

4th World Conference on Psychology, Counselling and Guidance WCPCG-2013

Job Satisfactions of Academics in Malaysian Public Universities

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Abstract

The paper describes a proposed study to examine the relationships between job satisfactions, organisational support, academics-employer relations and organisational citizenship behaviour. This study hypothesizes perceived organisational supports and academics-employer relations as antecedents; and organisational citizenship behaviour as consequences of job satisfactions among academics in Malaysian public universities. Data will be collected through self-administered questionnaire which will be distributed to a sample of academics in five Malaysian public research universities. The study will contribute to knowledge by looking at the relationships in the context of Malaysian higher education sector, something which has largely been ignored at present.

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Selection and peer-review under responsibility of Academic World Education and Research Center.

Keywords: job satisfaction, perceived organisational support, leader-member exchange, organisational citizenship behaviour

1. Introduction

Universities play important roles in any nation as knowledge producers and higher education providers. Function of universities is the training of skill labour forces and professionals. The academic staffs are key resources within higher education institutions. Success of universities in fulfilling the role expected by the society will depend on highly motivated staff. It is therefore important to understand the nature of work attitudes among academic staff in universities. In the context Malaysia, very few studies have been conducted to examine the nature, cause and consequences of academics' job satisfaction. Among few studies conducted are Noordin and Jusoff (2009) who have conducted a small scale survey and found a moderate level of job satisfaction among academics in a Malaysian public university. By integrating existing theories on work behaviour and employee-employer relations (POS, LMX and OCB), we, therefore, propose a study that looks into these questions: 1) What is the level of job satisfaction of academic staff in Malaysian public university; 2) What are the antecedents and consequences of job satisfactions among academic staff in Malaysia public university.

2. Antecedents of Job Satisfaction

The concept of general satisfaction is defined as the extent to which a worker feels positively or negatively about his / her job (Locke, 1976; Odom, Boxx, and Dunn, 1990, Noordin and Jusoff 2009). Previous research

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indicates positive relationships between Perceived Organisational Support (POS) and Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) with job satisfaction (Sluss et al. 2008, Credo et al. 2010, Stringer, 2006). There is also considerable support for the relationship between job satisfaction and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB); for example Organ (1988), Williams & Anderson (1991) Schappe, (1998), Ngunia, Slegers & Denessen, (2006) and Zeinabadi (2010).

Originally termed *vertical dyad linkage* (Dansereau et al., 1975), Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) theory conceptualises leadership as a process of interaction between leader and follower and centres on the dyadic exchange relationships between both (Winkler, 2010). LMX theory assumes that leaders and followers are involved in an exchange relationship. Followers follow because they receive something from the leader. In turn, leaders lead as they get something from followers (Messick, 2004; Winkler 2010). The basic principle of leader–member exchange (LMX) is that leaders develop different types of exchange relationships with their followers and that the quality of these relationships affects important leader and member attitudes and behaviours (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Liden et al., 1997; Sparrowe & Liden, 1997; Illies, 2007).

High-quality leader–member relationships are characterised by high levels of trust, interaction, support, and formal and informal rewards (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). This will likely to contribute to job satisfactions among employees. Indeed, a study by Stringer (2006) has shown that LMX has a positive impact on employee’s job satisfaction. Other studies by Baranik et al. (2010), Knoll and Gill, (2011), Larse, Marnburg and Øgaard (2012) and Shaukat et al. (2012) also found a positive relation between quality of relation with supervisor and job satisfaction in their study. In the context of academic staff in Malaysian public universities, it is thus reasonable to hypothesise:

H1: LMX is positively related to employee’s job satisfaction.

Perceived Organisational Support (POS) refers to employees’ perception concerning the extent to which the organisation values their contribution and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison and Sowa, 1986). It is a social exchange relationship that results from exchanges between an employee and his/her employing organisation (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Baranik et al. 2010).

When employees believe that the organisation is committed to them, they feel obliged to put their commitment to the organisation. Perception of support from the organisation creates a psychological and social bond between organisation and employees and this will contribute to job satisfactions. Previous studies in other sector offered empirical evidence that POS is a significant determinant of job satisfaction (Podsakoff and Ahearne, 1998; Judge, Bono and Locke, 2000; Testa, 2001; MacKenzieAllen, Shore and Griffeth, 2003). Following previous research we propose that, in the context of Malaysian universities:

H2: POS is positively related to employee’s job satisfaction.

While looking at work behaviour, especially in the context of higher education sector, one relation that has not been investigated in previous researches is the association between LMX and POS. High LMX will lead to employees’ positive perception of organisational support (Sluss, Klimchak, and Holmes, 2008; Credo, Armenakis, Field, & Young, 2010). A leader is a representative of organisation and his actions are considered as the actions taken by organisation itself (Levinson, 1965). LMX has a direct relation with job satisfaction but employees take leader’s actions as action of their organisation (Levinson, 1965). This suggests that a leader affects employees’ satisfaction by changing their perception about organisation. Actions on the part of organisational agents lead employees to personify the organisation and develop perceptions about how the organisation values them (Baranik et al 2011). Empirical research, such as Baranik et al. 2010 and Knoll and Gill 2011, support this assumption by finding that POS mediates the relationship between leader-member exchange and job satisfactions. Replicating previous research, we hypothesise that:

H3: LMX is positively related to POS.

H4: POS mediates the relation between LMX and job satisfaction.

3. Consequences of Job Satisfaction

Employees satisfied with their work are motivated and keen to perform for their organisation. Job satisfaction has positive effects on employees’ attitudes, loyalty, supports and commitments to the organisation. One of the results

from job satisfaction is the high level of Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) (Schnake, Cochran, and Dumler, 1995).

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) can be defined as a set of discretionary behaviours exhibited by employees that are not directly or clearly recognized by the formal reward system and have an overall positive impact on the operation of the organisation. It cannot be enforced by the organisation and the omission is not punishable (Organ, 1988). Indeed, studies have shown that satisfaction of employees with the working conditions of their organisation encourages them to put voluntary efforts for the achievement of organisational goals (Blakely, Andrews and Fuller, 2003; Lapierre and Hackett, 2007; Zeinabadi, 2010; Sesen and Basim, 2012). Therefore, we proposed that:

H5: Job satisfaction is positively related to OCB.

Employees' satisfaction with job is essential for the entire organisational effectiveness (Lim, 2008). Satisfaction with job builds mental relaxation which ties employees with their organisation. Employee's dissatisfaction with the job may change their intentions to think to change the job (Reed, Kratchman and Strawser, 1994). Job itself is the prime motivator for not to quit the job for employees (Beecham, Baddoo, Hall, Robinson and Sharp, 2008). Thus satisfaction with the job negatively influences employees' intention to leave the organisation (Lee, 2000). In a Meta analysis of 33 studies, Korunka, Hoonakker and Carayon (2008) found that job satisfaction helps individuals to stay with the organisation. Many other researchers are also in favour of the same relation (e.g. McKnight, Philips and Hardgrave, 2009; Korunka, Hoonakker and Carayon, 2008; Joseph, Ng, Koh and Ang, 2007). Thus:

H6: Job satisfaction is negatively related to employees' turnover intentions.

The proposed model to be tested in this study is illustrated in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1. Research model

4. Research Methodology

We will select a sample of 500 academic staff from five public universities. These universities are located in all the major cities of Malaysia. Data will be collected through self-administered questionnaire which will be mailed to participants.

Questionnaire will be used as the tool for data collection. The questionnaire will be composed of six parts; one to collect demographical information and other five to collect data for variables under investigation. Job satisfaction will be measured by the 3-item scale of Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins and Klesh, (1983). Saks (2006) has validated the scale in his research. The reliability of scale is 0.84. An example of sample items of scale is, "All in all, I am satisfied with my job". Perceived organisational support will be measured by the 8-item scale of Eisenberger et al, (1986), which extensively used instrument for this construct. The example of sample items of scale are: "The organisation values my contribution to its well-being", "The organisation cares about my general satisfaction at work". Leader-member exchange will be measured using 6-item scale of Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995). This scale is

further applied and validated by Maa and Qu (2011). The reliability of scale is 0.892. An example of sample items of scale is “My immediate supervisor understands the problems associated with my position”. Turnover intentions will be measured by 3-item scale developed by Colarelli (1984). An example of sample item is, “I am planning to search for a new job during the next twelve months”. The measurement of OCB will be based on the 8-item scales used by Lee and Allen (2002). An example of sample item is, “Willingly give my time to help others who have work-related problems”. The questionnaires will be modified to suit academic settings in Malaysia. It will be tested for reliability and validity.

For data analysis two widely used software will be used i.e. SPSS and AMOS. SPSS will be used for descriptive analysis and AMOS will be used to run structural equation modeling. Analysis will include descriptive analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and structural equation modeling technique.

5. Conclusions

The paper proposed a study to examine the relationships between job satisfactions, organisational support, academics- employer relations and organisational citizenship behaviour in the context of Malaysian higher education sector. Since most empirical evidence on antecedents and consequences of job satisfaction has been limited, this study will extend this line of inquiry in this sector. The concepts (LMX, POS and OCB) have been applied only on limited basis to higher educational settings; by integrating these three concepts in the context of this sector, this study will add to the literature. In addition, the findings from this study shall also inform the decisions of higher education policy makers and administrators of universities in Malaysia.

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