Organisational Commitment and its Relationship with Organisation Citizenship Behaviour in a Malaysian organization

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ABSTRACT

This study sets out to test whether the relationship between Organisational Commitment and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) found in the Western context holds true in the non-Western context of Malaysia. This study has two main objectives. The first objective is to assess organisational commitment and its consequences for the level of employees' OCB directed at the individual and organisation. The second objective is to determine if the relationship between organisational commitment and OCB found in the Western context can be generalisable to the Malaysia context.

The study uses Meyer and Allen's (1991) multidimensional organisational commitment and two dimensions of OCB model developed by Williams and Anderson (1991). The respondents (n=315) from six organisations in Malaysia completed the questionnaire. The results indicate that employees' willingness to engage in organisational citizenship behaviours differs depending on the level of their commitment to the organisation. The findings appear to match other studies conducted in the Western context. However, while it has been previously demonstrated that people with high affective commitment appear to be more willing to engage in extra-role behaviour, this study indicates that this notion may only be true for extra-role behaviour that is targeted at the organisation (OCBO). Normative commitment explained the other half of extra-role behaviour targeted at certain individuals in the organisation (OCBI). Moreover, the unique cultural norms and workplace socialisation experiences in Malaysia could have explained the existence of normative commitment as the sole predictor of extra-role behaviours directed at individuals which is different from the Western context.

Key words: organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviour, Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this study is to analyse the impact of organisational commitment on employees' level of organisational citizenship behaviour in a Malaysian context. More specifically, this study aims to assess organisational commitment (OC) and its consequences on the level of employee's organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) directed at the individual and organisation and to determine if the relationship between OC and OCB found in the Western context can be generalised to the Malaysian context.

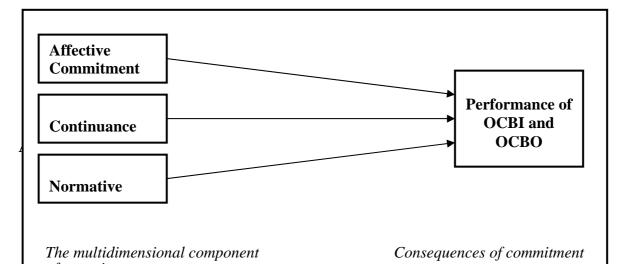
The researchers used Meyer and Allen's (1991) multidimensional OC instrument and two dimensions of the OCB model developed by Williams and Anderson (1991). Most research in OC has been conducted primarily in the United States (Meyer et al., 2002; Randall, 1993) but more recently, the

interest in OC has been extended beyond the Western context. However, most of the research conducted outside Western countries uses the Porter et al (1974) OC Questionnaire (OCQ) model that has a somewhat restricted view of the commitment dimension (Commeiras & Fournier, 2001). The one-dimensional nature of this model and its lack of attention to the various aspects that could shape employees' commitment to the organisation renders the interpretation of results in a non-Western context problematic. A multidimensional approach provides a more thorough understanding of employee commitment because the components of OC have differing relationships with particular behavioural outcomes as well as with antecedent variables (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Multidimensional constructs generally look at commitment from three different components: i.e. affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Few studies have used this multidimensional approach to explain the impacts of OC on OCB.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this study was developed to analyse employee OC and its consequences on the performance of OCB. The schema of this framework is presented in Figure 1. OCBI refers to OCB behaviours directed at the individual while OCBO refers to OCB behaviours directed at the organisation. The dimensions of OC such as affective, continuance, and normative commitment are analysed as independent variables to gauge their effects on the two dependent variables, the performance of OCB that is directed at the individual (OCBI) and performance of OCB that is targeted at the organisation (OCBO). The hypotheses that will be tested are based on this theoretical framework.

Figure 1 The Theoretical Framework



Previous research in western settings indicates that affective commitment is the key factor in predicting OCB (Bolon, 1997; Meyer et al., 1993; Morrison, 1994; Shore & Wayne, 1993; Wiener, 1982). In a meta analysis of attitudinal and dispositional factors of OCB, Organ and Ryan (1995) reported that affective commitment had a significant average correlation positively with altruism and generalised compliance. This also appears to be true in some non-western settings. Recently, Chen and Francesco (2003) found that affective commitment related significantly to OCB in China while Kuehn and Al-Busaidi (2002) also found a similar correlation in Oman. Thus, we anticipate that similar relationships may be found in the Malaysian setting. In general, we conclude that the employees' liking for and attachment to the organisation manifested by affective commitment will lead to the performance of extra role behaviours directed at the individual and organisation. Furthermore, the employee will engage in extra-role behaviours if he or she has high level of involvement with the organisation and strong desire to remain in it. This could only be true for those employees with high levels of affective commitment. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Affective commitment will be positively correlated with the performance of both OCBI and OCBO among Malaysian employees.

NORMATIVE COMMITMENT AND OCB

Previous research has empirically demonstrated that normative commitment is positively related to OCB in western settings(e.g. Allen & Meyer, 1996; Dunham et al., 1994; Kuehn & Al-Busaidi, 2002; Meyer et al., 1993; Morrison, 1994), and Kuehn and Al-Busaidi (2002) found that normative commitment was significantly related to OCB in Oman. In addition, Meyer et al (2002) observed that OCB correlates more strongly with normative commitment in studies conducted outside of North America. Thus, we proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Normative commitment will be positively correlated with the performance of both

OCBI and OCBO among Malaysian employees

CONTINUANCE COMMITMENT AND OCB

There has been some disagreement in the literature when continuance commitment and OCB were examined. In some studies E.G. (Bolon, 1997; Kuehn & Al-Busaidi, 2002; Meyer et al., 1993; Organ & Ryan, 1995), continuance commitment was unrelated to citizenship behaviours, while in other studies E.G. (Chen & Francesco, 2003; Moorman et al., 1993; Shore & Wayne, 1993), a negative relationship was found. Several studies E.G. (Shore and Wayne, 1993; Meyer et al, 1993) suggest that a negative relationship may exist where the intention to stay is based on a lack of alternatives rather than a positive desire to remain. In this case there would be no positive relationship with OCB. Chen & Francesco, 2003, in their study set in China, also found a negative relationship between continuance commitment and OCB. China is a collectivist culture, as is Malaysia (Hofstede, 2001), and so we predict that a similar negative relationship will exist in Malaysia.

Hypothesis 3: Continuance commitment will be negatively correlated with the performance of both OCBI and OCBO among Malaysian employees

THE DOMINANT PREDICTOR OF OCB

Malaysia is a collectivist culture. The main elements of collectivist culture is the emphasis on in-group attachments and the involvement of employees in the organisation is perceived as part of a moral and social identification(Geiger et al., 1998; Clugston et al., 2000; Randall 1993). In a collectivist culture, it is suggested, employees develop strong ties with their in-groups such as managers, owners, and coworkers. Based on this argument, we concluded that employees in a collectivist culture will be more loyal to their organisations than their Western counterparts.

Collectivist cultures have also been shown to be more strongly related to normative commitment (Clugston et al., 2000; Randall, 1993). Recently, in a cross-cultural comparison of OC, Cheng and Stockdale (2003) found that Chinese employees had a significantly higher level of normative commitment than Canadian and South Korean. Within the Malaysian context, several values that promote the development of normative commitment such as obligation, loyalty, and maintaining

harmonious relationships in the workplace have been heavily emphasised (Abdullah, 1992, 1994; Pearson & Chong, 1997).

Therefore, we expect that due to the collectivist cultural context of Malaysia, normative commitment will be the dominant predictor of OCB. Specifically, we will try to determine if normative commitment, rather than affective and continuance commitment, contributes significantly to predicting the level of both OCB forms in Malaysia. Therefore, we proposed this hypothesis

Hypothesis 4: Normative commitment will explain more variance in the performance of

OCBI and OCBO than affective commitment and continuance commitment

OPERATIONALISATION OF VARIABLES

a. Organisational Commitment - These are operationalised using the revised version of Allen and Meyer's (1990) scale which measures the three dimensions: affective, normative, and continuance commitment. The revised version of the scale was adapted from Meyer et al (1993) because it reduces item redundancy and increases clarity. This scale was used because it demonstrates that employees may experience varying degrees of commitment in a particular setting. Recently, this scale has been used in studies of commitment conducted in Asia, the Middle East, and Europe (e.g. Chen & Francesco, 2003; Jong et al., 1997; Kuehn & Al-Busaidi, 2002; Suliman & Iles, 2000; Vandenberghe et al., 2001; Wasti, 2003). The scale has been demonstrated to yield high reliability in those studies.

b. Organisational Citizenship Behaviour - This variable was operationalised using a scale developed by Williams & Anderson (1991). This scale was also consistent with the conceptualisation of OCB as a prosocial behaviour (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986) and OCB (Organ, 1988). Moreover, all of five OCB dimensions proposed by Organ (1988) fit into the Williams & Anderson (1991) scale. In three studies (Bolon, 1997; Turnley et al., 2003; Williams & Anderson, 1991), the scale also has been demonstrated to yield high reliability.

RESEARCH SETTING

The research was conducted in one of the largest energy and utility corporations in Malaysia. The study used cross-sectional data from employees at the corporation's headquarter and its subsidiaries.. In September 1990, this corporation was transformed from a government utility into one of the largest corporations in Malaysia, under the privatisation programme of the government (Malaysian Ministry of Finance, 2001). This corporation was regulated under the purview of the Malaysian Ministry of Energy, Communications, and Multimedia and the government continues to hold the majority stake. The unit of analysis for this research is at the individual level

DATA COLLECTION

Employees were selected randomly by the human resource department of each subsidiary and at headquarters. A total of 598 questionnaires were distributed using the internal mailing system. The completed questionnaires were returned to the human resource department and collected by the researcher the following week.

RESPONSE RATE ANALYSIS

A total of 317 questionnaires were returned after two weeks. However, two questionnaires were not completed and were not used due to the missing responses. This resulted in 315 usable questionnaires for a total response rate of 52.6 percent. The high response rate was attributed to support from the management and initiatives of the participating company's human resource department.

INTERNAL CONSISTENCY RELIABILITY

To test the inter-item consistency of the measures the Cronbach coefficient alphas were calculated. The alphas have values of more than 0.70 except for the dimensions of continuance commitment, OCBO, and overall OCB scale. Overall, the reliability of the measures used in this study was considered acceptable although the value of the alpha coefficient for OCBO was low. Therefore, it could be concluded that all the scales used in this study have demonstrated their consistency and reliability.

PEARSON CORRELATION ANALYSIS

As the primary objective of this study was to analyse the relationship between the dimensions of OC and the dimensions of OCB, a series of Pearson correlations were conducted. This analysis was also used to test Hypothesis 1, 2, and 3. The bivariate correlation analysis was conducted on affective, continuance, and normative commitment as well as on the OCB dimensions of OCBI and OCBO. The result of the Pearson correlation are presented in Table 1.

The values of Pearson's r range from .51 to -.007. This suggests that most variables have a low to medium correlation. According to Cohen and Holliday (1982 in Bryman and Cramer, 1997), a correlation coefficient between .40 to .69 is modest and that those below .19 are considered very low. Based on that guideline, most correlations in this study should be considered modest. The relationships among the variables will be discussed in the following section.

Table 1 Means, Standard Deviation, and Pearson Correlation Analysis

| Variables | Means | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| 1. Affective commitment | 5.150 | 1.020 | | | | |
| 2. Continuance commitment | 4.975 | .903 | .154* | | | |
| 3. Normative commitment | 4.875 | .945 | .510* | .252* | | |
| 4. OCBI | 3.547 | .571 | .222* | 007 | .289* | |
| 5. OCBO | 3.937 | .459 | .273* | 080 | .091 | .071 |

Note: *Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

The Test of Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 proposed that there is a significant and positive correlation between affective commitment with the performance of OCBI and OCBO among all the employees. From the results it can be ascertained that affective commitment had a significant and positive correlation with the performance of OCBI (r = .222, p<.01) and OCBO (r = .273, p<.01). The outcome of this correlation analysis fully supported Hypothesis 1. The values of Pearson's correlation that range from .154 to .510 suggest that there is a moderate to high positive relationship between affective commitment and other variables. Moreover, affective commitment was also significantly correlated with all of the variables at p<.01

The Test of Hypothesis 2

Normative commitment was hypothesised to be positively related to the performance of OCBI and OCBO. However, only the OCBI dimension had a significant and positive correlation with normative commitment (r = .289, p<.01). The findings partially supported Hypothesis 2. In addition, the magnitude of the correlation is slightly stronger than the correlation between affective commitment and OCBI.

The Test of Hypothesis 3

Continuance commitment was hypothesised to be negatively correlated with OCBI and OCBO. However, there was no significant correlation for either constructs and the Pearson's r for OCBI and OCBO were negative. Thus, it is concluded that we did not find the hypothesised relationship between continuance commitment and OCB.

The Test of Hypothesis 4

Regression analysis was performed using the dimensions of OC as the independent variables and OCBI as the dependent variable. The values of regression coefficient from the multiple regression analysis conducted are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Regression Coefficients of OCBI on the Dimensions of Organisational Commitment

| Variables | Estimated parameters | Standardised parameters | Std Error | t-value | Sig. | |
|-----------|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------|---------|------|--|
| Intercept | 2.765 | | .226 | 12.223 | .000 | |
| AC | .058 | .104 | .035 | 1.658 | .098 | |
| CC | 056 | 088 | .035 | -1.580 | .115 | |
| NC | .156* | .258* | .039 | 4.013 | .000 | |

Note: *p<.001.

AC = Affective commitment; CC = Continuance commitment; NC = Normative commitment.

Overall model: $R^2 = .098$; F = 11.207; df = 3,309; Significant at p<.001.

Overall, the three OC dimensions accounted for 9.8 percent of the variance in OCBI and significant at p<.001. Of these predictors, only the regression coefficient of normative commitment was statistically significant (Standardised β = .258, p<.001). Meanwhile the regression coefficients of affective and

continuance commitment did not shown to be an important predictor of OCBI. Therefore, normative commitment contributes unique variance in OCBI beyond affective and continuance commitment. The finding supports the hypothesised dominance of normative commitment in explaining the citizenship behaviour that is directed at the individuals in the organisation. Hence, Hypothesis 4a and 4b were partially supported.

Consistent with the previous section, regression was also carried out involving OCBO as the dependent variable and the dimensions of OC as independent variables. The results of the regression coefficients are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Regression Coefficient of OCBO on the Dimensions of Organisational Commitment

| | Estimated | Standardised | | | | |
|-----------|------------|--------------|------------------|---------|------|--|
| Variables | parameters | parameters | Std Error | t-value | Sig. | |
| Intercept | 3.606 | | .183 | 19.756 | .000 | |
| AC | .140** | .310** | .028 | 4.916 | .000 | |
| CC | 060* | 119* | .029 | -2.116 | .035 | |
| NC | 018 | 037 | .031 | 578 | .563 | |

Note: * p<.05; ** p<.001.

AC = Affective commitment; CC = Continuance commitment; NC = Normative commitment Overall model: $R^2 = .091$; F = 10.293; df = 3,309; Significant at p<.001.

From the results in Table 3, it can be concluded that affective, continuance, and normative commitment account for 9.1 percent of the variance in OCBO and significant at p<.001. Contrary to the findings for the regression of OCBI, the value of the regression coefficient of normative commitment was not statistically significant. However, the regression coefficients of affective commitment (Standardised β = .310, p<.001) and continuance commitment (Standardised β = -.119, p<.05) were statistically significant. From this result, it appears that affective commitment and continuance commitment are the two most important components of OC in terms of predicting OCBO. It could also be concluded that neither dimensions of OC are more significant than normative commitment in explaining the performance of citizenship behaviour that is directed at the organisation. Therefore, Hypothesis 4, the power of normative commitment in contributing unique variance in OCBO beyond affective and continuance commitment, is not supported.

THE PREDICTIVE POWER OF AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT ON OCBO

Given that affective and continuance commitment appear to be the two most important dimensions of OC in terms of their relationship with OCBO, it is important to test the relative abilities of these predictors to contribute uniquely to changes in R². To test which predictor(s) add significantly to the explanatory power of OCBO, hierarchical regression analysis was performed. This procedure tests a predictor's contribution to unique variance in a criterion beyond another predictor's contribution (Organ & Konovsky, 1989). In the first step, affective commitment was entered as the first block into the equation followed by continuance commitment (in the second block) in predicting OCBO. In the second step, continuance commitment was entered as the first block into the equation followed by affective commitment. The changes in R² and F-ratio were observed in both the hierarchical regression models. Table 4 summarises the hierarchical regression analysis performed.

Table 4 Hierarchical Regression Analysis

| Regression model | ОСВО |
|---------------------------------|----------|
| 1. AC first, then CC | |
|) G. 1 4 G | |
| a) Step 1: AC R ² | .075** |
| K | .073 |
| b) <i>Step 2: AC + CC</i> | |
| $\frac{1}{R^2}$ | .090** |
| ΔR^2 (AC beyond CC) | .015* |
| $F \Delta (1, 310)$ | 5.219* |
| 2. CC first, then AC | |
| a) Step 1: CC | |
| R^2 | .006 |
| b) Step 2: CC + AC | |
| R^2 | .090** |
| ΔR^2 (CC beyond AC) | .083** |
| F Δ (1, 310) | 28.409** |

^{*} p<.05

AC = Affective commitment; CC = Continuance commitment

From Table 4, it can be concluded that continuance commitment does add significantly to the explanatory power of affective commitment for predicting OCBO (change in $R^2 = .015$,

^{**} p<.001

p<.05). Subsequently, affective commitment also adds significantly to the explanatory power of continuance commitment for predicting OCBO (change in R^2 = .083, p<.001). However, continuance commitment on its own does not significantly predict the performance of OCBO. The results of hierarchical regression indicate that upon adding affective commitment after continuance commitment, the R^2 changes significantly. Furthermore, when affective commitment is added in the second step, the significant change in R^2 was five times higher than when continuance commitment was added in the second step. This could suggest that affective commitment has a stronger augmentation or add-on effect in predicting OCBO.

Table 5 Summary of Hypothesis Test Results

| Hypotheses | Support | Outcomes |
|--|-------------------------|---|
| 1. Affective commitment will be positively correlated with the performance of OCBI and OCBO among Malaysian employees | Fully Supported | Affective commitment correlated significantly with OCBI and OCBO. |
| 2. Normative commitment will be positively correlated with the performance of OCBI and OCBO among Malaysian employees | Partially Supported. | Normative commitment only correlated with OCBI. No support for OCBO. |
| 3. Continuance commitment will be negatively correlated with the performance of OCBI and OCBO among Malaysian employees | Not Supported | Continuance commitment did not correlate with OCBI and OCBO. |
| 4. Normative commitment will explain more variance in the performance of OCBI and OCBO than Affective commitment | Partially Supported. | Normative commitment only explained the variance in OCBI. No support for OCBO because Affective commitment is strong predictor of OCBO. |
| Normative commitment will explain more variance in the performance of OCBI and OCBO than Continuance commitment | Partially Supported | Normative commitment only explained the variance in OCBI. No support for OCBO. |

Hence, we concluded that affective commitment is the dominant predictor of OCBO. The addition of affective commitment in the second step also gave rise to an F-ratio of 28.409, which is significant with a probability of less than .001 (p<.001). Similarly, the addition of continuance commitment in the second step also resulted in an increase in the F-ratio of

5.219, which is also significant (p<.05). Table 5 presents a summary of the hypothesis test results.

DISCUSSION

There were both similarities and real differences between the results in this study and previous research carried out in western contexts. This research has given new insights into the understanding of normative commitment, one of the less researched dimensions of organisational commitment. Unlike affective and continuance commitment, that have been demonstrated to predict several behavioural outcomes including OCB, the notion of the predictive ability of normative commitment is largely theoretical rather than empirical (Allen & Meyer, 1990, 1996; Meyer & Allen, 1991, 1997). The main implication of this is to emphasise that normative commitment is as important as affective commitment in explaining several employee behavioural outcomes. Previously, it has been demonstrated that people with high affective commitment appear to be more willing to engage in extra-role behaviour. However, this study indicates that this notion may only be true for extra-role behaviour that is targeted at the organisation (OCBO). Normative commitment explained the other half of extra-role behaviour targeted at certain individuals in the organisation (OCBI). Moreover, the unique cultural norms and workplace socialisation experiences in Malaysia could have explained the existence of normative commitment as the sole predictor of extra-role behaviours directed at individuals which is different from the Western context.

Another implication of this study is the justification of using the multidimensional model of commitment in analysing the impacts of organisational commitment on OCB in a non-Western context. Particularly, the use of Meyer and Allen's (1991) model of commitment in understanding OCB behaviours was warranted in this study. By using this model, we found different correlations between affective, normative commitment, and both dimensions of OCB. This is better than using Porter et al's (1974) model that analyses commitment from one perspective, affective attachment. The failure of continuance commitment to explain the consequences of OCB needs to be further investigated. This weakness could impair the use of

the multidimensional model in the future and h Lastly, the study dealt with the two targets of OCB, the individual and organisation. Previous research has not separated these two foci of OCB behaviours. The findings of this study indicate that when we separate OCB into two dimensions, different predictors exist. This conclusion suggests that these dimensions may be distinct. However, the conclusion of this study must be interpreted carefully because this is the first study that uses the classifications of OCBI and OCBO in operationalising OCB in Malaysia. The different predictors we found for both OCBI and OCBO dimensions could suggest that cultural values could influence the development of OCB in the non-Western context of Malaysia.

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