Gen Ys to unleash and nurture their creativity (Staronline, 2018). Many researchers have discussed the outcomes of emotional and spiritual intelligence in the workplace. Yahyazadeh-Jeloudar, and Lotfi-Goodarzi (2012) found that spiritual

intelligence was a predictor of job satisfaction. This indicates that there are several studies on the determinants of employees work engagement and intention to leave.

The employee turnover cost is high and might be equal to one and half times the employee's total yearly compensation (Cappelli and Keller, 2013). The average employee replacement cost for all workforce are within the range of \$3,000 to \$4,500. In addition, professional and managerial employee's replacement costs are even higher (Dube, Freeman and Reich, 2010). Moreover, employee replacement costs could amount between 90 to 100% of an employee's yearly remuneration (Wilson, 2012). The ICT industry has the highest employee turnover rate among the other industries in Malaysia (Hewitt, 2016). In spite of the challenges faced by the companies, there is a lack of studies on Generation Y employees' intention to stay in the ICT industry in Malaysia. Although previous studies have revealed several determinants of work engagement and intention to stay by generation y employees, there is a dearth of research that focused on the relationship between spiritual intelligence, engagement and intention to stay of generation Y employees. Moreover, previous studies were conducted mostly on intention to leave and not intention to stay (Allen, 2006; Spreitzer and Mishra, 2002). The present will examine the relationship between spiritual intelligence, work engagement and intention to leave by generation Y employees. The outcome of this study will assist the HR managers to recognize the value of accepting spiritual intelligence to increase the Generation Y employees' engagement and intention to stay.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Employee Engagement**

One of the challenges that the academician's faces is a clear definition on employee engagement. The definition of employee engagement differs among scholars with the variances in intellectual processes (Ellis and Sorensen, 2007; Rafferty, Maben, West and Robinson, 2005). Some researcher argued that engagement includes vigour, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). The model of engagement by Mone and Landon (2018) include involvement, commitment, meaningfulness, empowerment, manager support and loyalty. This model includes six components of associated behaviours and attitudes that, is used to measure of engagement. According to Trus et al. (2013), engagement refers to involvement, commitment, passion, dedication and energy and employee engagement. It refers to the employee relationship with the organization. Researchers and scholars also argued whether employee engagement is a trait or a state the employee is in. Mone and Landon (2018) argued that engagement is not a personality trait. Employee engagements tend to be a state. Kahn (1990, p.694) defined employee engagement as the "harnessing of organizational members' selves to their work role by which they employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performance". This indicates that employee engagement is a multi-dimensional concept. Mone and Landon (2018) stated that an employee is deemed as engaged when he or she feels involved, committed, passionate, and empowered and demonstrates those feelings in work behaviour. Saks (2006) explained that the employee engagement construct is unique and include emotional, behavioural and cognitive components that are related to employee role performance. As stated by Trus et al. (2013), the different aspects of engagement encompass its role with role performance, employee wellbeing, its relation with the job and the organization. Similarly, Schaufeli et al. (2002) defined employee engagement as a

positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption. Macey and Schneider (2008) identified three forms of definitions of employee engagement, namely psychological state of engagement, a trait and direct observable behaviour within the working environment. Engaged employees will do more and establish innovative behaviours and creatively, proactively pursue opportunities to contribute and take one step ahead than what is required as per the job role (Macey and Schneider, (2008)). Based on the above review, there are several definitions and components of employee engagement and employee engagement is a concept that drives employees to work beyond and achieve organizational outcomes. As stated, Mone and London (2018), there is no clear agreement among scholars on the actual meaning of employee engagement.

In early studies researchers have recognized numerous factors that influence Generation Y employees' engagement. Past research has identified several determinants of employee engagement. Based on past research, the determinants of employee engagement encompass organization culture (Suharti and Suliyanto, 2012), perceived organizational support or POS (Saks, 2006), leadership style (Zhu et al., 2009), and teamwork (Anitha, 2014). The working environment is the primary spot in which the employer and the employee can mutually get together for the benefit of both the parties, where employee feels a sense of communal, a comfort zone for them and figure out opportunities to contribute in boosting the growth of the organization (Penna, 2007). As explained by Anitha (2014), work environment is one of the predictors of employee engagement which leads to better work performance. Leaders also play a major role in forming a working environment which is favourable to employee engagement in conglomerates (Kahn and Heaphy, 2014; Truss et al., 2014). Leaders appearance encourage, support and develop individuals to play a substantial role in the employee engagement (Harter and Adkins, 2015; May et al., 2004; Rothmann and Rothmann, 2010; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Porath (2014) figured out that employees were engaged as high as 55% when the leaders treated the employees respectfully. May et al., (2004) found that helpful co-worker relations that formulate a companionship and a sense of belonging forecast psychological meaning and employee engagement. Furthermore, fulfilling co-worker relations could generate an experience of belonging and care, which would lead to a sense of psychologically safer at work (Rothmann and Olivier, 2007). Mostly, according to the previous studies the factors influenced employee engagement are in the nature of the non-financial terms. Researches have indicated that Generation Y employees are keen on immediate feedback, healthy relationship with superiors and a partnership kind of bond (Macky et al., 2008; Rai, 2012; Weyland, 2011) which eventually allows Generation Y to develop a better work engagement. Reverse mentoring is a form of mentoring method where the juniors circulate the technological skills to seniors and in return the seniors offer direction of job roles and career progression. Reverse mentoring increases pleasant associations among Generation Y employees and older employees (Koster, 2013). Therefore, these mentoring sessions leads to a greater level of engagement within Generation Y employees (Pathak, 2014). Hence, based on the earlier researches there are various of predictors that influences Generation Y employees' engagement.

### **Employee Intention to Stay**

Academics have explained the construct of employees' intention to stay and the factors that influence employees' intention to remain in an organization (Currivan, 1999; Naim and Lenka, 2017). Naim and Lenka (2017)

indicated intention to stay as employee's willingness to remain employed longer in an organization. Likewise, intention to stay is defined as to the employee's tendency to remain employed in the present organization (Currivan, 1999). Tett and Meyer (1993) explained, intention to stay as employees' conscious and cautious willingness to remain with an organization. Furthermore, Hewitt (2004) added that employee commitment and intention to stay denotes to employee's wilfulness to remain employed in the present organization and individuals' level of commitment. Hunjra et al. (2010) explained intention to stay from a psychological perception which stated that it is a procedure of psychological relationship with the conglomerate. Employee intention to stay can be discussed through the Social Exchange Theory and Theory of Planned Behaviour. Accordance to Theory of Planned Behaviour, employee's intention to stay in a conglomerate could be forecasted through the employee's attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. These three paradigms forecast the behavioural intention and the actual intention to remain in a conglomerate (Ajzen, 1991). Nevertheless, actions are controlled by the intentions, although the entire process of intentions are not taken by the employees. The Social Exchange Theory by Thibaut and Kelley (1959) is focused on understanding the relationships, the support system and the consequences. Essentially, it describes good conducts by the respective employers could be used to understand the reasoning why the employees maintain a relationship with them. Therefore, it was found that employees' attitude forecast the results such as intention to stay through the impact on organizational recognition.

Previous academicians have recognized variety of factors that influence Generation Y employees to remain longer period in a conglomerate. Magner et al. (1996) explained that employees feel comfortable to remain in an organization for longer, in positions where the employees are actively involved in the decision-making process. Ghosh et al. (2013) researched on employee commitment and found that affective commitment, normative commitment and goal clarity had a substantial impact on employee's intention to stay. Additionally, factors influencing retention involved in financial and employee benefits, job enhancement, training and development, working surroundings and work-life balance (Allen et al., 2003; Anderson et al., 2002; Cappelli, 2001; Horwitz et al., 2003). Similarly, Walker (2001) stated seven predictors that would encourage retention of the employees, which are namely compensation and appreciation of the performance, challenging job role, opportunity to learn, positive relationships with work colleagues, recognition of competences and contributions to performance, work-life balance and effective communication. Al-Hamdan et al. (2017) emphasised on the work environment and found a positive relationship among work environment and employees' intention to stay. While some researchers have identified the factors influencing employees' intention to stay, there are some studies that indicated the relationship between the workplace and intention to stay. Milliman et al. (2018) and Aboobaker and Zakkariya (2018) gave the attention to workplace spirituality and found out that workplace spirituality had a positive impact on employees' intention to stay. Naim and Lenka (2017) mentioned mentoring has a direct influence on Generation Y intention to stay. Training and development, compensation and benefits and transformational leadership style are some factors that have a positive link with Generation Y employees' intention to stay (Othman and Lembang, 2017). Brown et al., (2015) and Naim and Lenka (2018) recognized career growth and development as positive factors of Generation Y intention to stay. Further, Naim and Lenka (2016) identified knowledge sharing is another substantial factor that inputs for the growth of competencies and generate a logic that impacts Generation Y employees' intention to stay.

A study conducted by Hossain et al (2018) on Generation Y employees in Malaysia, where the outcomes shows the Generation Y employees desires flexibility and a good work-life balance to retain longer with the organizations. Therefore, grounded on the previous studies there are variety of factors that predicts the intention to stay amongst Generation Y employees.

### **Relationship between spiritual intelligence, employee engagement and intention to stay**

The perception of spiritual intelligence was originated by Barnum (1996; 2006), followed by Emmons in (1999). Spiritual intelligence indicates in offering spiritual information that allows to make it simpler and solve day to day difficulties and achieve goals (Emmons, 2000). Zohar and Marshall (2000) explained spiritual intelligence as the ability in recognizing and solving difficulties of meaning and value. King (2008) identified spiritual intelligence as a collection of mental competences based on splendid aspects of life as personal understanding, deep existential thinking and expansion of meaning. King (2008) explained spiritual intelligence in four aspects, which are critical existential thinking, production of personal meaning, transcendental awareness and expansion of conscious states. Bowell (2004) identified seven levels of spiritual intelligence that includes awareness, meaning, evaluation, being centred, vision, projection and mission. Spiritual intelligence is known to be to focus on the inner life of consciousness and lifeforce with its relationship to existence in the world (Vaughan, 2002). Furthermore, Wigglesworth (2006) described spiritual intelligence as the aptitude to act with wisdom and compassion, conserving the internal and external peace taking care of the situations into consideration. Emmons (1999) further added that spiritual intelligence focuses on the abilities that have the attention on spiritual themes that predicts functioning, adaption and the capability to manufacture valuable products and services. Mayer (2000) changed the perception of spiritual intelligence from intellectual capability and intelligence towards to more of a higher level of consciousness.

Presently, the spiritual intelligence of employees is researched, and the researches have emphasized that there is a positive relationship among the spiritual intelligence and varies job related outcomes (Emmons, 2000; Hanafi, 2010). High intensity of spiritual intelligence expands and upgrade the performance in the organization (Emmons, 2000). While the spiritual intelligence leads to development of organizational performance, it also leads to a higher level of job performance (Hanafi 2010; Utomo et. al., 2014). The positive impact of spiritual intelligence leads towards to job satisfaction which directs to a higher level of job performance (Ali Shah and Ellahi, 2012). Further, the studies have revealed that spiritual intelligence had a direct and indirect impact on the scopes of job performance which are task and contextual performance (Upadhyay, 2017). Therefore, employee performance denotes both task and contextual, where spiritual intelligence had a positive impact on the entire performance. A study by Faribors et al (2010) concluded that spiritual intelligence is linked to happiness of the employees. Concludingly, studies have emphasized that happiness leads to job satisfaction and varies added results.

The sense of workplace spirituality and engagement both propose a meaning of wholeness and completeness. Spiritual intelligence has a clear direct influence on quality of work life and work engagement (Karimi and Karimi, 2016). A study conducted by Devi (2016) emphasized that there is a positive relationship among spirituality and employee engagement. Torabi and Javadi (2013) identified that there is a significant and positive correlation among spiritual intelligence and job engagement. While studies identify a positive relationship

between spiritual intelligence employee engagement, Torabi and Nadali (2017) found out that psychological empowerment fully mediates the relationship between spiritual intelligence and job engagement.

There are few researches on the relationship between spiritual intelligence, employee engagement and intention to stay. A research undertaken by Rego et al. (2008) found out that five spirituality scopes were linked to the affective, normative and continuance forms of commitment. It was found out the employees feel more affectionate to the organizations, when they experience workplace spirituality. Another research conducted by Lee et al. (2010) recognized the level of understanding among spiritual management and factors of employee turnover intention. The research found that there was a variation in the insight among managers and workers about proper spiritual management strategies. Where the managers gave the priority to tangible aspects, in which the workers gave the priority towards the intangible aspects. Hence, spiritual intelligence would boost the work performance, enhance the relationships between the employees, increase the job satisfaction and decreases the turnover intention (Frew, 1974; Alexander et al., 1993).

### **III. CONCLUSION**

In the ever-changing environment, where the pace of changes is ever growing, the organizational workload requires on spiritual intelligence, which is becoming more and more significant. In the context of the challenges faced by the conglomerates with related to the engagement and intention to stay of Generation Y employees, the aim of this research was to enhance the engagement and intention to stay of Generation Y employees. The core of this research was the influence of spiritual intelligence. The results of this research concluded that spiritual intelligence is positively connected to employees' engagement and intention to stay. The greater level of spirituality of employees in the organization would lead in greater level of ethical behaviour. The greater level of ethical behaviour would ultimately increase the performance of the employees at the organization and intention to stay (McGee and Grant, 2008). It is assumed that spiritual intelligence is critical for the success in the workplace outcomes together with engagement and intention to stay.

In succeeding throughout the digitalised world, organizations require to invest in variety of programs that would allow the human capital to grow. Human resource managers require to understand the perspective of spiritual intelligence and articulate strategies and support programs to enhance the level of spiritual intelligence of employees. In developing programs, organizations must identify the importance of spiritual intelligence, which would eventually boost the performance of the employees. Leaders should support in implementing the strategies to improve Generation Y employees' perspective of the conglomerate, in dedicating themselves in the work and enhancing their well-being in up surging the level of engagement and intention to stay.

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