FACTORS OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES
ASSOCIATED WITH ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT
IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY IN KUCHING, SARAWAK

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DEDICATION

To my dearest wife, Ng Lay Chu
&
my daughters, Jasmine Eva and Charmaine Grace
whose endearing love has always served as an inspiration to all my endeavors
I would like to sincerely acknowledge several parties who have contributed, in one way or another, to the completion of this thesis.

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This study was conducted to investigate the relationship between the organizational commitment of employees in the hotel industry of Kuching, Sarawak, and the factors of career development opportunity, and also the demographic variables. The factors of career development opportunities examined in this study were job fit, job rotation, effective training and development programs, effectiveness of top management support, mentoring system, and recognition level. This study was carried out in 12 major hotels in Kuching City. A total of 364 lower and middle management level hotel employees, from the Food and Beverage Department, Front Office Department and the Housekeeping Department were selected as samples in this study. The questionnaire was self-developed based on Mendes' (1996) Commitment Factor Profile. The questionnaire had an overall reliability score of 0.9320 on the Cronbach Alpha for reliability test. Overall, the survey revealed that 68.7 percent of the employees were moderate level, 29.9 percent were high level, while 1.4 percent were low in commitment. There was no significant difference between the selected demographic characteristics and employees' organizational commitment except for marital status. The results of Pearson Correlation Coefficient Analysis revealed that all the factors of career development opportunities were significantly related to employees' organizational commitment. The strongest correlation was by effective training and development (r=0.483). This was followed by job rotation (r=0.420), mentoring system (r=0.416), effectiveness of top management support (r=0.405), level of recognition (r=0.388) and job fit (r=0.361). The results of Multiple Regression Analysis showed that effective training and development program was the most dominant predictor (p=0.001) among the five predictors for organizational commitment of employees. It was followed by job rotation (p=0.009), recognition level (p=0.011), job fit (p=0.017) and effectiveness of top management support (p=0.034). The predictors contributed approximately 31 percent of the variance of the hotel employees' perception towards organizational commitment. Policy makers or human resource manager/personnel may use the findings in this study as a basis and guideline to improve the organizational commitment of employees in the hotel industry.
ABSTRAK

Kajian ini telah dijalankan untuk meninjau perhubungan di antara iltizam organisasi pekerja industry perhotelan di Kuching, Sarawak dengan faktor peluang pembangunan kerjaya; dan juga pembolehubah demografi. Faktor peluang pembangunan kerjaya yang dianalisis ialah kesesuaian kerja, pusingan kerja, keberkesanan program latihan dan pembangunan, keberkesanan sokongan pihak atasan, sistem 'mentoring' dan tahap pengiktirafan. Kajian ini telah dijalankan di 12 buah hotel utama di Bandaraya Kuching. Seramai 364 pekerja hotel golongan pengurusan bawahan dan pertengahan, iaitu dari bahagian 'Food and Beverage', 'Front Office' dan 'Housekeeping' telah dipilih sebagai sampel kajian. Borang soalselidik telah dihasilkan oleh penyelidik sendiri berdasarkan profil faktor iltizam oleh Mendes (1996). Borang sedik ini telah memperolehi skor kepercayaan keseluruhan sebanyak 0.9320 dalam ujian kepercayaan Alpha Cronbach. Secara keseluruhan, kajian mendapati 68.7 peratus dari pekerja hotel mempunyai tahap sederhana, 29.9 peratus mempunyai tahap tinggi, manakala 1.4 peratus mempunyai tahap rendah dari segi iltizam organisasi. Kajian juga menunjukkan tiada perbezaan yang signifikan diantara demografi terpilih dengan iltizam organisasi pekerja kecuali taraf perkahwinan. Ujian Pekali Pearson telah menunjukkan bahawa keenam-enam faktor peluang pembangunan kerjaya tersebut mempunyai hubungan significant dengan iltizam organisasi pekerja. Keberkesanan program latihan dan pembangunan mempunyai korelasi yang paling tinggi (r=0.483). Ini diikuti oleh pusingan kerja (r=0.420), sistem 'mentoring' (r=0.416), keberkesanan sokongan pihak atasan (r=0.405), tahap pengiktirafan (r=0.388) dan kesesuaian kerja (r=0.361). Hasil Ujian Regresi Berganda telah menunjukkan bahawa keberkesanan program latihan dan pembangunan merupakan peramal yang paling dominan (p=0.001) di kalangan lima peramal untuk iltizam organisasi pekerja. Ini diikuti oleh pusingan kerja (p=0.009), tahap pengiktirafan (p=0.011), kesesuaian kerja (p=0.017) dan keberkesanan sokongan pihak atasan (p=0.034). Kesemua peramal ini akan menyumbang lebih kurang 31 peratus kepada varian persepsi pekerja hotel terhadap iltizam organisasi mereka. Pihak pembuat polisi atau pihak pengurus pegawai sumber manusia boleh menggunakan hasil kajian ini sebagai asas atau panduan untuk memperbaiki selanjutnya iltizam organisasi pekerja di industri perhotelan.
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The hotel industry in Sarawak is a lucrative business, especially when it is directly related to tourism industry. The tourism industry in Sarawak itself has been booming since Visit Malaysia Year was declared in 1990 and 1994. The most recent event of The Year of Sports and Recreation in 1998, and the Kuala Lumpur '98 – XVI commonwealth Games have been a boost to the hotel industry. Statistics have shown that the number of tourist visiting Sarawak experienced an increased by 11.85 percent from 188,135 tourists in 1991 to 210,430 tourists in 1996 (Yearbook of Statistics, Malaysia). These are not tourists from Asian countries only but are also tourists from all over the world, especially Europe and the United States. The number of establishments (hotels and other lodging places) in Sarawak also increased from 189 establishments in 1988 to 353 establishments in 1996 (Yearbook of Statistics, Sarawak). The increase in the number of hotels and other lodging places has provided more employment opportunities. This is evident from the increase in the number of employees in the industry from 38,861 employees in 1980 to 134,708 employees in 1996, indicating an increase of 246.6 percent (Yearbook of Statistics, Sarawak).

The scenario of the hotel industry in Sarawak as described above shows that this industry is getting more competitive. The survival and success of an organization depends on the caliber of its human resources: the employees. Employees are important assets to an organization. It is the quality of people that determines the continued survival and growth of the organization. As the organization grows, thought must be given not only to the recruitment, selection, development and retention of human resources but also for the organization to focus its attention towards enhancing organizational commitment of employees by creating more career development opportunities (Tan Kwang How, 1995a).

In the past, many organizations have adopted a benevolent and paternalistic attitude towards their employees, assuming responsibility for the career pathing and growth of their employees. In this kind of system, the organization or rather the senior management will decide to what position, and at what speed, employees will advance in their careers. This system can work in situation of stability or very steady growth (Tan Kwang How, 1995a; Tyson & York, 1996).

The dynamic nature of business today, however, has presented problems for the system. At the present age, most organizations are striving to maintain their continuous success in fast changing business environment that brought about stiff competition in the market. They are struggling to keep abreast with the changes and at the same time are trying to withhold and maintain a skilled and diverse workforce to cope with a volatile business environment. Many organizations today have realized that they cannot take total responsibility for the career growth of their employees. At the same time, the fast pace of
technological change has brought about an unprecedented level of demand for highly educated skilled workers. The wage premium enjoyed by most highly educated employees is at all time high, as is the increment in earnings associated with receiving additional training at work. Therefore, most employees are motivated by the possibility of having the opportunity to develop their abilities and to improve their career and job prospect. Many employees will also seek extra responsibility, as they believe that hard work and achievement will be recognized in tangible ways like promotion and job prospect (Knowles, 1998, p. 166).

According to Kanter (1978), there has been an evolution in the relationship of employee and employer concurrent with the demographic “baby boom.” Employees are beginning to look to their jobs as a potential source of challenge, growth, and personal fulfillment, and not just a way to make money (DeCotiis & Jenkins, 1994). The competitive business environment in the hotel industry points to the clear conclusion that demand for the most highly skilled workers is outstripping the supply. New hotels, for instance, offer better salaries to attract skilled manpower. The increasing number of hotels operating has created more jobs opportunities. Obviously, the labor market in the hotel industry has shifted from buyers’ market to sellers’ market. The implication is clear that in job markets that are very tight (a sellers’ market), workers are beginning to demand excellent training and career development as a benefit of employment opportunities as a primary determinant of their decision to stay with (or leave) their current employer (Tan Kwang How, 1995a). As a result, employers are being pushed to make the workplace a worthwhile place for employees.

1.1 Background of the study

Many organization today have realized that they cannot take total responsibility for the career growth of their employees, but at the same time realized the importance of career development needs of their employees. In a study carried out in the United Kingdom by Hirsh, Jackson and Jackson (1995), it is reported that in many organizations, tensions is discovered between short-term and long-term goals and between individuals' career aspirations and organization's goal. A mismatch between career development practices and strategy can lead to unproductive and uncommitted workers. Thus, organizations and employees must support each other's development goals. By giving employees more career development opportunities, their commitment to their organization will be further enhanced, thus retaining and maintaining not only skilled workers, but also committed ones (DeCotiis & Jenkin, 1994).

According to a Human Resource Manager of a big hotel in Kuching, the hotel industry is becoming very competitive with the emergence of new hotels (59.7 percent increase from the year 1990 to the year 1996). She says that with more employment opportunities, turnover rates are high and hotels are continually confronted with the problem of losing experienced employees; and have to hire those with fewer experiences as replacements. To reduce turnover, it will be
necessary to take suitable steps directed towards retaining employees. The hospitality industry is one of the larger employers of those with limited education. The hospitality manager who establishes Employee Assistance Plans (EAPS) as part of the career development program will develop a more loyal workforce (Dittmer & Griffin, 1993).

The growing wage premium enjoyed by highly skilled workers has sent a powerful signal that education and training matter. At the same time, senior management has been consistently sending the message that employee must assume responsibility for the development of their skills. These messages have not been missed; there is mounting evidence that workers are voting with their feet by leaving. This has resulted in frequent changing of employees and constant dilemma by organization in looking for more committed employee (Farrel & Rusbuilt, 1981; Jenkins & Thomlinson, 1992; Tan Kwang How, 1995a). Those employees are assuming responsibility for development of their own skills, in large part, by quitting those organizations where their prospects of development seem poor in favor of organizations with more promising career development opportunities (Jenkins & Thomlinson, 1992). The paradox is ironic. As a result of years of preaching self-responsibility in the domain of skill and career development, competitive advantage is now accruing to those firms that take this development most seriously. Commitment among the employees has posed concern by many organizations who depends on their employees for their continuing success. Organizations need more than just loyal employees but also dedicated employees.

Committed employees will help an organization to compete more effectively in good times and react to adverse conditions when things turn bad. They will help an organization gain responsiveness and also quality, service and productivity levels the competitors will envy. More than anything, though, committed employees will do their best for an organization even when the management is not watching, and more and more jobs today are carried out far from the watchful eyes of the organization supervisory staff (Dessler, 1993).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In order to maintain a skilled and diverse workforce to cope with the dynamic business environment, management should place more concern towards possible factors that contribute to employees' organizational commitment. The problem of career changing amongst the employees has caused disruption in optimization of resources in the internal environment of organization's human resource. The high tendency of employees leaving an organization is related to the organization's climate that does not foster employees' commitment (Poon, 1994). Furthermore, a mismatch between career development practice and individual's career aspirations can lead to unproductive and uncommitted workers.

Lower commitment will lead to the loss of many skilful individuals from a profession. Blau (1985) found that subjects lower in commitment are significantly more likely to be thinking about leaving their organization than
those high in commitment. While career change might represent the best course of action for some individuals, it will mean loss to an organization of substantial investment in training and experience (Jenkins & Thomlinson, 1992). Thus, to understand how an organization provides career development opportunities to match both the career goals of the individual and that of the organization and to what extent that effort will enhance commitment is amongst the reasons for this study to be carried out.

This study seeks to stress on the importance of career development opportunities in the hotel industry in the face of the increasingly competitive business. By focussing on career development, an organization may be able to find a solution to the problems that are faced by other organizations in an evolving and complex global marketplace.

The study will try to find answers to the following general research questions:

1. Are the employees committed towards their organization?
2. What is the perception of the employees towards career development opportunities in their organization?
3. Do employees' perception of career development opportunities influence their commitment towards their organization?
4. Do employees' demographic characteristics influence their commitment towards the organization?

1.3 Research Objectives:

The main objective of the study is to determine whether the employees' perception towards career development opportunities has any influence on the employees' organizational commitment. This is important because the employees' commitment will ensure loyalty, involvement and support from the employees for the organization's continuous success.

Specifically, the objectives of this study are as follow:

1. To describe the demographic characteristics of the employees.
2. To determine the levels of commitment of employees.
3. To determine if there are any differences in commitment of employees of different gender, marital status, age, work department, education level, years of service and income group.
4. To determine the relationship between employees' commitment and their job fit.
5. To determine the relationship between employees' commitment and their job rotation.
6. To determine the relationship between employees' commitment and the effectiveness of organization's training and development programs.
7. To determine the relationship between employees' commitment and the effectiveness of organization's top management support.
8. To determine the relationship between employees' commitment and the mentoring system.
9. To determine the relationship between employees' commitment and the organization's level of recognition.

10. To determine the factor related to career development opportunity that is most dominant in influencing employees' commitment.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

This study explores the variables related to the hotel employees' perceptions of the career development opportunities that may have corresponding effect on the employees' organizational commitment. The researcher has selected and posed six factors to be analyzed. The factors of career development opportunities are job fit, job rotation, effective training and development program, effectiveness of top management support, mentoring system, and level of recognition.

![Research Framework Diagram]

Figure 1.1: Research Framework
All the six factors mentioned above, as shown in Figure 1.1, will form the independent variables in this study, which will then be tested against the dependent variable, that is the employees' organizational commitment.

The scores on organizational commitment will be ranked to determine the levels of employees' commitment as low, moderate or high.

Demographic characteristics such as gender, marital status, age, work department, education level, length of service, and income will also be tested to see their relationship with the dependent variable – organizational commitment. Finally, the most dominant factor that influences the employees' organizational commitment will be determined.

1.6 Research Hypothesis

This research posed fourteen null hypotheses to be tested. They are:

H₀₁: There is no difference between male and female employees in terms of their organizational commitment.

H₀₂: There is no difference between married and single employees in terms of their organizational commitment.

H₀₃: There is no difference between employees of various age groups in terms of their organizational commitment.

H₀₄: There is no difference between employees of various work departments in terms of their organizational commitment.

H₀₅: There is no difference between employees of various education levels in terms of their organizational commitment.

H₀₆: There is no difference between employees of various lengths of service in terms of their organizational commitment.

H₀₇: There is no difference between employees of various income groups in terms of their organizational commitment.

H₀₈: There is no relationship between employees' organizational commitment and job fit.

H₀₉: There is no relationship between employees' organizational commitment and job rotation.

H₀₁₀: There is no relationship between employees' organizational commitment and effectiveness of top management support.

H₀₁₁: There is no relationship between employees' organizational commitment and effectiveness of top management support.
Ho12: There is no relationship between employees’ organizational commitment and mentoring system.

Ho13: There is no relationship between employees’ organizational commitment and level of recognition.

Ho14: None of the career development opportunity factors has any influence over employees’ organizational commitment.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study aims to uncover factors related to career development opportunities that have contributed to employees’ commitment towards an organization. Thus, it serves as an important source of information to employers in improving their human resource management practice. The findings of this study will provide employers first hand information, as they are based on the views and perceptions of the employees themselves on their career development opportunities and on how they are related to their organizational commitment.

It is hoped that through this study, the reality on factors that influence employees’ commitment in the hotel industry is revealed. This should then reveal to employers what their organization lacks and what they have neglected in their practice. An insight into the career development environment as perceived by employees will be beneficial for the purpose of developing an organizational strategy and planning for employees’ career development. Thus, further efforts can be formulated to:

1. Improve organization’s training and career development strategies and opportunities;
2. Help organization to develop and utilize human resources more effectively; and
3. Enhance further employees’ commitment and retention.

All these efforts will be able to place the organization in a much better position to compete in the markets. Apart from this, the aim of studying employees’ perception of career development opportunities is to better understanding complexities of these variables and their impact on organizational commitment. Such study may enable managers to understand how employees form the attitudes that affect their perception towards career development opportunities and commitment. It may serve as a guide for top management to manage employees effectively. At the same time, this study is useful as a “catalyst” to the employer and other interested parties to examine the type of experiences they bear on their employees, who have depended, in no small measure, on them for the fulfillment or satisfaction of their needs and expectations for career development.

Finally, in implementing the career development programs, the organization should cater to, as wide a spectrum of employees’ needs as possible, if their
basic aim is to give equal career development opportunity to every individual. This study will hopefully provide a guide for the organization or top management to efficiently and effectively meet the career development needs of their employees and elevate them to a secure and productive life. In other word, an insight into the employees' organizational commitment in relation to factors of career development opportunities will hopefully equip managers with better understanding of the insidious disease of turnover and how to overcome it.

1.7 Operational Definition of Terms

The following terminology used in this study are defined operationally.

1.7.1 Perception

The perception in this study refers to employees' interpretation and impression of career development opportunities available within their organization. This perception is constructed based on the employees' background knowledge and several other factors relating to the career development opportunities in their organization. The perception of the employees is classified as either positive or negative, which will determine their response towards career development opportunities in their organization. The relationship between employees' perception of career development opportunities and commitment will then be analyzed.

1.7.2 Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment in this study refers to employees' identification and dedication to his organization. In other word, it is the employees' undivided loyalty to the organization. The Commitment Factor Profile that consists of four cornerstones to commitment will be used in this study to determine employees' organizational commitment (Mendes, 1996). They are vision, insight, acceptance and integration. Apart from that, the three factors that characterize commitment as postulated by Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982, p.27) will also be incorporated in this study. The three factors are (1) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goal and values, (2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and (3) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization. This study seeks to find out the possible relationship between commitment and the factors related to career development opportunities as perceived by the employees.

1.7.3 Vision

In this study, vision refers to the ability to visualize success and anticipate positive results. Vision is needed to enhance commitment and elevate an employee to greater height. It provides some kind of detailed picture of a person's goal in life.
1.7.4 Insight

*Insight* in this study refers to a person's ability to know oneself and apply this knowledge to his commitment. This is because a person's past behavior is an excellent predictor of present and future behavior. Thus, a person uses his experiences to make decisions, and this can be an important tool for future success.

1.7.5 Acceptance

*Acceptance* in this study means a person's need to accept change. Committing to new behaviors is often the most difficult part of keeping a commitment. Therefore, acceptance can prepare us for unexpected setbacks and will help us make healthy adjustments.

1.7.6 Integration

*Integration* consists of blending our values with our thoughts, words, and actions. The true test of commitment is "walk your talk and live your commitment" (Mendes, 1996, p. 28).

1.7.7 Career Development Opportunities

*Career development opportunities* in this study refers to the organization's effort to provide opportunities and alternative to employees to develop themselves through continuous learning at the workplace while recognizing their potential and capabilities in alignment with the organization's strategies and goals. It is important for the organization to create opportunities to match both the career goals of the individual and that of the organization so that both are moving in the same direction. The factors related to career development opportunities that are emphasized in this study are job fit, job rotation, effective training and development programs, effectiveness of top management support, mentoring system, and level of recognition.

1.7.8 Job Fit

*Job fit* or *job match* in this study refers to how the organization assigns jobs or tasks to its employees based on their skills, abilities and expectations. The study will determine how employees feel about and perceive the given tasks and to see whether these tasks are in alignment with their expectancy.

1.7.9 Job Rotation

*Job rotation* in this study refers to the movement of employees from one job or task allocated to them to another one in different functional areas of the organization. In term of career development, job rotation provides employees with the opportunities to learn and use new skills and to better understand different organizational functions. It is a way to provide variety in the
employee's career and it also helps the employee to build network within the organization.

1.7.10 Effective Training and Development Program

*Effective Training and development* in this study refers to both on-the-job and off-the-job training that offers employees with the opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills, enhance their performance at work, and hence contribute to the growth of the organization.

1.7.11 Effectiveness of Top Management Support

*Top Management supports* in this study refers to how effective the top management gets involved in the career motivation of its employees. Such career activities are like top management showing their positive support for their employees' career resilience, enhancing employees' career insight and helping them build career identity. Amongst the supports given by the top management are like career counseling, career pathing, career information system and human resource planning. The findings will be tested to determine whether this factor will bear any relationship towards their commitment.

1.7.12 Mentoring System

In this study, *mentoring* refer to the process of monitoring the career development of a junior member of the organization by a senior member. The study seek to find out if the organization has created an effective mentoring program/system in which mentors and proteges are paired by the organization and provided with support from the relationship. Mentoring is usually the directing activities of non-management employees by a member of the operating level of the management hierarchy, known as a 'supervisor' (Punkett, 1992).

1.7.13 Level of Recognition

*Level of Recognition* in this study refers to the organization's acknowledgement and gratitude to deserving individuals for their contribution to the organization. This includes rewards in the form of certificates, symbolic souvenirs, and titles such as Employee of the Month and Employee of the Year. Recognition may also be in the form of verbal praises from supervisors or the time spent by the superior to listen to their subordinates' ideas and suggestion. The level of recognition shown by the organization will give the subordinates the sense of worth; and respect shown by a superior will also reflect his sensitivity to his subordinates' self development.

1.7.14 Influence

In this study, the employees' perception towards career development opportunities regarding job fit, job rotation, effective training and development