

Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment Among Customer Service Representatives at Call Centre Industry in Malaysia

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Abstract

The call centre is a service-intensive organization with a significant proportion of its employees working in direct contact with its customers. Given the nature of front line employees, job satisfaction is a serious issue in call centre as well as the service industry. The front line employees, like any other service sector employees, need to develop and maintain a strong relationship with its human resources for effective performance in assisting customers' problems and inquiries. Therefore, this paper formulates a framework postulating job satisfaction as an antecedent of organizational commitment in call centre industry. The finding of this study should enrich the existing theories by providing additional evidence on the relationship between employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment especially for call centre industry. Eventually, the findings provide empirical support to the concepts and theories that are currently discussed in the employees' job satisfaction literature to be applied especially in the context of call centre perspective.

Keywords: Organizational Commitment, Job Satisfaction, Call Centre Industry, Conceptual Paper.

1. Introduction

In this era of intense competition, employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment receive greater concern among organizations. This concern arises as it is believed that job satisfaction and organizational commitment in return will increase the bottom line and competitive advantage of that particular organization. Clearly, most employees in a particular organization have a view about this issue but all views are different. In some ways, the employees feel differences in their experiences as they interact with the different types of work and organization especially in the call centre areas. Basically, call centre is a centralized office

used for the purpose of receiving and transmitting a large volume of request via telephone from employees (Indridason & Wang, 2008). In call centre areas, employee is an essential part of doing business because it will lead to excellent customer experience that is consistent with customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Shaw & Haynes, 2004). To create values for customer satisfaction, the organization must first create values and great experiences for their internal customer so called employees. The organization must give the most excellent and greater effort to satisfy their employees by building up strategies that meet today's employees' needs with adequate preparation to interact effectively with today's employees. However, this preparation does not magically appear. The call centre organizations must have the ability to assess the employees' need and begin the process of need satisfaction in order to achieve employees' job satisfaction, to deliver excellent customer experience as well as to attain organizational commitment (Sureshchandar, Rajendran, & Anantharaman, 2002). Meaning to say, the employees must be well knowledgeable, open to innovative ideas, flexible and motivated to change rather than resistance to face the global competitions in the global market (Harris, 2006). Today's employees offer a great opportunity to today's organization to excel, to be the best and to separate themselves from other competitors. The organizations must reimburse a lot of concentration particularly to employees who are the essential elements in organization to gain organizational commitment that is parallel with affective, normative and continuance aspects (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Obviously, thing to remember by any organization is that satisfied employees will generate and create organizational commitment. By having employees' job satisfaction, Ahmad and Kamal (2002) claimed that these employees are able to satisfy customers by providing the best excellent services that are desirable by valued customers. This is a long-term benefit for the organization. Therefore, satisfaction is tied closely to organizational commitment that can give positive return to a particular organization.

2. Problem Statement

Even though the importance of organizational commitment and job satisfaction has received extra attention from organization, much of the research in this area has been carried out in the West (Darwish, 1998). There is lack of research being done in Malaysia. To worsen the issue, organizational commitment among employees in call center also has been given least attention. In the Malaysia context, the study of this area only focuses on the employees at public sectors especially in library and radiography staff (Noor & Noor, 2007). Yet there have been few research studies in this field, research effort on job satisfaction and organizational commitment in call center work is crucial.

On top of that, highly job demand in call centre environment creates unbearable pressure to the employees (Connel & Hanif, 2009). Organization should be able to identify and address this issue since stress in the job brings bad consequences towards the employees. These consequences include feeling demotivated and dissatisfied among employees. According to Sharma and Bajpai (2011), when employees are dissatisfied, this will lead to the intention to leave the organization and find other jobs. Other than that, the organization should be noted that the costs of losing employees are normally higher than retaining them. The more employees leave the organization, the more investment the organization has to incur. According to Pepe and College (2010), the concern with costly challenges of locating, attracting, and retaining quality

employees are becoming overwhelming among the business executives. They further added that there is a significant economic impact when organization starts losing critical employees (Pepe & College, 2010). According to Gunlu, Aksarayli and Percin (2011) employees leaving organization means that the turnover is growing. High turnover rate of a particular organization is actually a warning alarm for the organization to put extra effort to find what is going on.

Considering the importance of these issues, organization should be able to fulfil the employee needs by providing satisfying job since the negligence of these problems could harm the organization. Thus, this study attempts to uncover the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment, giving a focus on call centre industry. Eventually, this study represents an attempt to fill in the empirical gap in the call centre literature in Malaysia.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment

Job satisfaction and organizational commitment has received much attention in various organization industries including airways (Chen, 2006), educational institution (Gopinath, 2020; Anari, 2012, Wong & Tay, 2010; Arif & Junaidah, 2011), library, (Noor & Noor, 2007; Strohmamm & Ohler, 2011), health (Puriene, Petrauskiene, Janulyte, & Balciuniene, 2007), tourism (Gunlu *et al.*, 2011), police (Abdulla, Djebarni, & Mellahi, 2011) and others. With regard to the importance of satisfying and retaining employees, most organizations are now being highly concern to be proactive in understanding and dealing with these issues.

Numerous studies have found the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment (e.g Lambert, Keena, Leone, May, & Haynes, 2020; Kwantes, 2009; Chen, 2006; Westover, Westover, & Westover, 2010; Darwish, 1998; Darwish, 2002; Gunlu *et al.*, 2010; Noor & Noor, 2007; Arif & Junaidah, 2010; Pepe & College, 2010). The results from these studies mostly have proven that there is a strong relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Westover *et al.*, 2010; Darwish, 1998). For example, a study conducted by Westover *et al.* (2010) found a significant relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Job satisfaction is argued to be directly connected with organizational commitment affectively, continually or normatively (e.g Kwantes, 2009; Chen, 2006, Darwish, 2002, Gunlu *et al.*, 2010; Makanjee, Hartzler, & Uys, 2006; Namasivayam & Zhao, 2007; Noor & Noor, 2007). However, the direction is different. It was found that job satisfaction was positively related to affective commitment (Kwantes, 2009; Gunlu *et al.*, 2010; Noor & Noor, 2007; Makanjee *et al.*, 2006; Namasivayam & Zhao, 2007; Darwish, 2002). The similar findings noted that job satisfaction was positively related to normative commitment (Darwish, 2002; Gunlu *et al.*, 2010). In contrast, the results for job satisfaction and continuance commitment are mixed. There was a positive relationship found between job satisfaction and continuance commitment (Pepe & College, 2010; Makanjee *et al.*, 2006) while other studies revealed that continuance commitment was found to have negative relationship with job satisfaction (Gunlu *et al.* 2010 and Darwish, 2002; Namasivayam & Zhao, 2007; Noor & Noor, 2007).

3.2 Outcomes of Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment

Numerous studies have conducted research on the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment to predict other work-related outcomes. Lambert *et al.* (2020) and Rodrigues and Pinho (2010) suggested job satisfaction and organizational commitment reflect the contribution of employees to the vital success of organization. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are found to be positively correlated to job performance and productivity (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Jaramillo, Mulki, & Marshall, 2005; Venderveghe, Bentein, & Stinglhamber, 2004; Westover *et al.*, 2010; Zhen & Francesco, 2003). As predicted, researches agreed that when employees are highly committed and satisfied with their job, this will in turn increase their performance and productivity. As stated by Gunlu *et al.* (2010) “job satisfaction is a key factor to maintaining high performance and efficient service, which will directly increase the productivity of the organization” (p. 694). In contrast, they are negatively correlated with turnover intention, turnover, absenteeism and job stress (Somers, 2009; Makanjee *et al.*, 2006; Chen, 2006; Ito & Brotheridge, 2007; Darwish, 2002). For example, Darwish (2002) suggested that employees with low job stress will experience better job satisfaction as well as organizational commitment. He added that when employees are satisfied and highly committed, they are believed to perform job better, reduced absenteeism and fewer turnovers (Darwish, 2002).

3.3 Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment has been defined in various ways. According to Camp (1994), organizational commitment refers to the equality between individuals’ goals with the organization whereby the individuals will identify and extend their effort on behalf of the organization’s general goals. Similarly, Rodrigues and Pinho (2010) define organizational commitment as “the strength of the employee’s feelings toward and views of the organization, belief in its goals, identification with the organization values and a cognitive desire to belong to the organization” (p.177). Meyer and Allen (1991) have proposed three components of organizational commitment concept. The three components are affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). According to Meyer and Allen (1991), the first component, affective commitment refers to employee’s attachment to, identification with and involvement in the organization. Employees with strong affective commitment will remain in the organization because they want to (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Normative commitment on the other hand refers to feelings of obligations to the present organization based on employees’ own personal norms and values (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Employees whose primary link with the organization is based on normative commitment remain in the organization because they feel they ought to (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Meanwhile, continuance commitment is defined as employees’ awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Employees whose primary link with the organization is based on continuance commitment remain in the organization because they have to or need to.

According to Zhen and Francesco (2003), the three components proposed by Meyer and Allen (1991) are commonly related to the view that commitment is a psychological state that is characterized by the relationship between employees with the organization as well as their

implications on the decision whether to continue or discontinue membership with the organization. Vandenberghe *et al.* (2004) further extended the idea whereby they discovered that the decision to pursue or stop the organizational membership will be based on employees' primary evaluation on the current status of their relationship with the organization. The relationship status by means reflect their level of commitment to the organization (Vandenberghe *et al.*, 2004).

3.4 Job Satisfaction

Along with the growth of researches and literatures on job satisfaction, there have been various definitions of this variable. Furnham, Eracleous, and Premuzic (2009) define job satisfaction as the extent to which people are satisfied with their work. Arif and Junaidah (2011) refer job satisfaction as an emotional or affective response employees have towards their job. They further explained that this is a result from employees' perceptions of their jobs plus the degree between individual and the organization goals are matched. Job satisfaction also relates to the positive feeling they have about their job. According to Lambert *et al.*, (2020) and Wong and Tay (2010), the positive feeling results from employees' perception of the extent to which their personal goals are complemented by their jobs. Wong and Tay (2010) further added that the perceptions disclose employees' value judgment is based on expectations and perceptions of the effort they put in with the outcome they receive. According to Westover *et al.* (2010) satisfaction is closely related to expectations. When expectations are met or exceeded, the level of satisfaction will be high and vice versa. Satisfied employees are closely related with committed employees. Westover *et al.* (2010) revealed that commitment to continued employment is more important for satisfied employees than dissatisfied employees.

3.5 Determinants of Job Satisfaction

For several decades, factors influencing job satisfaction are determined and classified by numerous studies (Abdulla *et al.*, 2011). In determining the factors, Abdulla *et al.* (2011) stressed that extra attention has been given to factors arising from the work environment. These environmental factors are believed to motivate employees to work with high levels of job satisfaction (Abdulla *et al.*, 2011) including salary or pay (Okpara, 2004; Carraher, 2011; Wunder & Schwarze, 2006; Puriene *et al.*, 2007; Chen, 2006; Westover, 2010; Abdulla *et al.*, 2011; Furnham *et al.*, 2009; Koustelious, Theodorakis, & Goulinoris, 2004), promotion opportunities (Okpara, 2004; Chen, 2006; Westover, 2010; Abdulla *et al.*, 2011; Koustelious *et al.* 2004), supervision (Okpara, 2004; Camp, 1994; Chen, 2006; Griffin, Patterson, & West, 2001; Pepe & College, 2010; Bulgarella, 2005; Babin & Boles, 1996; Abdulla *et al.*, 2011; Koustelious *et al.*, 2004) and satisfaction with co-workers (Okpara, 2004; Westover, 2010; Abdulla *et al.*, 2011). Another study done by Darwish (1998) stressed out another dimension of job satisfaction which is job security. This dimension is supported by Westover (2010) and Qiao and Schaufeli (2011) but in the opposite way which is the relationship of job insecurity with job satisfaction. For this study, four dimensions of job satisfaction are considered which are pay, promotion, supervision and job security. There is general agreement that these four variables have strong impact on job satisfaction (e.g Darwish, 1998; Chen, 2006; Abdulla *et al.*, 2010; Pepe & College, 2010) whereby it was indicated that through the findings of their studies, these

variables have significance relationship with job satisfaction. In fact, with regards to the role of call center employees, Saane, Sluiter, Verbeek, and Frings-Dresen (2003) listed promotion, financial rewards and supervision are common items used to predict job satisfaction in social service employees.

3.5.1 Satisfaction with pay

According to Abdulla *et al.* (2011), salary and incentive clearly appeared to be the most powerful determinant of job satisfaction. In the finding of their study, great deal of attention is given to remunerations such as salary, fringe, benefits, allowance, recognition and financial rewards. Wunder and Schwarze (2006) in the study of German full-time employees found that different income between persons in organization has a clear impact on job satisfaction. Qiao and Schaufeli (2011) believed that equal expected utility level and satisfaction are major concerns of employees. They found that if workers can obtain salary and fringe benefit compensation according to their effort, they are willing to accept additional risks including high workload and extra work time. Furnham *et al.* (2009) claim that employees who perceived their job are well-paid feel satisfied and become more attached towards the organization.

3.5.2 Satisfaction with promotion

Gorjup, Valverde, and Ryan (2008) define promotion as a job that provides opportunities with rapid advancement. Gorjup *et al.* (2008) further extend that employee's opportunities in getting promoted are influenced by the period of employment they have. The longer the employees work with particular organization, the higher the chance of them being promoted. Okpara (2004) claimed that employees who have opportunities to be promoted will behave in a positive way and increase their level of job satisfaction. Weng, McElroy, Morrow, and Liu, (2010) added that employees who are seeking for personal career growth would hop from one organization to others. The idea is based on the assumption that if opportunity for career growth is lacking within their current employer, they would go for other organization (Weng *et al.*, 2010). This concurrently reflects that the dissatisfied employees will quit from the organization. Due to this issue, organizational commitment is less salient to these individuals (Weng *et al.*, 2010) whereby their psychological attachment to the employers is affected by their ability to personally grow and develop within the organization.

3.5.3 Satisfaction with supervision

According to Griffin *et al.* (2001), supervisors' support is defined as supervisors who provide support and encouragement to their work group employees. In relation to this encouragement and support, supervisors play an important role in providing information and feedback to employees (Griffin *et al.*, 2001). The role of supervisors is also concern with structuring the work environment (Griffin *et al.*, 2001) which allows conducive environment for employees to perform their work (Babin & Boles, 1996). Supervisors who are able to provide this reflect the employees' believes that those supervisors are concerned about their well-being and contributions (Pepe & College, 2010). According to Babin and Boles (1996), supervisors who are supportive will help increase employees satisfaction with their job. Through the findings

of their study, it is indicated that a strong relationship between supervisor support and job satisfaction is a result of employee perceptions of supportive management has given towards their physical well-being (Babin & Boles, 1996). This is in line with the finding of Bulgarella (2005) study whereby she found that supervisory support is the powerful job satisfaction and employee service effort predictor. Pepe and College (2010) suggested in order for organization to have highly committed and satisfied employees, managers should be able to express supportive environment towards the employees. It was found that when perceived supervisor support level is low, employee’s organizational commitment and job satisfaction will consequently be low.

3.5.4 Satisfaction with job security

Darwish (1998) refers job security as the extent to which an organization provides stable employment for employees. In contrast, Ito and Brotheridge (2007) state that job insecurity reflects the negative feeling the employees have towards their employment including potential loss of employment as well as the uncertainty in promotional opportunities and responsibility levels in ones career or job. The perceived stability of employment is normally related to employees’ experience (Qiao & Schaufeli, 2011). They stressed out employees who have gone through downsizing in the past employment will experience future job insecurity and will make them to be less confidence towards current organization (Qiao & Schaufeli, 2011). Darwish (1998) suggested that if employees are satisfied with job security, they will display high level of attachment and commitment towards organization. The more the employees are satisfied with the security of their jobs, the more they are committed to their organization (Darwish, 1998).

4. Conceptual Framework

Based on the literatures reviewed, the conceptual framework is developed and illustrated in Figure 4.1 as below:

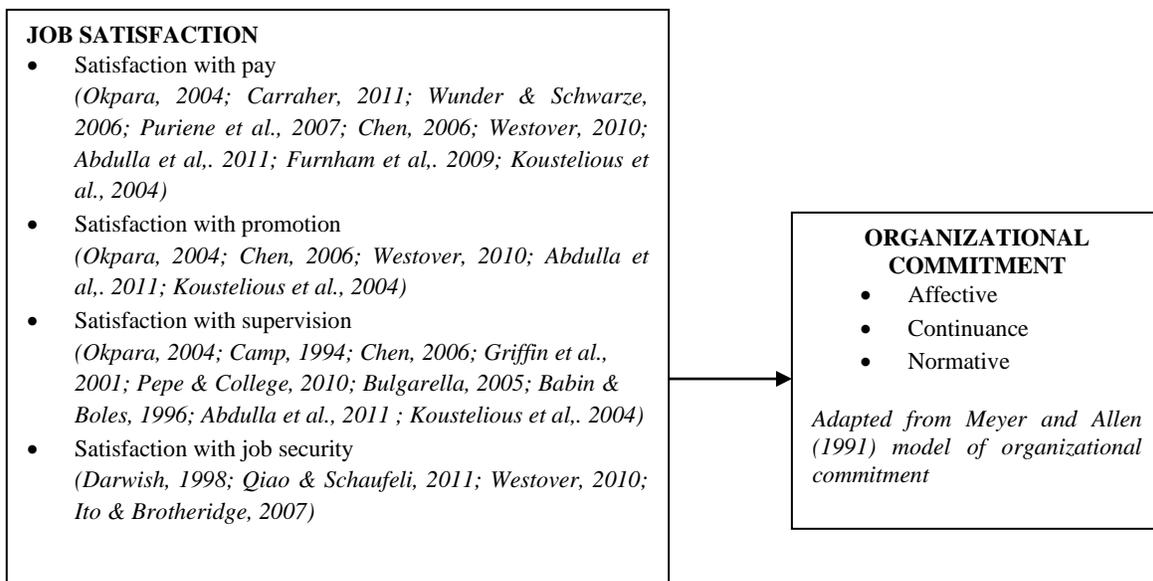


Figure 4.1: Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment among Customer Service Representative at Call Centre Industry

On the basic review of the previous literatures and the development of conceptual framework, 12 hypotheses are developed:

- H1: There is significant relationship between satisfaction with pay and affective commitment
- H2: There is significant relationship between satisfaction with promotion and affective commitment
- H3: There is significant relationship between satisfaction with supervision and affective commitment
- H4: There is significant relationship between satisfaction with job security and continuance commitment
- H5: There is significant relationship between satisfaction with pay and continuance commitment
- H6: There is significant relationship between satisfaction with promotion and continuance commitment
- H7: There is significant relationship between satisfaction with supervision and continuance commitment
- H8: There is significant relationship between satisfaction with job security and continuance commitment
- H9: There is significant relationship between satisfaction with pay and normative commitment
- H10: There is significant relationship between satisfaction with promotion and normative commitment
- H11: There is significant relationship between satisfaction with supervision and normative commitment
- H12: There is significant relationship between satisfaction with job security and normative commitment

5. Discussions

5.1 Call centre industry

The finding of this study should become the main subject in the call centre industry that job satisfaction with four dimensions – satisfaction with pay, satisfaction with promotion, satisfaction with supervision and satisfaction with job security in which dramatically will contribute to some ideas towards the perceptions of employees on how well they are performing their jobs and how the organization can help them to be committed and continue servicing in call centre industry. By having this information, it is hoped will help the organization to find the way how they can develop or improve existing policy regarding benefits or retention program in the organization.

5.2 Leader in call centre industry

Moreover, the study should also help the leaders especially in call centre industry to understand how employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment in correlate to each other. Hence, by learning how organizational commitment operates in organizations, the leaders will be able to use that knowledge to become more effective leaders. The findings of this study also may provide leaders with a clear picture of their roles and how it might impact the level of employees' job satisfaction in organization.

5.3. Employees

The study should also enhance employees' positive behaviour in which specifically job satisfaction in workplace. When positive workplace is increased, employees will become the asset to the benefits of organization.

6. Theoretical Contribution

Besides, the finding of this study also should enrich the existing theories by providing additional evidence on the relationship between employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment especially for call centre industry. Eventually, the findings provide empirical support to the concepts and theories that are currently discussed in the employees' job satisfaction literature to be applied especially in the context of call centre perspective in order to stay competitive among other competitors. It is also anticipated that the results of the study contribute to the research literature on employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment that providing further clarifications and explanations of both constructs in an organizational context.

7. Conclusion

As conclusion, the ability of particular organization in retaining and satisfying its employees have great impact in overall company well-being and consequently affect the productivity and successfulness of its business. The efforts of retaining employees to have full commitment towards organization do not happen in short time. It requires long-term plan and strategies. In order to do so, regular monitor on organization current practices of hiring, training and terminating employees should be concerned. It is important to have quality employees within organization, rather than massive volume of unqualified employees. With regard of the call centre context, it is necessary for organization to carefully manage their employees since the tendency and risk of employees' turnover to occur is quite alarming. Proper training should also be given so that employees are equipped with the necessary skills and competencies to perform their job. On top of that, commitment of employees toward the organization mainly relies on their satisfaction with job. The critical satisfaction factors should be considered and taken into accounts so that their well-being is well-taken care off.

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