

Factors Affecting the Affective Organizational Commitment, Job Satisfaction and Job Acceptance Intention of Interns: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract—Attracting and retaining potential talents is crucial for ensuring the success of an organization and internship is one of the common methods used for recruiting fresh graduates. The Millennials, who is the latest cohort of workforce, have high expectation on their future career and it is crucial organizations to understand the factors that are valued by the students. It is therefore essential to understand these expectations and explore and analyse the ways on how organizations could address this challenges. The purpose of this paper is to propose a conceptual framework to investigate interns' expectations, job characteristics, organizational attributes and supervisory support and to develop a better understanding on how these variables influence affective organizational commitment. This study would also investigate interrelationship between affective organizational commitment and interns job satisfaction, and how job satisfaction influence the interns job acceptance intention.

Index Terms—Internships, job characteristics, affective organizational commitment, organizational attributes, supervisory support, job satisfaction and job acceptance intention.

I. INTRODUCTION

The shortage of suitable talent is common problem for many countries and many organizations invested large amount of money and time in graduate recruitment to attract applications from the graduating students [1]. The graduate recruitment process begins with the offering internship programmes to students and internships are commonly used by employer for training and recruiting potential talent for the organisation. On the other hand, internship could provide opportunity for students to learn specific job related to their interest or the skills that are not taught in traditional business programme [2].

The experience during the internship offers the students an opportunity to evaluate their understanding of the organization and make a decision to apply or not to apply for a job in the host organization. Therefore understanding the factors affecting internship experience and how they influence affective organizational commitment and student career intention is important for both industries and universities. An effective internship programme could be a successful recruitment strategy as it can attract the best talent for the organization. This can help the recruitment managers in maintaining a continuous flow of potential talent for the

organization.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Internship

According to Maskooki *et al.* (1998), internships have become an important component of the curriculum in many business school. Internship is a common module in many undergraduate degree programme and in many business programmes, academic credit is given for internship module and students are required to complete an internship for graduation [3]. Internship is a practical based educational experience that has been traditionally included as one of the module in the undergraduate programme. Internship is defined as “a short-term period of practical work experience where students receive training as well as gaining invaluable job experience in a specific field or potential career of their interest” [4]. Internship is on a full-time basis and students are required to perform on relevant jobs which allow students to reflect on the concepts and theories learned in classrooms and experience gain in the workplace [5]. Alpert *et al.* (2009) further confirmed that the one of the key benefits of the internship programme is where interns are able to bridge the gap between classroom learning and the workplace expectation [6].

Students who undergo the internship programme can have the opportunities to acquire practical hands-on experience and this valuable experience allow students to have a good sense of what it would be like to work for organizations in the respective industry. During the internship programme, students are able to develop unique skills that are relevant and useful in that particular industry. Students experienced authentic practical working practices and have the opportunity to apply knowledge in the real-world setting. Baker and Paulson (1995) suggest internship help students transition from college to the real working world [6] while Brooks (1995) confirmed that internship plays an important role in assisting students make good career choices [7]. The internship programme provide students with the opportunity to discover their dream job through real work experience.

B. Internship and Talent Recruitment

For host organizations, internships allow student to try out the various job functions and explore the advisability of joining a particular career. The internship programme allow the host organization to evaluate a potential employee over a short period of time before committing on future employment.

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This is a great approach to recruit potential talent them after graduation and contribute towards the organization goals. For the students who are participating the internship programme, this working experience allow them to crystalise their personal interest or career ambitions.

According to Richardson (2008), many undergraduates view the working experience as the main reason for future career decisions [8]. Organizations should therefore seek to understand the working experience of it's employee, be it permanent or temporary employee, such as interns. This paper focus on the development value of the internship programme. Harris (2017) stressed the crucial role of HR practices in assisting organizations in attracting, selecting and retaining individuals who fit with the job and the organization [9]. An internship could therefore, offers a realistic job preview where potential applicants (such as the interns) obtain genuine information about the organization, such as the job characteristics, organization attributes and supervisor support during the internship attachment. This research is aimed to develop a theoretically based understanding of Millennial (Gen Y) final-year undergraduate business students' intention to join the host organization.

C. Job Characteristic Model

Hackman and Oldham's highly influential Job Characteristics Model (JCM) identified five core job dimensions, which include skill variety, task identity, task significance autonomy a well as feedback [10]. According to JCM, these five core job characteristics underlying psychological states: meaningfulness of work, sense of responsibility for the outcome of the work and knowledge of actual results of work. According to Hackman and Oldham, five core job characteristics are especially important to employee motivation and job satisfaction

Based on the various research, the JCM dimensions are generally found to have significant influence on the behavioural and psychological outcomes of employees in a Western context. For example, Brown and Peterson (1993) reported that quality of feedback, variety of skills set, autonomy are associated with greater job satisfaction [11]. Lohar *et al.* (1985) and Thomas *et al.* (2004) also found positive relationship between skill variety, autonomy, and feedback and job satisfaction [11], [12]. Birtch (2016) demonstrated how the interpretation of job characteristics influences psychological contract fulfillment, job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment [13]. New employee who perceive that their job lacks challenge, opportunity for growth and support may result in leaving the organization prematurely. Employee with a positive experience within the first six months can develop significant attachment to the organization. The time frame of six months is similar to most internships, which usually last between three to six months.

In general, the research on JCM dimension are mostly conducted in a Western context and limited research relate the JCM dimension with the internship programme. This has provided an opportunity for the researcher to replicate and test in a non-Western context and in the internship programme. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the job characteristics and the job satisfaction for the students in the internship programme in a

non-Western context, specifically to the Malaysian context. According Johari and Yahya (2016) and Krishnan *et al.*, (2010) most of the research conducted in Malaysia focused on full-time jobs, such as assessing the predicting role of job characteristics on job performance of public servants and determining relationships between job characteristics and organizational citizenship behavior of the supporting staff in a public higher learning in Malaysia [14], [15]. This study attempts to investigate the interrelationships between the internship's job characteristics and the affective organizational commitment in the internship environment.

D. Organizational Attributes

According to Roberson (2005), organizational attributes refer to perceptions regarding an organization's working condition and policies [16]. Organizational attributes are crucial factors in attracting potential applicant [17] and it is common for job seekers to compare themselves with the organizational's attributes to determine whether they "fit" with potential organization. Several evidences (e.g. Cable and Judge, 1996; Judge and Cable, 1997) support the relationship between the organizational attributes and job choice intentions [18], [19].

Smith *et al* (2005) suggests that it is common for new individuals to have high expectations before joining an organization [20] and Sturges *et al.* (2000) further suggest fresh graduates normally join an organization with very high expectation on their future career [21]. The expectations include issues such as working environment, career path as well as work load. Oliver's (2006) finding confirm that fresh graduates can be seen to have a much higher expectations of a career compared to previous generations [22]. This may result graduates' work expectations may exceed the reality in the work place which may result not meeting the expectations. This comparison process is crucial as it will ultimately determine if they will apply for the jobs. Previous research conducted by Verquer, Beehr, and Wagner (2003), and Hoffman and Woehr (2006) suggest that individuals with a favorable organizational attribute fit will result a higher job satisfaction, better job performance and lower intention to voluntarily leave an organization [23], [24].

Several studies have revealing specific traits of Generation Y regarding work-related expectations, attitudes, and behaviours. Previous research highlights the importance of job content, career advancement [25], self-actualisation, training and development [26], meaningful work [27], intrinsic benefits, work-life balance, and a work environment that is nurturing and supportive [28]. These studies provide us a better understanding on the importance of organizational attributes and how they affect early recruitment, however there is a lack of research that focus on this factors on interns, who are the potential talents for the organizations. The study therefore attempts to explore how the organizational attributes affect interns during the internship module.

E. Supervisory Support

Supervisor support is important for interns as the supervisor represents the organization and reflects the commitment of the organization on providing career development opportunities and concern for intern well-being [29].

According to Russel and Adams (1997), supervisor support is important to interns, where supervisor provides support, direction and feedback career plans and personal development [30]. Kottke and Sharafinski (1988) further explain the supervisor support has a great influence on the internship experience since it focuses on supervisor appreciation on employee contributions and cares about employee well-being [31]. Rhoades et al. (2001) conducted a longitudinal study and found that supportive treatment by the management generates a greater commitment from employees which result in enhancing organizational outcomes, such as better performance and lower turnover intention [32].

The impact of supervisor support on workplace outcomes has been researched through the investigation of leadership/supervisor- employee relationship [33], however no research has been done on supervisory support within the internships settings in Malaysia. Most of the research conducted in Malaysia were full-time employment, such as supervisor support on employee engagement in the Malaysian hospitality industry [34], Supervisor and peers' support in transferring training in the academic line [35] [36]. Previous research suggest that the relationship between supervisor-employee is developed during a series of exchanges between the supervisor and follower, in this case, between intern and their immediate supervisor of their host-organization. According to Graen & Scandura (1987) and Beenan & Mrousseau (2010), limited research has been conducted on how supervisor-intern exchange differs from regular supervisor-employee exchange relationship [37], [38]. In this research, these characteristics are replicated within an intern-supervisor relationship, and explain the importance of this factor in the internship module.

F. Affective Organizational Commitment

According to Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982), organization commitment is defined as an attitude in the form of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization [39]. Affective commitment is concern with the emotional attachment to an organization when employees identify with an organization and enjoy being a member of this organization. Clugston (2000) suggest employee with strong affective commitment continue to stay in the organization because they want to [40]. According to Meyer and Allen (1998), the early months of employment are crucial in development of work attitudes, such as affective organizational commitment and job satisfaction [41]. For new recruits who perceive that their job lacks challenge, and supervisory support may result in early exit, such as leaving the organization. Employee with a positive experience within the first six months can develop significant attachment to the organization. The time frame of six months is similar to most internships, which usually last between three to six months.

Studies from Mathieu and Zajac (1990) and Herrbach, Mignonac and Gatignon (2004) has suggested that employee commitment to the organization relates positively to a variety of desirable work outcomes, such as employee job satisfaction, performance and negatively correlated to absenteeism and turnover [42], [43]. As discussed earlier, studies from Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler (2002) and Kuvaas & Dysvik (2009) have also shown that temporary employee, which in this the interns in this research, could develop a social employment exchange relationship and reciprocated

with positive responses to host organization [44], [45]. The studies suggest that when the company develops actions that are valued by the employee, the employee reciprocate and engaged with positive behavior and attitudes towards the host organisation [46].

Affective organizational commitment has been widely studied in Western context and there is limited research on the relationships between the antecedents and affective organizational commitment in non-Western environment, especially so in the Malaysian context. The objective of this research is therefore to investigate whether the perceptions of interns regards factors that plays an important role in explaining the social employment relationship of the interns with the host organizations. To my knowledge, there has been no research conducted on the relationship between affective organizational commitment and the interns job satisfaction during the internship programme in Malaysia. This study is to explore the relationship between affective organizational commitment and interns job satisfaction.

G. Interns Job Satisfaction and Job Acceptance Intention

Job satisfaction is considered one of the core indicators of employees' evaluations of their jobs [47]. Job satisfaction assumes that employee evaluate all aspects of their job situations and consider their alternatives before arriving an overall evaluation of the quality of their jobs. Tourangeau & Cranley (2006) further indicated that job satisfaction is consistently and significantly correlated with retention [48]. Research has found low job satisfaction to be a determinant of intention to leave the workplace [49] and to quit a job [50].

Various studies have explored the benefits of internship programme to students [51], [52]. Some of terms that reflect benefits include "Bridge to the real world", "window to the real world" or "supervised work experience". Student satisfaction is one of the most important criterion for evaluating the success of the programme.

During the internship period, the undergraduates will experience and receive the recruitment messages from the attached company, the interns start to assess whether the organizational attributes are similar to their own personal expectation set prior joining the company. This assessment by interns' results in developing a feeling of whether they would be comfortable in working for these potential organizations in the future. The interns' perceptions of the organizational attributes and their expectation can be used to predict the job acceptance intention. Job acceptance intentions in this research refer to the undergraduate intern's belief his or her likelihood of accepting a full-time job offer with the internship host employer [53]. Interns who are satisfied with the internship programme are expected to accept the job offer from their internship host employer in contrast to those who are less satisfied. Cable and Jude (1996) suggest job acceptance are known to predict job acceptance, which in turn indicate the attractive an employer to a potential job candidate [54]. It is therefore crucial for the organization to understand that through internship, positive interns experience would enhance job satisfaction, which would increase the likelihood of job acceptance intention.

III. CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Based on the literature reviews and discussion, this study integrated the readings into a conceptual framework shown in Fig. 1. This research is designed to study the relationship of

the various factors, job characteristics of the interns, job attributes of the organization and supervisory support with affective organizational commitment. We seek to further understand how the affective organizational commitment affect interns job satisfaction and how job satisfaction would eventually affect the interns job acceptance intention.

Below is the proposed conceptual framework that attempt to explore the critical relationships among various variables in the internship programme.

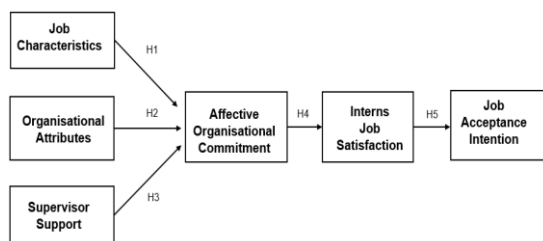


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework.

Below shows the proposed hypothesis for this study.

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between job characteristics dimension and affective organizational commitment

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between organizational attributes and affective organizational commitment

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive relationship between supervisor support affective organizational commitment

Hypothesis 4: There is a positive relationship between affective organizational commitment and interns job satisfaction

H5: There is a positive relationship between interns job satisfaction and Job Acceptance Intention

IV. CONCLUSION

The importance of internship programme has been well researched in many aspects. However, based on the above literature review, the finding highlighted the trends and gaps in retaining talents from the internship programme. A conceptual framework is developed to understand the various variables affecting the job acceptance intention of the interns. This study discussed the importance of affective organizational commitment and we seek to explore the relationship between the affective organizational commitment and interns job satisfaction, how job satisfaction affects the job acceptance intention of an intern. To the researcher knowledge, the proposed factors have been studies separately. None of the research has integrated them together, especially in the Malaysian context. This study has therefore important implications for research on retaining talented interns from the internship programme offered by the organization.

This study intends to pave way for further research in this area, and to test the validity of the components as proposed in the conceptual framework. The outcomes of this study can assist the host organization to develop a meaningful internship programme for interns. This research investigates whether interns' perception of the HR practices, such as the job characteristics and supervisory role, as well as organization attributes affect their affective organizational commitment, and subsequently affecting interns job

satisfaction and job acceptance intention. An effective internship programme offered by the host organization attracts best talent and help the recruitment managers in maintaining a continuous flow of potential talent for the organization. The investment in this study could benefit both interns as well as the host organizations that engaged in the internship programme in the long run.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Soon-Meng Chong and Dr Khashayar jointly developed the conceptual model. Soon Meng conducted the literature review and wrote the paper. Both authors jointly developed the proposed hypothesis for this study. All authors has approved the final version.

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