

Psychological Empowerment, Work Stress and Organizational Commitment among Academic Staff in Malaysian Public Universities

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the significant impact on the relationship between psychological empowerment, work stress and organizational commitment among academic staff in public universities. A total number of 297 academic staff in northern region public universities in Malaysia was responded to this study. Data was analyzed using SPSS 21 to test the hypotheses of the study. The results indicated that psychological empowerment and work stress have significant impact on organizational commitment. Future research can be done by identifying other factors such as work-life balance, job overload, job security, pay and benefits, communication and work conflict that effect employee's commitment towards organization. It is also recommended that this study could be further extended to compare between public and private universities as well.

Keywords: Organizational Commitment, Psychological Empowerment, Work Stress

1. Introduction

Nowadays, human resources are the important assets of the organization (Malik, Nawab, Naeem and Danish, 2010). Every organization targets to have employees who are committed towards the achievement of the organizational goals. It is important for organization or institution especially to know what features play the main role to enhance commitment of the employee. They have many factors impact on organizational commitment and at the same time effect on job satisfaction. Therefore, this is seriously issue that organization must obtain because organizational efficiency is depending on employee's productive and commitment. It is difficult for organization to shift forward in achieving their objectives without productive and committed individuals. Malaysia needs work forces that possess high commitment, productivity and progressiveness, competitive, and efficient in its mission to achieve the Vision 2020 targets (Ismail, 2012).

The demand of meeting the key performance indicators (KPI) from universities and the demand from stakeholders to produce quality and employable graduates have put Malaysian academic staffs in situations in big challenge (MoHE, 2012). With these demands and the quick growth in education sector in Malaysia, academics are facing more stresses. This effect of stress is supported by Nilufar, Abdullah, Fie, and Alam (2009) in their studies that work stress has influence on work satisfaction among academics in public institution in the Klang Valley. Academics that are always having stress and unsatisfied with their work will have negative influence on their performance and quality of work and also their commitments towards organization (Adebiyi, 2013; Barkhuizen, Roodt and Schutte, 2014).

In order to maintain the teaching quality and to compete successfully in the domestic and international market, it is crucial for leaders to understand the behavior and attitudes of academic staffs. In this context, deans and heads of department would be able to shape the attitudes of the academics by implementing empowerment that will subsequently lead to higher organizational commitment (Dee Henkin and Duemer, 2002; Bogler and Somech, 2004; Choong, Wong and Lau, 2011).

The role of the academic staff is very important to the university in improving corporate image and produce graduates who excel. They have professional interests, work and their own personal connection with their university, including the freedom to pursue excellence, the right to make decisions regarding curriculum and research agenda, ensuring a balance between work and family, ensure a satisfactory level of salary, as well as opportunities for advancement career. As the role of academia is very important, efforts should be taken to encourage loyalty among them. That is why the commitment is one of the most important elements in making academic staff loyalty and should be seriously considered by all higher education institutions. Academic staffs who are always stressful and dissatisfied with the work that will have an impact on the performance and quality of their work and will indirectly affect student achievement. In addition, it is also important in higher education to know what aspects play an important role and have a significant impact in improving employee commitment.

2. Literature Review

Empowerment is a process of increasing employee's feeling of self-efficacy within the organization and the topic of empowerment is necessary due to limited understanding of the empowerment construct and its underlying process (Conger and Kanungo, 1998). Further, in order to increase employee's commitment to the organization, organizations should provide them with substantial opportunities to obtain more responsibilities and perform challenging work (Onn, 2012). Employees will feel empowered when they are given responsibility to undertake tasks and more responsibilities to give opinion and make a decision in work, consequently they are willing to

remain within organization and to work harder (Spreitzer, 1995; McShane and Von Glinow, 2010).

Consequently, the increasing perception of work empowerment promotes increasing organizational commitment. This view have been supported by Liu, Fellows and Chiu (2006), Krishna (2007), Nabila (2008), and McShane and Von Glinow (2010). Furthermore, when superior empower them by giving an opportunity to make decision about their work methods, pace and efforts which able to influence the organization outcome, this will automatically increase staff commitment (Onn, 2012). It can be concluded that, in order to promote loyalty among employees especially academic staff, dean or head of department should play a key role by empower them in term of responsibilities such as make a decision making and obtain more challenging task so that they are willing to stay in organization.

Likewise, a study on a university's staff in South Africa revealed that work stress played a role in decreasing organizational commitment (Khairuddin and Makhbul, 2011). Work stress (Beehrs and Newman, 1997) is something which influences physiological feedback and behavior towards unpleasant inspiration. Work stress is a condition arising from the interaction of people and their jobs and characterized by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning (Luthans, 2002). Michael, Court and Petal (2009) in their research paper found that work stress had negative influence on affective commitment. This means the level of affective commitment tends to increase when stress decreases. In addition, similar study has also been conducted on workplace stress and work fatigue among academics by Adebisi (2013) and Barkhuizen, et al. (2014). Academics that are always having stress and unsatisfied with their work will have negative influence on their performance and quality of work and also their commitments towards organization (Adebisi, 2013; Barkhuizen, Roodt and Schutte, 2014). However, O'Laughin and Bischoff (2005) in their study suggested that women have reported higher level of stress as compared to men. Conversely, Purvanova and Muros (2010) in their recent research paper revealed that female and male employee experience equally experience stress. Work stress currently is not a new trend and it is become visible in each of organization until today.

Therefore, based on the arguments, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H1: There is significant relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment

H2: There is significant relationship between work stress and organizational commitment

3. Methodology

A simple random sampling consisting two hundred and ninety seven of academic staff in northern region public universities were participated in this study. The questionnaire were administered to test organizational commitment, psychological empowerment and works stress among academic

staff represented various groups and categories such as lecturers, senior lecturers, associate professors and professors. 11 items examined respondents' commitment developed by Meyer and Allen (1991; 1997), 10 items related to psychological empowerment developed by Ashforth (1989); Hackman and Oldham (1980); Jones (1986); Spreitzer (1995) and Tymon (1988), whereas 9 items were utilized to assess respondents' work stress level and the instrument was from Cartwright and Cooper (2002) and Kelloway and Barling (1994). The respondents indicated the extent to which they agreed with each statement on a five-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Analysis of data was done using statistical analysis (SPSS version 21.0) and analysis included descriptive, and regression to test the hypotheses.

4. Findings

Respondents Profile

Out of the 297 respondents, 54.2 per cent were female and 45.8 per cent were male. The composition of the highest age group is from 26-30 years which is 32.0 per cent, while the lowest is age less than 25 years (10.4%). The largest group in current position is from lecturer at 70.0 per cent. A majority of them have experience from one to five years. In terms of marital status, 73 per cent were married, 27 per cent were single and 2 per cent were from other status. Finally, most of the respondents hold a Master degree (57.2%) while the rest have PhD and Bachelor degree.

Descriptive Analysis, Reliability, and Correlation

Table 1 shows that the result of descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha reliabilities for the variables. The mean range for all variables in positive side and mostly agree range at 3.16 – 3.39. The reliabilities finding showed the alpha value for each variable in the range between .70 and .82 which that exceeded recommended value .50 suggested by Hair et al. (2010). The range of correlation among the constructs from .329 to .415 which is accepted level and met requirement.

Table 1: Means, Reliability Coefficient, Correlation

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha	1	2	3
Psychological Empowerment	3.37	.625	.82	1		
Work Stress	3.39	.465	.73	.399**	1	
Organizational Commitment	3.16	.366	.70	.329**	.415**	1

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

Hypotheses Testing

Table 2 below illustrates the result of regression analysis between psychological empowerment, work stress and organizational commitment. Based on the result, psychological empowerment and

work stress have significant impact on organizational commitment ($B = .194, p < .001$; $B = .337, p < .001$). The variable had explained 19.8 per cent of variance influence on organizational commitment. Hence, H1 and H2 are accepted.

Table 2: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis

Construct	Dependent variable	R ²	F	Std. Error of the Estimate	Beta	t-value	Sig.	Decision
Psychological empowerment	Organizational commitment	.198	37.65	.327	.194	3.42	.001	H1 accepted
Work stress					.337	5.94	.000	H2 accepted

5. Discussion

The results of the descriptive (Table 1) indicated that the academic staff in selected universities had significantly higher in work stress with mean rating of 3.39 and standard deviation of .465. The moderate level was reported for psychological empowerment with ($M = 3.37, SD = .625$). The results illustrated that the mean value for organizational commitment quite low compare to other variables with value ($M = 3.16, SD = .366$). To the result it shows that majority of academic staff in this study was low in commitment and high in work stress. Multiple regression analysis (Table 2) was used to determine the relationship between independent variables (psychological empowerment and work stress) and dependent variable (organizational commitment). The results demonstrated that psychological empowerment and work stress found to be a significant relationship with organizational commitment ($B = .194, p < .001$; $B = .337, p < .001$). Thus, the finding led to the confirmation of the research hypotheses (H1 and H2). Furthermore, psychological empowerment and work stress among academic staff explained about 19.8 per cent of variance in their university commitment. The percentage was quietly low and may be there have another factors more influencing on organizational commitment. The results of current findings in line with previous research such as Adebisi (2013), Barkhuizen, Roodt, and Schutte (2014), Khairuddin, and Makhbul (2011), McShane, and Von Glinow (2010), Nabila (2008) and Onn (2012).

6. Conclusion

The study of organizational commitment among academic staff nowadays is becoming more popular for researchers because of its link to behavior and attitudes that contribute to organizational outcomes and as a result may play a key role in how academic staff works in order to achieve goals and objectives of universities and student performance as well. However, many researchers much focus on academic staff in private sector. Even so, the researchers should also pay attention among academic staff in public sector because to become a Research University (RU), the level of committed performance among academic staff is extremely important since it would affect the productivity, creativity and quality contribution and also would affect the perception of external stakeholders toward university as a whole. In the same with other studies, this study also has some limitations. Firstly, this study focuses on academic staff; future research could further extended for non-academic staff as well. Secondly, the sample size was too small which is focus on northern region area; future research should employ a much larger sample size and focus on Peninsular Malaysia. Thirdly, a cross-sectional strategy was employed when doing survey distribution; future studies could look into and employ a longitudinal strategy for further findings. In addition, the researcher also recommend a few approaches to be undertaken by identifying other factors such as work-life balance, job overload, job security, pay and benefits, communication and work conflict that effect employee's commitment towards organization.

7. References

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