



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**EXPLORING THE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY IN
AIRPORT OPERATION MANAGEMENT BASED IN SIBU, SARAWAK**

Trudia Ryanty Anak Francis Mawi

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

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EXPLORING THE IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY
IN AIRPORT OPERATION MANAGEMENT BASED IN SIBU, SARAWAK

TRUDIA RYANTY ANAK FRANCIS MAWI

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PhD

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Name of the student (Matric No.)

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Received for Examination by,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helmi', written over a horizontal line.

(Helmi Sumilan)

Date: 19th August 2020

GRADE:

A

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ABSTRACT

EXPLORING THE IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY IN AIRPORT OPERATION MANAGEMENT BASED IN SIBU, SARAWAK

Trudia Ryanty Anak Francis Mawi

This research is conducted to explore the importance of employee engagement in Airport Operation Management in Sibu. This research was fully designed by using qualitative method and case study have been adapted. Semi-structured interview has been conducted with 8th informants in order to collect the data. All informants were recruited by using purposive sampling. The findings indicated that majority of the informant experience engagement if there is teamwork from all department when handling problems at the workplace. Meanwhile, the informants also reported that they experience disengagement when their effort are not being appreciated by the management which reduce their motivation to perform the work beyond the standard requirement. This study also revealed the barriers that inhibit employee engagement consist of burnout, unfairness performance evaluation and not competent in performing the job assigned. Moreover, few organizational strategies that suggested by the informant will contribute to the additional literature review. This study also provides better understanding on the factor that contribute to employee engagement and disengagement to the organization and HR practitioner. The findings of this study can provide an input to HR practitioner to implement policies and initiates few engagement activities while future researcher is recommended to integrate qualitative and quantitative method as well as exploring on employee engagement at all airport operation management to have better results.

Keywords - employee engagement, employee disengagement, job satisfaction and employee voice

ABSTRAK

MENEROKA MENGENAI KEPENTINGAN KETERLIBATAN PEKERJA: KAJIAN KES DI PENGURUSAN OPERASI DI LAPANGAN TERBANG SIBU, SARAWAK

Trudia Ryanty Anak Francis Mawi

Kajian ini ditulis untuk meneroka kepentingan penglibatan pekerja dalam pengurusan operasi di Lapangan Terbang Sibu. Penyelidikan ini dirancang sepenuhnya menggunakan kaedah kualitatif dan juga kajian kes. Instrument yang dipilih ialah temu-ramah separa berstruktur dengan 8 informan telah dikenalpasti dengan menggunakan persampelan bertujuan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa sebahagian besar informan mengalami penglibatan sekiranya terdapat kerja berpasukan dari semua jabatan ketika menangani masalah di tempat kerja. Sementara itu, para informan juga melaporkan bahawa mereka kurang terlibat dengan kerja apabila usaha mereka tidak dihargai oleh pihak pengurusan dan ini mengurangkan motivasi mereka untuk menjalankan tugas. Untuk halangan tersebut, para informan menekankan bahawa keletihan, penilaian prestasi yang tidak adil dan tidak kompeten dalam melaksanakan tugas yang diberikan telah menghalang penglibatan pekerja. Selain itu, beberapa strategi organisasi yang disarankan oleh informan akan menyumbang kepada tinjauan literatur tambahan. Kajian ini juga memberikan pemahaman kepada organisasi mengenai faktor yang menyumbang kepada penglibatan pekerja dan ketidaklibatan pekerja. Dapatan kajian ini dapat memberi input kepada pengamal Sumber Manusia untuk melaksanakan polisi dan memulakan beberapa aktiviti penglibatan sementara penyelidik masa depan disyorkan untuk mengintegrasikan kaedah kualitatif dan kuantitatif serta meneroka penglibatan pekerja di semua pengurusan operasi lapangan terbang untuk mendapatkan hasil kajian yang lebih baik.

Kata kunci - penglibatan pekerja, ketidaklibatan pekerja, kepuasan kerja dan suara pekerja

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

In this era of globalization, airport operation management has been known to contribute effectively toward the economic growth and sustainability. With the expansions of airport business, the airports are competing in order to maintain their competitive advantages and for services that they offer in the global market (Jimenez, Claro, & Sousa, 2014). In addition, airports are crucial for the communities that they serve, provide possible connection to the people across geographical region and wide variety of job opportunities to the community members. Airport is a service-oriented business where the employee's readiness and commitment are very significant to ensure its management and daily operations are running smoothly and safely. So, it is very important to ensure that the employees are fully engaged with their job and the organization itself in order to perform voluntary efforts beyond their minimum requirement to the organization.

Every successful organization really concerned about their employee engagement to sustain their growth in market place and maintain their competitiveness. As mentioned by Andrew and Sofian (2012) as cited in Ibrahim and Falasi, 2014, employee engagement is the level of employee involvement and commitment toward the organization and its values. Employee who are reported to be engaged tends to exert discretionary efforts to be more productive and satisfied with their employment. According to Blessing White (2013) as cited in Sacher and Lai, 2017, full engagement is the result from high level of employee satisfaction and productivity. Besides, employee engagement can be implementing by giving employees the opportunity to perform and voice out their views. From this action taken, they would realize that their views and performance are matters to the organizational growth

which eventually leads them to be more committed, satisfied and engaged in the organization. However, employee that having low satisfaction toward his or her job and feel that their contribution to the organization outcomes and performance are meaningless tends to be disengaged which will minimize their productivity to be committed in the organization

On the contrary, employee disengagement is the dark side of employee engagement that make every organization try to avoid this problem from occurring. Disengaged employee will withdraw themselves from being connected with colleagues or management and will not invested any efforts when it comes to knowledge or ideas sharing for organizational benefits (Ford, Myrden, & Jones, 2015). If this problem cannot be sort out by the employer, the most critical issue such as employee turnover will arise and it can affect the whole organization negatively. In Southeast Asia, Hewit (2011) as cited in Salleh, Baharom and Memon, 2014, in which reported that the average employee turnover in Philippines was 14.8% while Malaysia (14.4%) followed by Singapore (14.1%), Thailand (10.5%) and lastly Indonesia with 9.8%. According to the problem that happened at Indian International Airport in the beginning of year 2011, employee turnover greatly give bad impact towards the employee, organization and customers as the remaining employees need to share the work of those left their employment as the recruitment takes a long times (Balakrishnan, Masthan, & Chandra, 2013). Nevertheless, employees turnover rate varied according to the sector ranging from manufacturing to the services sector (Nahar, Islam, & Ullah, 2017).

Historically, it can be seen that many organizations not able to create and maintain its lifelong competitiveness and sustainability by ignoring the importance of employee engagement (Ganguly, 2015). In fact, employee engagement is very important to every organization that aims to be successful in term of productivity and financial stability while preventing from employee turnover that will greatly resulting to organization loss. According to Blessing and White (2011) as cited in Shmailan, 2016, a study have been conducted at

India in the year 2010, the researcher was determine about the level of employee engagement and revealed that only 37% of employees are reported to be engaged which the number are varied according to the gender, job function and structure and the size of organization. In order to retain the best possible human talent in the organization, an action should be taken by the managerial position and HR practitioner to ensure every employee engaging with their work and organization effectively while satisfied with both work and life commitment. Therefore, this study is looking at the employee engagement in airport operation management because no current study has been explored regarding employee engagement in this sector.

1.1 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The topic about employee engagement give some attraction toward both academic and organizational circles and raises some questions about this issue (Guest, 2014). It can be seen that the concept of employee engagement has attracted a lot of interest in this new era with the increase numbers of practitioners, theories and writing that focusing on the important of being engaged in job and how this can give an impact positively to the organization (Garg, 2014). The toughest challenges that the HR department, CEOs and the leaders encountered are in ensuring the employees engaged physically, emotionally and mentally (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014)

Previous researches have been found to discuss on employee engagement area. However, most of the past studies regarding this area were conducted in Western countries (United Kingdom, United States and Canada) and Asia countries such as Western Asia(United Arab Emirates), East Asia(Japan and South Korea) and Southeast Asia(Thailand) while very limited research regarding employee engagement have been done in Malaysia context (Gupta, 2019, Keeble-Ramsay & Armitage, 2014, Ibrahim & Falasi, 2014, Shuck, Brad, Reio Jr, Thomas G., 2014, Al-dalahmeh, Masa'deh, Abu Khalaf, & Obeidat, Kang & Sung, 2017, Nasomboon, 2014). Even though there were studies have been conducted in Malaysia but mostly were focusing on West Malaysia rather than East Malaysia (Idris, Dollard, & Tuckey, 2015, Mansor, Jaharudin, & Nata, 2018).

Moreover, the research on employee engagement in Malaysia context are focusing on hospitality industry and healthcare industry and no research have been conducted in airport operation management sector. Although there are few prior researches been conducted in airport operation management but it more focusing on airport operation management at India (Balakrishnan, Masthan, & Chandra, 2013, Balakrishnan & Masthan, 2013, Ali, 2013).

Therefore, this study is crucial to bridge the gap in literature of employee engagement and explore on employee engagement in airport operation management in Sarawak context based in Sibü.

In addition, much of the past studies discussing on organizational factors that drives the employee to be engaged have been done in quantitative nature in the West. Yet, little study has been known on how these factors drives employee to be engaged in the Malaysia specifically in Sarawak context. For instances, study conducted by Kang and Sung (2017) show that greater symmetrical internal communication is positive and significantly related with employee engagement. This finding been supported by the research that have been done by Ali, Sabir, and Mehreen (2019) stated that internal communication among the employee in textile sector is positively related with employee engagement. However, Mansoor and Hassan (2016) found that communication has no significant influence toward employee engagement. They concluded that according to the finding, learning and development practiced that link with job roles and career path show positive and significant effect on employee engagement. Their findings can be supported by the study from Shuck, Rocco, and Albornoz (2011) revealed in their document analysis and throughout the interviews, learning played as critical component to boost employee engagement. Due to the contradiction of factors that leads to engagement in the findings, little researches have been found to investigate on the experiences that employee have regarding their engagement at the workplace and very limited qualitative study regarding this area have been known. How engagement affecting their experience, feelings and productivity are not yet being explored by the researchers. Hence, this study conducted to explore on the employee's experiences for being engaged in the organization.

Next, the study that have been done by Keeble-Ramsay and Armitage (2014) show that in their finding, the participants tend to be disengaged in work because they feel 'lack of

caring' by the employer. Not only that, they experience felt of pressure for quick responses to an email because they are fear of being subjected to disciplinary action if not doing so which resulting them to be disengaged in the workplace. Moreover, the findings from the study conducted by Shuck, Rocco, and Albornoz (2011) revealed that the participants feel unhappy and disconnected when their previous working environment are overly competitive and neglecting collaboration among the employees. The participants mentioned that their past employer did not supported them to have relationship with other colleagues which leads them to be disengaged due to this problem. Although there are studies have been investigated on the employee engagement in the West but little have been known to explore on employee disengagement in the workplace. The issue on how employee experiences being disengaged and the causes specifically from individual factors that inhibit them to be engaged are not yet being explored in the organization that being selected in this study. For that reason, by conducting this study, the researcher has explored deeper on the experiences of employee being disengaged and identify the possible barriers which impede them to be engaged in the workplace.

There are some strategies regarding employee engagement have been discussed by the prior researchers in their studies. Nawaz, Hassan, Hassan, Shaukat, and Asadullah (2014) found that employee engagement can be enhanced when the employees are given the training and empowerment because the employee will feel that the organization care about their growth and development in their roles. On top of that, previous studies done by Gowda and Siddegowda (2018) recommended to further understand the employee engagement dimensions, the perspectives of employee toward employee engagement, using observation method to discover employee disengagement and strategies that need to be implemented to overcome this problem. Therefore, this study conducted to examine the strategies that can be done in order to minimized the occurrence of employee disengagement in the organization.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1.2.1 Main objective

To explore about the employee engagement in the Airport Operation Management based in Sibuhut.

1.2.2 Specific objectives.

- I. To find out the employee's experience for being engaged in the organization.
- II. To find out the employee's experience for being disengaged in the organization
- III. To identify the barriers that inhibit the employee to be engaged in the organization
- IV. To examine the strategies to foster the employee engagement in the organization

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- I. How do employees describe experience of being engaged?
- II. What are the employee's experiences of being disengaged in the organization?
- III. What are the barriers that the employee face in engaging with their work and organization?
- IV. What are the strategies that should be taken to foster the employee to be engaged in the organization?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

By reviewing the literature, the study able to create awareness about the importance of employee engagement especially for employee, HR practitioner, manager and organizational benefits. This is because some of the organization are not really concerned about their employee's well-being as long as the employee doing their job and can benefit the organization. Disengaged employee can lead to employee turnover if this problem cannot be sort out immediately.

Besides, the findings from this study have provide inputs to the HR department to establish and implement the policy in order to encourage employee engagement in the organization in order to minimize the number of disengaged employees in the organization. In addition, HR department can give suggestion by conducting new training to increase the level of engagement among the employee by exposing them the values of their work and the organization. This action might be able to motivate their enthusiasm to perform their work better for achieving organization's objective and ultimate goals.

Last but not least, the result can contribute to the body of knowledge regarding employee engagement. The superior and HR practitioner can refer to this study in order to understand better about the employee engagement and the factors that can encourage the employee to be engaged in the working environment. As we know that, engaged employee can give positive impacts toward the organizational productivity and marketability. So, by implementing employee engagement practice in the organization surely can produce satisfied and productive employee.

1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are two (2) limitations of this study. Firstly, the study has been conducted in one company only which is located at Sibu while the researcher was currently based in Kuching. The verification of data has been done by the researcher through phone call only which this situation will resulting to time consuming. Thus, the informants need to be re-guided on the research in order for them to recall their answer assume that they might be forgotten their early points.

Next, the sample size in this research might be small because it is focusing only to senior employee to be the informants. Thus, this research only explores on the employee engagement from the senior employee experiences, perspective and reflection that meet the criteria to be informants. Therefore, further exploratory studies are needed to address on the other population.

1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS

I. Employee engagement

Kahn (1990) as cited in Bhuvanaiah and Raya, 2014 in which defined employee engagement as the organizational harnessing its members to perform their own roles; working in engagement, people employ and physically, emotionally as well as cognitively expressing themselves during their performance on the job.

Schaufeli (2002) as cited in Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma and Bakker, 2002, defined the engagement as a positive, fulfilling and work-related state of mind which are consist of vigor, absorption and dedication

In this study, employee engagement is the involvement of the employee with their work and organization

II. Employee disengagement

Kahn (1990) as cited in Ford, Myrden and Jones, 2015 in which defined employee disengagement as an action withdrawing simultaneously and defense of a person's preferred behavior which resulting to low level of connection, lack or passive in term of cognitive, physical and emotional and defective role performance at workplace.

As eloquently mentioned by Hochchild (1983) as cited in Pech and Slade, 2006, employee that are being disengaged tends to detach themselves from work roles and withdraw emotionally and cognitively.

In this study, employee disengagement is the employee that totally not active to contribute their effort and passion toward their work and organization.

III. Employee voice

Van Dyne and LePine (1998) as cited in Aburumman and Mohd Arif, 2017 in which highlighted that employee voice means that promotive behavior in which strengthen on the expression of positive challenge in order to change compared to criticize only. Giving the imaginative recommendations for better improvements and proposing regular modification even though some disagree.

Bryson (2006) as cited in Rasheed, Shahzad, Conroy, Nadeem and Siddique, 2017 in which stated that employee voice is two-way communication between employee and management to discuss and share insight and opinions regarding work-related problem or opportunities directly or indirectly which will improve organizational outcomes.

In this research, employee voice can be known as the way employee speak out their views and ideas in decision making to boost organization effectiveness and performance.

IV. Job satisfaction

Ashwathapa (2008) as cited in Aburumman and Mohd Arif, 2017 in which defined job satisfaction as the extent to overall good feelings in which the employee has toward their work.

According to Finn (2001) as cited in Kokalan, 2019, job satisfaction can be defined as the degree to which the employee feels pleased toward their present job which is able to satisfy their desire and needs.

In this study, job satisfaction is the employee level of satisfaction toward their task or job given.