



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONALITY TRAITS AND
AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT AMONG EMPLOYEES IN
HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY**

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(Human Resource Development)**

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Final Year Project Report

Masters

PhD

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KEK XIANG (61112)

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
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The project entitled ‘The Relationship between Personality Traits and Affective Commitment among Employees in Hospitality Industry’ was prepared by Kek Xiang and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Science with Honours (Human Resource Development).

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ABSTRACT

Global workforce shortages are reaching critical levels and organizations are looking for effective strategies to retain and develop committed employees in these turbulent times. This study seeks to identify the relationship between personality traits and affective commitment among employees in hospitality industry. Hotel employees in Kuching, Sarawak were selected as target population for this study. Primary data were collected by distributing survey questionnaire to 88 employees from hospitality industry. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure all of the items in the survey questionnaire. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 had been utilized for the data analysis process. For data analysis process, Pearson Correlation Coefficient Analysis, Multiple Regression Analysis, Independent Sample T-test as well as the One-way ANOVA to test the data collected. The findings of the study revealed that four of the personality dimensions such as openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion and agreeableness are positively correlated with employees' affective commitment. However, personality trait such as neuroticism is negatively correlated to affective commitment. One-way ANOVA established significant differences between age group and affective commitment scores. Since there is a dearth of the previous research focused on this topic, the results of present study could contribute to researches by filling up the research gap and provide a base for future researches. The outcomes of the study also serve as a reference for HR practitioners from hospitality industry to have a better understanding of the dispositional antecedents of employees' affective commitment and hence it is beneficial to the HR recruitment process. Hotel employees with desirable personality characteristics were emotionally attached to the organization and thus it can attract and retain the talented workforce.

Keywords: Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, Affective Commitment, Hotel Employees

ABSTRAK

Kekurangan tenaga kerja global mencapai tahap kritikal dan organisasi mencari strategi yang berkesan untuk mengekalkan dan menambah pekerja yang komited dalam masa bergolak ini. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti hubungan antara sifat keperibadian dan komitmen afektif dalam kalangan pekerja di industri hospitaliti. Pekerja-pekerja hotel di Kuching, Sarawak dipilih sebagai populasi sasaran untuk kajian ini. Data primer dikumpulkan dengan mengagihkan soal selidik tinjauan kepada 88 pekerja dari industri hospitaliti. Skala Likert lima mata digunakan untuk mengukur semua item dalam soal selidik tinjauan. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) versi 20.0 telah digunakan untuk proses analisis data. Bagi proses analisis data, Analisis “Pearson Correlation Coefficient”, Analisis “Multiple Regression”, “Independent Sample T-test” dan “One-way ANOVA” digunakan untuk menguji data yang dikumpulkan. Hasil dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa empat dimensi keperibadian seperti keterbukaan untuk pengalaman, kesungguhan, ekstraversi dan keselesaan berkorelasi positif dengan komitmen afektif pekerja. Walau bagaimanapun, sifat keperibadian seperti neurotisme berkorelasi negatif dengan komitmen afektif. “One-way ANOVA” menunjukkan perbezaan yang signifikan antara kumpulan umur dan skor komitmen afektif. Oleh sebab terdapat kekurangan kajian lepas yang difokuskan pada topik ini, hasil kajian ini dapat menyumbang kepada penyelidikan dengan mengisi jurang penyelidikan dan menyediakan asas untuk penyelidikan masa depan. Hasil kajian ini juga berfungsi sebagai rujukan bagi para pengamal HR dari industri hospitaliti untuk memiliki pemahaman yang lebih baik mengenai anteceden perangsang komitmen afektif pekerja dan dengan itu bermanfaat dalam proses pengambilan pekerja HR. Pekerja-pekerja hotel dengan ciri keperibadian yang diingini komited pada organisasi secara emosi dan rentetan itu dapat menarik dan mengekalkan tenaga kerja yang berbakat.

Kata Kunci: Keterbukaan untuk pengalaman, Kesungguhan, Ekstraversi, Keselesaan Neurotisme, Komitmen Afektif, Pekerja-pekerja Hotel

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

“The fact is that people are good. Give people affection and security and they will give affection and be secure in their feelings and their behaviour.”

(Lowry, 1973, p.18)

In this current era, a variety of challenges were encountered by organizations especially in the environment that constantly evolving and changing. In the context of organization development (OD) and human resource development (HRD) practices, securing employees' affective commitment became one of the rising concerns in the organization. In order to maintain a competitive advantage in particular industry, human resource in the modern organization was considered the most crucial element to attract, cultivate and retain talented and committed workforce (Dychtwald, Erikson & Morison, 2013; Pangarkar & Kirkwood, 2013; Alvino, 2014; Clifton, 2014). According to Rezaian (2008), an organization's success, survival and promotion could be attained if a competent and committed workforce existed. Employees who emotionally committed to organization normally reflected their positive attitude and capabilities towards organizational values and purposes by achieving the expected goals effectively and efficiently. Appropriate workforce with knowledge, skills and abilities led to reduced absenteeism, retention in the organization and improved outcome of job that facilitated an organization's way to success (Hussain Ali & Opatha, 2008).

In this modern environment, there were many backdrops and potential factors that drove the increased attention on employees' commitment by both of the Human Resource practitioners and scholars including economic declined due to uncertainty, drastic change, consistent globalization as well as competition elevated (Cohen, 2007; Fornes, Rocco & Wollard, 2008; Gibb, 2011; Morrow, 2011). When explaining employees' commitment

towards the organization, it was focused heavily on their emotional well-being. A study conducted by Davies (2015) further investigated the organizational and societal requirements for emotionally attached employees. Basically, employees who highly committed to the organization had a strong loyalty towards their company, high job responsibilities, desire and knew the need to stay as well as they would recognize their identity and belief. Commitment represented the linkage between employees and organization that they were willing to provide positive contributions for the sake of the organization. In addition, it also contributed to the mindset that related employees' actions to the most relevant particular target (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001).

According to Sood and Puri (2016), organizational commitment was defined as a psychological state, a kind of desire and an attitude for attachment to and engagement in an organization. Allen and Meyer (1990) depicted three different dimensions of organizational commitment incorporating affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Based on meta-analysis conducted on the antecedent of commitment by Meyer et al. (2002), affective commitment has a higher rate compared to the other two commitments which meant affective commitment was reasonably considered as the core essence of organizational commitment. Hence, this study focused on affective commitment as the researcher assumed that it has a vital role in the organization.

Based on Allen and Meyer (1990), affective commitment could be described as an individual emotionally attached, identified and involved in the organization. In other words, employees developed a sense of commitment towards the organization when the goals and missions of the organization could be identified and accepted by them. They were willing to help and endeavoured to attain these organizational goals since its values in accordance with employees' values and hence they were able to internalize it with their desires. Hence, their degree of acceptance of organization increased and the turnover rate was reduced as a result of

feeling as a part of the organization. In general, affective commitment was widely portrayed as a crucial key in the management and behavioural science literature that a mutual connection occurred between people and the organization. Employees acted as committed workforces when they desired to attain the organization's goal and stay employed in the present company. According to Mathieu and Zajac (1990), affective commitment concept has gained the most studies concern by other researchers. Moreover, some researchers have conducted significant meta-analyses of literature regarding affective commitment that have designated research of the construct by identifying its antecedents, correlates, consequences as well cross-cultural generalizability (Meyer et al., 2002; Cooper- Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005 Riketta, 2005).

The study regarding the antecedents that influencing affective commitment has surged. Through meta-analyses conducted, the antecedents of affective commitment comprised of demographic factors, personal characteristics as well as work experiences (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990 ; Meyer et al.,2002 ; Cooper- Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005 ; Riketta, 2005). However, this study had only focused on antecedents such as personal disposition and demographic factors since they had the empirical link with affective commitment.

The findings of the studies conducted by Tziner, Waismal-Manor, Vardi and Brodman (2008) revealed that the most significant predictors in evaluating the degree of affective commitment among employees are individual's personality traits. Individual personality differences were considered as the source of creativity, development or origin of organizational issues that may directly impact on their action, behaviour as well as decision making (Khanifar et al., 2010). It distinguished employees and gave insight into whether an employee was able to efficiently complete a job if compared to others (Beer & Brooks, 2011). These attributes were consistent throughout an individual's work and life in the personality behaviour model. Likewise, their knowledge and capabilities became the backbone of organizational outcomes. Several researchers suggested that personality traits as an effective predictor for job

performance and as tools adopted during the recruitment and selection process (Awadh & Ismail, 2012).

By recognizing employees' personality, it was essential for upper management in appointing qualified individuals in appropriate position levels in the organization that fulfilled the person-environment fit approach. In addition, upper management could also understand how employees felt in particular situations and took action if necessary. As we know, personality was not only utilized to determine an individual's behaviour but also his or her life success and wealth. In this context, Big Five Personality traits models developed by Goldberg (1990) refers to the five broad traits such as openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism and this model was adopted in the present study. It was utilized due to the five basic dimensions of personality trait act as the main representation of an individual's attributes. Based on Kumar and Bakhshi (2010), the five independent constructs had provided a useful classification for study regarding personal differences in work-related attitudes and behaviour. With the model, it was beneficial to the organization as the basis of the behavioural system in order to forecast employees' organizational behaviour within the organization.

Employees' affective commitment could be induced if their personality traits were compatible with what the organization offered. Personal dispositions were significant in this competitive organizational setting because if they were underrated, undesired personality may lead to disastrous and unpleasant tension, anxiety and inhibit organization from achieving the set goals (Khosla, 2009; Ganapathi, 2012). Employees from different levels of the organization should fully be involved to be part of the firm and their well-being could be enhanced. Despite the employees' needs were different from each other according to their personal belief, ethnic backgrounds, values, perception and so on but it behoved the upper management to ensure both of the employees and organization' goal were compatible for congruous co-existence (Ezerim,

Nwibere & Emecheta, 2010). Therefore, it was sufficed to consider that employees' personality traits had a significant relationship with affective commitment towards organization.

This study was conducted in the hospitality industry. Nowadays, the hospitality industry was considered the most dynamic industries and it became one of the significant sources of revenue or income for many countries (Bharwani & Butt, 2012). This sector was the critical industry and second largest foreign-exchange earner in Malaysia after the manufacturing sector. This industry predominantly provided direct services to customers and focused on the quality of services to fulfil the customers' demand. The tourism industry that consists of several sectors such as accommodation, transportation, food and beverage, travel trade and so on was also part of the hospitality industry.

Malaysia's economy was stable with the support of extensive investment in the tourism industry. Several historical destinations, jungle and beaches that recognized as the attraction place for tourists became the reason for them to have a visit to Malaysia. Hospitality industry also played a significant role in Sarawak and it became the reason for choosing the target population from certain hotels of Kuching, Sarawak to study. Since 1985, hospitality industry has started to be a crucial key in sustaining and developing the growth of the State's economy. It was no doubt that this industry will surpass the agriculture and manufacturing sector in the future. According to Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports Sarawak (2017), the number of tourist arrivals in Sarawak increased by 42.4% which equivalent to 4.7 million tourists in the year of 2016 if compared to the only 3.3 million tourists' arrival in the year of 2010. The development in the number of tourist arrival had increased the tourism receipt from RM5.8 billion in the year 2010 to RM8.4 billion in the year 2016, with averagely 7.5% of annual growth. This condition revealed that Sarawak's hospitality industry was gradually improving and possessed the potential to raise economic development in Sarawak at a rapid pace.

According to Department of Statistics Malaysia (2017), 34.4% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in Sarawak is from the service sector in the year 2016 and 7.9 % of it is contributed by the hospitality industry. Hence, the growth in the hospitality industry has been given the prior concern in Sarawak because of the depressing development in the oil industry (Then, 2018). No doubt, the hotel industry was significant for the Malaysia government for developing the hospitality industry. The estimation of the hotel numbers seemed to increase from 2720 in 2012 to 2760 in 2013. Then, it was anticipated to get 3130 hotels in 2018.

Nevertheless, Malaysia's hotel industry encountered issues in retaining and recruiting a committed workforce. Employees had influenced by personality traits when a higher rate of absenteeism, low level of performance and productivity as well as the retention rate in the organization was low which meant they were unable to perform the task effectively because of the low engagement in the organization (Zopiatis, Constanti, & Theocharous, 2014; Chew & Wong, 2008; Kumar & Eng, 2012; Business Monitor International, 2014). Similar to other industries, employees with different personality traits in the hospitality industry joined and cooperated to perform a variety of job assigned. All of the employees in this industry worked by enhancing organizational behaviour. However, employees did no show alike actions even they were placed in a similar situation. Hence, the particular fundamental consistencies underlying the employees' behaviour should be identified and then modified in order to display personal differences of characteristics (Kondalkar, 2007). Based on Eslami and Gharakani (2012), the perception in the hospitality industry was related to quality and organizational commitment.

Despite there were various antecedents that influenced the employees' affective commitment, dispositional factors became the main concern in the unstudied population such as the hospitality industry. Thus, this proposed study aimed to identify the significant

relationship between personality traits and affective commitment among employees in hospitality industry of Kuching, Sarawak.

1.2 Problem Statement

Nowadays, the constantly evolving environment and economic situation had brought different types of challenges for organizational commitment. It was crucial for an organization to have highly committed employees especially during economic deprivation. According to Cairncross and Kelly (2008), the short-term nature among employees especially in the hospitality industry clearly showed that employees with a high level of organizational commitment placed company in long-term competitive advantages. However, it seemed not easy to obtain the advantages at this time. Since this issue was the central concern to be addressed in this study, the current study prompted the researcher to identify the extent of organizational commitment especially affective commitment as a focus in the context of the hospitality industry.

Although there was extensive research devoted to understanding the concept of organizational commitment in terms of nature, antecedents as well as consequences, there was a dearth of researches identifying the dispositional antecedents of organizational commitment. In addition, the majority of researches regarding this topic was mainly conducted within the Western setting (Newman, Thanacoody, Hui, 2011). Based on some primary studies, there were very few dispositional factors included as variables in the previously established meta-analysis of organizational commitment (Meyer et al., 2002; Riketta, 2002). The meta-analysis by Meyer et al. (2002) revealed that there was only one dispositional antecedent such as locus of control for affective commitment. Besides, the past studies conducted by Thoresen, Kaplan, Barsky, Warren and de Chermont (2003) also failed to give us a full picture in investigating the role of five dimension personality traits as a whole in commitment. An empirical gap is built and hence it was not surprising that some scholars have suggested that dispositional

antecedents may not play a crucial role in developing the employees' commitment (Meyer et al., 2002). The results prevalent in the past empirical studies may be premature and an in-depth comprehending of employees' commitment must comprise both situational factors (Meyer et al., 2002) and personal differences such as personality traits (Lewin, 1951).

According to the three-component model of commitment (TCM) by Allen and Meyer (1990), affective commitment was indicated lower in the middle of the economic crisis (Markovits, Boer & van Dick, 2014) as it was negatively influenced to affective feeling of employees especially during a critical point. Employees nowadays were more emphasizing on psychologically satisfying lives by determining the full potential of their career and professional irrespective of the organization barriers.

The ways to ensure the employees to be always committed to the organization became a challenging issue to the majority of industry included the hospitality industry. Technology advanced, financial poverty, internationally competitive as well as the change in customer priority led to difficulty in showing commitment among employees. The organization was under pressure to ensure them from remained active and efficient by downsizing, reengineering and outsourcing (Meyer et al., 2002). According to Ruokolainen (2011), employees would not constantly show the commitment to the organization if the organization itself did not do so. Besides, a low level of organizational commitment among employees caused poor working attitudes and behaviours (Kumar & Eng, 2012).

A lower degree of organizational commitment of employees which led to high employees' turnover rate in hotels was one of the factors that influencing its organization's productivity, effectiveness and hotel cost structure (Deery & Shaw, 1997; Lashley & Chaplain, 1999). Based on Barnes (2001), the recruitment of new hires with inappropriate personality types may lead to low employees' commitment and hence high turnover rate in the hospitality industry. Hotel labour market encountered difficulty in attracting an appropriate workforce

which corresponds to the significant loss of investment in human resources, quality and training (Davidson, Timo & Wang, 2010). The productivity of the organization might be influenced by low commitment especially when there was reduced in the number of skilled workforces and high percentages of novice workforces in the population (Utoro & Gustomo, 2014). Besides, according to Bryant and Allen (2013), costs related to recruitment and selection as well as training of new hires normally exceed 100% of the vacated positions' annual salary. In the context of a low level of employees' commitment, few organizations designed a retention plan to deal with it and it led to elevated cost on turnover (Bourke, Waite & Wright, 2014). Employees' personality traits should become the concern of the organization, misinterpretation may exist among employees who susceptible to change and it is detrimental to the performance and profitability of a company.

According to International Labour Organization (2003), lack of talented and skilled workforce and low degree of commitment among employees were the most common problems that the hospitality industry faced either by both trades itself or by industry practitioners. Based on the survey report by Malaysian Employers Federation (2011), it showed that the annual turnover rate of employees in the year 2010 and 2011 were severely high, between 9.6% and 75% respectively. Then, 32.4% was the turnover rate for the hospitality industry. Furthermore, a survey showed about 20% of managers around the world indicated that the fifth largest antecedent caused poor productivity was high employee turnover rate (Proudfoot Consulting, 2008). Hence, it became anxiety in retaining talented workforce since employees choose to leave the organization in voluntary and involuntary (Kuean, Kaur and Wong, 2010). The biggest challenge encountered by the hotel management team was managing workforces effectively (Kapoor & Solomon, 2011).

Based on Branham (2005), retention of employees began with their commitment. In line with this, different studies have been managed throughout the world in order to examine