ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND ATTITUDES TOWARD ABSENTEEISM

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Bachelor of Science with Honours
(Human Resource Development)
2005
ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND ATTITUDES TOWARD ABSENTEEISM

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This project is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Science with Honours Human Resource Development (HRD)

Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK

2005
The project of Organizational Commitment and Attitudes toward Absenteeism was prepared by Robert Ewin Anak Peter Raig and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Science with Honours in Human Resource Development (HRD).

Received for examination by:

(Dr Hong Kian Sam)

Date:

21.7.2005
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Hong Kian Sam for his guidance in helping me for completing my project. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the management of Malaysia Airport Berhad Kuching Sarawak for allowing me to conduct this research at the organization. Finally, I take this opportunity to thank all lecturers and friends who have one way or another helped me in successfully completing this project. Your assistance will be forever remembered. Thank you.
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ABSTRACT

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND ATTITUDES TOWARD ABSENTEEISM

ROBERT EWİN ANAK PETER RAİG

This study looked at organizational commitment and attitudes toward absenteeism of support staff in Malaysia Airport Berhad, Kuching Sarawak. This study used survey methodology and collected data with questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed to 100 respondents of which 80 were returned and analyzed. The study revealed that half of the support staff have high organizational commitment and have positive attitudes toward absenteeism. However, employees' commitment was not significantly related to attitudes toward absenteeism. The most important cause for low level of organizational commitment was organizational dimensions, rather than external environment and employees' personal qualities. Employees with LCE/SRP/PMR qualifications have negative attitudes toward absenteeism while more with MCE/SPM and others qualifications (Diploma and Degree) have positive attitudes toward absenteeism. It is recommended that future researchers should look into other demographic characteristics that could affect employees' organizational commitment and attitudes toward absenteeism and also use observational data and interview to get a more in-depth results.
**ABSTRAK**

KOMITMEN ORGANISASI DAN
SIKAP TERHADAP KETIDAKHADIRAN

ROBERT EWING ANAK PETER RAFIQ

Kajian ini mengkaji komitmen organisasi dan sikap pekerja terhadap ketidakhadiran di Malaysia Airport Berhad, Kuching Sarawak. Kajian ini mengaplikasikan metodologi survei dan borang soal selidik digunakan untuk mengumpul data. Sebanyak 100 borang soal selidik telah diedarkan dan 80 daripadanya telah dikutip semula dan dianalisis. Hasil kajian mendapati komitmen organisasi pekerja tidak mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan sikap terhadap ketidakhadiran. Faktor dimensi organisasi pula didapat berperanan kesan terhadap komitmen organisasi dan bukan oleh persekitaran luaran dan kualiti peribadi pekerja. Selain itu, kajian mendapat separuh daripada staf sokongan mempunyai komitmen organisasi yang tinggi dan sikap yang positif terhadap ketidakhadiran. Pekerja yang mempunyai kelayakan LCE/SPR/PMR didapat mempunyai sikap yang negatif terhadap ketidakhadiran manakala pekerja yang berkelayakan MCE/SPM dan kelayakan lain (Diploma dan Sarjana Muda) mempunyai sikap yang lebih positif. Pengkaji akan datang perlu mengkaji ciri-ciri demografi lain yang penting yang boleh mempengaruhi komitmen dan sikap pekerja terhadap ketidakhadiran.
1.0 Introduction

Organizational commitment is an essential element for employees and can assist in involving them in the assigned tasks and the organization. Commitment to the organization will ensure continuous involvement and participation of employees in the organization. Commitment to work will result in higher productivity and improvement in the quality of products and services provided by an organization. According to Sethiavethi, Sethivikram, Meinert, Kingrkking and Sethiavethi (1996) and Caruana, Ewing and Ramaseshan (1997), organizational commitment is positively related to job performance.
Organizational commitment refers to a wide range of feelings, attitudes, values, practices and the implementation of brilliant ideas in the interest of the organization to which an employee belongs (Awamleh, 1996). Iniesta (2000) defines commitment as a psychological state generated by an individual's perceptions, beliefs and emotions which provoke the willingness or intention of developing and maintaining a stable and durable relationship, because the individual wants it or feels that he or she should make it, and which manifests itself in a behavior which bears certain obligation. According to Allen and Meyer (1997), organizational commitment is a psychological state that characterizes the employee's relationship with the organization. This has implications in terms of continuing his or her membership in the organization. A committed employee is one who stays with the organization under any favorable or unfavorable circumstances affecting the organization.

Absenteeism on the other hand is a problem faced by many organizations. Empirically, absenteeism refers to the number of "sick hours" or "sick days" an employee uses during a calendar year (Leong, 1993). According to Guinchard (1998), absenteeism refers to the non-presence at work or a voluntary reduction by the individual of his or her working time.

Absenteeism becomes a problem when an organization has to spend a large amount of money to manage the absence of its employee. For example, an organization has to cope with paying the salary of the employee, replacement of
position and over time. According to Edwards and Whiston (1993), absence, as a problem, comes to managerial attention when it appears to cost money. The absence of the employee indirectly will cause low productivity and may affect the quality of the goods and services and may bring bad image to the organization. A common agreement is that highly committed employees would contribute to the reduction of the absenteeism rate among employees in an organization. The rationale is that commitment to work, career, job and organization would enhance the desire to stay and develop within the organization (Blood, 1969; Vandenberg & Scarpello, 1994). Wooden (1995) in addition has lists organizational commitment as one of the most important factors that could impact on absence from work. He commented that higher level of organizational commitment is positively related to improved attendance, thus increased organizational commitment could lead to substantially reduced levels of absenteeism and possibly reduced labour turnover.

1.1 Background of the Study

Employee absence has been widely acknowledged in recent years to be a growing problem for organizations, including local government organizations. According to McElroy, Morrow and Wordlow (1999) in their study on police officers, employees usually begin with a high level of organizational
commitment that falls after a few years, only to increase again as employees gain promotion. Lack of employee’s organizational commitment in the organizations may result to lack of productivity and quality of products or services produced and may be caused by some factors. For example, Beck and Wilson (1997) reported that police officers have relatively low levels of organizational commitment, probably resulting from a culmination of poor experiences with organizational management.

A survey conducted by Bennett and Durkin (2002) on employees' organizational commitment indicates that for the reporting year 1998/1999, district councils in Northern Ireland showed a mean loss of 8.7 days per employee (3.85 per cent of working days), with an estimated direct cost of £4.5 million. This estimate does not include the indirect costs of the absence, which many writers (for example, Ho, 1997) argue outweigh the direct costs experienced. One of the most immediate direct and substantial costs resulting from absence is the direct payment of sick pay to employees (Dunn, 2002). Sick pay can also prove costly to the organization in other way. For example, bringing in staff to cover for the absentee, is in effect, having the organization paying twice, for the absent employee and the replacement worker (Dunn, 2002).
In a survey of eleven U.S based telecommunications organizations, 72 cents of every dollar of costs related to employee absence stems from lost productivity, rather than hard costs, such as health care and disability benefits (Business Insurance, July 2000). Of all the expenses related to absence, unscheduled time off has the biggest impact on productivity, profitability and morale. Companies lose approximately 2.8 million workdays each year because of employee injuries and illnesses. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of unscheduled absences are due to family issues (22 percent), personal needs (18 percent), entitlement mentality (13 percent) and stress (11 percent) (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1993).

As a conclusion, organizational commitment is essential for every organization regardless of its size and capacity. It may help in improving the quality and productivity of employees in an organization. Organizational commitment may also affect employees’ attitudes toward absenteeism, with high level of organizational commitment reducing the level of absenteeism.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to investigate the employees’ organizational commitment, attitudes toward absenteeism and the relationship between the two constructs.
1.3 Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to:

1. measure the levels of employees' organizational commitment.
2. determine the factors affecting organizational commitment.
3. measure the employees' attitudes toward absenteeism.
4. determine the relationship between organizational commitment and attitudes toward absenteeism.
5. determine the differences in organizational commitment based on demographic characteristics.
6. determine the differences in employees' attitudes toward absenteeism based on demographic characteristics.
1.4 Conceptual Framework

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Demographic Factors
- Sex
- Age
- Qualifications
- Length of service

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

- Organizational commitment
  - Desire to continue in service
  - Give maximum effort to work
  - Maintaining work time
  - Application of laws
  - Maintaining public property
  - Maintaining civil service image
  - Give priority to public interest
  - Keeping secrecy
  - Improving performance
  - Rationality in decision making
  - Supporting organizational survival
  - Contribution to organizational growth
  - Fighting grapevines
  - Encouragement of innovation
  - Improving commitment level

- Attitudes toward absenteeism

Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework for the study.
1.5 Research Hypotheses

Based on the research objectives, the following research hypotheses were tested in this study.

$H_{a1}$: Support staff at Malaysia Airport Berhad has high level of organizational commitment.

$H_{a2}$: Organizational dimension rather than external environment or employees personal qualities is the cause of organizational commitment.

$H_{a3}$: Support staff in Malaysia Airport Berhad has negative attitudes toward absenteeism.

$H_{a4}$: There is a significant negative relationship between organizational commitment and attitudes toward absenteeism.

$H_{a5}$: Sex, age, qualifications and length of service has an effect on organizational commitment.

$H_{a6}$: Sex, age, qualifications and length of service has an effect on attitudes toward absenteeism.
1.6 Significance of the Study

This study will provide input to Human Resource Department in general and at the research site, in particular, in preparing steps to increase organizational commitment and reduce absenteeism in an organization.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Absenteeism

Non-attendance when an employee is scheduled to work. Employees who initially present but left the workplace without permission or good reason is also considered as absent. Non-attendances due to annual and other approved leave are generally not viewed as absenteeism.

Attitudes toward absenteeism

Attitudes of employees towards absenteeism in the workplace include their perspective and stand on absenteeism at the workplace.

Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment refers to the involvement and willingness of the employees towards their jobs as a consequence, such as desire to continue in
service, application of laws, improving performance and encouragement of innovation.

1.8 Limitation of the Study

This study was conducted with only support staff at Malaysia Airport Berhad. The measures of organizational commitment and absenteeism were based on questionnaires by Buchan and Seccombe (1995) and Awamleh (1996) and did not include qualitative data such as observations and interviews.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction
The purpose of this chapter is to get an overview of previous studies on organizational commitment and attitudes toward absenteeism and the correlation between the two constructs.

2.1 Organizational Commitment
Organizational commitment has been extensively researched over the past 20 years. Most of the studies have tried to measure the significance of organizational commitment, as it was the essential element to the organizations. According to Fink (1992), organizational commitment develops through the process of identification in which a person experiences something or some idea
as an extension of the self. On the other hand, Allen and Meyer (1990) views organizational commitment as complex employee attitudes, including: affective commitment involving emotional attachment to the organization, continuance commitment emphasizing the perceived investments versus costs, and normative commitment concerning obligation-based considerations.

2.2 Factors Affecting Organizational Commitment

Previous research findings show that organizational commitment is affected by many factors. According to Harr (1997), low levels of organizational commitment among policemen reflected their bad experiences in their field (such as investigating a high-category criminal case). Research undertaken by Metcalfe and Dick (2000) findings suggest that job commitment is enhanced when police officers are involved in decision-making, feel supported by superiors and receive adequate levels of feedback about their job performance and job expectations. On the other hand Bhuian and Shahidulislam in 1996 reported that level of employee’s organizational commitment would be higher when employees perceive higher job security and greater satisfaction with jobs in general. Martocchio (1994) and Johns and Nicholson (1982) found that organizational commitment is likely to be influenced by the commitment of the individual to the organisation, which is in turn influenced by factors such as morale, motivation and job satisfaction. According to Steers and Rhodes (1997), task difficulties were positively related to the commitment of scientists,
engineers and hospital employees. However, Agarwal and Ramasami (1993) in contrast found that task difficulties were not significantly related to organizational commitment.

2.3 Importance of Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is an important element for every organization regardless of its size. Organizational commitment enhances products and services quality and affects the absenteeism rate because organizational commitment and absenteeism could be correlated. Many studies have found individual with high level of commitment shows lower level of absenteeism in the workplace. For example, Wooden (1995) found that higher levels of organizational commitment positively related to attendance, which suggested that increased organizational commitment could lead to substantially reduced levels of absenteeism. In year 1999, Iverson and Budgeting further reported that employees with high organizational commitment are more congruent with the goals and values of the organization, willing to expend considerably more effort on behalf of the organization, and thus more likely to accept organizational change, provided that such a change would not alter the basic values and goals of the organization and it is perceived as beneficial to the organization. Organizational commitment has also been found to be positively related to organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction (Bateman & Strasser, 1984; Mowday, Porter & Steers 1982), motivation (Mowday, 1979) and attendance