

Organizational Commitment: An Empirical Investigation on the Academician of Malaysian Private Universities

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Abstract: *Shaping and changing the attitude of academic staff in private higher education institutions is critical in enhancing their commitment for the overall improvement of organizational performance. This will enable private universities to compete with other institutions as well as to produce high quality and competitive graduates. The first objective of this research is to examine the relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment. The second objective is to explore the influence of the four cognitions of psychological empowerment: meaning cognition, competence cognition, self-determination cognition and impact cognition on organizational commitment. The study employed a stratified proportionate sampling design. A total of 247 academicians from four private universities participated in the survey. The result indicated that the overall psychological empowerment is significantly related to organizational commitment. Further analysis also revealed that of the four cognitions of psychological empowerment, only impact cognition significantly contributes to organization commitment. Managers who empower their employees by giving them opportunities to make decisions about their work methods, pace and efforts will subsequently increase their subordinates' commitment.*

Keywords: Organizational Commitment, Psychological Empowerment, Economic Transformation Programme, High-Income Nation and Malaysian Private Universities

JEL Classification: A22, D24, I21

1. Introduction

There are two main categories of higher education institutions in Malaysia: public and private institutions (Lembaga Akreditasi Negara, 2006). Public higher education institutions comprise of universities, community colleges, polytechnics and branch community colleges; whereas, private higher education institutions consist of universities, university-colleges, foreign university branch campuses and colleges. All public higher education institutions are under the purview of the government through the Universities and Universities-Colleges Act 1971 and technical education governed by the Education Act 1996 (Lembaga Akreditasi Negara, 2006) and hence, fully funded by the Malaysian government. On the other hand, private education institutions did not receive any financial support from the Malaysian government (Lembaga Akreditasi Negara, 2006). From 1996 to 2010, there was a rapid growth in the number of private higher education institutions in Malaysia. Currently there are more than 400 private higher education institutions that comprises of 21 private universities, 20 private university-colleges, 5 foreign universities branch campuses and nearly 400 private colleges (MOHE, 2010).

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The aim of this paper is to explore how psychological empowerment impacted organizational commitment of academic staffs in the Malaysian private universities. According to Allen and Meyer (2000), organizational commitment is one of the most important work attitudes in the study of management and organizational behavior. In the past three decades, there had been substantial research conducted that proved organizational commitment to have significant relationship to the various consequences and antecedents. However, there seems to be a paucity of research that focus on the relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment of academic staffs in Malaysian private universities. Therefore, the scope of this study is to examine how psychological empowerment and its cognitions are related to academic staff commitment in their respective institutions.

1.1. Research Problem

The government launched the economic transformation programme (ETP) in late 2010. Due to the rapidly changing world economy, the objective of ETP is to transform Malaysia from a middle-income nation to a high-income nation by the year 2020 (Economic Transformation Programme: A roadmap for Malaysia, 2010). ETP comprises of 12 National Key Economic Areas (NKEAs): greater KL/ Klang Valley, oil, gas and energy, financial services, wholesale and retail, palm oil, tourism, electronic and electrical, business services, communications and content infrastructure, education, agriculture and healthcare. Education is targeted as one of the most important drivers to transform Malaysia into a high-income nation. Through ETP implementation, an additional 3.3 million jobs will be created. Education will play a critical role in producing more quality and competitive graduates, in order to support and fulfill the talented workforce demand from various industries. Apart from this, attracting more foreign students to enroll in Malaysian private higher education institutions (PHEIs) is also deemed essential to meet ETP objective.

To produce higher quality and competitive graduates, PHEIs have to maintain or even improve the teaching quality at these institutions. It is crucial for administrators at PHEIs to understand the behavior and attitudes of academic staff. With this insight, Deans and Heads of Departments will be able to shape the attitudes of the academics by implementing sound practices that will increase psychological empowerment of academics. This will subsequently lead to higher organizational commitment (Dee Henkin & Duemer, 2002; Bogler & Somech, 2004).

1.2. Research Objectives

Shaping and changing employees' attitudes is critical in enhancing their commitment for the overall improvement of organizational performance. Subsequently this will enable private universities to compete with other institutions as well as to produce high quality and competitive graduates. This research has two objectives. The first objective is to examine the relationship between the overall psychological empowerment and organizational commitment in the context of academic staff in Malaysian PHEIs. The second objective is to explore the relation between four dimensions of psychological empowerment, namely meaning cognition, competence cognition, self-determination cognition and impact cognition and organizational commitment.

1.3. Importance of study

The study is important as understanding the relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment could lead to greater job satisfaction. Successfully shaping the attitudes of the academic staff will eventually lead to the enhancement of productivity, creativity, innovation and the overall organizational performance. Ultimately through this initiative, hopefully Malaysian PHEIs will be able to compete with other foreign universities in attracting students to study in Malaysia. PHEIs may produce higher quality and competitive graduates that could ensure sufficient talented workforce matching the labor demand from various industries. This will ensure that the country can transform from a middle-income nation to a high-income nation by 2020.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Organizational Commitment

There are multiple definitions of organizational commitment as defined by different researchers. According to Becker, Randal and Riegel (1995), organizational commitment is multidimensional in nature. Employees who are committed to their organization will have a strong desire to remain a member of a particular organization. The employees also would be willing to put substantial effort into their job on behalf of the organization. Furthermore, they will also agree with the values and goals of the organization (Becker et al., 1995).

Meyer and Allen (1987) developed a commitment model in which commitment was categorized into three approaches: affective, continuance and normative commitment. They provide preliminary evidence that affective, continuance and normative components of attitudinal commitment are conceptually and empirically separate. The meaning and concepts of all the three dimensions or components of organizational commitment did not overlap with each other and all three components were measured reliably. Further study by Meyer and Allen (1991) broadened the perspective of organizational commitment through the componential model. They suggest that organizational commitment should be conceptualized as a psychological state that is concerned about how individual feel about their organizational engagement and the desire to continue to remain with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

One of the dimensions of organizational commitment is affective commitment and is defined as an employee's desire to be emotionally attached to the identification with and involvement in the organization (Allen and Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1997). Employees who have strong affective commitment will be more likely and happier to remain in the organization because they want to. They will most likely continue to work for the organization when they agree with the organization's goals.

Another dimension is continuance commitment and it is defined as the employees' awareness for or recognition of the benefits of continuing to remain in the organization versus the perceived cost of leaving the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991). According to Chan (2003), employees with high continuance commitment are more likely to remain in the organization. If the cost of leaving is much lower than the benefit of continued stay with the organization, employees will tend to leave the organization because of the low continuance commitment.

Finally, the dimension of normative commitment is a consequence of an employee's feeling of obligation to stay in the organization based on one's personal norms and values (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Even when the employee is under the pressure to leave the organization, s(he) will still feel the strong need to continue working for the organization. The decision made by the employee whether to stay or leave the organization is based on his/her personal morality. Individual employees with higher normative commitment usually will be more likely to remain at the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

2.2. Psychological Empowerment

Conger and Kanungo (1988) defined empowerment as a process of increasing employee's feelings of self-efficacy within an organization. Subsequent study by Thomas and Velthouse (1990) on cognitive elements of empowerment found that it was an interpretive model of intrinsic task motivation. In their research, they identified four cognitions or task assessments as the basis for empowerment. The four cognitions are impact, competence, meaningfulness and choice. The combination of the four cognitions reflects an active orientation to a work role which indicates how an individual wishes to shape his or her work role or context.

Spreitzer (1995) make some improvement on the psychological empowerment construct model by extending and operationalizing the model of four empowerment components previously developed by Thomas and Velthouse (1990). Spreitzer (1995) renamed the meaningfulness dimension as "meaning" and the choice dimension as "self-determination". Furthermore, the study also defines empowerment as reflecting a personal sense of control in workplace, which is manifested in four beliefs about the person-work environment relationship in four cognitions, namely meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. The four dimensions are interrelated and in combination will measure the psychological empowerment constructs. If any one of these dimensions is missing, the experience of empowerment will be limited.

Meaning cognition is a sense of purpose or personal connection to the work goal (Spreitzer, 1995). However, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) define meaning as the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual's own ideal. Employees must have belief in their sense of judgment, values, work role and behavior with connection to the work. These employees have the opportunity to be guided by their own ideas and standards to evaluate the achievement of the organizational goal or purpose. Meaning can be found in almost any task, job or organization (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Wrzesniewski, 2003).

Another dimension of psychological empowerment is competence and is defined as a sense of belief that employees have in their skills and capability to perform their work better (Spreitzer, 1995). In other words, if the employees lack a sense of confidence in their skills and capability, they will feel not empowered by their superiors. Moreover, these employees must not only have the sense of belief that they have all the necessary skills and capabilities, but at the same time, they should try to perform the task as well.

Self-determination is a sense of freedom or autonomy about how individuals do their own work (Spreitzer, 1995). If employees feel empowered, they have a substantial autonomy or power to make decision about their work. When employees believe that they are just following orders of their superiors, they will not feel empowered due to the little autonomy and freedom given. Self-determination exists when employees have some control over what

they do, how much effort should be put in their work, and when they have a say in establishing start and end times for the task (Spector, 1986).

Lastly, impact describes a belief that employees can influence the system in which they are embedded (Spreitzer, 1995). This means that employees believe they are able to make a difference in their organization. In other words, impact is the degree to which employees can influence organizational strategy, administrative or operating outcomes at work (Ashforth, 1989). When impact exists, employees would feel that they could perform better and have significant influence in the organization. Therefore managers need to affirm their employees that they can affect the organizational outcomes by completing the assigned tasks.

2.3. Relationship Between Psychological Empowerment and Organizational Commitment

According to Liu, Fellows and Chiu (2006) and Krishna (2007), when the perception of work empowerment increases, it will lead to an increase in organizational commitment. Organizations should provide employees substantial opportunities to take more responsibilities and perform challenging works in order to increase their commitment to the organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991). When employees are given more responsibilities and undertake tasks that are vital to organizational performance, have opportunities to make significant decisions and more chances to voice out their personal opinions, they will in turn feel more empowered. Empowered employees tend to be more willing to remain within the organization and work harder.

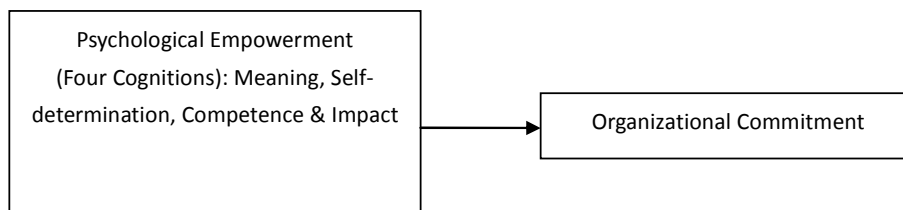
To encourage employees' sense of belonging to the organization, companies could empower their employees by focusing on the four cognitions of psychological empowerment: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact cognitions. The organizations must authorize their employees to decide how to complete their job tasks. In addition organizations need to ensure the job assigned could be performed well by their employees, the goals or values of the job assigned is not in conflict with their employees' values and inform them that they have the great deal of control and influence over what happens in the organization (Spreitzer, 2005).

A research by Bogler and Somech (2004) looks at the relationship between empowerment of teachers and their level of organizational commitment, professional commitment and organizational citizenship behavior in middle and high schools in Israel. The study shows that empowerment level was significantly related to feelings of commitment to the organization and professionalism as well as organizational citizenship behaviors. In another study, Dee et al. (2002) indicate that psychological empowerment was positively related to organizational commitment of teachers from eight elementary schools of an urban district located in South-Western United States. When teachers have the right or power to make decision in their daily management work, this will lead to an increase in organizational commitment. Employees will feel more empowered and are more likely to respond with more commitment (Kraimer, Seibert & Liden, 1999). Based on the extant literature, psychological empowerment seems to be strongly related to organizational commitment (Dee et al., 2002; Bogler & Somech, 2004; Raub & Robert, 2007).

2.4. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

The first aim of this paper is to examine the relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment of academics in Malaysian PHEI. Extant literature suggests exploring the relationship between four cognitions of psychological empowerment, namely meaning cognition, competence cognition, self-determination cognition and impact cognition and organizational commitment. Based on the above discussion, the research model is constructed and presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Proposed Research Model



The study proposed the following hypotheses concerning the academics in the Malaysian PHEIs:

H1: Overall psychological empowerment is directly related to organizational commitment.

H2: The four cognitions of psychological empowerment, namely meaning cognition, self-determination cognition, competence cognition and impact cognition are related to organizational commitment.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Instrument

Survey method was employed for this research. The survey questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section was divided into two sub-sections namely: organizational commitment and psychological empowerment. The measure of organizational commitment (OC) was adopted from Allen and Meyer (1990, 1996) and consisted of 24 questions. Regarding the independent variable, psychological empowerment the questions were adopted from Spreitzer (1995). There were four cognitions reflecting psychological empowerment and each has three questions. Respondents were asked to choose their most favorable answer for each item on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. The second section of the questionnaire measured the respondents' demographic characteristics and consisted of 8 questions.

3.2. Sampling Design

A probability sampling technique was adopted as researchers managed to obtain a full name list of the target population. Proportional stratified sampling technique was employed to select proper respondents in order to minimize bias. The survey was conducted by e-mail and personal self-administered questionnaires. The target population was academics in the business faculty of private universities in Malaysia. The total population for this study was

approximately 850 qualified academics. Four private universities that comprised of six management and business faculties were selected namely: Faculty of Accountancy and Management (FAM) and Faculty of Business and Finance (FBF) from Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR), Faculty of Business and Law (FBL) and Faculty of Management (FOM) from Multimedia University, Faculty of Management and Information Technology (FMIT) from University UCSI and Faculty of Management and Humanities (FMH) from University Technology Petronas. A sample size of 260 was targeted. Roscoe (1975) argued that sample sizes should be larger than 30 and not more than 500 for most research and additionally should be ten times or more as large as the number of variables.

3.3. Data Collection

Five hundred and fifty questionnaires were administered through personal distribution and e-mail. A total of 271 questionnaires were collected, yielding 49% response rate. However, only 247 of them were usable, as 15 questionnaires were incomplete and 9 questionnaires were not in the range of proper respondents.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Respondents Characteristics

The majority of the respondents were male (55.5%). The educational qualifications of participants were varied: Other Professional Certificates (6.6%), Master degree (80%) and PhD (13.4%). Twenty four percent of the respondents were less than 30 years old, 38% of the respondents were between 30 to 39 years old, 29.1% were between 40 to 49 years old and 9% were more than 49 years old. Ethnic composition comprised of Chinese (73.7%) followed by Malay (15.4%) and Indian (10.9%).

4.2. Validity Analysis

According to Hair, Babin, Money and Samouel (2003, p.174), validity can be defined as “the extent to which a construct measures what it is supposed to measure”. Factor analysis was used to validate the measures. As shown in Table 1, the result indicated that R-matrix was not an identity matrix and the factor analysis was appropriate. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) for psychological empowerment (0.775) was acceptable (between 0.5 and 1.0). Furthermore, Bartlett’s test of sphericity for organizational commitment and psychological empowerment were significant ($p = 0.000$, $df. = 246$) for all the correlations within a correlation matrix. Factor loadings below 0.4 were suppressed. However, factor loadings of at least 0.4 will be considered significant for interpretive purposes (Sekaran, 2003). Based on the principal components analysis, Table 2 demonstrated that the Eigenvalues for the construct of psychological empowerment were greater than 1.0, which ranged from the lowest 1.001 (Impact Cognition) to the highest of 5.229 (meaning cognition). Moreover, Table 1 also displayed the rotated variances for each factor with eigenvalues greater than 1.0. VARIMAX procedure in orthogonal rotation was applied and factor loadings for all items within a dimension of psychological empowerment appeared to be higher than 0.40. At the same time, the results also indicated that all items were allocated according to the proper dimensions. In other word, the items were not overlapping with each other. For example, there were a total of four factors within psychological empowerment construct with eigenvalues more than 1.0 and each factor or cognition has three items.

Table 1: Factors Identified by the Principal Components Factor Analysis for Psychological Empowerment

Factor's Name	Variable	Factor's Loading	Eigenvalues
Meaning	My job activities are personally meaningful to me.	0.900	5.229
	The work I do is meaningful to me.	0.874	
	The work that I do is very important to me.	0.842	
Self-determination	I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work.	0.873	2.442
	I have considerable opportunities of independence and freedom in performing my job.	0.852	
	I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job.	0.816	
Competence	My job is well within the scope of my abilities	0.885	1.427
	I am confident about my ability to do my job.	0.852	
	I have mastered the skills necessary for my job.	0.816	
Impact	I have a great deal of control over what happens in my faculty.	0.942	1.001
	My impact on what happens in my faculty is large.	0.891	
	I have significant influence over what happens in my faculty.	0.825	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) = 0.775, Bartlett's Test = 0.000			

4.3. Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha was measured to test the reliability of the measures. Reliability tests were conducted on psychological empowerment and organizational commitment. As shown in Table 2, the Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient value for psychological empowerment and organizational commitment were indicated as 0.865 and 0.863 respectively. Moreover, the reliability values for the four cognitions of psychological empowerment namely: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact were 0.934, 0.880, 0.887 and 0.890 respectively. In addition, the three dimensions of organizational commitment namely: affective (0.812), continuance (0.830) and normative (0.713) commitments have displayed quite good reliability values. According to Hair, Money, Samouel and Page (2007), the minimum acceptable level of reliability coefficient value is 0.700.

Table 2: Reliability Test Value for Independent and Dependent Variables

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Psychological Empowerment	12	0.865
Meaning Cognition	3/12	0.934
Competence Cognition	3/12	0.880
Self-determination Cognition	3/12	0.887
Impact Cognition	3/12	0.890
Organizational Commitment	24	0.863
Affective Commitment	8/24	0.812
Continuance Commitment	8/24	0.830
Normative Commitment	8/24	0.713

4.4. Normality Test and Outliers

According to Hair et al. (2007, p. 320), data skewness values must be within +1 and -1 and kurtosis values must be in the range of +3 and -3. When there is no violation in both conditions, then the data can be considered as normally distributed (Hair et al., 2007, p. 320). Table 3 revealed the normality test value for Kurtosis and Skewness test. Since, all the

skewness and kurtosis values for the variables were within the acceptable range, the data were normally distributed. Based on Table 3, the standard residual values were between -2.349 to 1.980. This indicated that there were no outliers and all the cases were within the range of -3 and +3. The mean standard residual and standard predicted values were 0.000 and this means that the data was independent and normally distributed.

Table 3: Normality Test Results

Variables	Skewness	Kurtosis
Organizational Commitment	0.190	-0.099
Psychological Empowerment	-0.496	0.542
Meaning	-0.404	-0.571
Competence	-0.492	0.754
Self-determination	-0.208	0.446
Impact	-0.542	0.283
Standard Residual = -2.349 to 1.980 Mean of Standard Residual = 0.000 Mean of Standard Predicted Value = 0.000		

4.5. Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient

Subsequent analysis looks at Pearson correlation of organizational commitment and the four independent variables. Results indicated in Table 4 displays that psychological empowerment has significant correlation with organizational commitment [overall psychological empowerment ($r = 0.324$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$), meaning ($r = 0.132$, $p\text{-value} = 0.037 < 0.05$), competence ($r = 0.149$, $p\text{-value} = 0.019 < 0.05$), self-determination ($r = 0.243$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$) and impact ($r = 0.343$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$)]. Impact cognition was shown to have the highest correlation with organizational commitment.

Table 4: Correlation between Dimensions of Psychological Empowerment and Organizational Commitment

Independent Variables	Organizational Commitment
Psychological Empowerment Cor. Coeff.	.324
p-value	.000
Meaning Cor. Coeff.	.132
p-value	.037
Competence Cor. Coeff.	.149
p-value	.019
Self - Determination. Cor. Coeff.	.243
p-value	.000
Impact. Cor. Coeff.	.343
p-value	.000

4.6. Multiple regression analysis

The overall result for the regression model was significant ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$) with the F-value of 9.641. The result indicated that the four cognitions of psychological empowerment significantly contributed to variation in organizational commitment. R-square value ($R^2 =$

0.137) indicates that four predictors were able to explain 13.7% of the variation in organization commitment. According to Table 5, impact cognition ($p = 0.000$, $t = 4.532$) was found to influence organizational commitment. However, meaning ($p = 0.942$, $t = -0.073$), competence ($p = 0.309$, $t = 1.019$) and self-determination ($p = 0.138$, $t = 1.489$) were not significant predictors of organizational commitment. The results of unstandardized coefficient postulated that impact cognition was the most important variable that contributed to organizational commitment with beta value of 0.165. The results of tolerance and VIF value were also displayed in Table 5. Each variable tested the different dimensions clearly and without any multi-collinearity problems as indicated with the tolerance rate of more than 0.1 and $VIF < 10$ (Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black, 1998).

The following is the multiple regression equation for the current study:

$$[1] \text{ Organizational Commitment} = 2.937 + 0.165 (\text{Impact}) + 0.058 (\text{Competence}) + 0.087 (\text{Self-determination}) - 0.004 (\text{Meaning})$$

The values of unstandardized Beta coefficients were used to formulate the multiple regression equation with the highest of 0.165 (Impact) to the lowest of -0.004 (Meaning). Hence, impact cognition is the most important dimension of psychological empowerment that predicts organizational commitment. For every unit increase in impact cognition, organizational commitment will go up by 0.165 units, provided other predictors (impact, competence and self-determination) remain unchanged.

Table 5: Result of Regression Analysis

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
Constant	2.937	.336		8.743	.000		
Meaning	-.004	.061	-.006	-.073	.942	.580	1.723
Competence	.058	.057	.074	1.019	.309	.680	1.470
Self-Determination	.087	.058	.110	1.489	.138	.649	1.542
Impact	.165	.036	.292	4.532	.000	.856	1.169
R-Square = 0.137 Adjusted R-Square = 0.123							
F-Value = 9.641 Sig. = 0.000							

5.1. Discussion

The result indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment. Thus, hypothesis 1 is supported in the study. Several studies investigating this relationship have yielded similar results (Dee et al., 2002; Bogler & Somech, 2004; Liu et al., 2006; Raub & Robert, 2007). Bogler and Somech (2004) found that empowerment level of teachers was significantly related to the feelings of commitment to an institution and profession. In other words, the increase of academics' psychological empowerment level will subsequently enhance their commitment to their institution.

Regarding hypothesis 2, the results indicated that the four cognitions of psychological empowerment, namely meaning, competence, self-determination and impact cognitions,

have significant positive relationship with organizational commitment. Hence, hypothesis 2 was supported. Moreover, a number of researchers assert that all the four cognitions of psychological empowerment are not significantly related to organizational commitment (Dee et al., 2002; Chen & Chen, 2008; Nabila, 2008). Evidence from past research concerning these relationships yielded a slightly different result as compared to current study. Impact cognition has the highest correlation with organizational commitment followed by self-determination, meaning and competence cognitions. The relationship between impact cognition and organizational commitment displayed the highest consistency as compared to other three cognitions with organizational commitment (Dee et al., 2002; Chen & Chen, 2008; Nabila, 2008). Based on the regression model, impact cognition is the most important predictor that can explain organizational commitment. However, the other three cognitions have no significant prediction on organizational commitment. Therefore, it is worth-emphasizing that the increase in impact cognition also causes an increase in organizational commitment.

5.2. Implications

The present research provided some insights on ways to improve academics commitment to an institution. There were no past studies that found all the four cognitions of psychological empowerment relating significantly and positively with organizational commitment (Dee et al., 2002; Chen & Chen, 2008; Nabila, 2008). Nabila (2008) added that it is unlikely that results will show all four cognitions to have significant relationship with organizational commitment. Findings of the current study confirmed this observation. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) stated that the four cognitions of psychological empowerment must be additively combined together in order to have the sense of being empowered.

The current finding on impact cognition is also consistent with the results of past studies (Dee et al., 2002; Chen & Chen, 2008; Nabila, 2008). Impact cognition is found to be the most important predictor of organizational commitment. Managers who empower their employees by giving them opportunities to make decisions about their work methods, pace and efforts will subsequently increase their subordinates' commitment (Nabila, 2008). The practical implication here is that academic staff should be given more opportunity to have greater control over what happens in their workplace. McShane and Von Glinow (2010) suggest that institutions should recruit and select suitable candidates with the required skills and knowledge. Employees with relevant skills and knowledge are capable of performing their job well. Chen and Chen (2008) also suggest that organizations apply work redesign in order to increase employees' psychological empowerment.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations of this study. Firstly, the study is based on cross-sectional data that is only capable of revealing the net effect of predictor variable towards a particular criterion variable at a specific point in time. Longitudinal study, which can capture the temporal dynamics of perception change, is proposed to be adopted in future research in order to help researchers identify the cause and effect relationships among the various constructs. The second limitation is the survey itself. Some institutions were apprehensive on surveys concerning staff commitment and performance. Certain institutions might even curtail or discourage their staff from participating in the survey. Future researchers should consider explaining the benefits of participating in the survey to heads of department to encourage a more open and inclusive response from the academic staff. Future studies should also consider other potential antecedents of organizational commitment among

Malaysian PHEIs. Additionally, the research could be further extended to include non-academic staff as well.

5.4. Conclusion

This paper reviews the existing literature on the relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment. The study also evaluates the relationship between the four cognitions of psychological empowerment: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact cognitions and organizational commitment. The findings concluded that overall psychological empowerment is related to organizational commitment and further investigation revealed that among the four cognitions, only impact cognition has a significant influence on organizational commitment.

Malaysian PHEIs stand to gain from this empirical study as it will provide management with better and clearer understanding on how they can influence and shape the attitudes of the academics by focusing on improving the right cognitions of psychological empowerment. With high level of organizational commitment, this will improve the performance of the academic staff subsequently. Eventually, PHEIs will be able to increase the quality and competitiveness of its graduates to support the economic growth of the country and consequently to transform Malaysia from a middle to high income nation.

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