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CONSTRUCTING A FRAMEWORK TO EXPLORE OFFICER CADETS' COMMITMENT IN OFFICER CADET SCHOOL, DEFENCE ACADEMY, ROYAL BRUNEI ARMED FORCES

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Abstract:

This article proposed a framework to explore the commitment of officer cadets, specifically those in the Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF). The unique socio-cultural context of Brunei and RBAF provides a distinctive perspective for exploring organisational commitment. Secondly, no study has been conducted on the organisational commitment of officer cadets in Brunei. Hence, the objective of this article is to address this gap through the proposed framework that will utilise existing research on commitment. This study adopted a qualitative research methodology by reviewing documents related to the subject. The proposed framework considered job satisfaction, perceived organisational support, and career development opportunities to influence officer cadets' organisational commitment. It is anticipated that this framework can be applied to explore the commitment of officer cadets, thus providing valuable insights into the factors that influence officer cadets' commitment levels. These insights can potentially lead to significant improvements in the design and implementation of military training, contributing to the broader discourse on understanding commitment in this context. Lastly, this framework has a limited generalisability as it was tailored to the specific military context of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces

Keywords:

Career Development Opportunities, Commitment, Job Satisfaction, Military Training, Officer Cadets, Perceived Organisational Support

Introduction

Officer cadets at the Officer Cadet School (OCS) in the Defence Academy of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces (DA RBAF) undergo a 48-week training course that challenges them physically, intellectually, and emotionally (Officer Cadet School, 2024a). This rigorous military training pushes them out of their comfort zones and tests their resilience. A high level of commitment is essential for an officer cadet to succeed. Studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between commitment and performance among officer cadets at the Royal Military College of Canada (Bradley & Nicol, 2006). This underscores the importance of organisational commitment to training success. However, failing to explore the organisational commitment levels of officer cadets and not addressing any shortfalls can lead to severe consequences, such as poor training performance and potential risks to mission success. Lack of commitment can also lead to poor discipline and the display of characters of unbecoming officers. This highlights the urgency and necessity of this study.

Exploring the organisational commitment of officer cadets is also crucial due to the vision of OCS. The vision of OCS DA RBAF is to develop and produce high-quality officers dedicated and committed to defending the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity, upholding the constitution and philosophy of the Malay Islamic Monarchy, and contributing to nation-building (Officer Cadet School, 2024b). The philosophy of Malay Islamic Monarchy essentially means accepting and upholding Malay values, Islam as the official religion and the Sultan as the ruler of Brunei (Effendi, 2022). To achieve this vision, the mission is to develop officer cadets' leadership, character, and intellect so they will be ready for their first appointments once they are commissioned. Commitment is explicitly mentioned in OCS's vision, indicating its importance. Furthermore, leadership, character, and intellect development does not end when these officers are commissioned; it continues throughout their careers. Therefore, the vision and mission of OCS underscore the importance of commitment. Exploring commitment is essential to determine its level among officer cadets, evaluate the effectiveness of OCS in instilling commitment, and contribute to the continuous improvement of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces.

Despite the importance of exploring organisational commitment, no effort has been made at the RBAF. This absence of exploration is a critical gap that this study aims to address. Based on the findings, this study will provide insights into the state of organisational commitment among officer cadets and will help improve organisational commitment and training performance at the RBAF.

From an academic perspective, research on organisational commitment in a military context is limited (Cohen, 1992; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Riketta, 2002). A military context provides a unique perspective of organisational commitment (Allen, 2003; Gade, 2003). This research addresses this gap, providing a unique context that includes OCS's size, culture, spirituality, and environment in the RBAF. The OCS population is less than one hundred, predominantly Malay and mostly Muslim, from the unique sultanate of Brunei. These factors provide a unique context to explore the factors that can influence organisational commitment.

Literature Review

Organisational commitment is often defined as the degree to which an individual identifies with and is involved in their organisation (Mowday et al., 1982). This commitment in the military includes a willingness to serve, fulfil responsibilities, and maintain organisational integrity.

Previous studies on military personnel and other security agencies have provided valuable information on understanding the factors influencing commitment. A study on the Reserve Officers' Training Corps, United States Armed Forces, found that satisfaction with training, motivation, and unit cohesiveness positively correlate with commitment (Mathieu, 1988). Another study on United States Air Force Academy officer cadets found that positive relations among peers, effective leadership, open and transparent communication from leaders, an environment that promotes creativity, providing officer cadets with a sense of ownership and a practical training process all contribute positively to the increase of commitment (Pendry, 2021). Meanwhile, another study on the Reserve Officers' Training Corps in South Korea found that job satisfaction, leadership, and self-efficacy significantly impact organisational commitment (Yoon et al., 2018).

Moving away from officer cadets and looking at the military and other organisations, there are numerous valuable insights into factors that influence organisational commitment. Studies conducted on employees of PT.XXX, Indonesia (Jasrol et al., 2022), academic staff of Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar, Indonesia (Ni Kadek Ani Widiani et al., 2023) have shown that motivation has a positive influence on organisational commitment. Studies conducted in different industries in Lebanon (Ismail, 2016) and South Korea (Kim, 2021) concluded that goal orientation influences organisational commitment. Studies conducted on different organisations in Kosovo (Hameli & Ordun, 2022) and Kompas Gramedia Xpress Yogyakarta, Indonesia (Utomo et al., 2023) found self-efficacy to be a factor that influences organisational commitment. Studies conducted on hospital staff in Iran (Hesam et al., 2013) and foreign construction workers in Malaysia (Jamaludin et al., 2021) discovered values and beliefs to be influential on organisational commitment. All these factors are related to the individual and can be categorised as individual factors.

In addition to factors related to the individual, there are also factors related to the organisation that influence organisational commitment. One factor is organisational support, where studies on employees in Medan City, Indonesia (Junita et al., 2022), managerial staff in private banks in Cochin, India (Prasad & Jha, 2023) and economic sector employees in Portugal (Silva et al., 2022) have found that organisational support can be associated with increased organisational commitment. Training relevance is another factor associated with organisational commitment supported by the studies conducted on academicians in Malaysia (Bashir & Long, 2015), employees from different industries in Lebanon (Ismail, 2016) and enterprises in Shenzhen City, China (Shen et al., 2014). Another factor that can contribute to increased organisational commitment is recognition and rewards, and this is backed by the studies on private bank employees in India (Ghosh et al., 2016) and nurses in Taiwan (Hsu et al., 2015). Work environment is another factor related to organisational commitment and this is supported by the studies conducted on clinical care providers in the United States of America (Rathert et al., 2009) and hospitals in New York, United States of America (Weinberg et al., 2013).

Previous research also found that factors can be categorised as societal factors that affect organisational commitment. Studies conducted on restaurant staff in Malaysia (Ahmad et al., 2020) found that peer support influences organisational commitment. Economic factors have also influenced organisational commitment based on the study conducted on retail employees in China (Gamble & Tian, 2015).

Various factors affecting organisational commitment can create some complex and challenging issues. First, the diversity of factors such as leadership style, training environment, peer influence, and job satisfaction make it challenging to determine which variables are most important in increasing organisational commitment. Second, the relationship between independent variables and organisational commitment is not always linear and can be influenced by moderator variables such as demographic, psychological, and situational factors. This adds a level of complexity in understanding and measuring commitment. Third, existing models may not fully capture the nuances and uniqueness of specific contexts, as in the case of the Officer Cadet School at the Defence Academy, RBAF. Without a particular model, it may be difficult to devise effective strategies to increase commitment among officer cadets. Collecting sufficient and high-quality data on all relevant factors can also be challenging. Therefore, building a comprehensive and specific framework is essential to overcome these issues and ensure a more accurate and meaningful exploration of organisational commitment.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach to explore the level of commitment of officer cadets at the Officer Cadet School, Defence Academy, Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF). A qualitative approach was chosen because it allowed for an in-depth understanding of the various factors influencing organisational commitment (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Documents such as theses and articles on organisational commitment in a military and non-military context were analysed. (Bowen, 2009). The documents were selected based on their relevance to the research objective and the diversity of their perspectives. This analysis aimed to identify the main factors that influence the commitment of officer cadets. Based on this analysis, a conceptual framework was developed.

Findings

As mentioned in the literature review, numerous factors have been identified that can influence organisational commitment; however, in the context of officer cadets in the RBAF, this study will look at job satisfaction, perceived organisational support and career development opportunities as factors that influence organisational commitment. Job satisfaction refers to the extent to which an individual feels satisfied with their work. This is an essential factor that can influence organisational commitment among officer cadets. When officer cadets feel confident with their duties and responsibilities, they are more likely to form positive emotional relationships with the organisation. This increases their affective commitment to RBAF. This is aligned with a 2017 cross-national study conducted on public managers in India and the United States, where it was found that job satisfaction is an antecedent to affective commitment (Chordiya et al., 2017). Secondly, high job satisfaction is usually associated with higher motivation and better performance, which can lead to a desire to stay with the organisation to achieve more success. This is supported by a study on IT professionals in India where it was found that there is a positive correlation between job satisfaction and motivation (Tiwari et al., 2023). Finally, officer cadets who are satisfied with their work are less likely to seek opportunities elsewhere, which may increase their continuance commitment to the RBAF. Therefore, job satisfaction can lead to an increase in affective commitment.

Perceived organisational support refers to the extent officer cadets believe that the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being. Rhoades & Eisenberger discovered that perceived organisational support positively influences commitment (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). When officer cadets feel supported by the organisation, they may feel more obligated to reciprocate that support by showing higher commitment. This increases their

normative commitment to the RBAF. Strong organisational support can build officer cadets' loyalty to the organisation, improving their commitment. Perceived support can also increase officer cadets' morale and job satisfaction, affecting all components of organisational commitment.

Career development opportunities refer to the opportunities the organisation provides officer cadets to develop their skills and advance their careers. When the organisation offers good career development opportunities, officer cadets may feel that they have invested a lot in their future, which increases their continued commitment to staying with the organisation. Clear and available career development opportunities can increase the motivation and dedication of officer cadets, making them more committed to achieving organisational goals. This is supported by a study conducted in South Africa, where career development opportunities influence affective commitment (Muleya & H., 2022). Through skill development and career advancement, officer cadets can feel that their future in the organisation is bright, increasing their job satisfaction and loyalty.

Figure 1 shows the proposed conceptual framework for exploring officer cadets' commitment in Officer Cadet School, Defence Academy, Royal Brunei Armed Forces.

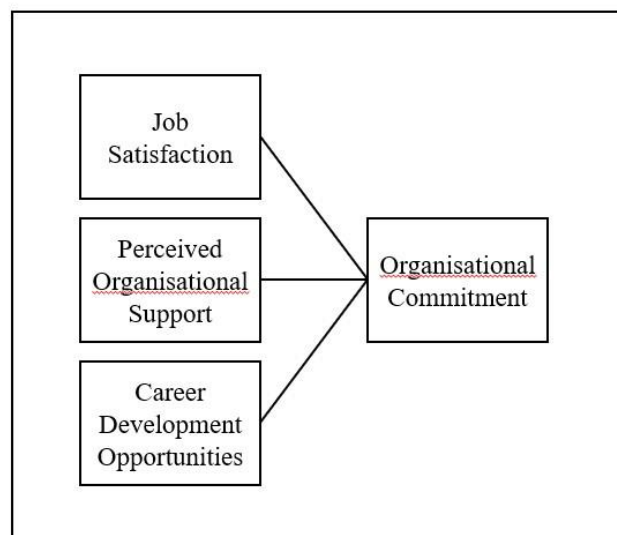


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Conclusion

In conclusion, the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1 has achieved the objective of this study. This framework can be used as a guide to explore and understand officer cadets' organisational commitment level. However, as this framework has not been tested on officer cadets, it is recommended that this study be continued. Semi-structured in-depth interviews with officer cadets are recommended to test this framework. The findings of these interviews can also be supported by interviewing the instructors and officers at Officer Cadet School.

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