

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE EFFECTS TOWARDS EMPLOYEE INTENTION TO STAY

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ABSTRACT : *This research paper discusses on the relationship between emotional intelligence towards employee intention to stay amongst private higher education institutions. It is a common situation in Malaysia whereby the private higher education institutions faces many challenges including high employee turnover rates and burnout amongst staffs. The data collected represented the private higher education institutions in the East Coast of Malaysia. The respondents for this research are 100 employees who are willingly participated and most of them have a high level of emotional intelligence. They also indicated that they have no intentions of leaving their current job because of their passion and love towards the job. The results shown that employee emotional intelligence significantly have a positive relationship with employee intention to stay.*

INTRODUCTION

The Higher Education Department of Malaysia in February 2013 has instructed a moratorium status to all the private higher education institutions in Malaysia. Therefore, the action taken by the department indicates that there are evidences of difficulties and challenges in managing and coordinating the private higher education institutions in Malaysia. This involves the high turn over rates of staffs in the institutions, governance of the institutions, financial problems, academic quality control challenges and issues involving international students. Baharuddin (2003) has identified that employee turn over rate in the private higher education institutions is a critical issue because it gives impact towards the institution's academic quality and efficiency. A higher learning institution will not be able to produce talented graduates if the organizational members were incompetent. Rozhan (2005) has identified that organizational members who has the potential to overcome domestic organizational problems and challenges has indicated that they are the core individual staff who are willing to work the extra mile for the organization. This group of people are the ones who are able to commit their lives and well being to the organization even though that the organization has been making many troubles and facing problematic issues such as monetary and sustainability. For a person to have high commitment levels showing towards the organization, Sahdat et al. (2011) suggested that only high levels of emotional intelligence amongst individuals will develop such behavior.

Employee intention to stay had always fascinates scholars to further probe on the issue in real organizational settings, amongst the important key factors associated with employee intention to stay are the demand towards work loads (Butler et al., 2005), job satisfaction (Onyishi et al. 2012 & Voydanoff, 2004), autonomy (Langfred, 2000), values of positive relationships in organizations (Kristof et al., 2005) and burnout (Muhammad & Umar 2012). However, the emotional intelligence factor associating with employee intention to stay has not yet deeply discussed especially in the Malaysian Private Higher Education Institutions' organizational setting. Therefore, this study will help the researcher to further probe the importance and association of emotional intelligence and employee intention to stay.

In predicting the factors associating employee intention to stay, Volkwein dan Zhou (2003) suggested that emotional intelligence plays a vital role towards improving healthy work relationships, job satisfaction and better organizational commitment. The positive and healthy work environment will eventually increase the

potential of an employee to stay longer with the organization. Besides that, an individual's emotional intelligence creates a positive relationship with employee satisfaction, motivation, productivity and organizational commitment as worked out by Trivellas dan Dargenidou (2009), Larsen et al. (2002) and Sparrow (2001). According to Markowitz (2012), an individual's willingness to give full support and commitment towards an organizations' goals will stay longer compared to others who do not. Employee organizational commitment is regarded as the main contributor towards organizational performance Riketta (2002). Emotionally intelligent and committed individuals has higher potential to sustain and overcome stressful conditions as predicted by Ilhami (2012), Loquias (2012), Muhammad Shaheel et al. (2012) dan Lawrence (2011). They are also able to develop strategies in undertaking the negative effects of stress (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997).

Unfortunately, individuals with low levels of emotional intelligence are not able to control their emotions especially when handling difficult situations. They are also not aware of the changes of their emotions and behavior. This will then increase their stress level and reduces their intention to stay with the organization (Rosser 2004). It is true that academicians in the higher education institutions shows high level of emotional intelligence, positive behavior towards the organization and develop high potential for success Coco (2011). Emotionally intelligent individuals are able to act and behave accordingly and able to sustain even though there are changes and new implementations in the organization Vakola et al. (2004). An individual who has a positive personality and are able to adapt the organizational changes especially in universities as proposed by Hagedorn (2000) are more productive and committed to the university. Therefore, the research objective is to identify the emotional intelligence effects towards employee intention to stay amongst Malaysian PHEI's employees.

THE METHODOLOGY

For the collection of data, a set of questionnaire is used to maximize information gathered within a huge population, the data gathered will also identify the relationships of the variables and will not be expensive (Mohd. Majid, 1990; Ishak, 2002; Ashkanasy et al. 2000). The respondents identified to participate in this research are amongst the management level staff, the academic staff and the supporting staff. The respondents were PHEI permanent staff in the East Coast Region of Peninsular Malaysia. There are 14 PHEIs in Terengganu, 10 PHEIs in Kelantan and 15 PHEIs in Pahang. A set of questionnaire consists of four important components which are (i) Emotional Intelligence Section by Wong & Law (2001) with 12 items; (ii) Organizational Commitment Section by Cook & Wall (1980) with 9 items, (iii) Intention to Stay Section by Price & Mueller (1986) with 4 items and (iv) Demographic Section with 10 items were used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research managed to obtain 100 respondents from the East Coast Region of Peninsular Malaysia. From the data gathered, 32 of the respondents are male PHEI staff and 68 are female. Only 25 of the respondents are the academic staff while 75 are administrative staff. The data also indicates that 60 of the respondents have 1 to 5 years of experience working with the PHEI and only 40 of them has been working for more than 5 years.

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 20. Pearson Product Moment Correlations and Multiple Regression analysis were used to measure the degree of relationships and effects of both variables in the study. There is a positive and significant relationship between emotional intelligence and employee intention to stay at $r = 0.375^{**}$, $p < 0.01$. The effects of employee emotional intelligence towards their intention to stay shows a significant value ($F(2, 99) = 8.975$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, from the data analysis obtained, it is crucial to understand that employee emotional intelligence plays a significant role in employee intention to stay with the organization. It is observed that most of the respondents has a significantly high level of emotional intelligence, and even though that the organization might be facing some sort of organizational problems, challenges and difficulties but with high emotional intelligence, they will not leave the organization. They are willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of the organization.

Guleryuz et al. (2008) suggested that employee with high levels of emotional intelligence are more satisfied with their jobs and are more committed towards their work and efforts. They also have the capabilities to control their emotions when are attacked by their superiors or counterparts and they are willing to sacrifice their personal feelings when they are working under pressure. High levels of emotional intelligence will create an effective worker who are also efficient in the organization. An employee who has high levels of emotional intelligence will not easily give in when there are troubles in the organization Humphreys et al. (2005) and Sy et

al. (2006). These people will work hard and overcome the problems professionally. Conflicting situations will not deter them from being highly committed while working and obtaining job satisfaction. They trust and have high confidence towards the organization and will not leave the organization easily (Labatmedeine et al. 2007).

An individual worker who has a low level of emotional intelligence are easily affected by unsatisfactory feelings towards their organization. They will act negatively, being unproductive and sometimes create irrational situations Lopes et al. (2006) & Aremu (2005).

The data analyzed in this particular research has also shown to agree with the cross cultural theory. The cross cultural theory developed by Early and Francis (2002) has identified that an organizational culture influenced the characteristics of individual staff in the organization. This in turn will then effects the commitment levels of the individual staff. A supportive organization will understand and create the feelings of ownership throughout the organization. It shows that the organization has to create a positive and supportive working environment in order to do so. A good quality organizational culture in private higher education institutions has contributed to the success of developing committed employees and enhance their emotional intelligence. Apart from the theory developed by Early and Francis (2002), the organizational culture model by Schein (1992) also indicates the importance of having a dynamic and understanding perception amongst the individual employees in the organization. When the individual employees in the organization understand the philosophy and the need to become united as one, the individual employees will work hard to strive their very best. This situation will also enhance their commitment towards the organization and at the same time becoming more emotionally intelligent due to the understood purpose towards the organization.

These findings are also supported by the model suggested by Volkwein and Zhou (2003). They identified that a satisfied individual employee has to have a good level of emotional intelligence. An individual employee who are not able to control or regulate their emotions have problems in maintaining good relationships in organizational settings and are unable to commit themselves to the organization wholeheartedly. These individual employees are also hesitated to put extra effort to ensure organizational success. Larsen et al. (2002) supported this statement by indicating that an individual's emotion has a significant impact towards the organizational commitment. Mohd. Azhar (2004) and Ke Guek Nee (2008) has done a comprehensive research on emotional intelligence and linked it with job satisfaction. They have identified that an emotionally intelligent individual employee has a higher level of job satisfaction. This is due to the ability to regulate and control their emotional well being when ever the individual employees face a problematic situation or circumstances.

CONCLUSION

PHEI staff participated in this study has shown significant amount of effort for their organization. They have high levels of emotional intelligence, they are committed towards their work, they are satisfied with their jobs and at the same they have no intention to leave the organization. This indicates that the Malaysian PHEI has managed an excellent talent pool in their organization that can help the organization to move further in the future. This will then increase the efficiency of the organization and enhance the organizations effectiveness. Even though the organization faces many challenges and problematic situations, it does not deteriorate the satisfaction and commitment level of their employees. They will keep on going and sacrificing for the organization.

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