

# Escalating the Employee Organisational Commitment through Employee Job Satisfaction: A Malaysian Childcare Centre Perspective

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## ABSTRACT

The number of childcare centers in Malaysia has been steadily increasing and is expected to continue to increase in the future. This is largely due to the active campaign of the Malaysian Government for early childhood education, which is based on the important role played by formal early childhood education. One major factor contributing to the success of childcare centre is the quality of the childcarers or the front-line employees. Hence, a quality childcare service is impossible without quality childcare employees. In fact, Malaysian childcare centers experience a high job turnover rate among their front-line employees. The high turnover rates could be due to lower employee job satisfaction levels which lead to a lower employee organisational commitment levels among the childcare employees. Finally, the study presents some suggestions for further studies that can be conducted in the future.

**KEYWORDS:** Employee job satisfaction, employee organisational commitment, childcare employee and Malaysian childcare centre.

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The number of childcare centers in Malaysia has been steadily increasing and is expected to continue to increase in the future. This is largely due to the active campaign of the Malaysian Government for early childhood education, which is based on the important role played by formal early childhood education (National Family and Population Board Report “Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita, Keluarga dan Masyarakat”, 2008). In fact, the childcare sector has grown tremendously over the years in Malaysia, due to the growing number of women who are joining the paid labour force (Omar, Abu, Sapuan, Aziz & Nazri, 2010). This significance increase in the number of registered and licensed childcare centers is reflected in Table 1.1 (Childcare Centre Statistical Report “Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita, Keluarga dan Masyarakat”, 2012).

Table 1: *Number of registered and licensed childcare centre 2007-2012 in Malaysia*

Year	Number of Registered and Licensed Childcare Centers
2007	306
2008	337
2009	395

2010	493
2011	668
2012	853

*Source:* Childcare Centre Statistical Report “Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita, Keluarga dan Masyarakat”, 2012

The population of children requiring care in Malaysia also grew from 3.05 million out of a population of 26.75 million in 2005 (National Family and Population Board Report “Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita, Keluarga dan Masyarakat”, 2008) to 10.5 million out of 27.7 million in 2008 (National Family and Population Board Report “Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita, Keluarga dan Masyarakat”, 2011).

One major factor contributing to the success of childcare centers is the quality of the child carers or the front-line employees (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007). Employees are instrumental in contributing to the children’s learning (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007). However, Malaysian childcare centers lately have been plagued with problems of well-being of children under their care due to a poor commitment from the childcare centers’ employees, for example, children’s abuse, injure and death (Hashim, 2012; Isa, 2007; Zulkifli, 2012). This happened because the employees were not satisfied with their job since the low salary offered by the childcare centers compared to the other sector and long service hours (from 6.30 am to 6.30 pm) as disclosed by Persatuan Pengasuh Berdaftar Malaysia (2012). Hence, a quality childcare service is impossible without quality childcare employees (Chiam, 2008). Besides, Malaysian childcare centers experience a high job turnover rate among their front-line employees (Persatuan Taska Negeri Selangor, 2011; Persatuan Pengasuh Berdaftar Malaysia, 2012). The high turnover rates could be due to lower employee job satisfaction (EJS) levels which lead to a lower employee organisational commitment (EOC) levels among the childcare employees. Therefore, the owners of childcare centers should be more concerned with the importance of satisfying the needs of the front-line employees first before satisfy the customers’ needs in order to retain committed front-line employees.

This paper aims to examine the influential role of the EJS on the organisational commitment level among the childcare front-line employees in the Malaysian context. In other words, the objective of this study is to examine whether EJS has a relationship with EOC (affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment) within childcare centers in Malaysia. In order to achieve the aforementioned objective, the data were collected from childcare centers in Malaysia through a self-administered questionnaire. Our findings provide insights into how far EJS can be the catalyst of any successful EOC. However, the limitations of this research provide some future research directions that can be deeply investigated to get the valid and reliable results.

## **1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1.2.1 Employee Organisational Commitment**

Bentein, Vandenberg, Vandenberghe and Stinglhamber (2005) and Grigg (2009) pointed out that EOC is the progress of employees’ trust in their organisation, which is shown by their willingness to engage in the organisation’s vision, mission and values. Grigg (2009) and McKay, Avery, Tonidandel, Morris, Hernandez and Hebl (2007) stated that EOC correlates with the level to which the employee is psychologically involved in the organisation. Furthermore, Lee and Olshfski (2002) determined that EOC was a four-facet construct, comprising commitment to their superior,

commitment to their teamwork, commitment to their organisation and commitment to an identity that was set up in a job.

According to Meyer and Allen (1991), EOC can be classified into three elements: affective commitment (AC), continuance commitment (CC) and normative commitment (NC). AC shows an individual's emotional commitment, connection and association with a certain organisation. CC relays to the cost that occurs if the employee leaves the organisation, for example, the distance and location costs. NC highlights the commitment of the employee to remain with his or her organisation because he or she feels that he or she should remain there.

### **1.2.2 Employee Job Satisfaction**

The concepts of EJS have been a focal point of study among the academicians and practitioners over the last two decades. Saif, Nawaz, Jan and Khan (2012) pointed out that EJS is a persistent attitude and that it needs constant management. In fact, EJS is regarded as a significant success factor for organizations. Hence, the concept of EJS is a multi-dimensional and inter disciplinary term, which has attracted the consideration of many researchers from around the world and from a variety of disciplines, namely, Total Quality Management (TQM), Human Resource Management (HRM), psychology, organisational behaviour (OB) and so on (Zaim & Zaim, 2008).

EJS was also identified by Spector (1997) as a level to which employees are comforted and delighted with the job. Spector developed a Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) in 1985, which is an extra job satisfaction instrument, in order to meet the need for human services, public and nonprofit organisations. This happens because most of the existing instruments had been developed for other types of organisation (industrial areas) and a somewhat little can be found about the human service employees. Some items of the existing instruments might not be suitable for human services since those instruments had been developed for industrial areas. Therefore, JSS was developed to fill the need for an instrument for human services, public and nonprofit organisations. JSS contains nine dimensions such as communication, contingent rewards, co-workers, fringe's benefits, nature of work, operating procedures, pay, promotion and supervision (Spector, 1985, 1994, 1997).

### **1.2.3 Employee Job Satisfaction and Employee Organisational Commitment**

The research conducted by Abdullah, Musa, Zahari, Rahman and Khalid (2011) showed that employee job satisfaction had a positive and significant relationship with employee organisational commitment among 300 front-line employees of hotels in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. Zaim and Zaim (2008) conducted a study among employees in small and medium enterprises in Turkey. The sample of the study was randomly selected from the database of the Turkish Small Business Administration (KOSGEB). This study concentrated on the textile industry, especially in textile mill products and apparel. The findings reveal that there is a positive relationship between employee job satisfaction and overall employee organisational commitment in small and medium enterprises. Doraisamy (2007) pointed out that the six dimensions of employee job satisfaction, that is, nature of work, promotion, supervision, co-workers, pay and work conditions, have a significant impact on employee organisational commitment. Based on the previous arguments and other supporting ones, the following hypotheses are to be empirically tested:

H1: EJS is positively impact the EOC (AC, CC and NC) within childcare centre.

H1a: EJS is positively impact the AC within childcare centre.

H1b: EJS is positively impact the CC within childcare centre.

H1c: EJS is positively impact the NC within childcare centre.

Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical framework for the present study.

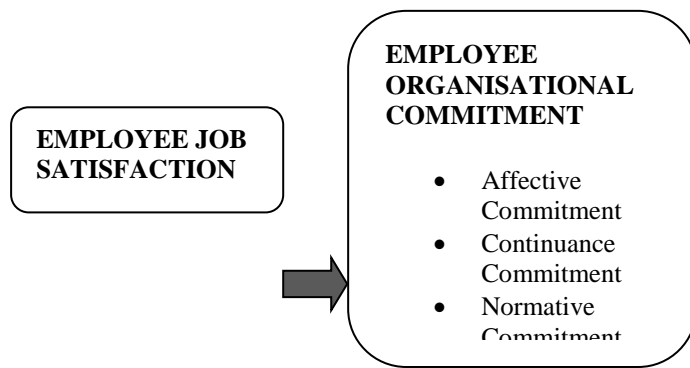


Figure 1: *The theoretical framework*

### 1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 1.3.1 Sample and Data Collection

The data for this study were collected from the full-time front-line employees within registered and licensed childcare centers in 12 states in Peninsular of Malaysia, namely, Kedah, Perlis, Penang, Perak, Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Negeri Sembilan, Johore, Malacca, Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang. The researcher used a systematic sampling technique in selecting the respondents. This technique involves drawing every  $n$ th respondent in the sample frame (from each childcare centre that the researcher visited) starting with a randomly chosen respondent between 1 and  $n$  (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). The respondents will be selected through the odd numbers from the sample frame which is number 1, 3, 5, 7 and so forth. For the purpose of the study, self-administered survey questionnaire will be distribute to the 500 employees in mentioned states.

Initially, the original version of the questionnaire was in English language. However, since the potential respondents of the study were front-line employees within childcare centers in Malaysia, therefore, the questionnaire was translated into Bahasa Malaysia. This was done accordingly to the suggestion of Brislin (1986). He stated that the questionnaire should be back to back translated in order to compute the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Moreover, it was expected that it would be easier for the respondent to understand if the questionnaire was set in Bahasa Malaysia and this would encourage them to react to the survey. According to Sekaran (2000) it was important to

make sure that the translation of the questionnaire was developed consequently in order to get the better feedback from the respondents.

### 1.3.2 Measurements of Variables

All of the items in the constructs of EJS in this study were measured by using a five points Likert Scale instead of seven points Likert Scale as used in the main source, Spector (1985), which was ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The researcher adapted the work of Meyer and Allen (1991) to measure the EOC in the current study. All of the items were measured by using a five points Likert Scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. According to Goldberg and Velicer (2006), using a rating scale of five points increased a probability because the respondents would precisely assess the ranking scales and would be minus likely to hustle through the items.

## 1.4 RESULTS

To test the hypotheses of the study, the Multiple Regression Analysis was employed. The adequacy of the model was confirmed by checking the regression assumptions such as linearity, normality, homoscedasticity and error independence. The data showed that no issue of the multicollinearity observed in this study.

As shown in Table 2, EJS had a significant and positive impact on AC at the 0.001 significant level ( $\beta=0.470$ ,  $t=8.179$   $p<0.001$ ) and had a significant and positive impact on CC at the 0.001 significant level ( $\beta=0.240$ ,  $t=3.889$   $p<0.001$ ). In other words, the findings revealed that Hypotheses 1a and 1b are supported. However, EJS is not significant in predicting NC level among the childcare employees. Therefore, Hypotheses 1c is not supported.

Table 2: Regression results of EJS on EOC (AC, CC and NC)

IV	DV					
	AC		CC		NC	
EJS	SB	TV	SB	TV	SB	TV
	0.470	8.179	0.240	3.889	-0.098	-1.782
RSq		0.234		0.117		0.296
AdRSq		0.226		0.107		0.288
FVal		27.157		11.795		37.231
Sig		0.000		0.000		0.000
DW		1.685		1.805		1.652

\*\*\* $p<0.001$ ; \*\* $p<0.01$ ; \* $p<0.05$

## **1.5 DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS**

The findings indicate that EJS has a positive and significant relationship with AC and CC. In other words, in the childcare sector, if the employees are satisfied with their job, it will lead them to remain in the childcare centers. Specifically, satisfied employees will remain in the childcare centers because they have a strong individual emotional commitment and association with that childcare centers. Moreover, if the employees are satisfied with their job in childcare centers, then, they will continue to stay there because they think that they need to be there in order to avoid the distance, transport and location costs, if they leave the old childcare centers (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

The results of the study also show that EJS does not have any positive impact on NC. This result is not coherent with results of the prior studies in related literature. For example, the research conducted by Abdullah et al. (2011); Adey and Bahari (2010); Peltier et al. (2009); Testa (2001); and Zaim and Zaim (2008) argued that EJS has a positive impact on employee organisational commitment as a whole. These striking findings can be described by the statement that when the employees are not satisfied with their job, they tend to have less feeling of responsibility and moral obligation to stay in the childcare centers. In other words, the lack of a significant positive relationship between EJS and NC might be explained by other factors that attract the employees, for example, if the employees are not satisfied with their jobs, they feel they should move to other childcare centers or other services/industries that might offer them flexible working hours (normally for childcare centers, the working hours start from 6.30 am to 6.30 pm), a higher salary and better benefits (promotions, incentives, bonuses and training). Furthermore, they may also feel confident enough to start their own childcare centers.

The researcher executed a survey questionnaire research design, which used cross-sectional data collection at a specific point of time in order to test the hypotheses. Therefore, the information gained only demonstrates the degree of association between variables. As a result, the causal relationships which were basically assumed based on the results attained cannot be accurately determined. Additionally, the findings of the study were based on the data collected from the childcare centers representatives at one point in time. Consequently, the study does not reflect the continuous changes in the psychological human aspects that could have taken place in the organisations due to the continuous experience. This is because the data were based on the cross-sectional approach and no follow up data were gathered.

Therefore, a case study approach might be a better potential choice in order to be able to examine the relationships between EJS and EOC level among the childcare employees. Also, a longitudinal research is highly recommended since it would help the researchers to validate the findings attained from the cross-sectional method regarding the change in human views, behaviour and attitudes. This is because a longitudinal approach could explain the complex relationships between EJS and EOC level over a long period of time.

## **1.6 CONCLUSION**

The main objective of the study is to examine the relationship between EJS and EOC. The findings of the study validated the significant effects of EJS on EOC (AC and CC). Therefore, it could be concluded that the managers or owners of the childcare centers should provide a workplace that contribute to EJS in order to make sure that their employees have a strong connection with the childcare and as a result, they will continue remain in that childcare.

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