

Personal and Work Related Factors as Antecedent of Affective Commitment in Malaysian Higher Educational Institutions

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Abstract. Resilience, self-efficacy and organizational support are part of personal and work-related factors that contribute to positive human resource strengths that relates to affectively committed staffs in the workplace. For this reason, by using the norm of reciprocity along with the social exchange theory, this paper seeks to understand the relationship between resilience, self-efficacy and organizational support with affective commitment among support staffs in the context of Malaysian Research Universities. Data were gathered through questionnaires from 306 staffs in five universities in Malaysia. The regression result indicated that self-efficacy and organizational support had positively correlated relationship with affective commitment but resilience did not pose any substantial impact on this outcome. Implications of the finding and future research on these personal and work related factors with affective commitment in the context of Malaysian Higher Educational Institutions were also discussed.

Keywords: Resilience · Self-efficacy · Organizational support · Affective commitment · Malaysia Higher Education Institutions

1 Introduction

Staffs working effectively and efficiently are a clear sign of good performance in an organization. Affectively committed staffs whom placed their trust and sincerely believe that the organization care about their well-being and value their contribution will then, in exchange will willingly return by them towards the organization with stronger emotional ties and identification with the organization and its goals [12,18]. To committed staffs, work has meaning and purpose, thereby they are more willingly to do more than their usual job duties, which in turn, provide performance that is beyond expectations.

The literature has shown that personal and work-related factors that center on staffs' strength are important in generating skilled staffs that are desired in order to achieve sustainable and comprehensive development of the respective organization [9, 12, 13]. Despite that, for the last two decades, most researchers studied either personal factors or work-related factors as separately as antecedents of affective commitment (10, 13). Therefore, this study responds to the need to examine in a single study the

relationship between personal factors (i.e. resilience, self-efficacy) and work-related factor (i.e. organizational support) with affective commitment among support staffs in Malaysian Higher Educational Institutions (MHEIs).

2 Literature Review

Affective commitment is defined as staffs' positive emotional ties to, identification with the organization, involvement in the organization and its goals [2, 10]. Previous studies have shown positive correlation between affective commitment with personal and work-related factors that influence staffs' positive work attitude, behavior and outcome such as self-efficacy [1, 9], organizational support [16, 18] and resilience [4, 14].

Resilience is one of important personal factor which refers to a process of adapting well in the face of adversity or the adaptation to it in response to challenging situations [4, 14, 17]. Tracey et al. (2017) posited that resilience focuses on positive organizational behaviors that are open to development and have an impact on desired staffs' attitude, behavior and intention. Due to this reason, most researchers referred resilience as a positive way of coping and adapting with adversity or challenges whereby resilience exists when individuals develop psychological and behavioral capabilities that allow them to remain calm during adversity or any hardship and move on [4, 13, 17].

Another important personal factor is self-efficacy which refers to self-reflecting, self-organizing, and proactive individuals driven by inner impulses [3, 5, 7]. These researchers perceived self-efficacy as self-confidence in individuals' ability to utilize control over their personal motivation and attitude which allow them to become advocates for their own behaviors [3, 5, 7]. Similarly, Onn et al. (2017) also suggested that organization should select individuals who has high level of self-efficacy as these individuals will be motivated to emotionally commit to the organization.

Organizational support, in the other hand, refers to staffs' awareness concerning the extent in which the organizations value their contribution and cares about their well-being [6, 7, 18]. Previous studies had showed that organizational support as possible stimulating condition for the staffs to reciprocate by affectively committed to their organization. These researchers posited that staffs who perceived a high level of support from their organization will feel obligated to and respond in kind through their willingness to affectively commit to their organization [7, 12, 16].

Based on suggestion of the above researchers on the relationship between resilience, self-efficacy and organizational support with affective commitment, this study assume that these personal and work-related factors are positively and significantly related to affective commitment. Hence, the following hypotheses are suggested:

- H₁ - There is a positive and significant relationship between resilience and affective commitment among support staffs in MHEIs.
- H₂ - There is a positive and significant relationship between self-efficacy and affective commitment among support staffs in MHEIs.
- H₃ - There is a positive and significant relationship between organizational support and affective commitment among support staffs in MHEIs.

3 Methodology

This study fell under correlational study that utilized a quantitative method of research whereby it was used to analyze the relationship between or among variables in a single study [8]. A cross sectional survey data was used based on responses from 306 respondents which consisted of support staffs from MHEIs. Data analysis was performed by using SPSS version 25 which was used to screen the collected data and SEM AMOS to examine the relationship between the research variables. Resilience was measured by using a short version of the Resilience Scale developed by Smith et al (2008). Self-efficacy was measured by using the New General Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Chen, Gully and Eden in 2001. Organizational support was measured by using a short version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support Survey (SPOS) developed by Eisenberger et al. (1997) whilst affective commitment was measured by using 6-items developed by Allen and Meyer in 1990.

4 Analysis and Results

4.1 Demographic Profile

Out of 306 staffs who participated in the study, 177 (57.8%) respondents were female and 129 (42.2%) respondents were male. The age varied from 19 to 60 years old, whereby age ranged of 30 years and below constituted 21.6% (66 respondents), 31 to 40 years represented 50.0% (153 respondents) followed by 41 – 46 years (15.0%) and 50 years and above (41, 13.4%). The respondents' working experiences varied from 2 to more than 30 years of experience. Almost half 48.7% or 149 of the respondents have worked between 11 to 20 years. While the remaining of 33.0% (101 respondents) have worked between 2 to 10 years and 18.3% (56 respondents) have worked more than 20 years. In term of academic qualification, 3.3% (10 respondents) had at least a primary school degree (SRP/PMR/LCE), 41.2% (126 respondents) had upper school degree (SPM/SPMV/GCE), 43.8% (134 respondents) had a Diploma/STPM/HSC and 11.8% (36 respondents) had a Bachelor's degree.

4.2 Assumption Test, Convergent Validity and Construct Reliability

In this study, the skewness of the variable ranged between -.059 to -1.193 while kurtosis ranged between -.735 to 1.752 which implied that all variables were normally distributed. The study's variables were also linearly related as the dots in the scatterplot were oval-shaped rather than square. The Normal P-P plot of Regression Standardized Residual showed a straight line which suggested that there was no violation of the linearity assumption. The result also showed that the VIF values ranged from 1.246 to 1.766 which were found to be less than 10, therefore, there was no issues of multicollinearity. This study also used standard deviation analysis to identify univariate outliers whereby the result showed that the standardized (z) score of the imputed variables ranged from -2.315 to 2.0527, therefore, no case of univariate outliers was identified which exceeded the threshold of ± 4.0 as suggested by Hair et al. (2013).

Convergent validity was tested by using factor loading in which factor loading of these constructs were resilience (.649 to .749), self-efficacy (.663 to .803), organizational support (.737 to .912) and affective commitment (.810 to .878). The result of constructs reliability indicated good reliability, thus, the measurement instrument was valid for the results to be accurately applied and interpreted.

Table 1. Construct Reliability, AVE and Squared Correlation Coefficient.

Variable	CR	AVE and r^2			
		Resilience	Self-Efficacy	Organizational Support	Affective Commitment
Resilience	.858	.501			
Self-Efficacy	.910	.225	.560		
Orga Support	.955	.140	.436	.726	
Affective Comm	.940	.091	.297	.483	.725

Note: CR= Construct Reliability, AVE = Average Variance Extracted (on the diagonal), r^2 =coefficient determination (on the off-diagonal)

4.3 Measurement Model

The measurement model assessment of standardized factor loading that consists of 28 items obtained from the individual CFAs indicated that all items had positive values which ranged between .649 to .907. The fit indices values were Relative Chi-Square = 2.117, RMSEA = .061, CFI = .941, IFI = .941 and TLI = .935. Therefore, in this study the measurement model was testified as a good fit model based on factor loading of each revised individual CFAs and fit indices.

The discriminant validity, was tested by comparing the AVE for two constructs against the square of the correction estimation (r^2) between the two constructs. For the present study, the variables' AVEs ranged from .501 to .726, which showed that the values of r^2 were less than AVEs'. The correlation between variables ranged from .302 to .695, which was less than .9, indicating that there was no multicollinearity issue, therefore, the constructs were discriminant from each other.

4.5 Structural Model

The testing of structural model was used to examine research objective through three hypotheses. The result showed that two variables were significantly related to affective commitment whereby the relationship between self-efficacy and affective commitment was $\beta = .150$, $p < .05$, organizational support and affective commitment was $\beta = .593$, $p < .05$. Whilst, relationship between resilience and affective commitment was $\beta = .009$, $p > .05$ which signified that resilience was not significantly related to affective commitment, thus, the hypothesized relationship was not supported. In combination these three constructs explained 49.7% variances in affective commitment or $R^2 = .497$ which signified a moderate relationship.

Table 2. Results of Hypotheses Testing (H₁ to H₃).

Hypotheses	Causal Path	b	SE	Beta	C.R	p
H ₁	R ----> AC	.011	.069	.009	.165	.869
H ₂	SE ----> AC	.200	.092	.150	2.170	.030
H ₃	OS ----> AC	.549	.065	.593	8.479	.000
AC → R =		.705				
AC → R ² =		.497				

5 Discussions

This study was crystallized in order to forecast the relationship between resilience, self-efficacy and organizational support with affective commitment. The result showed that resilience did not contribute significantly towards affective commitment. This result contradicted with previous researchers such as Cho et al. (2017), Jin and Hahm (2017) as well as Paul et al. (2016). These researchers verified resilience as positive response to difficult situation in which these staffs maintained positive emotions that can further translated into an affective attachment to the organization. However, the finding from this study exerted that staff's perseverance in facing and adapting to adversity did not contributed to their affective attachment and commitment to their universities. This may due to the fact that resilience staffs develop psychological capabilities that allow them to remain calm during adversity or any hardship and move on that may not related to their emotionally ties to and identification with the universities.

Conversely, the result from this current study indicated that self-efficacy contributed positively and significantly toward affective commitment. This showed that MHEIs staffs believed that their capabilities will empowered in their career pathways which in turn will give positive implication towards their commitment to their universities. This result was in line with Mukhtar and Sujanto (2018) findings that self-efficacy was a valid predictor of individuals' positive behavior whereby individuals decided on how to behave based on their belief in their own capabilities which was also correlated with their commitment to the organization. Gupta et al. (2016), Jin and Hahm (2017) as well as Onn et al. (2017) also suggested that individuals who had high level of self-efficacy will make them feel emotionally ties to, identification with and involvement in the organization and its goals.

Finding from this study showed that organization support also contributed positively and significantly toward affective commitment. Paramaatha et al. (2019) pointed out that organizational support inculcated sense of responsibility and commitment in employer which will then reflect on staffs' belief that their employer values their contributions and cares about their well-being. These perceived organizational support were reported to have strong positive relationship with affective commitment [12, 16]. Similarly, Stinglhamber et al. (2015) and Vanderberghe et al. (2019) also found that perceived organizational support had a direct impact on affective commitment whereby staffs who perceived better organizational support were more likely to reciprocate with greater positive attitudes such as higher levels of affective commitment towards the organization.

Finally yet importantly, this study fulfilled two out of three theorized hypotheses whereby self-efficacy and organizational support contributed positively and significantly toward affective commitment. This finding conceptualized the important of social exchange theory in which the staffs had high level of self-belief over their capability in achieving an outcome or reaching a goal in the workplace combined with organizational support vested by the organization captured the staffs' beliefs in their universities' commitment to support them, will then in exchange to be repaid by the staffs towards the universities with stronger affective commitment. On the other hand, resilience did not contribute significantly towards affective commitment whereby staffs' ability to experience adversity and adaptation were not a significant factor that make them more willing to commit to their universities.

6 Implication of the Study

To date, insufficient focus and not enough attention were given to personal and work related factors in cultivating staff's strength through affective commitment. This is because, for the last two decades, most researchers studied either resilience, self-efficacy or organizational support as independent topic in different area of studies in organizational behavior [4, 7, 10, 13, 16]. Although there were models of affective commitment, these models did not empirically test in a single study both personal and work related factors with affective commitment. Due to this, this present study added to the body of knowledge by providing a new insight empirically by examining in a single study on the contribution of personal factors (resilience, self-efficacy) and work related factor (organizational support) on attitudinal outcome (affective commitment).

Moreover, most of the studies pertaining to affective commitment were done mostly in western context and in the industry that was different from educational industry. Besides, in Malaysia, the study of affective commitment was still an open field whereby the study that was conducted in educational setting among support staffs in a non-western culture such as Malaysia was minimal. As support staffs were the heart of any organization, therefore, this study added value to the body of knowledge in the context of MHEIs by identifying personal and work-related factors that will drive them to strengthen their emotional bond with the university and voluntary acts in undertaking tasks towards particular commitment targets, goals and values of the universities.

7 Suggestion for Future Research and Conclusion

Although the present research has some merits, it was not free from limitations that suggested directions for future research. First, this study used cross-sectional data which were collected from individual staffs at the same point of time. Future research could employ longitudinal study which able to provide better insight about the causality among study variables. Second, the study was conducted in public MHEIs, thus, it would be recommended to replicate the same study in private universities so that the findings can be generalized to support staffs working in higher education institutions context. Third, the result indicated that resilience was not significantly related to affective commitment, therefore, future study need to add an intervening variable that

may improve this relationship. Finally, it was also recommended for future studies to test these relationships with other organizational theory than social exchange theory to examine this three ways interaction between personal factors, work-related factors and affective commitment.

In the nut shell, this study verified previous researcher findings that affective commitment is beneficial to organization including in MHEIs. By establishing the importance of affective commitment among staff in MHEIs, it will propel top management in the MHEI to design suitable interventions which aims to foster staffs' emotional attachment, involvement, and identification with the universities that combines specific measure at the university and individual level.

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