

Assessing Emotional Intelligence, Leadership Behavior and Organizational Commitment in a Higher Learning Institution

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Abstract

Employees' commitment, in particular, the academics are crucial to universities as their commitment may be directed towards a number of entities, such as the work of teaching and research, students' success and other specific programs. On the other hand, a low level of commitment tends to demonstrate negative work behaviors. Therefore, this study intends to examine whether the constructs of leadership behavior and emotional intelligence could enhance organizational commitment among the academic staff in a higher learning institution. A total of 169 academic staff of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) participated in this study. They were selected based on stage and cluster sampling from the main and branch campuses around Malaysia. The result shows that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership behavior on organizational commitment. The practical implications of these findings were discussed in this paper.

Keywords: organizational commitment; emotional intelligence; transformational leadership; transactional leadership

1.0 Introduction

Effective management of organizations and human resources are facing enormous challenges. This is due to the fact that many organizations are downsizing, reengineering or restructuring themselves to compete in the global market and facing an explosion of available information (Desimone et al, 2001). In addition, diversity has become more prominent characteristics of today's workforce (Reece & Brandt, 2005). These massive changes are expected among public enterprises including higher educational institutions. In this sense, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) is no exception. However, despite existing trends and threat from internal and external environments, people or employees will remain as the heart and soul of any organization. In the era of globalization, what differentiates effective and ineffective organizations are the quality and commitment of the people who work there. Consequently, Dunham et al (1994) noted that one of the contributions of organizational effectiveness is reflected in organizational commitment and performance among its members. Hence, employees' commitment in particular, that of the academics are crucial to the universities; as their commitment may be directed toward a number of entities (such as to the work of teaching and research, to students' success, to specific programs or the universities as the organization).

The organizational commitment concept emerged from studies exploring employees- organization linkages. Previous research has viewed that organizational commitment continues to be a powerful attitudinal response in employees (Scott-Ladd, Travaglione, and Marshall, 2006). In fact, Rathi and Rastogi (2009) reviewed the literature on organizational commitment and found that it has potential to predict organizational outcomes such as an increase in job performance, reduced turn over and withdrawal cognitions, lower absenteeism rate, and increased organizational behavior. Subsequently, Meyer and Allen (1991) provide empirical support that organizational commitment is a multidimensional concept that provides a comprehensive insight into the link between employees and work related behaviour. Meyer and Allen (1991) indicated that there are three components conceptualization of organizational commitment; which are affective, continuance and normative commitment.

Meyer & Allen (1991) believe that employees can experience all three forms of commitment to varying degrees. They claimed that given these conceptual differences, the psychological states reflecting the three components of organizational will develop as the function of quite different antecedents and have different implications for work behaviour. For example, affective commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with,

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and involvement in the organization. Employees with strong affective commitment continue employment with the organization because they want to do so. On the other hand, Continuance commitment refers to an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization. Employees whose primary link to the organization is based on continuance commitment remain because they need to do so, while, normative commitment reflects a feeling of obligation to continue employment. According to Meyer and Allen (1997), employees high in affective commitment, for example, demonstrate emotional attachment, identification with the involvement in the organization. Hence, this would explain why these employees are less likely to engage in withdrawal behaviour and are more willing to accept change (Sommers, 1995, Iverson, 1996). Hence, organizational commitment in this study refers to member's identification and level of engagement with a particular organization. It reflects peoples' attitudes towards the organizations goals and values, a desire to stay with the organization, and a willingness to expend effort on its behalf (Mowday et al., 1982)

Of these, the academic staffs' commitment to their organization served as the focus of the present study. Aamir Ali Chughtai & Sohail Zafar (2006) claimed that developing and encouraging organizational commitment among the academic staff is important, because, as shown in many studies, employee that are committed would remain attached to their organization, perform better and engage in organizational citizenship behaviours. There were many studies that relate organizational commitment with its antecedents and outcomes. According to Mowday et al (1982) the antecedents of organizational commitment fall generally in to four categories: personal characteristics, structural characteristics, job related characteristics and work experiences. However, the aspects on emotions and leadership have not been given much emphasis. Given that commitment incorporates an attitudinal and behavioural dimension, the aspects of emotions and leadership have found it necessary for its development. For example, the leaders' behaviours can be a major influence on the level of organizational commitment (Campisano, 1992). Another factor assumed to significantly influence organizational commitment is the construct of emotional intelligence (Nikolaou and Tsaousis, 2002); Sy and Cote, (2003); Carmeli,(2003).

1.1 The relationship between leadership and organizational commitment

Moss, Jensrud & Johansen (1992) have provided a conceptualization of leadership in vocational education that depicts the relationship among a leader's attribute, behaviour and effectiveness. They believe that it is a leader's behaviour that influences group performance and it is a leader' attributes that shape those behaviour. Literature noted that there is also connection between leadership styles and organizational commitment and several major studies have found a positive relationship between them (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Omar Sayeed, 2001; Carmeli, 2003). For example, Rowden (1999) in his study found that the leader's sensitivity to member needs is clearly related to commitment. He stated that it is unlikely that someone would be committed to an organization where its leader was not attuned to his or her needs. Besides, Rowden (1999) also found that there was a relationship between vision and articulation and commitment. Therefore, he suggests that existing commitment theory, which previously did not include vision and articulation factor , may need to be extended to include it. In addition, Dvir, Kass & Shamir (2004) found in their studies, a positive relationship of balanced transcendental and realistic content of the vision and a high level of sharedness in vision assimilation processes to affective commitment. On the other hand, Salancik (1977) observed that high levels of employee commitment were associated with supervision that was not overly tight or close. Besides, supervisor supports decreased emotional exhaustion, which in turn, increased job satisfaction; thus increased organizational commitment (Ray & Miller 1991; Iverson et al., 1998)

Nevertheless, some previous research has been conducted using parts of transformational and transactional leadership theories. Transformational leadership approach is viewed to have the ability to motivate its followers thus enhance their commitment and job satisfaction. For instance Koh, Steers & Terborg, 1995) found in their study that supervisors who manifest transformational leadership behaviour has been found to be associated with subordinate satisfaction with the supervisor. The original ideas of transformational and transactional leadership theory was first developed by Burns (1978) based in the political contexts and later Bass (1985) refined this theory and introduced into organizational context. According to Bass (1985) transactional leadership develops from the exchange process between leaders and subordinates wherein the leader provides rewards exchange for subordinates' performance. On

the other hand, transformational leadership behaviours go beyond transactional leadership and motivate followers to identify with the leaders vision and sacrifice their interest for that of the group or the organization. For example, Fortmann et al (2003) studies, provides reason to suspect a relationship between transformational leadership style and affective commitment. This is evidence in their study on the effects of transformational and transactional leadership on affective commitment. Results further provided support for the augment effect of transformational leadership on this outcome. In addition, Judge (2000) found leaders perceived as being transformational were likely to be associated with subordinates who express commitment to the organization. Angle and Lawson (1994) found that affective commitment was related to a leader's ratings of dependability and initiative. They argued that increased affective commitment to the organization produces individual pro-social behaviour, which eventually benefit the entire organization. According to Dixon, Turner, Cunningham & Kent, (2005), although these benefits may not always be noticed with a very narrow, task type performance dependent variable, they certainly are apparent when one considers the whole organizational effectiveness. Given that an effective leader plays a vital role especially in this era of transition to an informational and technological age, leadership becomes more important to an organization in unstable situations.

1.2 The relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment

Current literatures noted that the construct of emotional intelligence can predict work related behaviours, leaderships and performances at the workplace (Mayer et. al., 2000; Baron and Parker, 2000; Dulewicz & Higgs 2000; Salovey & Mayer, 1997). The concept of emotional intelligence is stated to be based on extensive scientific and research evidence (e.g. Copper, 1997, Cooper and Sawaf, 1997 & Goleman 1996). Goleman (1995, 1998) popularized emotional intelligence in the business realm by describing its importance as an ingredient for successful business careers and as crucial components for effective group effectiveness. On the other hand, Mayer and Salovey (1990) describe emotional intelligence as a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor our own and others' feeling and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this to guide our thinking and actions. Nevertheless, to date, scholars tend to view emotional intelligence as a factor which has the potential to contribute to more positive attitudes, behaviours and outcomes (Schutte 2002; Carmeli, 2002; Vokala, Tsaouis & Nikolaou, 2004). For example, people with high emotional intelligence competencies are more likely than less emotional intelligence people to gain success in the workplace (Carmeli, 2003). In a study done by Carmeli (2003), the study show evidence points to a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and affective commitment but on the other hand, the hypothesis does not support the relationship between emotional intelligence and continuance commitment. Consequently, researcher is unaware of research that has measure emotional intelligence construct and normative commitment. In another study done by Adeyemo (2007), it was found that organizational commitment is a function of job satisfaction. He claimed that when employees' needs are met there is likelihood that the level of commitment manifested by workers would be high. Gardner & Stough (2003) also found that emotional intelligence can predict external and internal job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Evidence also shows that emotional intelligence may have direct and indirect influence on work attitude, leadership and performance (Poon, 2003). Subsequently, there was evidence that emotional intelligence impacts leadership and social relationship at work (Sy and Cote 2004). For example, people with high emotional regulation abilities were rated by their peers as being more visionary leaders than those with low emotion regulation abilities (Cote, Lopes & Salovey 2002). Indeed, people with high emotion regulations abilities also reported receiving more social support, being more satisfied with communication and with other group members than their counterparts (Sy and Cote 2004). Therefore, although there are many constructs used to predict modest amounts of variability in organizational commitment, researchers have become aware that there is a need to study broader range of predictors. In fact, there has been a general lack of independent, systematic analysis of the claim that combination construct of emotional intelligence and leadership behaviour could be important factors in predicting organizational commitment in a higher learning institution. Hence, to mitigate the lack of empirical research on this area, the present study intends to examine the relationships between emotional intelligence, leadership behaviour and organization commitment.

2.0 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are three-fold, namely to determine (a) the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership behaviour on organizational commitment among the academic staff of UiTM, (b) the contribution of each of the significant predictor variables towards organizational commitment, and (c) whether emotional intelligence is useful for the study on moderating variables in the relationship between perceived leadership behaviour and organizational commitment among the academic staff of UiTM.

3.0 Methodology

This study was based on a conceptual framework that was adapted Three Component Model (TCM) of organizational commitment developed by Meyer and Allen (1991, 1997). Organizational commitment in this study was measured by affective commitment (i.e., based on emotional attachment to organization, identification with and involvement in the organization); continuance commitment (based on the cost that employees associate with leaving the organization) and normative commitment (feeling of obligation to remain with the organization) as operationalised by Meyer and Allen, (1990). A 7-point Likert scales ranging from (1) strongly disagree and (7) strong agree was used to measured this 24 items variable. The internal consistency estimates in organizational commitment scales was 0.826. The perceived leadership behaviour is reflected in the transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985). An instrument called the multifactor leadership style questionnaire (MLQ-5x form) was developed from Bass and Avolio (1995) and used in the study. On the other hand, to measure emotional intelligence, ECI inventory or Emotional Competencies Inventory which was developed by Boyatzis, Goleman and Rhee (2000) was utilized. The inventory consists of 110 items that reflected adaptive tendency toward emotional intelligence. The emotional competence inventory measures twenty- five competencies organized into four clusters: self-awareness, self-management, social skills. A 7-point Likert scales ranging from (1) strongly disagree and (7) strong agree was used to measured to EI. This study employed stage cluster sampling design. The samples were drawn from the academics of UiTM from main and branch campuses of the Malaysian Peninsula. Hence using Krejcie and Morgan's table (1970), a sample size of 357 was determined. However, a total of 169 academics participated in this study. Pearson's Product –Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between emotional intelligence, leadership behaviour and organizational commitment. In order to identify the contribution of each of the significant independent variables towards the variance of organizational commitment, multiple regressions were utilized. In order to check assumption on normality, a statistical normality test using kolmgrorov –Smirnov test was also performed on the data set to provide confirmation pertaining to the distribution of the data. Apart from that, the data of this study were also tested for potential problems related to multicollinearity, where its presence could violate the use of the multiple regressions analysis.

4.0 Findings

Analysis on the relationship of emotional intelligence, perceived leadership behaviour and organizational commitment on organizational readiness for change among the academic staff of UiTM

Table 1: Correlation matrix analysis of emotional intelligence, leadership behaviour and organizational commitment (n= 168)

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Org commitment	1.00			
2. Emotional intelligence	.353**	1.00		
3. Transformational	.401**	.444**	1.00	
4. Transactional	.419**	.315**	.692**	1.00

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level

Table 1 presents the result obtained from bi-variate analysis. The findings indicated emotional intelligence, transactional and transformational leadership behaviour were positively and moderately associated with organizational commitment, with their respective r and p values ($r = 0.353, p = 0.000$; $r = 0.419, p = 0.000$; $r = 0.410, p = 0.000$).

Analysis on the contribution of each of the significant predictors’ variables towards the variance of the criterion variables

Table 2: Multiple Regression analysis on organizational commitment

Variables	Un-std Coefficient β	Std coefficient β	t	P
(constant)	2.796		9.475	0.000
EI	.156	.213	2.792	0.000
Transactional	.333	.269	2.845	0.000
Transformational	.102	.121	1.207	.229
F Statistic = 16.872, sig. < 0.05 Adjusted R-squared = .222, R2 = .236				

Based on the ENTER method, as shown in table 2, the finding reveals that, out of three variables that were regressed, only two predictor variables were found to be significant. The two predictor variables were emotional intelligence and transactional leadership with their respective t and p values ($t = 2.792, p = 0.000, t = 2.845, p = 0.00$). However, Transformational leadership with $t = 1.207, p = .229$ was excluded because it did not contribute in significance to the variance of organizational readiness for change. Besides, Table 2 also indicates the coefficient of determination, that is, R squared. It is the value indicated that the percentage of total variation of the dependent variable explained by the independent variables. Therefore as shown in Table 2, the total amount of variance of the criterion variable that was predictable from the two predictors was 23.6%, and the adjusted R square change of 22.2%. Since the adjusted R square could give a better estimation of the true population value, the contribution of the predictor variables towards the variance in the criterion variable in this study was reported based on the adjusted R-square value. Therefore, the overall regression model was successful in explaining approximately 22.2% of the adjusted variance in organizational commitment.

The finding of the present study, support the existing work related to behaviour particularly organizational behaviour literature of the importance of developing emotional intelligence and leadership behaviour. In an educational setting, this finding suggests that both emotional intelligence and transactional leadership behaviour were important constructs that have the potential ability to enhance organizational commitments among its members.

Analysis on whether emotional intelligence is useful for the study on moderating variable in the relationship between perceived leadership behaviour on organizational commitment

Table 3: Moderated Multiple Regression predicting organizational commitment and leadership behaviour in interaction with emotional intelligence

Dependent	Independent	R	R2	$\Delta R2$	β	F-change	P
Step 1: Commitment	Main effect leadership	.476	.227	.227	.357	24.199	.000
Step 2: Commitment	Interaction leadership leadership \times EI	.231	.231	.000	-.349	.801	0.372

β = Standardized coefficient

Table 3 presents the results of the moderated multiple regression analyses in predicting organizational readiness for change with the interaction between leadership behaviour and commitment. In step 1, leadership behaviour and organizational commitment explained a significant amount of variance in organizational readiness for change ($R^2 = .227$, $p < .005$). In other words, R^2 means that 22.7% of variance in organizational commitment increase was explained by leadership behaviour scores and emotional intelligence. Step 2 showed that the inclusion of the interaction term (leadership behaviour \times emotional intelligence) resulted in ΔR^2 of ($\Delta R^2 = .000$, $F = 0.801$, $p = 0.372$), there was no additional increase in the R^2 change value and the F statistic was not significant. Therefore, this study showed that emotional intelligence did not moderate the relationship between leadership behaviour and organizational commitment.

5.0 Discussions and conclusions

The current study intends to examine the relationship of emotional intelligence, Transformational and Transactional leadership behaviour on organizational commitment. Hence, the findings have drawn three main conclusions. Firstly, there was positive but moderate relationship between emotional intelligence, leadership behaviour and organizational commitment. Besides, the finding evident that emotional intelligence and leadership behaviour were potential antecedents of organizational commitment. Williams and Hazer (1986) in their study also support that leadership style is considered as antecedent of commitment. Secondly, the overall regression model was successful in explaining approximately 22.2% of the adjusted variance in organizational commitment. The findings statistically showed that transactional leadership behaviour had contributed the strongest unique contribution to explain organizational commitment. This finding is consistent with the study done by Bycio et al. 1995, Major et al, 1995, Meyer and Allen, 1997. According to Burn (1978) the major focus of transactional leaders is follower role clarification and leaders have to know about the needs of employee which require meeting the organizational goals. Hence, Hamdia and Phadett (2011) suggest that if human resource managers or head of departments satisfy the needs of their employees, their commitment will increase and they will prefer to remain in the organization. Thus Jaskyte and Lee (2009) contended that when organizational members have a sense of belonging with organizational mission, goals, and values they will contribute all efforts to their work and the organizations. Besides, the current findings support the significance of emotional intelligent on enhancing organizational commitment. The finding of Bar-On (2003) corroborate with the present finding. This result may suggests that emotionally intelligence academics may have the desire to stay with the organization and are willing to expend effort on its behalf. According to Goleman (2006) emotional intelligence competencies can be learned. It is concerned with ones' ability to maintain self-control, enthusiasm, persistence and self-encouragement, as shown in five major dimensions: knowing your emotions, managing your own emotions, motivating yourself, recognizing and understanding other people's emotions, and managing relationships (Goleman, 2006). Nevertheless, Huy (1999) asserts that emotional intelligence employees could assist organizations in reducing turnover, identifying transformational leaders, facilitating executive coaching, creating more effective work teams, improving organizational culture, stimulating creativity, and enhancing employee acceptance of radical change. Therefore, emotional intelligence competencies and leadership skills may have a buffering effect on the organizational commitment of the employees. Lastly, the result of this study reveals that emotional intelligence did not moderate the relationship between leadership behaviour and organizational commitment. Several limitations constrain the interpretation and generalization of the findings. This study only focuses on academic staff and has not included non academics. Therefore, future studies may benefit from an exploration of a wider range of employees at different organizational levels. Besides, further studies on longitudinal research methodology would be useful to validate the framework of organizational commitment.

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