



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FOLLOWERSHIP STYLES AND
ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AMONG RETAIL SECTOR
EMPLOYEES**

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**Bachelor of Science (Honours)
(Human Resource Development)
2020**

Grade: A

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Final Year Project Report

Masters

PhD

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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FOLLOWERSHIP STYLES AND
ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AMONG RETAIL SECTOR EMPLOYEES**

NUR AQILA SUTARWAN

This project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a
Bachelor of Science with Honours
(Human Resource Development)

Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK
(2020)

The project entitled ‘The Relationship Between Followership Styles And Organizational Commitment Among Retail Sector Employees’ was prepared by Nur Aqila Sutarwan and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Science with Honours (Human Resource Development)

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I praise to the Almighty Allah for giving me the strength and patience in completing this research. I would like to express my sincere appreciation and deepest gratitude to these following individuals who have given me endless support while completing this final year project.

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my family especially my beloved mother and guardian, Anita Binti Samad and Mohamad Azlan bin Samad who have been always motivating, support, and pray for me, every day and night. To my beloved grandparents, Jama Binti Mohd Rejab and Samad bin Said, thank you for always be proud of me with everything that I do.

To my sole supervisor, Associate Professor Dr Abdul Halim Busari, thank you for your guidance, encouragement, advice, patience, as well as endless support in guiding me to complete this research. I would like to extend my gratitude to my best buddies; Wafa and Aishah and Sufi for helping me in writing this research.

Special thanks to these amazing best friends; Syukur, Munifah, Nayli, Iffah, Amirah, Alissa, Sarah, Fatini, Syazwani and Najlaa who are always listening to my rants, consoling me, making me laugh, and giving the motivational supports throughout the years of knowing each other.

Last but not least, to Aqila, thank you for keep going and not giving up.

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to examine followership styles and its relationship with organizational commitment. This non-experimental study employed a quantitative survey design with a set of surveys returned representing 140 employees at three shopping malls in Kuching which are Vivacity Megamall, The Spring Shopping Mall and AEON Mall Kuching Central. The two standardized instruments used in this study include The Followership Questionnaires (Kelley, 1992) and The Measure of Organizational Commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1990). A Spearman's Correlation Coefficient revealed findings that indicate there is a positive relationship between the pragmatist and the exemplary followership styles and organizational commitment. However, there is a negative relationship between passive styles and organizational commitment. Conversely, the analysis revealed no significant relationship between alienated and conformist followership styles and organizational commitment. The findings enhance the theoretical study of followership and organizational commitment by providing empirical evidence needed to validate further research.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter comprises of nine parts and it discusses some the first chapter of the whole research which are the background of study, problem statement, research objectives, research hypothesis, theoretical framework, significance of study, limitations of study, definition of terms and the summary of Chapter One. To sum up, this chapter will introduce the fundamental of this study, what it is all about and why the study is conducted that is significant to the researcher.

1.1 Background Of Study

Approximately, 80% the success of an organization lies within the contribution of the followers (Kelley, 1992) yet the spotlight is on leaders and the above is keep getting recognized. According to Kellerman (2008), many scholars have acknowledged that followership is a vital part of leadership theory and practice. This can be supported by Donald (2010), followers' role in the organization is turning to an important part in theoretical, applied and empirical research within leadership and management studies. For the past twenty-seven years after research by Kelley (1992), the landscape of followership has been evolved. However, the number of followership citation is incomparable to the body of leadership literature. The studies of followership in Malaysia has less than 15 researches, approximately.

Robert E. Kelley associated the theories and concepts of followership through five basic followership styles as proposed by Kelley (1988) are, 'the conformist', 'the exemplary', 'the pragmatist', 'the alienated' and 'the passive'. Twenty years have passed, Kelley (2008) stated that the concept of followership style is conceptualized based on a

combination of two behavioural dimensions — critical thinking and active engagement. Followers engagement is established between passive and active (Kelley, 1992) and engagement is varied between dependent uncritical thinking and independent critical thinking (Kelley, 2008).

According to Kelley (1992), people are both leaders and followers, and the majority of them acknowledge their leadership styles but ignorant of their followership dimension and styles. Not only leadership styles need to be revised to maintain organization relevancy in the global market, but followership dimension and styles also play a big role to enhance the effectiveness of an organization toward its desired goals. Logically, in any organization, the number of employees is greater than the employer. The reason why people only focused on the lesser amount is questionable.

The study of organizational commitment has been focused on by researchers since a few decades ago. Becker (1960) proposed the earliest study of organizational commitment. Next, the study follows by Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) which proposed an attitudinal commitment theory on how certain occasion contributes to commitment. After these theories are introduced, the researcher started to develop a multidimensional model. In the present time, the theory of organizational commitment by Meyer and Allen (1991) has been widely used in the body of knowledge. Meyer and Allen (1991) identify three approaches to conceptualize the organizational commitment namely affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment.

The commitment can be categorized into three factors; a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization (Mowday & Steers, 1978). Organizational commitment is not just being passively loyal, but it involves an active relationship of an individual to contribute

something within their skills and competency for the organization's well-being.

Moreover, commitment is not only the expressions of one's belief but also from their behaviour (Mowday & Steers, 1978).

In today's complex and competitive environment, committed employees are classified as an organization's valuable treasure. Competent and dependable employees are a form of investment in the long run. The construct of organizational commitment has become the interest of a researcher in producing employees with better performance and exhibit good work behaviour. Nevertheless, employee's commitment might shift due to uncertainties in the business environment such as job rotation, organizational restructuring, employee resizing, greater job insecurity and the growth in contingency workforce (Nollen & Axel, 1996; Cappelli, Katz, Knoke, Osterman & Useem, 1997; Hall & Moss, 1998)

Followership styles have been evolving ever since, past studies associated followership styles with job satisfaction. Hinić, Grubor and Brulić (2016) aim to study the frequency of followership styles, and their connection with job satisfaction and satisfaction with extrinsic/intrinsic aspects of work in teachers. The findings of this quantitative research indicate that the most prominent followership styles are exemplary followers and pragmatist followers, Exemplary followers shows a greater significance to intrinsic aspects of work and a higher job satisfaction rate, while pragmatist enhances more importance on extrinsic aspects.

Moreover, followership styles are linked with transactional leadership style and factors of employees' reactions towards organizational change as a moderating variable by Khan, Busari, Abdullah and Mughal (2018). The outcome of this study shows the moderation results clarify that followership significantly moderates the relationship between transactional leadership style, frequency of change and employee's participation.

Furthermore, Khan, Busari, Abdullah and Mughal (2019) also aims to further understand the importance of followership as a moderating variable in the relationship between transformational leadership style and factors of employees' reactions. The result demonstrates followership has a significant effect on the relationship between transformational leadership style and factors of employees' reaction.

Next, Essa, Eman Bani, Alattari and Aref (2019) supplement the followership bodies of research with identifying patterns of the followership styles and their relation to the leadership styles of academic leaders. The descriptive relation approach resulting in exemplary followership style is the most prevalent, followed by the pragmatic followership style and finally the alienated and the passive style. The results also show the most dominant leadership styles are the empowering, democratic, and autocratic. However, the study results also displayed that there are no statistically significant differences between the leadership and the followership styles. Walia, Bansal and Mittal (2015) also conducted a study between leadership style and followership style. The findings of this research show the most preferred leadership style is participative while exemplary style is the most preferred followership style. Nevertheless, participative leadership style is not significantly correlated with independent and critical thinking.

In the past research, only two studies have associated the followership styles and organizational commitment together in a western context. The research found studied the impacts of followership styles on job satisfaction and organizational commitment by Blanchard, Welbourne, Gilmore and Bullock (2009). The second studied the relationship between followership styles and organizational commitment by Morton, DiDona and Endo (2011). Therefore, this research is intended to fill in any research gap from the past studies and established followership and organizational commitment as its own body of research.

The targeted population which is the retail industry in Malaysia is considered as one of the main contributors to the economic growth in Malaysia. The continuity of the industry is depending more on the employee to ensure each task is carried out by every division efficiently. The efficiency of the team reliant to the way how the followers execute their duty according to the leader's command. However, although the instruction is received from the best team leader, each and everyone in the organization determine the team success as every follower is an essential element of an organization's success. By acknowledging the followership dimension and styles in every person, everyone can complete each other and making the workplace is a happy space to be at. Furthermore, by knowing the followership dimension and styles might enhance the organizational commitment among employees. Thus, the purpose of this research is to provide an insight for study of followership styles and how it influences organizational commitment for a sustainability plan in an organization, to enhance the understanding of followership dimension and styles and organizational commitment as awareness to maximize the effort for organization's change, strategies and interventions.

1.2 Problem Statement

Only 481 citations of followership are found in 26 electronic databases between the year of 1928 and 2004 (Baker, 2007). Research that has been conducted for followership emphasis in the foreign context; America, Africa and not in Malaysia. Less than 15 researches are bounded to Malaysia context and there is more qualitative research compared to quantitative research within the local context. Even though the role of the follower is disregarded, the importance of followers is as crucial as leaders. Williams and Miller (2002) stated that despite the role of the follower is as important as the leader, the followership is rarely discussed even for the improvement of the organization.

Based on past research, an in-depth finding is not well developed for followership as more focused go to leadership. Moreover, none of the past research discussing followership and organizational commitment in Malaysia context. The past study shows the research of followership dimension and styles is linked with job satisfaction, not organizational commitment. This shows the studies of followership dimension and styles and organizational commitment as a single independent and dependent variable has not had enough attention in Malaysia. The past study is conducted quantitatively in western context does not guarantee its suitability within the local context. Thus, the same approach will be used to determine whether the followership dimension and styles give a significant effect on organizational commitment.

Furthermore, past research in the foreign context is not conducted in the retail sector. The existing body of followership and organizational commitment is not adequate to portray the literature review within the local context and even foreign context. Since no research has been done in the retail sector, this study is intended to develop a study in a new sector. The same goes to the private sector, it is as important as the public sector in determining the survival of the organization.

A study by Morton, DiDona and Endo (2011) shows there is a negative impact between passive followership style and affective commitment. Hence, the proposed study may show a positive and negative correlation between different followership dimension and styles, and organizational commitment. Besides, the analysis from the past study demonstrates not the entire element followership styles affects organizational commitment.

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 General Objectives

To examine the relationship between followership styles and organizational commitment

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1.3.2.1 To determine the relationship between The Pragmatist style and Organizational Commitment of employees in the retail sector.

1.3.2.2 To determine the relationship between The Exemplary style and Organizational Commitment of employees in the retail sector.

1.3.2.3 To determine the relationship between The Passive style and Organizational Commitment of employees in the retail sector.

1.3.2.4 To determine the relationship between The Conformist style and Organizational Commitment of employees in the retail sector.

1.3.2.5 To determine the relationship between The Alienated style and Organizational Commitment of employees in the retail sector.

1.4 Research Hypothesis

*H*₁: The Pragmatist style has a positive relationship with Organizational Commitment.

*H*₂: The Exemplary style has a positive relationship with Organizational Commitment.

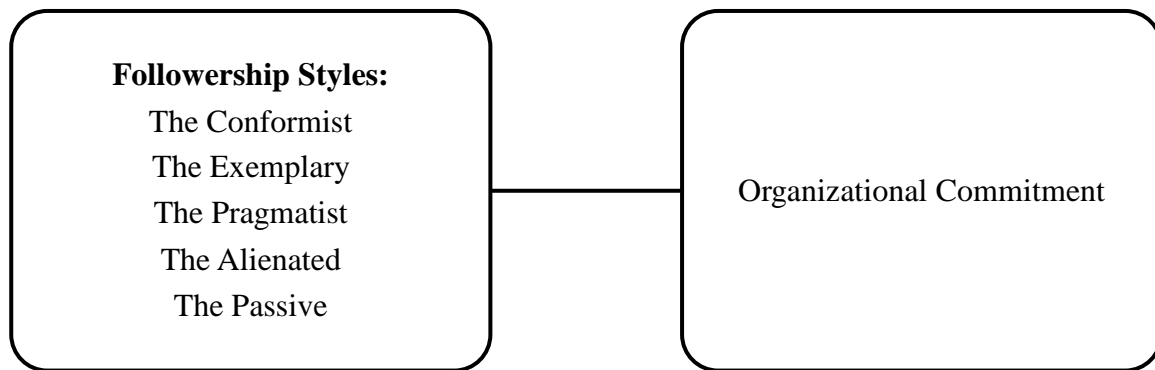
*H*₃: The Passive style has a positive relationship with Organizational Commitment.

*H*₄: The Conformist style has a positive relationship with Organizational Commitment.

*H*₅: The Alienated style has a positive relationship with Organizational Commitment.

.

1.5 Theoretical Framework



Source: Adapted and modified from Kelley (1992).

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

1.6 Significance Of Study

1.6.1 Body Of Knowledge

This study will expand more research on followership dimension/styles and organizational commitment to the existing study. It provides an insight into how the followership dimension/styles will affect the employees' organizational commitment. Therefore, it can be a useful reference for the future researcher, specifically in Malaysia to continuously explore more knowledge of followership dimension/styles and organizational commitment.

1.6.2 Organization Effectiveness

For an organization to achieve targeted performance goals, it is not fully dependent on the leaders; how good the leaders performed but instead, it is the symbiotic relationship between the leaders and the followers (Heremuru, 2018). The study of followership dimension and styles among employees provide an indication for the leaders in top management to manage to seek better for the organization, from the way the followers' act and their commitment to the organization. Apart from that, it is to ensure the continuity of

getting support from the workers as a good leader, is what he or she can achieve through other people.

1.6.3 Human Resource (HR) Practitioner

It helps in shaping future research in this area and provide a better understanding of the leader-follower relationship in Human Resource. It will contribute to providing information to HR practitioner to look thoroughly about the issue relatively to followership dimension and styles and their performance to the organization. The productivity and effectiveness of workers in the organization are identified through their followership dimension and styles and how they will contribute to the organization's success rather than just depending on the leaders to make a decision through committing to the organization at its best. Furthermore, this study will provide an in-depth understanding of the followership dimension and styles as proposed by Kelley (2008; 1992), how it emerged in Malaysia's private sector and the hybridization to match with the local perspective and organization goals.

1.6.4 Research Methodology

The significance of this study is to further look upon the concept of followership and how people commit to the organization in Malaysia's perspective rendering to the people's belief and behaviours. According to Kelley (1992), "on a global level, hundreds of thousands of Soviet, Eastern European, and African citizens have exercised the power of followership to reclaim control of their countries and their lives." The number of followership research that is related to organizational commitment has not been keen by the researcher. Thus, this study broadens the study between followership dimension/styles and organizational commitment by analysing the results of this study and make an improvement in future research.

1.7 Limitations Of Study

Firstly, this research does not study leadership and followership together although Millard (2009), stipulated that leadership and followership should be studied together. Next, the research is limited by the sample size, in which it does not represent all employees in the targeted population. Besides, the quality of the survey is fully dependent on the respondents' understanding of what has been asked in the questionnaire. Moreover, not everyone in the targeted population agrees to participate in the survey — due to time constraint and only the front level in the organization will be participated. Besides, this study only provides the outcome of followership dimension and styles and organizational commitment, however, the researcher does not provide the intervention to assess organization growth and development related to followership dimension and styles and how it will affect the employees' organizational commitment. Furthermore, the study only focuses on one sector thereon the findings of this research are not a generalization to other organizations. The instruments used in this research are adapted from the previous scholar, it is well constructed and structured. Thus, an in-depth discussion between the researcher and the participant can be hardly achieved. Lastly, the challenge of getting the respondent to understand deeply about the study since this study only explains the surface of followership concept and the influence of followership style to commit with the organization.

1.8 Definition Of Terms

Followership dimension and styles is an indicator by using Kelley Followership Questionnaire (KFQ) to distinct each type of followership that has been exerted by the employees in an organization.

Table 1. Definition of Terms

Term	Conceptual Definition	Operational Definition
-------------	------------------------------	-------------------------------