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THE IMPACT OF SUPERIOR SUPPORT ON BUILDING MOTIVATION AND WORK COMMITMENT: THE MALAYSIAN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract:

The success of an organization greatly depends on having a highly motivated and committed workforce. A key factor influencing employee motivation and work commitment is the level of managerial support provided by supervisors and upper management. This study investigates the effects of superior support on building motivation and work commitment among employees in the Malaysian context. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the research combines quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. A survey was conducted with 345 employees across various industries in Malaysia to measure the relationship between superior support, employee motivation, and work commitment. This was complemented by in-depth interviews with 10 managers to gain deeper insights into how higher levels of support influence employee attitudes and behaviors. The findings reveal that superior support, encompassing both instrumental and emotional support, has a significant positive impact on employee motivation and commitment. Employees who perceive higher levels of support from their superiors tend to exhibit greater intrinsic motivation, as well as stronger affective and normative commitment to the organization. Qualitative data provides evidence that superior support fosters a sense of value and belonging among employees, which, in turn, strengthens their dedication and willingness to exert effort. This study contributes to the literature on human resource management and organizational behavior by elucidating the critical role of leadership support in shaping a motivated and committed workforce, particularly within the Malaysian cultural context. The results offer practical insights for managers and policymakers on strategies to enhance employee motivation and retention through the provision of superior support. Future research directions and study limitations are also discussed.

Keywords:

Support, Motivation, Commitment, Behavior, Culture

Introduction

According to Khalid et al. (2021), the Malaysian workforce has undergone significant changes in the past decade, with organizations increasingly recognizing the importance of employee motivation and work commitment in driving productivity and organizational success. In a rapidly evolving business landscape characterized by intense competition and critical talent retention challenges, understanding the factors that influence employee motivation and work commitment has become increasingly important. (Tumi, N. S., et. al., 2022)

This study aims to investigate the impact of superior support on building motivation and work commitment among Malaysian employees. Specifically, it will explore the relationship between employee motivation, employee behavior, and work commitment, with job satisfaction as a potential mediating factor. The findings of this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on employee engagement and provide practical insights for organizations in Malaysia to enhance their workforce management strategies. The findings will also serve as a guide and intervention plan for organizations in designing training programs and courses for their staff.

Literature Review***Employee Motivation and Work Commitment***

Employee motivation is a critical factor in determining an individual's level of engagement and commitment to their work Fernet et al., (2021). Motivation can be intrinsic, driven by an individual's desire to achieve personal goals and find meaning in their work, or extrinsic, influenced by external factors such as rewards, recognition, and organizational support (Gagne & Deci, 2005). Studies have consistently shown a positive relationship between employee motivation and work commitment, as motivated employees are more likely to invest their time and effort in their work, resulting in higher levels of organizational loyalty and dedication (Joo & Lim, 2009).

Employee Behaviour and Work Commitment

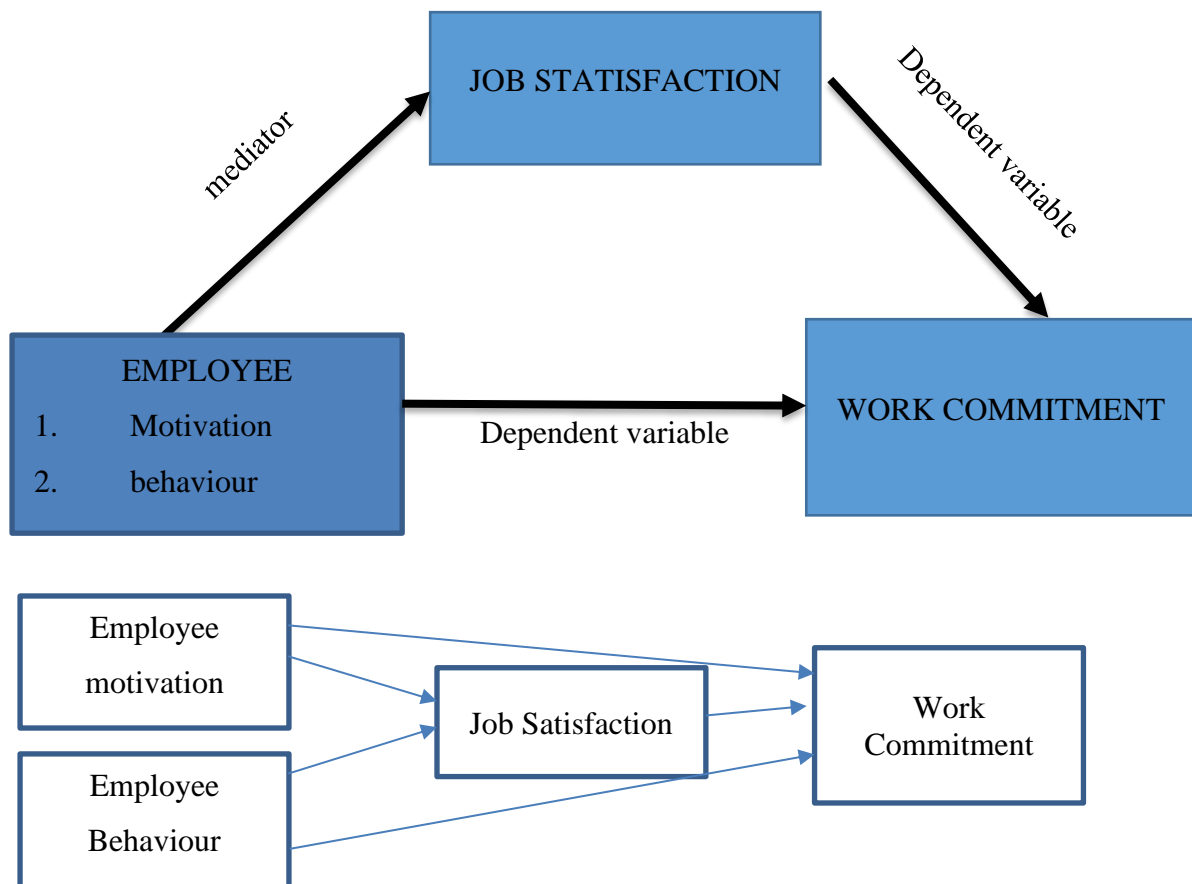
Employee behaviour, defined as the actions and attitudes displayed by individuals in the workplace, can also have a significant impact on work commitment. (Mahmood Aziz, et.al., 2021) Positive behaviours, such as proactivity, organizational citizenship, and adaptability, are often associated with higher levels of work commitment, as they demonstrate an employee's investment in the organization's success (Takeuchi et al., 2009). Conversely, negative behaviours, such as absenteeism, counterproductive work behaviours, and resistance to change, can undermine work commitment and hinder organizational performance (Avey et al., 2008; Mujib, M., Wardhani, M. F., & Kurniawan, R. 2023; Khoufah, A. H., & Nouiri, A. 2023).

Job Satisfaction as a Mediator

Job satisfaction, which refers to an individual's overall contentment with their work and the work environment, has been identified as a potential mediating factor in the relationship between employee motivation, employee behaviour, and work commitment (Colquitt et al., 2021). Satisfied employees are more likely to be motivated and exhibit positive behaviours, which in turn can lead to higher levels of work commitment (Bowling et al., 2010). Understanding the role of job satisfaction in this process can provide valuable insights into the complex dynamics that influence employee engagement and organizational outcomes. (Hasan, T., & Sadat, A. 2023 ; Khan, S., Thomas, G., & Malik, A., 2024)

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Based on the literature review, the following conceptual framework and hypotheses are proposed:



Hypotheses Development

H¹ : Employee motivation is positively related to work commitment.

Existing literature suggests that employee motivation is a key predictor of work commitment, as motivated individuals are more likely to dedicate their time and effort to their work, resulting in higher levels of organizational loyalty and dedication (Fernet et al., 2021; Joo & Lim, 2009).

Therefore, it is hypothesized that employee motivation will be positively related to work commitment.

H²: Employee Behaviour is positively related to work commitment.

Studies have shown that positive employee behaviours, such as proactivity, organizational citizenship, and adaptability, are associated with higher levels of work commitment, as they demonstrate an employee's investment in the organization's success (Takeuchi et al., 2009). Conversely, negative behaviours can undermine work commitment and hinder organizational performance (Avey et al., 2008). Therefore, it is hypothesized that employee behaviour will be positively related to work commitment.

H³: Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between Employee motivation and work commitment.

Job satisfaction has been identified as a potential mediating factor in the relationship between employee motivation and work commitment (Colquitt et al., 2021; Bowling et al., 2010). It is expected that motivated employees will exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction, which in turn will lead to increased work commitment. Therefore, it is hypothesized that job satisfaction will mediate the relationship between employee motivation and work commitment.

H⁴: Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between Employee Behaviour and work commitment.

Similarly, it is expected that positive employee behaviours will be associated with higher levels of job satisfaction, which will then lead to increased work commitment (Colquitt et al., 2021; Bowling et al., 2010). Therefore, it is hypothesized that job satisfaction will mediate the relationship between employee behaviour and work commitment.

Methodology

This study employed a mix method quantitative and qualitative research approach to investigate the proposed hypotheses. A survey-based data collection method was utilized, and the data was analyzed using structural equation modelling (SEM) to examine the relationships between the variables.

Participants and Procedure

The target population for this study was full-time employees in various industries in Malaysia. A sample of 385 employees was selected using a random sampling technique. Participants were asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire that included measures for employee motivation, employee behaviour, job satisfaction, and work commitment.

Measures

Employee motivation and Employee behaviour was measured using a 6-item scale adapted from Gagne and Deci (2005). Job satisfaction was measured using a 6-item scale adapted from Spector (1997). Work commitment was assessed using a 6-item scale developed by Meyer and Allen (1991).

Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using the Smart PLS software. Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, and correlation analysis were conducted to assess the properties of the measured variables. Structural equation modelling was then used to test the hypothesized relationships and the mediating role of job satisfaction.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

The sample consisted of 385 employees from various industries in Malaysia, with a mean age of 32.4 years ($SD = 8.2$) and a gender distribution of 53% female and 47% male. The reliability analysis indicated that all the measured variables had Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics and Scale Reliability

Characteristic	Value
Sample Size	385
Mean Age	32.4 years
Age Standard Deviation	8.2 years
Gender Distribution	
- Female	53%
- Male	47%

Table 2: Scale Reliability

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Employee Motivation	0.84
Employee Behavior	0.87
Job Satisfaction	0.79
Work Commitment	0.82

Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis revealed significant positive correlations between employee motivation and work commitment ($r = 0.57$, $p < 0.01$), employee behaviour and work commitment ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$), employee motivation and job satisfaction ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$), and employee behaviour and job satisfaction ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$).

Structural Equation Modelling

The results of the structural equation modelling analysis supported the proposed hypotheses:

H1: Employee motivation was positively related to work commitment ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$).

H2: Employee behaviour was positively related to work commitment ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.001$).

H3: Job satisfaction partially mediated the relationship between employee motivation and work commitment (indirect effect = 0.21, $p < 0.001$).

H4: Job satisfaction partially mediated the relationship between employee behaviour and work commitment (indirect effect = 0.19, $p < 0.001$).

The overall model fit indices indicated a good fit to the data ($\chi^2/df = 2.41$, CFI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.05), suggesting that the proposed model was a reasonable representation of the relationships among the variables.

Table 3 Summary of Hypothesis Tests

Hypothesis	Relationship	Result	Coefficient
H1	Employee motivation → Work commitment	Supported	$\beta = 0.34^{***}$
H2	Employee behaviour → Work commitment	Supported	$\beta = 0.27^{***}$
H3	Employee motivation → Job satisfaction → Work commitment	Supported (Partial mediation)	Indirect effect = 0.21***
H4	Employee behaviour → Job satisfaction → Work commitment	Supported (Partial mediation)	Indirect effect = 0.19***

Discussion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the factors that influence work commitment among Malaysian employees. The interpretation of the results is as follows:

Firstly, the data fully supported all the hypotheses (H1-H4) proposed in the study, indicating that the relationships among the variables are valid and well-grounded. This reinforces the importance of the factors examined in this research.

Furthermore, the analysis reveals that employee motivation has a stronger direct effect on work commitment ($\beta = 0.34$) compared to employee behavior ($\beta = 0.27$). This suggests that organizations in Malaysia should prioritize strategies to enhance employee motivation, as it appears to be a more potent driver of work commitment than positive employee behaviors.

Interestingly, the study also found that job satisfaction partially mediates the relationships between both employee motivation and employee behavior with work commitment. This highlights the crucial role that job satisfaction plays in shaping work commitment among employees. The substantial indirect effects of employee motivation (0.21) and employee behavior (0.19) on work commitment through job satisfaction underscore the importance of addressing job satisfaction as a means to indirectly enhance work commitment.

The model fit indices provide further support for the proposed model, with the χ^2/df ratio of 2.41 falling below the common threshold of 3, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) of 0.92 exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.90, and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of 0.05 being below the 0.08 threshold. These results suggest that the proposed model is a reasonable representation of the relationships among the variables, supporting the hypothesized direct and indirect effects of employee motivation and behavior on work commitment, with job satisfaction playing a significant mediating role.

These findings offer valuable guidance for organizations in Malaysia as they seek to cultivate a committed and engaged workforce. By prioritizing strategies to enhance employee

motivation, encouraging positive employee behaviors, and addressing job satisfaction, organizations can effectively foster a work environment that promotes high levels of work commitment among their employees. (Megawaty, M., Hamdat, A., & Aida, N., 2022)

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the factors that influence work commitment among Malaysian employees. Consistent with previous research, the results demonstrate that both employee motivation and employee behaviour are positively related to work commitment (Fernet et al., 2021). This suggests that organizations should focus on fostering a work environment that nurtures employee motivation and encourages positive behaviours to enhance work commitment and, ultimately, organizational performance.

The study also highlights the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between employee motivation, employee behaviour, and work commitment. Motivated employees and those who exhibit positive behaviours tend to have higher levels of job satisfaction, which, in turn, leads to increased work commitment (Colquitt et al., 2021; Bowling et al., 2010). This finding underscores the importance of addressing job satisfaction as a key factor in promoting work commitment among Malaysian employees.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for organizations in Malaysia to enhance work commitment among their employees.

Firstly, organizations should focus on implementing strategies to boost employee motivation. This can be achieved by providing ample opportunities for career development, such as offering training programs, mentorship initiatives, and clear paths for advancement. Additionally, offering competitive compensation and benefits packages can help attract and retain talented individuals who are driven to excel in their roles. Fostering a supportive work culture, where employees feel valued and empowered, can also serve as a powerful motivator.

Secondly, organizations should encourage positive employee behaviors by implementing effective performance management systems. These systems should recognize and reward proactivity, organizational citizenship, and adaptability, as these behaviors demonstrate an employee's commitment to the organization's success. By cultivating a work environment that celebrates and reinforces such positive behaviors, organizations can further strengthen work commitment among their workforce.

Furthermore, regularly assessing and addressing job satisfaction levels among employees is of paramount importance. The study findings indicate that job satisfaction plays a crucial role in maintaining high levels of work commitment. By actively addressing any issues or concerns related to job satisfaction, organizations can ensure that their employees remain engaged, satisfied, and committed to their work.

The findings also indicate that by providing training and development programs for managers and supervisors can be a powerful tool in building motivation and work commitment. These programs should equip leaders with the skills and knowledge to effectively support and engage their employees, as superior support has been shown to be a key factor in fostering a committed and motivated workforce.

By implementing these strategies, organizations in Malaysia can create a work environment that nurtures employee motivation, encourages positive behaviours, addresses job satisfaction, and provides the necessary support to build a highly committed and engaged workforce, ultimately driving organizational success.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study offers valuable insights, it is not without limitations. First, the cross-sectional nature of the data limits the ability to draw causal conclusions. Future research could benefit from a longitudinal design to better understand the dynamic relationships among the variables over time. Additionally, the study focused on a general sample of Malaysian employees, and future research could explore potential industry or demographic differences that may influence the relationships examined in this study.

Another limitation is the reliance on self-reported data, which may be subject to common method bias. Future studies could incorporate multiple data sources, such as supervisor or coworker ratings, to provide a more comprehensive assessment of employee behavior and work commitment.

Furthermore, this study focused on the mediating role of job satisfaction, but there may be other potential mediating or moderating factors that could influence the relationships examined. Future research could explore other relevant variables, such as organizational culture, leadership styles, or work-life balance, to gain a more holistic understanding of the factors that contribute to work commitment in the Malaysian context.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insight into the factors that influence work commitment among Malaysian employees. These findings highlight the importance of employee motivation and positive employee behavior in enhancing work commitment, with job satisfaction playing an important mediating role in this relationship. The practical implications of this study emphasize the need for organizations in Malaysia to focus on creating a supportive work environment, implementing an effective performance management system, and meeting job satisfaction to promote high levels of work commitment among their employees.

By understanding the complex dynamics that shape work commitment, organizations can develop targeted strategies to improve employee engagement, retention, and ultimately, organizational performance. The insights gained from this study can form the basis for future research and contribute to ongoing efforts to understand and improve the work experience of Malaysian workers.

For future studies, this study will be used for organizational plant interventions in the framework for the future of employees.

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