



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COMMUNICATION SATISFACTION
AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN A
SELECTED PUBLIC UNIVERSITY**

AZHAR HJ. AHMAD

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By

AZHAR HJ. AHMAD

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Chairman: Associate Professor Ezhar Tamam, Ph.D.

Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication

This study was undertaken to examine the relationships between communication satisfaction and organizational commitment of academic staff in a selected public university. The study was also aimed at identifying the role of selected demographic factors on organizational commitment. Stratified random sampling was employed in the sample selection and a total of 252 academic staff participated in the survey by returning the self-administered questionnaire distributed to them. Statistical analysis used in the study included descriptive statistics, t-test, ANOVA, Pearson Correlation, and Multiple Regression using both enter and stepwise methods.

Based on the study, it has been found that more academic staff were moderately satisfied with the communication practices in the university. Among the eight dimensions of communication satisfaction, subordinate communication achieved the highest satisfaction level as rated by the respondents. In terms of organizational commitment, the academic



staff had high affective commitment and moderate continuance and normative commitments. Gender, tenure, and position were observed to differ significantly only in terms of respondents' affective commitment. Higher affective commitment was observed mostly from the professors and associate professors and from those who had been with the university for more than 20 years. Results of correlation analysis showed significant bivariate relationships between the eight dimensions of communication satisfaction and organizational commitment. However, multiple regression analysis revealed that only four dimensions of communication satisfaction were significant predictors of organizational commitment. Media quality, horizontal communication, and organizational integration were observed to be good predictors of affective commitment. While media quality and horizontal communication were found to be predictors of continuance commitment, communication climate tended to be a significant predictor of normative commitment.

The study has shown that communication satisfaction plays an important and direct role in the organizational commitment of the respondents. The results suggest that in order to increase the organizational commitment of the academic staff, the selected university should improve its communication practices especially in the aspects of media quality, horizontal communication, organizational integration, and communication climate. Channels of communication should be developed, improved, and maintained to ensure a better communication atmosphere. In addition, the organization should encourage its academic staff to develop their academic career by providing ample opportunities for them to conduct research and further their studies.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi sebahagian keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**HUBUNGAN ANTARA KEPUASAN KOMUNIKASI DENGAN KOMITMEN
KEORGANISASIAN DI KALANGAN KAKITANGAN AKADEMIK
DALAM SEBUAH UNIVERSITI AWAM TERPILIH**

Oleh

AZHAR HJ. AHMAD

Januari 2004

Pengerusi: Profesor Madya Ezhar Tamam, Ph.D.

Fakulti: Bahasa Moden dan Komunikasi

Kajian ini dilakukan bagi melihat hubungan antara kepuasan komunikasi dengan komitmen keorganisasian di kalangan kakitangan akademik dalam sebuah universiti awam terpilih. Kajian juga bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti faktor demografi terpilih ke atas komitmen keorganisasian. Persampelan rawak berstrata digunakan dalam pemilihan sampel dan sejumlah 252 kakitangan terbabit dalam bancian dengan mengembalikan soal-selidik yang diberikan kepada mereka. Analisa statistik yang digunakan termasuk statistik diskriptif, t-test, ANOVA, Korelasi Pearson dan Regresi Pelbagai yang menggunakan kaedah “enter” dan “stepwise”.

Berasaskan kajian, ianya telah didapati lebih ramai responden menunjukkan tahap kepuasan yang sederhana terhadap amalan komunikasi di universiti tersebut. Di antara lapan dimensi kepuasan komunikasi, komunikasi subordinat mencapai tahap kepuasan yang tertinggi. Dari segi komitmen keorganisasian, kakitangan akademik mempunyai



komitmen afektif yang tinggi manakala mereka mempunyai komitmen berterusan dan normatif yang sederhana. Jantina, tempoh kerjaya dan jawatan dilihat mempunyai pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap komitmen afektif. Afektif komitmen yang lebih tinggi dilihat di kalangan professor dan professor madya serta juga pada kakitangan yang telah berkhidmat di universiti lebih dari 20 tahun. Hasil dari analisa korelasi menunjukkan hubungan bivariat yang signifikan di antara lapan dimensi kepuasan komunikasi dengan komitmen keorganisasian. Walaubagaimanapun, analisa regresi menunjukkan hanya empat dimensi kepuasan komunikasi menjadi peramal signifikan kepada komitmen keorganisasian. Kualiti media, komunikasi horizontal dan integrasi organisasi dilihat sebagai peramal yang baik untuk komitmen afektif. Sementara kualiti media dan komunikasi horizontal didapati menjadi peramal untuk komitmen berterusan, iklim komunikasi bertindak sebagai peramal komitmen normatif.

Kajian telah menunjukkan bahawa kepuasan komunikasi memainkan peranan yang penting dan terus terhadap komitmen keorganisasian responden. Hasil kajian mencadangkan bagi meningkatkan komitmen keorganisasian, pihak universiti harus memperbaiki amalan komunikasi teutamanya dalam aspek kualiti media, komunikasi horizontal, integrasi organisasi dan iklim komunikasi. Saluran komunikasi harus dibentuk, dibaiki dan dikekalkan bagi memastikan suasana komunikasi yang lebih baik. Di samping itu, pihak pengurusan universiti harus mengalakkan kakitangan akademik mengembangkan lagi kerjaya akademik mereka dengan menyediakan kemudahan yang banyak untuk mereka membuat penyelidikan dan melanjutkan pelajaran.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UM	-	Universiti Malaya
UPM	-	Universiti Putra Malaysia
UKM	-	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
UTM	-	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
CSQ	-	Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire
CAQ	-	Communication Audit Questionnaire



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

University is an organization that is responsible for educating students, creating new knowledge, and providing services to other organizations. As acknowledged by Sufean (1996), there are two philosophical approaches of a university: epistemology and politics. In epistemology, a university is committed to expanding the frontier of knowledge through scholarly research, and by doing so produce scholars and intellectuals. In politics, the university's education needs to be relevant to the life and development of society and as such, the situation and the context of the country influence the objectives of the universities.

In Malaysia, the objectives of higher education are in tandem with the New Economic Plan which highlights education as one of the major thrusts that propels Malaysia to become a developed nation. Through university, knowledge is developed, transmitted and applied to the country's development programs. Throughout the years the roles of the university have expanded. In addition to providing skilled and knowledge workers to the labour market, university is committed to contributing new knowledge in terms of research and development. In fact, the strength of any university is linked to its contribution towards the generation and dissemination of knowledge through research (Sham Sani, 1995).

Realizing the significant contributions of tertiary education toward nation building, the academic staff from a local public university were selected as the subjects for the



present study. The university, which is located in the state of Selangor, is one of the ten public universities in Malaysia. Since its establishment 30 years ago, the University has produced nearly 62,000 graduates ranging from Bachelors to PhDs (Annual Report, 2000). In terms of students' enrollment, the university had increased the number of students from more than 10,000 in 1993 to nearly double in 1999. This figure does not include postgraduate students which itself numbered 3,129. In supporting the nation's emphasis on science and technology (S & T), the university continues its efforts to increase the number of S & T students. In 2000, the students for the bachelor's program in the science and technology disciplines were nearly 55% of the overall intake of undergraduate students. In the Distance-Learning Programme, nearly 3,000 students have enrolled in six bachelor programs and one at the diploma level. New programs have also been offered in line with the university's commitment to academic relevance and excellence. By 2000, there were nine new undergraduate programs embracing different disciplines.

In line with the academic growth, the university has made substantial progress in the research areas. For the year 2000, more than three hundred projects with a total of about RM85 million were approved through IRPA (Intensification of Research in Priority Areas) under the Seventh Malaysia Plan. Also, nearly RM320,000 was approved for about 900 academic staff to attend and present papers in both local and overseas conferences.

The driving force behind the success of any organization is its staff. Presently, the university has more than 1700 academic staff that are placed in faculties, institutes, centers of excellence, and bureaus. These academic staff are categorized under five

positions: Professor, Associate Professor, Lecturer, Tutor, and Teacher. These intellectuals are responsible for promoting knowledge and culture of excellence to the students and the society. As mentioned by a renowned Malaysian scholar, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1988):

“... university is not just its building, not just its physical. Actually, in the history of any university, educators or teachers and those who studied under them are the important components in the existence of the university. So, the excellence of the university is related to the knowledge and experience of the teachers. If the knowledge acquired by the teachers are not solid, then obviously the status of the university is not excellent” (p. 147).

This university is also committed to realizing its mission of becoming a center of excellence by producing quality and competitive graduates. To achieve the university's objectives, the academicians are expected to teach and do academic research. However, the tasks are dependent on the position of the academic staff, since more is expected from a professor than a lecturer. Every year, academic staff have to update their activities in a performance appraisal form, which is then evaluated by a superior. In order to increase the quality of education and research, the organization expects more contributions from the academicians. This was shown in the higher demand of academic activities in the year 2002 performance appraisal. With the greater expectations from its academic staff, the organization demands the academicians to be committed and professional in carrying out their duties.

Committed academicians emerge when the organizations are able to provide them with not just jobs but opportunities to perform important and challenging tasks, to

meet and interact with people, to learn new skills, and to develop as a person. Meyer and Allen (1997) stated that employee's commitment to the organization includes commitment to the work group, employer, profession, and union. Therefore, in order to be committed it is important that an employee has good relationships with the various constituents of the organization such as peers, superiors, subordinates and other members in the organization. These relationships will thrive in an effective communication system if members are satisfied with the communicative process in the organization.

Research have demonstrated the existence of positive relationship between communication satisfaction and organizational commitment (Downs C., Downs A., Potvin, Varona, Gribas, & Ticehurst, 1995; Varona, 1996). As noted by Katz and Kahn (1978: 428), "Communication is the very essence of a social system or organization". Effective communication is one of the important factors that should exist in creating a more conducive working environment. In a university, the academic staff need to be satisfied with the communication activities within the faculty and also among other departments. In addition to getting feedback from their head of the department or the dean of the faculty, the lecturers also need to have information from the Registrar and Treasury Office on what goes on in the organization in terms of job advancement and budget allocations for research. The academic staff need to be aware of any policy changes that might affect them and the organization. In other words, workers will be satisfied and committed with their work when they have close cooperation and effective communication with the various parties involved in the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997).



Background of the Problem

The academic staff are valuable assets to the university since the success of the university is dependent upon their performance. As such, it is important to examine the commitment of the staff towards their jobs and the organization. The university selected for the study aims to maintain a strong relationship with its employees so that it creates positive behaviour such as better commitment and long-term attachment with the university. The importance of such behaviour has long been recognized by organizational scholars. For instance, Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982) purported that commitment would bring the individual to internalize the organization's goals and thus voluntarily engaged in discretionary behaviour.

In the interests of national and international scenarios, the university under study has made several developments to realize its new and expanding roles. One significant change is the restructuring of the faculties. In 1999, four science-based faculties were restructured into one mega faculty and in 2002, a new faculty was formed with the restructuring of three social science based faculties. This restructuring of faculties according to respective disciplines of knowledge is in line with the objectives of the higher education system to produce graduates who are knowledgeable in the holistic sense.

In line with the structural changes, the university has also introduced several changes to face the challenges of the new millennium. First, the university's Strategic Action Plan emphasis on the science and technology (S & T) components is parallel with the national policy of having a 60:40 ratio with respect to science and art programs. This

policy has resulted in the reduction of students' intake for the Arts and Social Science disciplines. Second, the selected university aims to achieve the status of a Research University. As reported in a local newspaper (Utusan, 29 March, 2001), several public universities such as University Malaya (UM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) are trying to achieve the Research University status. One of the criteria set by the Ministry of Education is that a research university must focus more on the post-graduate studies and at least 30% of the programs should be in the areas of science and technology.

The ways the selected university responded to the challenges have serious implications on the commitment level of the academic staff. As pointed out by Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982) organizational and employee behaviours are affected by the changes in the organizational environment. Some academic staff were not happy with the changes and developments instigated by the university under consideration. For instance, some the academic staff argued that the restructuring process would marginalize Bahasa Melayu as the country's official language and the Malay identity (Berita Harian, 26 March, 2001). This incidence was also highlighted in other mainstream media. One newspaper reported that several lecturers had voiced their frustration that the winds of change had created unhealthy working environment and bureaucratic barriers (New Straits Times, 10 February, 2002). As further developments are expected to continue, it is pertinent to reexamine the commitment of the academic staff of the university. The selected university needs to have committed workforce to ensure that the organization is run effectively. According to Meyer, Paunonen, Gellatly, Goffin, & Jackson (1989), the benefits of committed

employees include acceptance of organizational goals, reduced turnover and absenteeism, and potentially better job performance.

The public sector in Malaysia plays an important role in the nation building. Recently the Chief Secretary to the Government, Tan Sri Samsuddin Osman urged the public agencies to serve the people better so that the number of complaints would reduce (New Strait Times, 20 March, 2001). This could be achieved through professionalism in service by having a culture of commitment, dedication and quest for excellence. Hence, public universities have to strive to produce committed academic staff in order to provide quality tertiary education to the public.

In terms of organizational behaviors, commitment has been repeatedly shown to be an important factor in understanding the work behavior of employees (Kanter, 1977; Steers, 1977; Stevens, Beyer, and Trice, 1978). Since the 70's, Steers (1977) argued that the study of organizational commitment provided information on the performance outcomes of the employees such as the desire to remain and perform in the organization. Recently, organizational scholars have said that organizational commitment is a multi-dimensional construct. Meyer and Allen (1991) introduced three components of commitment namely affective, continuance, and normative commitments, and they concluded that there were differences in the commitment level of the employee in each component. Among the three components, affective commitment is said to be the most important because the employees are able to link or attach themselves to the organization. Hence, a public university would ideally like to have higher level of affective commitment from its academic staff to ensure that they want to stay and be part of the organization. It is expected that academic staff