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Testing the Effects of Employee Engagement, Work Environment, and Organizational Learning on Organizational Commitment

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Abstract

Organizational commitment is one of the most widely researched topics in the field of organizational behaviour. The main objective of this study is to test the effects of work engagement, organizational learning, and work environment on organizational commitment in higher education sector. To achieve this objective, the data was collected using an online survey from 242 employees at public universities in northern Malaysia. The collected data was analysed using SPSS and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The findings indicated that employee engagement has a significant positive effect on organizational commitment. It was also found that work environment has a significant positive impact on organizational commitment. Finally, the outcomes of this study confirmed that organizational learning has a significant positive effect on organizational commitment. These findings provide useful insights and suggestions for the management in higher educational institutions to learn developing organizational commitment among their employees by adopting effective human resource practices that could ultimately lead organizational competitiveness and increased performance.

Introduction

The historical research shows that a number of scholars have been interested in understanding the nature, predictors, and consequences of employee commitment towards an organization. Organizational commitment is very important because when it is built, it would lead to various favourable organizational outcomes. According to Chughtai and Zafar (2006), fostering organizational commitment among employees is very essential, because employees who are highly committed toward their organizations are likely to stay longer, have better performance, and they tend to be highly involved at workplace. Moreover, committed employees show their loyalty and become productive individuals in their organizations (Dey, Kumar, & Kumar, 2014). As a result, such employees show

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positive attitude towards organizational goals and values and are likely to develop positive work behaviour. Therefore, employee commitment is linked with several desirable behavioural outcomes such as employee retention, presence, performance, quality of work, and personal sacrifice for the best interest of the organization to make it successful (London, 1983; Randall, 1990).

Organizational commitment is regarded as a significant issue, particularly to the management of organizations. This is because organizational commitment is linked with job satisfaction and both are directly associated with organizational profitability and superior competitiveness (Abdullah & Ramay, 2012). Certain scholars also confirmed that organizational commitment had a direct effect on employees' performance and thus, it is viewed as an issue of importance (Jaramillo, Mulki & Marshall, 2005; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsky, 2002; Siders, George & Dharwadkar, 2001). In the previous research, it is evident that there are several factors that affect organizational commitment. However, this study is carried out to test the impact of factors like employee engagement, organizational learning, and work environment on organizational commitment among employees working in Malaysian education sector.

In Malaysian context, building organizational commitment among employee has become very important for various universities to enhance their competitiveness. By looking at literature on organizational commitment, it shows that there exists a gap with regard to the studies that examined this variable in higher education sector of Malaysia. That is, most of the previous researches on organizational commitment were conducted by industrial organizational and occupational psychologists (Mueller, Wallace & Price, 1992). According to Chughtai and Zafar (2006), there is a limited research on organizational commitment that focused on educational context. Thus, by examining the factors that affect organizational commitment among university staff, this study is designed to provide beneficial suggestions to the management in higher educational institutions to formulate the strategies that could help them to attract and retain their employees on the long term.

Literature Review

2.1 Organizational commitment

Building organizational commitment is undoubtedly very important for all organizations, because employees are the main sources for continued success and performance. Organizational commitment has been defined previously as a psychological attitude that attaches an employee to an organization in a manner that reduces his or her turnover intention (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The most widely accepted definition for organizational commitment was proposed by Mowday, Porter, and steer, (1982, p, 27) as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization and can be characterized by a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization and a strong desire to maintain membership of the organization". The authors added that commitment is revealed through an employee's willingness to work effectively in an organization and his intention to keep the relation without intending to switch to others (Mowday et al., 1982).

The importance of organizational commitment has been documented in the literature. For instance, organizations seem to be interested in to have highly committed employees, because it is commonly accepted that organizational commitment could lead to various organizational outcomes such as lower level of turnover, increased motivation, improved organization citizenship behaviour, and continuous organizational support (Kwon & Banks, 2004). Additionally, employees' commitment is an indicator of greater loyalty and increased productivity (Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian, 1974). Committed employees also work harder to achieve organizational goals and they tend to accept its values positively (Buchanan, 1974). In this context, it can be said that several desirable behavioural outcomes can be linked with employee commitment such as higher employee retention, engagement, productivity, work quality, and willingness to make sacrifice for the purpose of enhancing organizational image and performance (London, 1983; Randall, 1990).

Based on the above discussion, it can said that organizational commitment still holds a significant theme in literature and is valued by my researchers and practitioners as it has positive implications on organizational success. In other words, organizational commitment is the key factor in determining organizational competitiveness which enhances the motivation, and engagement of employees (Azeem, 2010). Organizational commitment also has a strong association with employee behaviour and performance. If an employee feels committed to an organization, the chances of his or her absenteeism and turnover will be lower (Igbaria & Greenhaus, 1992). Therefore, it is very