

WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY, PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AND
ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN THE MALAYSIAN PUBLIC
UNIVERSITIES

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UNIVERSITIES

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family members who are my source of inspirations and strength in my life. To my beloved late mother Hajjah Zainab bte Hassan who unfortunately passed away in September 2012 while I am writing my thesis and to my late father Hj. Suleiman bin Belawi. To my wife Hajjah Zakiah bte Abdullah and to all my children Salsabila, the late Fahmi, Safia, Adam Shukri, Nadiah, Idris and Muhammad Ibrahim.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between perceived organizational support, workplace spirituality and organizational commitment of the academic staffs of selected public universities in Malaysia. This study also probed the level and the differences of perceived organizational support, workplace spirituality and organizational commitment based on the demographic factors. A sample of 204 academic staffs from selected public universities in Malaysia participated in the study. Statistical analysis used in the study included descriptive statistics, Mann-Whitney test, Kruskal-Wallis test and correlation. The findings revealed that generally the respondents rated the perceived organizational support, workplace spirituality, affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment as above average. From this study, it was concluded that the perceived organizational support and workplace spirituality had the highest impact on the academic staffs' affective commitment. In contrast, the study also revealed that both perceived organizational support and workplace spirituality had minimal impact on their continuance commitment. In terms of theoretical and implication for research, the findings related to the relationship of perceived organizational support and organizational commitment had been consistent with the social exchange process and the organizational support theory. The results also supported the multidimensional definition of organizational commitment. In terms of practical implications, the findings of this study indicated that workplace spirituality and perceived organizational support seemed to influence the affective and normative commitment. Thus, these findings will have impact on the human resource practices in the universities. It will also add to new dimensions and approach in terms of recruitment, training, and performance evaluation of the academic staffs.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan adalah mengkaji hubungan antara sokongan organisasi dilihat, kerohanian di tempat kerja dan komitmen organisasi dalam kalangan staf akademik di universiti awam terpilih di Malaysia. Kajian ini juga mengkaji tahap dan perbezaan sokongan organisasi dilihat, kerohanian di tempat kerja dan komitmen organisasi berdasarkan faktor-faktor demografi. Sampel kajian terdiri daripada 204 orang staf akademik dari universiti awam terpilih di Malaysia. Analisis statistik yang digunakan dalam kajian itu termasuklah statistik deskriptif, ujian Mann-Whitney, ujian Kruskal-Wallis dan korelasi. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa secara umumnya penilaian responden terhadap sokongan organisasi dilihat, kerohanian di tempat kerja, komitmen afektif, komitmen berterusan dan komitmen normatif adalah melebihi tahap sederhana. Daripada kajian ini, kesimpulan juga boleh dibuat bahawa sokongan organisasi dilihat dan kerohanian di tempat kerja telah memberi impak yang paling tinggi terhadap komitmen afektif dalam kalangan staf akademik. Sebaliknya, kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa kedua-dua sokongan organisasi dilihat dan kerohanian di tempat kerja mempunyai kesan minimum pada komitmen berterusan dalam kalangan staf akademik. Dari segi implikasi teori dan penyelidikan, penemuan kajian berkaitan dengan hubungan sokongan organisasi dilihat dan komitmen organisasi adalah selaras dengan proses pertukaran sosial dan menyokong teori sokongan organisasi. Keputusan kajian juga menyokong definisi multidimensi komitmen organisasi. Dari segi implikasi praktikal, hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa kerohanian di tempat kerja dan sokongan organisasi dilihat mempengaruhi komitmen afektif dan komitmen normatif. Oleh itu, penemuan ini mempunyai kesan ke atas amalan-amalan sumber manusia di universiti-universiti. Dapatan kajian ini akan menambah dimensi baharu dan pendekatan dari segi pengambilan staf, latihan, dan pembangunan serta penilaian prestasi dalam kalangan staf akademik.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS

α	-	Cronbach alpha
H_0	-	Null Hypothesis
AC	-	Affective commitment
CC	-	Continuance commitment
NC	-	Normative commitment
WPS	-	Workplace spirituality

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The growing interest in the research in organizational commitment is mainly due to the competition faced by organizations. Companies or organizations need high people involvement, innovation, continuous improvement, and high quality standard in order to be competitive. In order to keep pace with competition, employees' discretionary effort has become essential and thus highlights the importance of organizational commitment (Gonzalez and Guilen, 2008).

The question is how do organizations enhance the organizational commitment and brings out the best of their employees. Some organizations adopted the inside-out approach by encouraging values and workplace spirituality among employees (Garcia-Zamor 2003; Rego and Cunha 2008). Research indicates that workplace spirituality has positive influence on the organizational variables such as organizational commitment, intrinsic work satisfaction, job involvement and organization based self esteem. In addition to these positive effects on organization, workplace spirituality also has negative influence on the intention to quit (Milliman, Czaplewski and Ferguson, 2001). Workplace spirituality also had an impact on organizational performance and work productivity (Garcia-Zamor, 2003).

Various organizations in diverse industries such as Aetna International, Taco Bell, Wal-Mart, Southwest Airlines, Xerox and Deloitte and Touche are encouraging spirituality in workplace (Vishag Badrinarayanan and Sreedhar Madhavaram, 2008). These initiatives indicate that workplace spirituality if supported by the organization will have positive impact on the organizational outcomes. If Alvin Toffler mentioned the impact of

technology on organizations as the third wave, the spiritually-based firm has been regarded as the organizational fourth wave (Wagner-Marsh and Conley, 1999). Therefore, workplace spirituality can be beneficial and brings positive impact to organizations.

In addition to encouraging workplace spirituality among employees, the perceived organizational support can also play a vital role in enhancing organizational commitment. If the workplace spirituality is derived more of the individual values, perceived organizational support is the role provided by the organization to enhance employees' organizational commitment. The positive impact of perceived organizational support on organizational commitment is enormous. Perceived organizational support is found to be strongly related to the affective commitment of university staff and administrators (Fuller, Hester, Barnett, Frey, & Relyea, 2006).

1.2 Problem statement

Like every other organizations, universities or higher education institution are facing competition to meet the demand and pressures to perform. The competitive nature of the business world does have an impact in the education sector. According to Hawawini (2005), the demand for higher education in business studies has surged worldwide and this upward trend is expected to continue in the future. The main reason is the demand for business education will increase in tandem with the expanding world economy as well as the faster growth in the developing countries.

However the increase in demand will not only create opportunities but will also pose challenges as well. These challenges must be addressed if universities in general and business schools in particular, want to exploit the opportunities available. In discussing the future of business schools, Hawawini (2005) outlined seven challenges or issues needed to be addressed by the business schools. The first challenge faced by the business schools' is the effects of globalization. Second, is the problem of shortage of highly qualified faculty members. Third, is the incorporation of softer skills into curriculum and at the same time maintaining the analytical concept-based courses. Fourth, is the effect of information and communication technologies in teaching and learning. Fifth, is the challenge of achieving financial balance and alternative source of funding. Six, is the issue of effective governance and strategic choices in dealing with competitive pressures. Finally, the last

challenge is how to strengthen the reputation of the business schools for the purpose of long term competitive position.

The emergence of new challenges such as competition and global ranking faced by the universities in general and business school in particular, signify the immense tasks faced by the administrators as well as the academicians. In order to rise and meet the challenges, it requires high commitment among the universities staff. Thus, the study of organizational commitment among the academic staff and administrators is very much relevance.

In Malaysia for example, not only local universities are facing the problem of academic staff turnover (Khoo, 1981) but also low level of commitment despite the changes made in the remuneration system (Morris, Arzmi Yaacob and Wood 2003). This will be detrimental to our local universities as to achieve higher performance, affective and normative commitment bonds between the organization and their employees are considered to be crucial (Rego and Cunha, 2008). In addition to that, according to the economic programme (ETP), education sector plays a vital role to transform the country into a high income nation. In order to meet these challenges the commitment of academic staffs will be critical (Humphreys & Hoque, 2007) as well as to improve the global ranking and attract more foreign students to our local universities (Yuen-Onn Choong et al, 2011). It has also been emphasized that understanding the factors that precede organizational commitment would enable universities in Malaysia to attract and retained good academic staffs (Tek-Yew Lew (2009).

However, it should also be emphasized that previous research have shown that all intrinsic, extrinsic and social reward do influence organizational commitment (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990). Thus by focusing on pay which is only one element of extrinsic reward may not be enough to strengthen organizational commitment of employees. In fact, providing intrinsic rewards could be very crucial because it is a more powerful determinant of affective commitment as compared the extrinsic rewards (Malhotra et al., 2007). Thus, it is important to probe further not only the extrinsic factors that organizations can provide, but also other intrinsic factors that could also strengthen organizational commitment.

The question is why is the level of organizational commitment among the academicians in the Malaysian's public university is relatively low? What are the factors that lead to the low commitment level and how do we remedy the problem? Does the

financial incentive alone through improvement of the remuneration system fail to enhance the organizational commitment among the academicians? Should there be more concerted efforts on providing the non financial incentives and initiatives? Could commitment be enhanced by encouraging individual's efforts on practicing workplace spirituality or should the organization provide more organizational support?

An extensive review of the literature in workplace spirituality, perceived organizational support and organizational commitment indicates various gaps in the studies conducted thus far. There are very few studies on the relationship of perceived organizational support and organizational commitment. In one of the studies that probe the relationship of workplace spirituality and organizational commitment, it has been proposed that further study should investigate the relationship of perceived organizational support, workplace spirituality and organizational commitment (Rego and Cunha, 2008).

In addition to that, none of the studies probe this relationship among the academic staffs of the Malaysian universities or business schools. Exploring this relationship in the context of the Malaysian universities academic staff would be important as the government often expressed its concern on the low commitment and higher turnover rate of the academic staff in the Malaysian universities (Khoo 1981; Morris, Arzmi Yaacob and Wood, 2003). It has also been suggested that the success of universities will very much be influence by the commitment of the academic staffs (Rego and Cunha, 2008; Tek-Yew Lew, 2009; Cristina Bayona-Saez et al., 2009; Yuen-Onn Chong et al., 2011 and Khasawneh, 2011).

1.3 Research Questions

The study will be based on the following research questions:

1. How do academicians rank perceived organizational support, workplace spirituality and organizational commitment items?
2. Are there differences among the academicians relating to each item of perceived organizational support, workplace spirituality and organizational commitment based on the demographic variables?

3. Are there differences among the academicians relating to overall perceived organizational support, workplace spirituality and organizational commitment based on the demographic variables?
4. What is the relationship of each items of perceived organizational support, workplace spirituality and organizational commitment items?
 - 4a. What is the relationship between perceived organizational support and affective commitment items?
 - 4b. What is the relationship between perceived organizational support and continuance commitment items?
 - 4c. What is the relationship between perceived organizational support and normative commitment items?
 - 4d. What is the relationship between workplace spirituality and affective commitment items?
 - 4e. What is the relationship between workplace spirituality and continuance commitment items?
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 - 5c. What is the relationship between the overall perceived organizational support and normative commitment?

- 5d. What is the relationship between the overall workplace spirituality and affective commitment?
- 5e. What is the relationship between the overall workplace spirituality and continuance commitment?
- 5f. What is the relationship between the overall workplace spirituality and normative commitment?

1.4 Research Objectives

This research has the following objectives:

1. To examine the rankings of perceived organizational support, workplace spirituality and organizational commitment items among selected Malaysian business schools' academician.
2. To examine the differences in perceptions of the Malaysian selected business schools' academicians relating to each of perceived organizational support, workplace spirituality and organizational commitment items based on the demographic variables.
3. To examine the differences in perceptions of the Malaysian selected business schools' academicians relating to overall perceived organizational support, workplace spirituality and organizational commitment items based on the demographic variables.
4. To examine the relationship between perceived organizational support and affective, continuance and normative commitment items among the Malaysian business' school academicians.
5. To examine the relationship between workplace spirituality and affective commitment, continuance and normative commitment items among the Malaysian business' school academicians.

6. To examine the relationship between the overall perceived organizational support and affective, continuance and normative commitment among the Malaysian business' school academicians.
7. To examine the relationship between the overall workplace spirituality and affective commitment, continuance and normative commitment among the Malaysian business' school academicians.
8. To recommend policies which Malaysian public universities could adopt to improve organizational commitment among the Malaysian public universities' academicians.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship of perceived organizational support, workplace spirituality and organizational commitment among the Malaysian university academicians in the selected public universities' business schools or the faculty of management. While there have been studies done separately to relate perceived organizational support to organizational commitment and workplace spirituality to organizational commitment, there is a lack of study to probe the relationships of both variables on the three components of organizational commitment in a single study. In addition to that, there is a lack of study that looks into the relationship of perceived organizational support, workplace spirituality and organizational support in the context of academicians in Malaysia.

1.6 Significance of the study

- i) The findings of the study will be able to contribute the body of knowledge in field of study by developing a framework of the relationship between organizational commitment, workplace spirituality and perceived organizational support.

- ii) In terms of the research methodology, this study attempts to make a rigorous empirical examination of the relationship between workplace spirituality, perceived organizational support and organizational commitment.

- iii) In terms of the practical implications, this study will provide recommendations to the Malaysian universities on how to improve perceived organizational support and implement workplace spirituality in the universities in order to enhance the organizational commitment among the academic staffs. Thus, the findings of this study will provide the input on the human resource practices in the universities. It will add new dimensions and approach in terms of recruitment, as well as training and development and of academic staffs.

1.7 Scope of the study

First, this study is confined only to a cross sectional survey method. Second, the respondents of this study will only be represented by active academicians serving the business schools or faculties of management from the main campus of the 10 Malaysian's public universities.

1.8 Limitation of the study

This study will also be constraint by its research limitations. The dependent and independent variables were collected from the same source. Future studies can consider employing double source method. In addition to that a longitudinal research design might be more suitable.

1.9 Definition of variables or key terms

1.9.1 Perceived Organizational Support

Perceived organizational support or POS refers to “the degree to which employees perceive their employer to be concerned with their well-being and to value their contributions to the organization” (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

1.9.2 Organizational Commitment

According to Joiner and Bakalis (2006), is defined as” a psychological attachment to the employing organization”. The three well accepted components of organizational commitment are:

- i) Affective organizational commitment is defined as the “employee's emotional attachment to, and identification with the organization” (Allen and Meyer, 1996)
- ii) Normative organizational commitment refers to the “moral obligation to continue working for the organization” (Allen and Meyer, 1996).
- iii) Continuance organizational commitment indicates “the degree which the employee stays with an organization because the costs of leaving are too high” (Allen and Meyer, 1996).

1.9.3 Workplace spirituality

Workplace spirituality is not about religion, conversion or adherence to specific belief system but the understanding that employees as spiritual beings whose souls need nourishment at work. It is also about a sense of purpose and meaning in their work and the connectedness to one another and their workplace community (Ashmos and Duschon,

2000; Vishag Badrinarayanan and Sreedhar Madhavarani, 2008). Workplace spirituality (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Milliman et al. 2001) consists of five major components of workplace spirituality namely a) team's sense of community, b) alignment between organizational and individual values, c) sense of contribution to the community, d) sense of enjoyment at work and e) opportunities for the inner life.

1.10 Contribution of the study

This study will contribute to fill the gap on the lack of study on workplace spirituality, perceived organizational and organizational commitment within the Malaysian context. By conducting the study within the Malaysian context, this study will also be able provide further insights on the relevance of the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), the norms of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) and the organizational support theory (Eisenberger, et al.,1986; Eisenberger et al., 2001). In addition to that, there is also a lack of study on demographic differences especially on the workplace spirituality. This study will also fill the gap on the correlations of the workplace spirituality and perceived organizational support items with each of the three organizational commitment items.

1.11 Organization of the thesis

The organization of this proposal is as follows. This proposal will be divided in five chapters. Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter, highlighting on the important of the study, the research questions, the research objectives, the research hypotheses, the significance, the scope, the limitation and the contribution of this study.

Chapter 2 is the review of the literature, all the variables namely workplace spirituality, perceived organizational support, affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment will be discussed based on the literature review. The underlying theories related to this study will also be discussed. Based on the literature review, research questions, research hypotheses and the research framework will be formulated.

Chapter 3 will discuss the appropriate research method for the study, which is on research framework and hypotheses. All the relevant factors, variables and link in the research framework will be described and discussed. This chapter will also discuss the research instruments, the sampling process and the methods for data analysis.

Chapter 4 will present the data analysis of the study. The first part will be the preliminary analysis of the data and will include the normality test, validity test and reliability test. The second part of the chapter will present the analysis of research findings.

Finally, Chapter 5 will be on discussion, conclusion and future research. The important findings will be discussed in terms of the theory and practical implications. The study limitations and future research directions will also be highlighted.

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