

**THE INFLUENCE OF EXPATRIATE
ADJUSTMENT AND WORK VALUES ON
ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AMONG
ACADEMIC EXPATRIATES IN MALAYSIA**

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**SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references are appended.

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ABSTRACT

THE INFLUENCE OF EXPATRIATE ADJUSTMENT AND WORK VALUES ON ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AMONG ACADEMIC EXPATRIATES IN MALAYSIA

This study investigates the extent to which expatriate adjustment and work values influence the level of organizational commitment among academic expatriates in Malaysia. Data for this study were obtained from a cross-sectional survey of expatriates employed in six Malaysian universities. Based on a sample of 70 expatriates who completed the study questionnaire, the results indicate that the level of adjustment among academic expatriates in the six Malaysian universities is moderate (a level of adjustment at 3.50 on a 5-point Likert scale). Regression analyses results show that work values (in terms of money ethic, individualism and risk taking) and expatriate adjustment have positive and significant influences on organizational commitment. However, levels of job satisfaction among these expatriates do not show moderating effects on the relationships between work values and organizational commitment and between expatriate adjustment and organizational commitment. Implications of this study are discussed and suggestions for future research are also provided.



ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti sejauh mana penyesuaian ekspatriat dan nilai-nilai kerja mempengaruhi tahap komitmen pada organisasi di kalangan ekspatriat akademik di Malaysia. Data untuk kajian ini diperolehi daripada survei silang rentas para ekspatriat yang bekerja di enam buah universiti di Malaysia. Berdasarkan sampel 70 orang ekspatriat yang melengkapkan soalselidik kajian, keputusan kajian menunjukkan tahap penyesuaian di kalangan ekspatriat akademik di enam buah universiti adalah sederhana (tahap penyesuaian sebanyak 3.50 pada skala 5-poin Likert). Analisis regresi menunjukkan bahawa nilai-nilai kerja (dalam bentuk etika wang, individualisma dan ambilan risiko) dan penyesuaian ekspatriat mempunyai pengaruh yang positif dan signifikan terhadap komitmen pada organisasi. Bagaimanapun, tahap kepuasan kerja di kalangan ekspatriat berkenaan tidak menunjukkan kesan penyederhanaan terhadap hubungan antara nilai-nilai kerja dengan komitmen pada organisasi dan antara penyesuaian ekspatriat dengan komitmen pada organisasi. Implikasi kajian ini dibincangkan dan cadangan untuk penyelidikan masa depan juga dikemukakan.



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Nowadays, universities and other tertiary institutions are increasingly searching for new academic talent on a global scale and more academics are employed abroad (Altbach & Lewis, 1996). Foreign academics are recruited in Malaysia universities because there was a general shortage of Malaysian academics. Other reasons are to fulfil teaching needs, to attract new knowledge and expertise to Malaysian universities. Now the Malaysian government has sent Malaysians abroad to do their PhDs and when they complete from their studies, they will return to serve as lecturers/ professors in Malaysia. In the meantime, foreign academics are hired to overcome the present shortage of local teaching expertise.

Numerous articles and newspapers have been written about the declining quality of graduates. There were allegations that local Malaysian graduates lack basic skills and knowledge that they were supposedly trained in local universities and private colleges (Woo, 2006). Lack of skills and knowledge among fresh graduates can lead to increase in unemployment rate and it would impact on the future and country. To improve the quality of graduates, universities need to attract and keep the best academics (Loh, 2005), which indicate having foreign expatriate in the local universities.

Based on 'The Academic Reputation Survey' conducted by a team led by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA), no public university in Malaysia were rated in the six-star "Outstanding" category while University Sains Malaysia was the only one rated in the 5-star "Excellent" category (Ramachandran & Foo, 2007). Thus, to improve the ratings of Malaysian universities, it is important to develop a pool of excellent and experienced academics. They must play strategic roles to improve ratings in key areas such as research quality, academic reputation of faculty, academic programs quality, research contribution to society, preparation of tomorrow's leaders and quality of graduates (Lew, 2009).

According to the Malaysian government policy, foreign academics who wish to enter Malaysia must take up employment in Malaysian universities based on a two or three years' contract. After that, the contract could be renewed depending on their performance or they could also be terminated. Thus, some of the expatriates are terminated after two years due to their poor performance or they have caused some problems with the organization.

Expatriates must face different socio-cultural environment that is totally different from their home country. Their new environment includes numerous challenges such as different workplace, management style, motivation, human relations and leisure facilities. Thus, when they encounter a new job environment, their response to the job situation can be a source of their problems.

In compliance with the fast pace of Malaysia's development and vision 2020, there need to be a quantum leap in terms of competence and commitment among educationists (Yunus,1999). All the academics need to commit themselves to shoulder heavier responsibility. Academic staffs who are well motivated and committed to their institution/ university can build a national and international reputation for themselves and the institution or the universities can attract high calibre students, research funds and consultancy contracts (Rowley, 1996).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In recent years, academic expatriates are becoming more prevalent in Malaysian universities. For example, a large number of academic staff, especially in the Medical Faculties is expatriates. At University Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and University

Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), a significant number of the expatriates are from Myanmar.

Unlike expatriates who are assigned by their employers to work in foreign countries, academic expatriates do not have employers in their home countries. They seek for jobs in foreign countries at their own free will. In Malaysia, academic expatriates are employed on a contract basis. Each contractual term may range from one to five years and at the end of each term, the employment contract may be renewed or terminated, commonly based on the performance of the expatriate.

Due to the contractual nature of the employment of academic expatriates, these expatriates may leave the organization or be terminated by the organization with short notice. Consequently, the organization will have to find new replacements and the costly process of recruitment, selection and placement will have to take place. It is not easy to find and hire new and qualified academics within a short period of time.

Previous studies have shown that employee turnover, absenteeism and poor job performance are associated with organizational commitment and job satisfaction. The tendency for employees to leave their jobs will be lower if they are satisfied with their jobs and their commitment to the organization is high. In the context of expatriates, the extent to which they have been able to adjust to the Malaysian environment is expected to influence their level of job satisfaction and commitment to their organization. If they can adjust faster, their level of job satisfaction will increase, they will be more committed to the organization, their performance will improve and the organization will benefit from hiring them.

Thus, this study will try to find out the level of organizational commitment among the academic expatriates and the extent factors to which such as job satisfaction, work values and expatriate adjustment influence their level of commitment towards the universities that employed them. A high level of commitment to the organization means that the tendency for these expatriates to leave the organization will decrease.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the levels of organizational commitment among academic expatriates? (high, medium, low)
2. What factors influence organizational commitment of academic expatriates?
3. What is the influence of job satisfaction and work values among academic expatriates on organizational commitment?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate the level of organizational commitment among the academic expatriates.
2. To study the effect of work values on organizational commitment of the academic expatriates.
3. To identify the relationship between expatriate adjustment (in terms of general, work, interaction).
4. To determine the influence of job satisfaction in the relationship between expatriate adjustment and organizational commitment.

1.5 Scope of the study

The scope of this study has covered respondents who are academic expatriates and they are currently employing in University Malaysia Sabah (UMS), University Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas), University college sedaya International (UCSI), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), International Medical University (IMU), University Putra Malaysia (UPM), University of Malaya (UM) and University Technology Mara (UITM).

University Malaysia Sabah or UMS is the ninth Malaysian public university and it is the largest university in East Malaysia .It was established on November 24, 1994. There are 33 professors, 96 associate professors, 420 lecturers, 123 senior lecturers and 89 tutors. As a long-term measure to overcome the shortage of local teaching expertise, the UMS has been sending its younger lecturers to

Britain and Australia for doctorate courses. Meanwhile, it employs 86 foreign lecturers with PhDs on three-year contracts; most of them are Burmese staffing the medical school which debuted in 2003. (online News Malaysia Today, 2009). There are 56 academicians totally in the school of medicine and for specific - 30 Myanmar, 7 Bangladeshi, 3 Indian, 2 Iraqi, 1 Egyptian, 1 New Zealander and 1 English and the rest are local. 30 foreign academicians are from other schools.

The International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), founded in 1993, has developed over the years into an innovative, forward looking centre of comprehensive excellence with a well-deserved reputation IIUM. The University currently has a student enrolment totalling 16,000 and 3,000 teaching and administrative staff members. Many of the students and members of the academic staff are expatriates, representing about 100 countries. There are 58 expatriates currently employing in IIUM.

University Malaysia Sarawak or Unimas is the eighth Malaysian public university in Malaysia and the first university in Sarawak. It is opened its doors for the first time to 118 students and 30 academic staff in August 1993. Today, UNIMAS caters for 7,113 students with 1,795 staff. There are around 48 expatriate academics currently employing in this university.

Researcher has mainly focus on these three universities (UMS, Unimas and IIUM) for this study because they have many foreign academics that are currently employing. To evaluate work values, expatriate adjustment and job commitment, all the foreign academics from these three universities are selected to be the respondents for the questionnaire in this study.

1.6 Importance of the study (significance of the study)

Nowadays, there are many expatriates are currently working in Malaysia and the main reason that they wanted to employ in Malaysia is Malaysian government offered with the high salary and allowances. We can say that money is the primary driver for expatriates. It is notable that a traditional image of an expatriate, particularly someone working in the Middle East and Far East, is a person who is driven by the "pull" of a high salary (Hailey, 1996).

However, if they are not satisfied and do not fit in with the organizational culture, they will leave from an organization or will perform their job poorly. Conversely, if they have satisfied, motivated and highly committed to the organization the tendency to leave will decrease and their performance also will be one of the critical roles to achieve the organization goal.

This research study will benefit not only for the academic expatriate but also for the university. It would be helpful for both academics and the university to understand how work values relate to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Hiring the expatriate academics which understand the value of the work and possess a willingness to work hard can benefit for the Malaysia universities to improve the quality of Malaysian graduates.

University magazines and journals of education suggest that internationalization is the main goal of the higher education (Laureys, 1992). Thus, academic expatriates are one of the university necessities to achieve the goal of higher education. But the problem of managing expatriate academics become more complex and need to be more strategic (Richardson & Mckenna, 2001). Such an investigation is likely to help the university in taking appropriate measures to address the problems of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Since Malaysia is becoming a regional centre of tertiary education, it is expected that this study would also help other universities and institutions in formulating their policies towards expatriate staffs.

1.7 Key terms

The key variables used in this study have specific meaning and such definition in general context as well as in the context of this research are outlined below.

1.7.1 Expatriate academics

Karpen (1993), defined expatriate academics as "professors and non professional staff, the latter only as far as (they are) part of the research and teaching profession". Capellaras (2005) stated that academics can be considered the operational core of the universities. Their performance determines to a large

extent of the quality of the student's higher education experience and thereby on the contribution that such institutions make to the society.

1.7.2 Work values

Work value can be defined as "the goals or rewards people seek through their work, and they are expressions of more general human values in the context of the work setting" (Schwarz, 1999). According to Penning (1970), work values can be defined as constellations of attitudes and opinions with which individuals evaluate their jobs and work environments.

1.7.3 Expatriates adjustments

A definition of expatriate adjustments as a state whereby changes occur in the individual in a direction of increased fit and reduced conflict between the environmental demands and the individual attitudinal and behavioral inclinations (Berry, 1992). Such a fit is marked by reduced conflict, stress and increased effectiveness (Aycan, 1997). According to Black and Stephens (1989), they identified three facets of adjustment: work adjustment, interaction with host nationals adjustment and general adjustment.

Work adjustment includes behaviors that result in effective accomplishment of one's require task and expression of positive attitude towards the new work role (Aycan, 1997). He also mentioned that general adjustment is related with the participation in the social life, satisfaction with living condition and psychological well being. Afterward, for the interaction adjustment, it includes the interaction with new culture and acquaintance with other employees in the host country.

General adjustment comprises psychological and social cultural adjustment. Psychological adjustment is evaluated in terms of maintaining good mental health or psychological well being (Ayan, 1997). It includes such as living conditions, food, shopping, opportunities, housing conditions and health care facilities etc.

1.7.4 Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction can be defined as an attitude that workers have about their jobs. It results from their perception of the jobs (Ivancevich, Konopaske, Matteson, 2008). Locke (1969) defined job satisfaction as a positive emotional feeling, a result of one's evaluation towards his job or his job experience by comparing between what he expects from his job and what he actually gets from it.

Job satisfaction is the result of the interaction of the employees' values and his perception towards his job and environment (Locke, 1976). According to Herzberg's motivation hygiene theory, there are two types of job satisfaction; intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic job satisfaction (factors of job content) is obtained from performing the job, self actualization and experiencing feelings of accomplishment. Extrinsic job satisfaction (Environmental factors) includes working conditions, pay, status and security.

1.7.5 Organizational Commitment

Meyer and Allen (1990) proposed a three component model of organizational commitment. They are affective, normative and continuance commitment. Affective commitment can be defined as the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization. Normative commitment is the feeling of obligation to continue employment. Continuous commitment is an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization.

Summary

As a conclusion of this chapter, researcher has discussed about the expatriate academics and their problems. Many expatriate academics are hired in Malaysian universities due to the general shortage of Malaysian academics. Every expatriate must face with many problems in their organization and try to adjust to fit with the host country organization. They all came from different countries and different environments. Therefore, their work values and perceptions will be different from each other. Thus, adjustments (work, interaction and general adjustment) are very important for every expatriate. In addition, expatriates have faced with many failures because they cannot adjust with the host country's culture. If they can

adjust with the host country's culture, they will be satisfied with their work. If they satisfied with their job, they will be more committed to an organization.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will emphasize past studies done on the influence of factors towards the expatriate adjustment, work values, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. This section also provides the definitions; theoretical explanations and some historical research of the related variables are discussed in this chapter.

2.2 Organizational commitment

Commitment can be defined as the congruence between individual and organizational goals and values (Buchanam, 1974, Mowday, Porter & Steer, 1982). Meyer and Allen (1991) described commitment as a psychological state that (a) characterizes the employee's relationship with the organization, and (b) has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organization. Organizational commitment has been defined as identification and involvement with the organization centering on firstly, believing in the organization's values and goals, secondly, and exerting effort on behalf of the organization and thirdly a desire to remain with the organization (Mowday, Steers & Porder, 1979).

In education industry, academics commitment is conceptualized as lecturers/professors identification with, involvement with, and loyalty to the university (Lew, 2009). Commitment is a high level of attachment to someone or something in a social endeavour. Steers(1977), noted that employees who are highly committed to the goals of an organization and have positive attitudes toward it should be more likely to have a strong desire to come to work and contribute toward goal attainment. Buchanan (1974) defined commitment as "a

partisan, affective attachment to the goals and values and to the organization for its own sake, apart from its instrumental worth”.

Based on the multidimensional nature of organizational commitment, there is growing support for a three-component model proposed by Meyer and Allen (1991). In Meyer and Allen’s (2001) study, they measured the three components have implications for the continuing participation of the individual in the organization. The three components are: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment.

Affective commitment is a feeling of attachment and belonging to an organization. It includes the structure of the organization, the type of work experiences, and personal characteristics (Hartmann & Bambacas, 2000). As academics, they like to teach students and mostly they are satisfying their teaching job. But some are not committed to their academics job because they cannot perform their job well due to the poor communication skills or they are not fit in with the organizational culture. In Meyer and Allen (1991) study, they stated that work experiences, personal characteristics and behavioral commitment factors are influence on affective commitment. They mentioned that employees with a strong affective commitment continue employment with the organization because they want to do so.

Meyer and Allen (1991) further stated that normative commitment is the obligation an employee feels for remaining with the organization to continue employment. In their study, they mentioned that employees with a high level of normative commitment feel that they ought to remain with the organization. Normative commitment could increase by receiving such benefits as advance payment for continuing education, and consideration of special needs and training (Hartmann & Bambacas, 2000). In this study, investments and alternatives factors have influence on normative commitment.

Continuance commitment refers to the awareness of the consequences associated with leaving an organization, or the awareness of a lack of alternatives. Employees choose to remain in an organization based on continuance commitment because they need to do so (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Lost benefits include accrued

pensions, promotions based on tenure, loss of values, future opportunities, or lost efforts if skills or systems are not transferable (Hartmann & Bambacas, 2000).

Hartmann & Bambacas (2000), mentioned in their article, they investigated the extent of three types of organizational commitment among women academic staff. Major variables included the three factors organizational commitment scale affective, continuance and normative (Mayer and Allen, 1990) and intention to quit scale (Burke's, 1991). If employees committed affectively in an organization, they will not leave from the organization within the short period. It is because their feelings of belonging and sense of attachment to the organization and they satisfied and performed well on their job.

Continuance commitment is related with the employees' feelings. Those with high continuance commitment are committed to an organization because of the costs to leaving (loss of friends, loss of pension benefit, loss of familiar environment, etc) that outweigh the benefits of taking a new job in a different organization, or because there is a lack of alternative employment opportunities. Thus, they have to committed to an organization although they are not satisfied their job.

Those with high normative commitment are committed to and remain with an organization because of feelings of obligation. They ought to remain in an organization because organization invested a lot on them (for instance- training, rewards, promotions, job advancement), and they need to loyal to an organization even though they are not satisfied their job. In Hartmann and Bambacas (2000) study, they found that continuance commitment factor has the most important determinant of intention to quit, among the three commitments because continuance commitment is high sacrifice factor among the three commitments.

According to the Xiao and Froese (2008), their study investigated the influence of employees' work values and job satisfaction on organizational commitment among Chinese white collar workers employed at foreign MNCs. Their findings demonstrated that there is a significance relationship between job satisfaction (such as autonomy, performance appraisal, job security and pay satisfaction) and employees' organizational commitment. However, they did not found out any direct effect of work values on employees' organizational

commitment. Then, their result showed that white collar workers are highly educate and ambitious than the blue collar workers. Thus, money ethnic, pay satisfaction might less urgent matters for them.

Boon and Arumuga (2006), in their article, they stated Organizational commitment, as an attitude, has been defined as the relative strength of an individual's identification with, and involvement in, a particular organization (Mowday et al., 1979; Meyer and Allen , 1990). In their study, they investigated the influence of four dimensions of corporate culture (teamwork, communication, reward and recognition, and training and development) on employees' organizational commitment within six major Malaysian semiconductor packaging organizations. Corporate culture is very important for every organization. The main points of employees are committed in their organization because they have good corporate culture. Corporate culture can make employees to satisfy their job such as team work and communication can improve employees relations , rewards and recognition can motivate employees and training and development can loyal to an organization. The results of this study reveal that employees' perceptions of the four dimensions of corporate culture are positively related to employees' work commitment.

The need for high organisational commitment is an important issue in any organisation. This is because an employee who is highly committed towards his or her organisation can be said to be productive, stable, and always strive towards fulfilling their organisation's needs as opposed to those who are less committed (Larkey & Morrill, 1995). Many researchers have used various dimensions towards the three organizational commitments. However, in this study, organizational commitment was used as uni- dimension instead of three dimensions. Regarding to Boon and Arumuga (2006), in their study organization commitment also has been treated as uni-dimension. Organizational commitment is very relevant factor for studying academic expatriates. If academic expatriates are committed to a university, they will be very useful and benefit for the university because they are willing to do everything for a university.

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