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TALENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN PRIVATE STATE-FUNDED HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract:

Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) have made significant contributions to the development of higher education in Malaysia. However, in recent times, there has been growing concern about the impact of talent management on the organizational commitments of its academic members. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the relationship between talent management practices and academics' organizational commitment. This study was conducted at a state-owned private university. An adapted version of a questionnaire with an internal consistency coefficient (α) greater than 0.8 was distributed to the academic staff. It was found that respondents gave moderate scores to all domains. The highest score was for career development (3.22), followed by organizational commitment (2.95) and talent management (2.94). Data analysis supports an alternative hypothesis (H_1) that a relationship exists between talent management, career development, and organizational commitment. This study suggests that talent management policies and practices should be taken into consideration for the sustainability of institutions.

Keywords:

Career, Development, Management, Organization, Talent, University

Introduction

Participation in higher education is growing around the world. This has prompted various changes, including aspects related to teaching and learning strategies (T&L), quality framework, internationalization, education financing, and the like (United Nations

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 2022). The rapid development of higher education in Malaysia began in the early 1990s. It is supported by the introduction and amendment of several acts, such as the Private Higher Education Act 1999 (Act 555) and several related acts. Higher education is acknowledged to play an important role in driving the country's economy, following the domestic demand for skilled manpower, external pressures due to the global financial crisis, as well as the government's aspiration to position the country as a world-class higher education hub (Hamid, 2022).

Apart from public universities, Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) have contributed a lot to the development of higher education in Malaysia. PHEI is also said to be able to provide quality facilities, offer various specialization programs, as well as build a reputation through a network of collaborations with well-known international universities (Cheng & Chiang, 2019). Over the past two decades, the term 'talent management' has become increasingly popular among academics and practitioners in the scope of career development management of academics (Ansar & Baloch, 2018). Talent management (TM) is relatively more focused on the employee side with the assumption that employee talent is an organizational competitive advantage (Abdullahi et al., 2022; Selvanathan et al., 2019). This is in contrast to human resource management (HRM), which considers all the functions of an organization. Technically, talent management is an integrated process framework to assist organizations in decision-making to support strategic objectives. Discussions on talent management are often linked to organizational strategic objectives, organizational context, and competitiveness in the industry (Hashimi et al., 2021). The leadership of HEIs needs to take strategic steps to critically assess the impact of talent management on the career development and organizational commitment of academics, as well as the factors that influence it. Focus should be given to ensuring that the potential of academics is in line with the mission and vision of the institution. Low levels of commitment, turnover, and dismissal of academics will affect the institution's development plans.

In recent times, there has been growing concern about the impact of talent management on member organizational commitments. While studies have explored various aspects of this relationship, there is limited research examining the role of talent management in Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) in contributing to the organizational commitment of academics, particularly in state-owned HEIs. The problem of talent management in HEIs should be addressed appropriately on the following rationale:

- a) **Avoid negative impressions of academic expert organization commitments.** Weaknesses in talent management are feared to negatively impact the level of organizational commitment to academics. A study by Siron (2005) in four well-known private universities in Malaysia found that the level of commitment of academics is moderate. Meanwhile, Razaki et al. (2020), who conducted a study of 239 academics in three public institutions owned by the state government, also showed the same findings, especially in the aspect of publications.
- b) **Boost the career development prospects of academics.** Several studies by local researchers have shown that there is a positive correlation between career development prospects and organizational commitment among academics in HEIs (Choong et al., 2012, 2011).
- c) **Avoid negative impacts on program quality.** Weaknesses in talent management will degrade the level of organizational commitment of academics. The frequency of

exchanges, terminations, and dismissals of academics will generally affect the quality of programmes (Too et al., 2015).

- d) **Reduce the mobility of academics.** Weaknesses in talent management can lead to a job change. The phenomenon of job mobility among academics in HEIs has received the attention of many local researchers (Ramasamy & Abbudullah, 2020; Selvanathan et al., 2019; Manogharan et al., 2018; Ramasamy & Abdullah, 2017; Rathakrishnan et al., 2016).

In conclusion, issues related to talent management need to be given proper attention to address the issue of retention or job change among academics. This is because the weaknesses of talent management will affect the commitment of member organizations and, at the same time, affect the performance of the organization. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the relationship between talent management practices and academics' organizational commitment, with a focus on identifying factors that can exacerbate or mitigate the negative impact of talent management weaknesses on organizational performance.

Literature Review

Since before the COVID-19 era, one of the main issues in HEIs has been related to financial management (Tajudeen & Raja, 2021). This issue is also related to the problem of maintaining the services of academics. Several factors were cited as driving factors for the failure of HEIs to retain academic staff, namely workload, role conflicts, employment structure, and other intrinsic factors (Manogharan et al., 2018). According to Sinniah et al. (2019), salary factors are the main cause of low satisfaction levels of academics with doctoral degrees, which leads them to transfer to other institutions. All the factors mentioned can be summed up as weaknesses of the top leadership of the institution in managing talent among the academics.

According to Suryadi et al. (2020), the career development of academics in universities lies in the vision and mission of the institution to become a superior university. It is also determined by various internal and external factors of the institution (Chornoivan, 2022; Khan & Siriwardhane, 2021; Annala et al., 2019). Obstacles that restrict the career development of academics should be given due attention so as not to create conflicts between academics and organizational leaders. This is because career development opportunities have a positive impact on increasing the level of organizational commitment among academics and non-academics (Robson et al., 2016). Career development is also one of the most important factors influencing the level of satisfaction and desire to stay at university (Adeoye & Egwakhe, 2019; Jabri & Ghazzawi, 2019; Muma et al., 2018). Academics will be more satisfied and willing to contribute more to the organization when they feel that the organization supports their psychological needs and they feel safe and supported (Aduma, 2022). The career development of academics can be attributed to talent management policies and practices within organizations.

Conceptual Framework of Study

This study is based on multiple theories as illustrated in Figure 1. Generally, talent management practices can be referred to as Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Institutional Theory (IT), while career development is based on Agency Theory (AT) and Career Theory (CT), and organizational commitment is based on Organizational Commitment Theory (OCT).

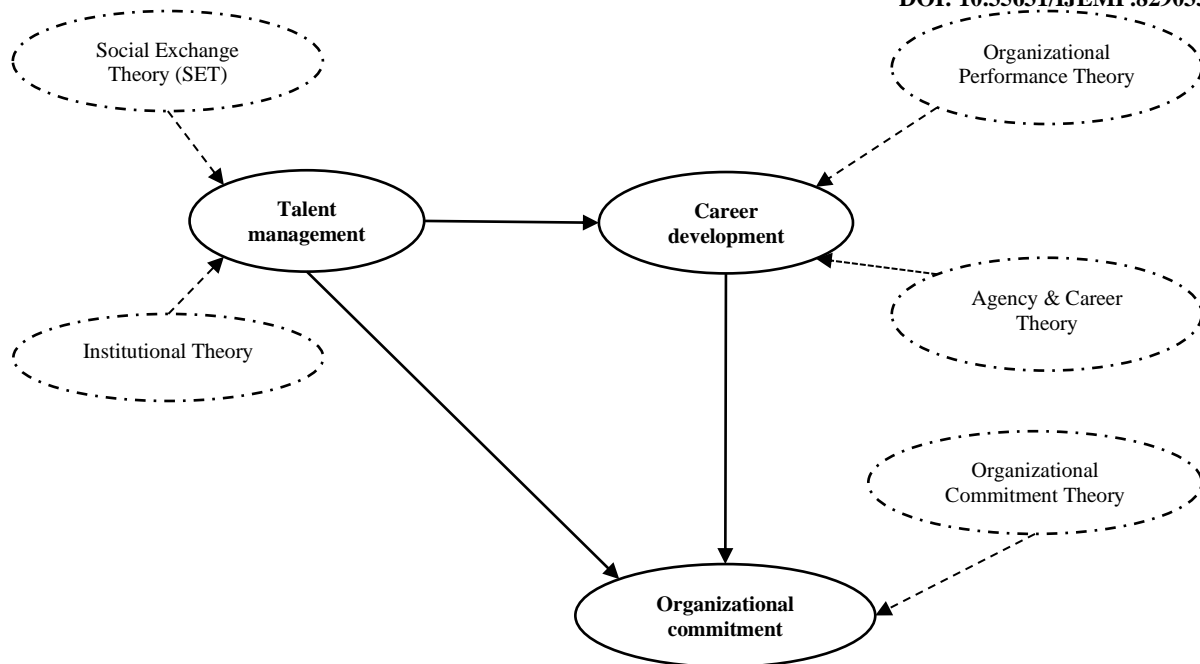


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for the Impact of Talent Management on Organizational Commitment

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) is based on the work of George Homans (1974, 1961, 1958), John Thibaut and Harold Kelley (1959), and Peter Blau (1964). According to Emerson (1976), this theory can be seen from different perspectives covering the fields of sociology, psychology, and economics. This theory explains that employees' positive perception of human resource management (HRM) practices is indicated by organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and intention to stay. In general, SET states that a person will be motivated to achieve the value of a reward and at the same time be willing to bear the cost or loss of value to achieve the reward. It starts with one's goal of earning social rewards. The process of obtaining social rewards occurs based on the concept of justice and equality before a social exchange occurs between the two parties involved.

The second theory is the organizational commitment theory, which emphasizes the positive factors for maintaining relationships between individuals and others (Agnew, 2009). Among the most prominent commitment theories are George Levinger's cohesiveness theory, Caryl Rusbult's investment model, and Michael Johnson's tripartite typology. Although the approaches between these theories are different, they share the same element, which is the notion that the relationship continues because there are interesting factors to maintain the relationship, and at the same time, there are also factors that prevent the relationship from being terminated. Among the highly respected researchers who have written extensively for studies on organizational commitment is John P. Meyer at the University of Western Ontario (Meyer & Maltin, 2010; Meyer & Allen, 2004; Meyer et al., 2004, 2002, 1993). In general, the dimension of organizational commitment proposed by Meyer & Allen (2004) is based on the notion that organizational commitment is a psychological condition that characterizes the relationship of an organization member with the organization and has implications for the decision of the organization member to continue or terminate his or her membership or

association with the organization. The three dimensions are effective, continuous, and normative commitments as depicted in Figure 2.

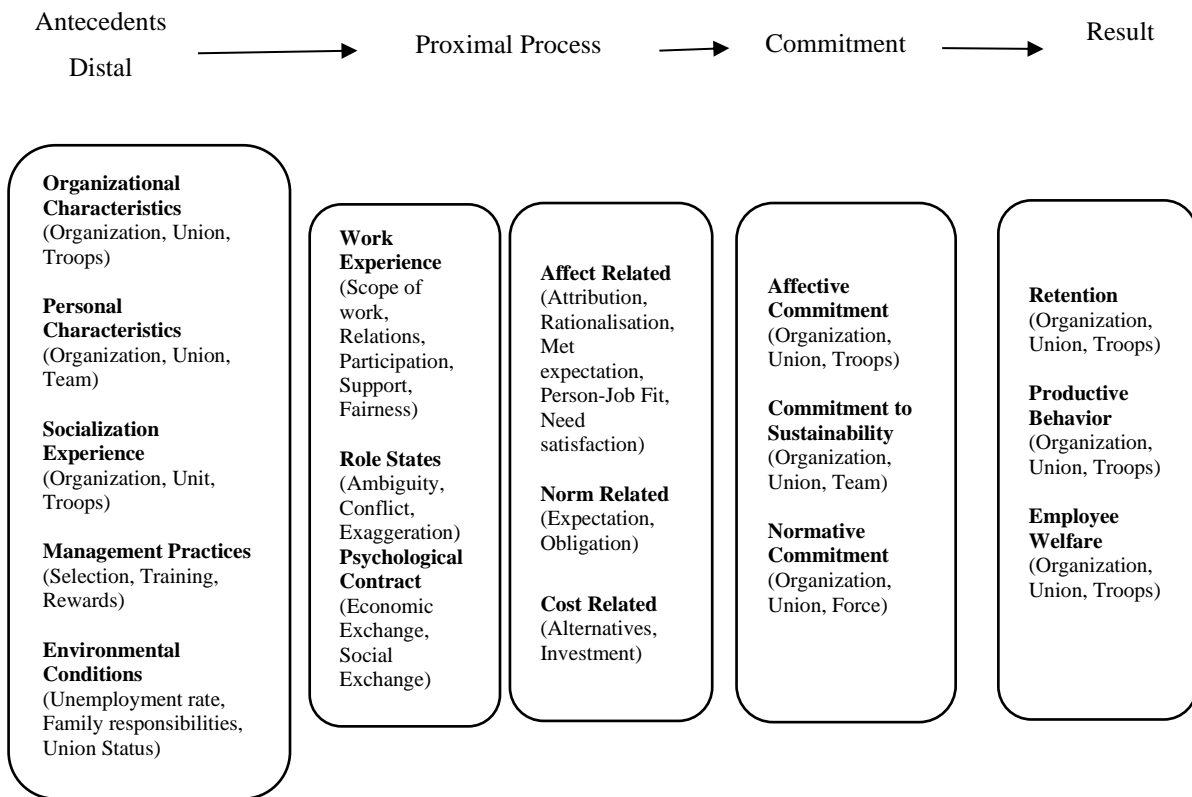


Figure 2. Organizational Commitment Model

Source: (Meyer & Maltin, 2010)

The third theory, institutional theory, is said to be the most popularly used to explain the study of organizational issues, including in the field of higher education, especially the study of policy and management (Cai & Mehari, 2015). Institutionalism is defined as a conventional and standardized pattern of behavior that exists within and across an organization (Guth, 2016). These patterns of behavior include organizational and industry standards, routines, and norms. Institutional theory suggests that "organizational behavior can be emulated and re-practiced by other organizations, establishing norms that are widely accepted and ultimately widely developed as a standard expected for all". Institutional theory attempts to explain the processes and reasons for organizational behavior as well as the effects of organizational behavior patterns in a broader scope based on the context between organizations.

Talent Management and Organizational Performance

Researchers, academics, and human resource practitioners are said to have not yet agreed to formulate a definition of talent management. Local researcher Baharom (2019) defines talent management as a comprehensive process to systematically recognize the type of talent needed, identify the positions to be filled, select and recruit the most suitable candidates, develop or equip talents with the necessary skills, knowledge, and expertise, and ultimately retain the incumbent to achieve the goals and objectives of the organization. Talent management is an integrated process framework to assist organizations in decision-making to support strategic,

profitable, and competitive objectives in the industry (Hashimi et al., 2021). Discussions on talent management are often linked to organizational strategic objectives, organizational context, and competitiveness in the industry.

A local study by Abdullahi et al. (2022) involving sampling from academics at private universities shows that talent management practices have a significant impact on employee performance, while employee involvement acts as a *mediator* between talent management practices and employee performance. A more comprehensive study involving the sampling of academics in private universities between Malaysia and Vietnam by Annakis and Esposto found that talent identification, talent development, and talent management culture are the most important contributors to talent management efficiency for academics. In addition, it is also shown that the level of competency in talent management for academics will be more effective if universities have an integrated resource management system to identify values, measure team and individual performance, evaluate and develop, provide honest formal feedback, and have a culture of rewarding high performance.

Research abroad has also yielded varying findings. For example, Mishra (2022) conducted a study involving staff from the information and communication technology (ICT) industry and found that talent management has minimal impact on organizational performance. However, other researchers reported more positive study findings. Talent management was found to have a direct impact on organizational effectiveness (Dagogo & Ogechi, 2020), organizational performance (Dahshan et al., 2018), and employee intent to stay (Madurani & Pasaribu, 2021). The conclusion of a study by Adeoye and Egwakhe (2019) involving sampling from academics in public and private universities stated that career development has an impact on talent retention. Furthermore, they explain that talent management will lead to career development and subsequently impact the growth of the organization. Integrated talent management, which is a structured system that aligns with the talent and strategic objectives of the organization as a whole, needs to be planned. It needs to involve coordinating talent management with the goals and plans of stakeholders (stakeholders). This strategy is best for reducing the layoff rate by ensuring that employees are always highly skilled and qualified. Therefore, it can be concluded that universities need to invest in talent management activities by increasing the involvement of academics to achieve positive organizational performance to the maximum.

Organizational Commitment

The concept of organizational commitment is generally associated with an organization's ability to recruit, train, and retain skilled individuals who contribute to maintaining the overall stability of the organization, including productivity and financial viability (Jabri & Ghazzawi, 2019). This process is spontaneous and organic and develops through the integration of individuals into the organization. It is also linked to one's perception of the concept of loyalty as an antecedent to organizational commitment. An employee's commitment to an organization is important because it influences their involvement in the organization and their intention to remain within the organization. In principle, employees will be more willing to take responsibility if they feel that the organization supports their psychological needs. Feeling safe and supported leads to increased job satisfaction, which is a predictor of engagement. According to Khan et al. (2013), organizational commitment (OC) includes three dimensions, namely affective commitment (AC), normative commitment (NC), and continuance commitment (CC). Affective commitment is indicated by a person's choice to remain with the organization, motivated by his or her emotional attachment toward the organization, while

normative commitment refers to a person's willingness to remain with the organization to shoulder the responsibility to achieve the organization's goals. Continuous commitment refers to the rationale of the economic benefits that motivate a person to stay with the organization. Staff who possess affective commitment will demonstrate voluntary loyalty to the organization and hope to extend their tenure.

Practically, when an organization can meet employee expectations, employees will be more loyal to the organization. The higher the loyalty, the higher the commitment given. High commitment will encourage the organization to behave together in achieving the desired performance. Therefore, it can be stated that the organization must create an atmosphere that meets the expectations of employees, such as providing appropriate salaries and other benefits, and includes providing material and non-material rewards (Hanum et al., 2021). A study by Dinc (2017) shows that affective and normative commitment have an impact on job satisfaction. Overall job satisfaction and affective commitment affect an employee's job performance. and job performance. A study by Altindis (2011) found that the effects of affective and normative commitment on intrinsic motivation are greater than continuous commitment. The most memorable factor against extrinsic motivation is normative commitment. Continuous commitment has less of an impact on extrinsic motivation than normative commitment. Additionally, Altindis noted that affective commitment has the lowest impact on external motivation.

This article's review is expected to provide clarification for the relationship between talent management and organizational commitment against the background of the increased rate of mobility among academics in HEIs in Malaysia.

Methodology

The study used a questionnaire adapted from several researchers. The process of adapting the questionnaire refers to Azraii et al. (2021) by appointing experts. The talent management questionnaire refers to Farooq et al. (2017), which covers four dimensions, namely talent recognition (5 items), talent development (3 items), talent culture (3 items), and talent retention (3 items). The instrument for measuring career development refers to Saleem & Amin (2013). The career development support component consists of two dimensions, namely supervisory support (10 items) and organizational support (6 items). The instrument to measure organizational commitment was developed by Meyer et al. (1993). The original questionnaire consisted of 24 items covering eight items for each dimension, namely the Affective Commitment Scale (ACS), the Continuous Commitment Scale (CCS), and the Normative Commitment Scale (NCS). The questionnaire was distributed to identified teaching staff in one of the departments at a state-owned private university in Selangor from September to December 2024. This department was selected because it is the largest in the university, based on student enrollment and lecture size.

Findings

Reliability of the Questionnaire

Measures of internal consistency of the questionnaire are based on Alpha Cronbach values (α). Generally, an α value > 0.8 is considered stable to be acceptable. Based on the analysis, each domain recorded an α value of > 0.8 , and a very high score was recorded for the talent management domain (0.917), while a high score was recorded for the career development

domain (0.848) and organizational commitment (0.819). For this pilot study, the researchers concluded that the instrument used was a combination of questionnaires by Farooq et al. (2017) to measure talent management practices, Saleem & Amin (2013) for career development, and Meyer et al. (1993) to measure the level of organizational commitment of academics can be used. The α value > 0.70 , as the minimum value of instrument acceptance, has been used by many researchers (Taber, 2018)

Descriptive Findings

The analysis in this section is to show the level of talent management implementation and acceptance of career development and organizational commitment from the perspective of academics. The mean value is used to indicate the level of agreement of academics on all variables, as shown in Table 1. It was found that respondents gave moderate scores to all study domains. The highest score was for the career development domain (3.2188), followed by organizational commitment (2.9447) and talent management (2.9429). Generally, the analysis of the data shows that:

- i. RQ1. The level of practice for talent identification, development, and retention in organizations is moderate, while the practice of talent culture is low.
- ii. RQ2. The level of organizational support and supervisory support for career development is moderate.
- iii. RQ3. The level of commitment of academics to the organization is moderate in all aspects, namely affective, continuance, and normative.

Table 1: Mean Values, Standard Deviations, and Variants for Study Domain

No.	Study Domain (construct)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
1.	Talent management	2.9429	0.59833	0.358
	a) Talent identification	3.2500	0.51453	0.265
	b) Talent development	3.0167	0.81989	0.672
	c) Culture of talent	<u>2.2500</u>	0.88440	0.782
	d) Talent retention	3.0500	0.69480	0.483

2.	Career development	3.2188	0.46396	0.215
	a) Organizational support	3.0205	0.68029	0.463
	b) Supervisory support	3.3350	0.43682	0.191
3.	Organizational commitment	2.9447	0.51327	0.263
	a) Affective	3.1333	0.71246	0.508
	b) Continuous	2.8250	0.78262	0.613
	c) Normative	2.9000	0.58839	0.346

Table 1b: Score Value Based on the Likert Scale Range of 5 Points

Value for Likert Scale Range				
Very Low (1.00-1.89)	Low (1.90-2.69)	Moderate (2.70-3.49)	High (3.50-4.29)	Very High (4.30-5.00)

Detailed analysis of the talent management domain showed that three constructs scored higher than the α of the study domain (2.94), namely talent identification (3.25), talent retention (3.05), and talent development (3.01), while a lower score was recorded on the talent culture construct (2.25). Similar observations were made in the career development domain, with higher scores recorded by supervisory support (3.33), while lower scores were recorded by supervisory support (3.02). For the organizational commitment domain (2.95), only one construct, affective, scored higher (3.13), while the other two constructs scored lower, namely normative (2.90) and continuous (2.82).

Correlation Between Variables

The correlation values between the study variables are shown in Table 2. This analysis is to answer the fourth and fifth study questions (RQ4 & RQ5), which are:

- i. Is there a relationship between talent management and academics' career development?
- ii. Is there a relationship between talent management and academics' organizational commitment? and
- iii. Is there a relationship between career development and academics' organizational commitment?

Table 2: Correlation Values Between Study Domains

Domain	Talent management	Career development	Organizational commitment
Talent management	1		
Career development	0.796**	1	
Organizational commitment	0.485*	0.169	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 2b: Interpretation of Correlation Scores Between Study Variables

Correlation Value	Interpretation
1	Perfect Positive/Negative Correlation
± 0.90 to ± 0.99	Very High Positive/Negative Correlation
± 0.70 to ± 0.89	High Positive/Negative Correlation
± 0.50 to ± 0.69	Simple Positive/Negative Correlation
± 0.30 to ± 0.49	Low Positive/Negative Correlation
± 0.10 to ± 0.29	Very Low Positive/Negative Correlation
± 0.0 to ± 0.09	Positive/Negative Correlation is negligible

Based on the values shown in Table 2 and Table 2b above, it can be stated that.

- i. The correlation of Pearson's product "talent management" to "career development" was highly positive and statistically significant ($r = .796$, $p < .001$). So, H_1 is supported. This implies that an increase in talent management will lead to higher career development in academics.
- ii. Pearson's product correlation of "talent management" to 'organizational commitment' was low-positive and statistically significant ($r = .485$, $p < .005$). So, H_1 is still supported. It shows that improvements in talent management will only have a low impact on academics' organizational commitment.
- iii. The correlation of Pearson's "career development" product to 'organizational commitment' was very low, positive, and not statistically significant ($r = .169$). So, H_1 is less supported. It means that the increase in career development has a very low impact on the organizational commitment of academics.

Discussion

Pilot studies are for researchers to assess the feasibility or acceptance of the approach to be used on a larger scale. The aim of the pilot study was not to test hypotheses or measure the effects of the interventions introduced. Pilot studies provide an opportunity for researchers to define study questions, test the design and process of the proposed study, and educate researchers on the different techniques relevant to the study to be conducted. Indirectly, pilot studies can alert researchers to issues that can negatively affect the research project. In summary, pilot studies provide an opportunity for researchers to assess the effectiveness of study methodologies to obtain better results. Among them are:

- i. **Selection of respondents.** Senior academics were found to be more difficult to approach, but they were particularly interested in engaging with the study. Therefore, the researcher took the initiative to meet in person among senior academics to distribute the questionnaire instead of the initial action of placing the questionnaire at the counter of the Faculty Office or distributing it via email and intermediaries. This step was found to play a big role in convincing them and thus increasing the percentage of participation.
- ii. **Response period.** Respondents were found not to answer immediately but instead took up to five days to return the questionnaire. The researcher had to contact the respondents several times via WhatsApp, email, and the like to remind the respondents to fill in and return the questionnaire. Therefore, for the next distribution, researchers need to devise more practical strategies to attract more academics to be involved in the study. This situation seems simple and not challenging, but it needs to be faced with high commitment because it is the most important process of the study, which is the collection of sufficient and reliable data.
- iii. **Data analysis.** More than 300 academics are expected to be involved with the study. If each questionnaire consists of 63 items, then the researcher would have to make entries and analyse 18,900 data. The SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) Version 23 software used was found to be adequate. However, researchers need to get a qualified statistician to enable the data to be analyzed better and according to the set standards.
- iv. **Results of studies (pilot studies).** The analysis of the pilot study showed that only one hypothesis was supported, namely the relationship between 'talent management and career development' (H_1), while the correlation value between talent management and organizational commitment was very low. The findings of this study differed slightly from what was expected. Therefore, researchers should consider conducting interviews involving selected individuals to get an explanation and unravel the findings.
- v. **Study product.** This study should be able to produce a product (or model) that can benefit stakeholders, especially administrators in State IPTS and lecturers. The current target is to produce a "Talent Management Strategy Checklist in State-Owned HEIs". Researchers should consider interviewing the Chief Executive (President), Registrar, and Human Resource Manager to get a clearer picture to produce a research product (model) that is more practical and relevant to the needs of the research institution.

This study has contributed to the existing literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between talent management practices and career development and staff organizational commitment in state-owned HEIs. These findings highlight the importance of

talent management practices in shaping staff's ability to develop their careers and provide a foundation for increasing organizational commitment among staff. This study could be inclined towards these areas in future research and could further develop our understanding of the impact and capabilities of organizational leaders and administrators in developing staff talents and careers to enhance service efficiency and effectiveness. The results of this study can illuminate the progress of the organization's development plan, the improvement of service quality, and the choice of strategies to improve staff.

The results of this study make a valuable and unique contribution to the broad literature by broadening the understanding of the pathways through which talent development practices in organizations can influence career development and organizational commitment among staff in HEIs. Understanding how talent development practices and career progression relate to organizational commitment among staff is the first step towards improving the resilience of business and service organizations to compete and remain relevant in the market. The current findings further highlight the important role of talent management and career development practices in increasing organizational commitment among staff in HEIs.

Conclusion

This study successfully met the objectives and answered the study questions. More importantly, this study can confirm that the adapted instrument can be used due to a stable value of the Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency measure ($\alpha > 0.8$) for each study domain, namely talent management, career development, and organizational commitment among academics. This allows researchers to conduct studies involving larger populations of higher education institutions. Data analysis supports an alternative hypothesis (H_1) that a relationship exists between talent management career development and organizational commitment. Some recommendations from the pilot study should be considered.

Acknowledgments

This article is part of preliminary studies to undertake a doctoral degree program, namely a Doctor of Philosophy in Leadership and Education Management, at Universiti Islam Melaka (UNIMEL), Malaysia. The aim is to guide the applicants in developing the objectives and framework for the proposal of the actual research.

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