A Modelling Framework on Factors to Determine Job Performance among Frontline Employees in the Malaysian Hotel Industry

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Abstract

The study attempts to propose a modeling framework on factors affecting individual job performance among frontline employees in the Malaysian hotel industry in the East Coast Region (ECER) of Malaysia. The proposed modeling framework will be based on previous literatures and the underpinning theories related to job performance. We propose two independent variables (transformational leadership, emotional intelligence) and two mediating variables (organizational commitment and communication satisfaction). In this study, thirteen hypotheses will be developed to determine the relationship between job performance and the determinant factors. Based on this framework, we will carry out a pilot study to test the validity and reliability of the model used. We expect the results to be consistent with previous research.

Keywords: Hotel Industry, Job Performance, Transformational Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, Organizational Commitment, Communication Satisfaction,

1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the important industries in Malaysia. Tourism is included as one of the key areas in the twelve National Key Economic Areas (NKEA) under the Malaysian Economic Transformation Programme (ETP). As one of Southeast Asia's most travelled places, tourism and hospitality industry are becoming more important. Malaysia needs to compete with ASEAN countries like Thailand and Philippines which has provided attractive packages to tourists. Thus, to increase tourist preferences towards Malaysian tourism and hotel industry, improvement and maintaining good quality product and service is a priority.

The tourism and hotel industry in Malaysia need to improve their quality of services provided since foreign and local tourists have lots of options to select from especially in the Asian region. Tourist's arrivals to Malaysia have shown significant increase, for example in 2012, the number of tourists is 25.03 million compared to 24.71 million in 2011 (Tourism, Malaysia). The development in tourism and hotel industry cannot be seen only on tourists' arrivals but also important in Malaysian hotel development. As at November 2012, there are 576 hotels in Malaysia (Tourism Malaysia).

Malaysian government has put interest on the development of tourism especially in the hotel industry since the industry has attracted more than a billion tourists per year (Tourism Malaysia). The Prime Minister of Malaysia has urged the hotel industry to enhance the productivity by providing lots of benefits. For example, in the Malaysian government 2012 budget, government provides tax exemption or allowance to 4-stars and 5-stars hotel. In the 2013 budget, tour operators, who bring in 750 foreign tourists or handle a minimum of 1,500 local tourists per year, will receive 100% income tax exemption for three years (Ministry of Finance, Malaysia).

The development of hotel industry can be achieved by a combination of variety of facilities, better rates and quality staffs. Here, in view of the significant role played by frontline employees in helping the hotel industry to achieve tourism as one of the 12 National Key Economic Areas (NKEA), the issues of job performance to increase the quality of staff becoming more important.

Maintaining the relationship with tourists is one of the criteria of good quality of frontline employee. It is important because it's determining the long term relationship among peers in the organization as well as customer through frontline employee communication. William & Buswell (2003) argued that most of service failure on tourism and other related service industry are the results of perceptual nature and communication, it's supported by Kusulvan (2003) stressed out the important roles of the frontline employee in maintaining the long term relationship between customer as well as in organization.

However, there are certain problems faced by frontline employee in the hotel industry, for instance shortage of local talent as insufficient Malaysians are entering the sector, restriction of hiring foreign worker especially to fulfil the frontline position. The hotel industry is often seen as the "last choice" due to the relatively low average salary in the sector compared to other industries in Malaysia (ETP Handbook, 2012).

Job performance is one of the criterions in the improvement and enhancement of products and services. Job performance refers to the expected behaviours that are in line with the organizations' goals and it is under the control of individual employees (Campbell et al., 1993). Job performance has been identified as the main key area in the field of organizational and management practice (Silvester, Patterson & Ferguson, 2003; Varela & Landis, 2010). Hunter & Hunter (1984) point out that job performance is concerned with value of high productivity in the workplace by looked upon on the organizations' behaviours influence. On the other hand, Rudman (1998) stated that job performance is focused behaviour or purposeful work.

In coming decades, Raymonds & Gibbs (2000) forecasted that the fundamental issues of the job performance will increase. The individual performance focuses on a continuing emphasis on organizational effectiveness, and increasing community pressures for quality of service. The performance management will involve a much more consistent and strategic approach. This paper attempts to model the relationship between job performance and transformational leadership, emotional intelligence, organizational commitment and communication satisfaction. Transformational leadership and emotional intelligence will be employed as independent variables while organizational commitment and communication satisfaction are used as mediating variables. The paper is organized as follows. The next section will focus on the literature review followed by underpinning theories related to job performance in Section 3. Section 4 presents the modelling framework and hypothesis development. The methodology will be discussed in Section 5 and Section 6 concludes.

2. Literature Review
2.1   Job Performance
Swanson (1999) defined performance as accomplishment in a productivity of system in the form of goods or services. It provides subordinate for each major duty with specific expectations. The behaviours observables of employee are explained in the jobs done and the results that are expected for adequate job performance.

There are several types included in the performance such as; individual job performance, organizational performance, groups performance and peers performance. The extended of performance concept and requirement within the organization have been made and are predicted by individual job performance (Campbell 1993). Generally, the higher performers earn better career opportunity and promotion in the organization (Van Scotter, Motowildo & Cross 2000).

Riketta (2005) defined task performance or known as in-role performance as behaviour to act to the job description and contextual performance. Extra-role performance is defined as behaviour that goes beyond formal requirement that are beneficial to the organization. Campbell (1993) suggested that task performance consist of five components that is job-specific task proficiency, non-job-specific task proficiency, written and oral communication proficiency, supervision in supervisory or leadership position and management or administration. Recent research by Bowen & Waldman (1998) indicates that, specific aspect such as customer-oriented behaviour put greater emphasis on customer service in the organization.

Contextual performance also known as organizational citizenship behaviour is not part of the job requirement but works effectively in the organization which includes representative of extra effort given. In early organizational citizenship behaviour, researchers found thirty different form of dimensions (Podsakoff et al., 2000) and it is grouped into seven dimensions and most frequently grouped into five dimensions: altruism; courtesy; sportsmanship; conscientiousness; and civic virtue (Moorman 1991; Organ 1988).

Performance management are necessary in order for job performance to work effectively can be defined as the use of performance measurement information to effect positive change in the organizational culture and processes, by helping to set agreed performance goals, informing managers to either confirm or change current policy or program directions to meet these goals, and sharing results of performance in pursuing goals (Procurement Executives' Association, 1999). Hence, the development of metrics that quantify the work efficiently is to distinguish performance management from performance measurement. (Neely, Gregory & Platts, 1995).

2.2   Transformational leadership
Mastrangelo, Eddy & Lorenzet (2004) define the professional leadership as providing direction for the purpose of attaining the organization's goals of the organization. It encompasses the "formal" part of leadership in order to achieve the organization goal by setting the vision and mission for the organization, creating a process, and aligning procedures, people and infrastructure. On the other hand, personal leadership is the personal behaviour of leaders in performing the responsibilities of professional leadership, including demonstrating expertise, building trust, caring and sharing for people, and acting in a moral way.

Leadership is one of the important factors because it has strong relationship with job performance. Steinhaus & Perry (1996) emphasize that the employees who are satisfied with their leader tend to be committed to their organization and in return they exhibit higher performance and productivity. It is supported by Carson, Huelskamp & Woodal (1993), who believe the consistent support from expert and referent power such as leader

and this is positively related to performance. Shamir, House & Arthur, (1993) stated that charismatic leadership is linked to the collective identity, potency, and performance.

Mosadeghrad, 2003 point out there are several styles of leadership such as charismatic, democratic, participative, situational, transactional, and transformational leadership. Style of leadership will result in the most effective form of organizational behaviour among peers and leader. Different styles are needed for different situations especially to exhibit a particular approach when situation needed. The leader may have act in their knowledge and skills effectively in one situation but may not be effective in another situation that may use some emotional rather than rationale.

Transformational leadership is one of the establish paradigms in job performance consisting of three important roles: (1) to increase subordinates self-efficacy (2) facilitating social identification of subordinates among group or organization and (3) linking the organization and work value (Shamir et. al., 1993). The presence of modern or contemporary leadership paradigm as far not much affected on connecting leadership and job performance. Adaptive, authentic, transcendence and open leadership are examples of modern or cotemporary leadership introduce recently (Garrity 2010). In the new era of leadership, it is suggested that leader and subordinate become more closed together in contrast to traditional leadership.   For instance, dispersed leadership involved the power sharing between leaders and subordinates. The model of dispersed leadership has been described in different named such as: Self- Leadership (Bono & Judge, 2003), Distributed Leadership (Senge, 1999) and Super Leadership (Manz & Simms, 2001).

The relationship between transformational leadership and job performance has been debated for a long time. Recent studies reported that transformational leadership is positively related to job performance. Mackenzie, Podsakoff & Podsakoff, (2011) found positive correlation on job performance in a study on 477 sales agents working for a large insurance company.   Kelloway et al., (2002) and Ozaralli, (2002) also found positive results in their studies between transformational leadership and job performance.

2.3   Organizational commitment

Steers (1977) posits that organizational commitment is the employees' behavioural intention on the willingness to exert the effort on the organization. Porter, Mowdy & Boulin (1974) indicate organizational commitment is definite intentions to remain in the organization, the belief, the willingness in, and acceptance of organizational goals and objectives.

Mathieu & Zajac (1990) emphasize on the stress impact of individual performance with varying degrees of commitment. They found that individual who has higher commitment will experience greater amount of stress. This is supported by Cropanzano, Rupp & Bryne (2003) who found that stress has positive impact on job performance such as high level of stress which can lead to lower organizational commitment and increase turnover. While Baugh & Roberts (1994) found direct relationship between organizational commitment and job performance in which those employees who were committed to their organization had high level of performance. Meyer et al., (2002) support the relationship between organizational commitment and job performance in their study by pointing out that organizational commitment has become an important issue because it increases the job performance. Higher commitment will reduce employee turnover along with work stress and performance (Guthrie, 2001).

Mowday et al., (1979) examine the organizational commitment which they refer to the interest remaining in the organization and interest of organizational goal. Affective commitment can be defined as employee emotional attachment involvement in the organization (March & Simon, 1958). Meanwhile, continuance commitment is willingness to remain in an organization because of personal investment such as close working relationships with co-workers, involvement in the community in which the employer is located, and other benefits that make costly for seeking employment somewhere else.

2.4 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence also known as social intelligence is defined as the ability to understand and manage human relation reaction (Goleman 1995). It is the combination between intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence of individual link to the social intelligence. Stewart (1996) viewed emotional intelligence as ability to understand other people to use knowledge and lead to satisfy outcomes in social interaction.

Salovely & Meyer (1990) categorized emotional intelligence into five domains:

Self-awareness - recognize the feeling as its happen

Managing emotion – handle feeling appropriately build from self-awareness

Motivating oneself – focus on enthusiasm, confidence, concentration and emotional self-control

Empathy – sensitive to others feeling and concern

Handling relationship – demonstrate interpersonal or social competence by managing emotional in others

Martinez (1997) supports the importance of emotional intelligence as antecedent of job performance by pointing out individual's success at work is 80% dependent on emotional intelligence and 20% dependent on cognitive intelligence (IQ).   Furthermore, Bradberry (2002) found there are strong correlation between emotional

intelligence and job performance by comparing job performance rating for each senior leader to score of others. High emotional intelligence reflects an individual, as long as organizational performance through productivity and effectiveness (Carmeli, 2003).

2.5   Communication Satisfaction

Organizational communication in job performance highlighted as transmitted information by organization or groups to subordinates particularly on job and workplace (Price, 1997). Interdependent groups' communication may occur though achieving the recognized goals by the organization.

Today, communication becomes crucial to the organization of service industries especially in job performance. Through communication, information transfers in the form of action and behaviour. Transformation of work and organizational structure in communication within technologies made knowledge-intensive organizations important and perhaps leading all the time (Giri& Kumar, 2009). However, traditional way, for instance verbal instruction and performance standard chosen by several organizations maintain as the best way of communication within the organization.

Leaders in organization generally employ performance standard as talking point with specific goals defined. Rummler & Brache (1990), have stressed out performance standard comprising of three-level frameworks that is organizational, process and job level emerge at goals, design and management as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: The Three Level Frameworks

	Goals	**Design**	**Management**
Organizational Level	Organization Goals	Organization Design	Organization Management
Process Level	Process Goal	Process Design	Process Management
Job/Performer Level	Job Goals	Job Design	Job Management

(Source: Rummler & Brache 1990)

Commonly, communication is not only delivered by written or spoken but also included with non-verbal signal such as; facial expression, body movement, touching behaviour, and voice characteristic (Hendon & Herbig,1996). They added that an effective communicator flexibility to fluctuate concerning communication behaviour are needed according to the context or situation.

In fact, Porter & Roberts (1976) stress out on their studies investigating how communication relates to both individual and unit performance a "glaring omission" in organizational communication research.   In organizations, a basic factor for improvement in job performance is communication between the employee and the supervisor. Both individuals should clearly understand the duties of their respective positions, and the employee should know the expectations of the supervisor.

3. Underpinning Theories Related to Job Performance

3.1   Transformational Theory

The transformational leadership theory is a generally use in leadership which is important to support the relationship between leadership and job performance. There are 3 types of relational leadership that is (1) Transactional leadership, (2) Transformational leadership and (3) Transcendental leadership (Cardona, 2000).

The fairness of reward will increase the job performance by appealing to the intrinsic motivation in transformational leadership. Thus, Charismatic leadership may boost participation in group effort and link to the collective identity and performance (Shamir, House & Arthur 1993). Three important roles of transformational leadership are: (1) to increase subordinates self-efficacy (2) facilitating social identification of subordinates among group or organization and (3) linking the organization and work value (Shamir *et. al.,* 1993).

3.2   Meyer and Allen Theory 1991

Meyer and Allen (1991) develop the Theory of Organizational Commitment under 3 circumstances that are affective, normative and continuance. Affective commitment is defined as emotional attachment towards organizational involvement and goal (March & Simon, 1958).   It includes job characteristics as task significance, identity, autonomy and feedback involving decision-making processes.

Normative commitment is when employee feels appreciative to remain in the organization, become loyal and faithful to the other factor such as marriage, region and organization. They believe loyalty is the moral value and it's more towards scarified to help the organization (Wiener &Verdi, 1980).

Continuance commitment remains in the organization because of the personal investment such as close working relationship between workers and involvement in the community. Employee leaving the organization and seek job somewhere else is considered costly to the organization especially in training and development of the employee. The organizational commitment of employee towards organization goal will result in better job performance. To increase employees' performance, organizational commitment becomes an important issue to study (Meyer *et al.,* 2002).

4. Proposed Modelling Framework

Based on the review of the literatures, we propose a modelling framework as in Figure 1. The variables are that we are going to employ are: Transformational Leadership (TL) and Emotional Intelligence (EI) as independent variables; Organizational Commitment (OC) and Communication Satisfaction (CS) as mediator, and Job Performance (JP) as the dependent variable.
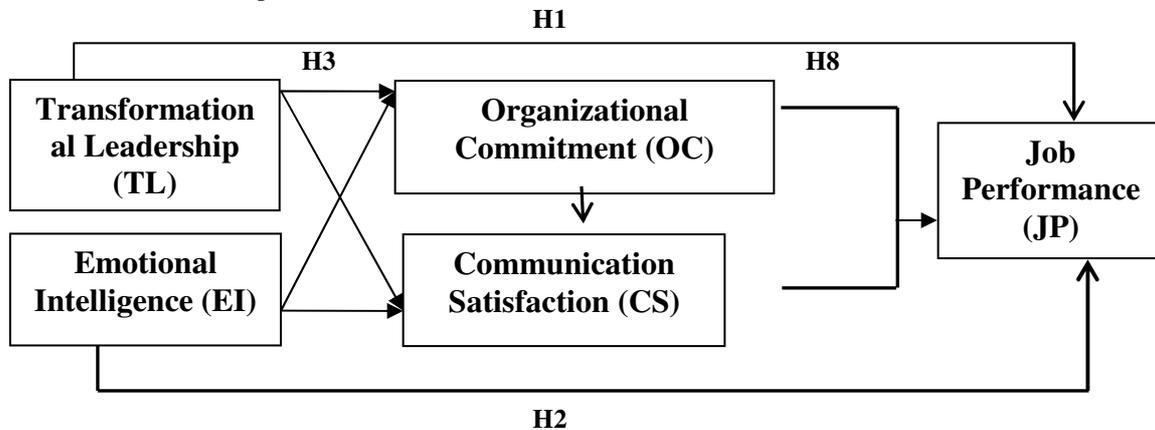

Figure 1: The Proposed Modelling Framework

4.1.   Hypothesis Development

4.1.1   The relationship between Transformational Leadership and Job Performance (H1)

H1: Transformational Leadership (TL) has positive influence on Job Performance (JP)

4.1.2   The relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance (H2)

H2: Emotional Intelligence (EI) has positive influence on Job Performance (JP)

4.1.3   The relationship between Transformational Leadership and Organizational Commitment (H3)

H3: Transformational Leadership (TL) has positive influence on Organizational Commitment (OC)

4.1.4   The relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Commitment (H4)

H4: Emotional Intelligence (EI) has positive influence on Organizational Commitment (OC)

4.1.5   The relationship between Transformational Leadership and Communication Satisfaction (H5)

H5: Transformational Leadership (TL) has positive influence on Communication Satisfaction (CS)

4.1.6   The relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Communication Satisfaction (H6)

H6: Emotional Intelligence (EI) has positive influence on Communication Satisfaction (CS)

4.1.7   The relationship between Organizational Commitment and Communication Satisfaction (H7)

H7: Communication Satisfaction (CS) has positive influence on Organizational Commitment (OC)

4.1.8   The relationship between Organizational Commitment and Job Performance (H8)

H8: Organizational Commitment (OC) has positive influence on Job Performance (JP)

4.1.9   The relationship between Communication Satisfaction and Job Performance (H9)

H9: Communication Satisfaction (CS) has positive influence on Job Performance (JP)

4.1.10   The mediating effects of Organizational Commitment and communication satisfaction on the relationship between Transformational Leadership, Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance (H10, H11, H12, H13)

Most of the studies identify organizational commitment as an outcome variable and mediating variable. Mowdays, Steers & Porter (1979) have stressed out individual are committed will associated with organizational goals and less tendencies for turnover. It supported by Guest (1987) that higher commitment will assume higher productivity and responsibility. Thus organization commitment is one of the factors that will affect job performance.

There are several researches linking transformational leadership to employee performance. The outcomes have shown that mediating effects other than organizational commitment, such as employees' levels of trust in the supervisor (Schaubroeck, Lam, & Peng, 2011) and self-efficacy (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996). The studies show the importance of mediating variable to strengthen the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance.

Communication Satisfaction is considered as important influence to the job performance. In spite of its importance, Cameron and McCollum (1993) found that employees tend to communicate when they need information on going issues in the organization. The relationship between organization communication and commitment or any relationship exist between these two variables is more implied than demonstrated (Putti *et*

al,. 1990). Thus:

H10:   Organizational Commitment (OC) has mediating effect between Transformational Leadership (TL) and Job Performance (JP)

H11:   Organizational Commitment (OC) has mediating effect between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Job Performance (JP)

H12:   Communication Satisfaction (CS) has mediating effect between Transformational Leadership and Job Performance (JP)

H13:   Communication Satisfaction (CS) has mediating effect between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Job Performance (JP)

5. Methodology

This research will be focussed on the Malaysian East Coast Region (ECER) areas which include Terengganu, Kelantan, and Pahang. ***Primary data*** will be used based on the previous work. Until June 2012, there are 929 hotels in Malaysia of which 138 are located on the East Coast Region (ECER) that is part of Johore, Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan. The main reason of choosing East Coast Region (ECER) as area of sampling is because the tourism industry is the main focus comparing to the other economic region in Peninsular Malaysia such as North Corridor Economic Region (NCER) where the main focus is on the agriculture and Iskandar Development Region (IDR) focuses on the technologies. The Malaysian government realized that the East Coast Region (ECER) has lots of potentials especially in the tourism industry. As we know, the East Coast of Malaysia is full of beautiful places that can attract domestic and international tourists. Therefore, the government should take actions in order to expand the tourism industry especially in the East Coast Region (ECER).

5.1   Sample, procedure and method of analysis

The unit of analysis in this study is individual level and probability sampling is use as a sampling technique in which stratified sampling is chosen. The purpose is to get information and it has the least bias and offer the most generalize method (Sekaran, 2003). The hotel industry with ranking 1 to 5 stars in East Coast Region (ECER) of Malaysia will be chosen and will be stratified focussing on frontline employees.

In term of sample size, the proposed of sample size is 300 and the model employed will be analyze using Structural Equation Model (SEM). A sample size of 100 will usually be sufficient for convergence for 3 or more indicators per factor, but to be sufficient for a convergent, the suitable sample size is 150 and above for SEM (Anderson & Gerbing, 1984). For SEM method, Sample size below 100 is not suitable (Kline, 1998) while Hoelter (1983) proposed a 'critical sample size' of 200 and above. Moreover, Schumacker & Lomax (2004) suggest the sample size to be around 250 to 500.

Structural Equation Model via Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 19th in Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) will be used to analyse the data set to test the hypothesised relationship among dependent, independent and mediating variable. To verify a set of factor structure of observed variables, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) will be used (Suhr, 1999) in which is to assess the validity and reliability of measurement scale (Hair *et al.,* 2006).

5.2   Research Instrument

Churchill & Iacobucci (2005) suggests that the content of individual questions should be guided by how each theoretical concept is defined and operationalized. All of the theoretical constructs proposed in this research have been well established and tested in various research settings. Likert Scale is a measure of attitude designed to allow respondent to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree towards an attitudinal object. A 7-point Likert Scales format will be implemented. The specific measures are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Measurement Scales and Reference

Scale	Adapted from	Original no. of Items
Job Performance Scale	Norwack (1994)	100
Emotional Intelligence Scale	Goleman (1998)	74
Organization Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ)	Meyer & Allen (1997)	18
Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ)	Avalio *et. al.,* (2004)	45
Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ)	Greenbaum, Clampit & Willihnganz (1988))	51

The Job Performance Scale by Norwack (1994) is used to measure the job performance which contains 100 items. The Emotional Intelligence Scale by Goleman (1998) which contains 74 items will be used to measure Emotional Intelligence variable. We will adaptMeyer and Allan (1997) to develop the Organization Commitment

Questionnaire by using the affective, normative and continuance which contains 18 items. It is important to determine the organization commitment in this research. The study will adopt the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire by Avilio *et. al*.,(2004) to measure leadership styles. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire contains 45 items. It includes idealized influence, attributed, behaviour, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ) by Greenbaum, Clampit & Willihnganz (1988)) whichcontains 51 items will be adapted.

6.   Conclusion

The study proposes a modelling framework to examine the factors affecting of individual job performance among frontline employees in the hotel industry in the East Coast Region (ECER) of Malaysia. Thirteen hypotheses are developed to test the relationships between dependent (Job Performance), independent which are direct variables (Transformational Leadership, Emotional Intelligence) and two mediating variables or indirect variables (Organizational Commitment and Communication Satisfaction). Structural Equation Model (SEM) will be used to analyse the data set to test the hypothesised relationship among dependent, independent and moderating variable. The expected result is targeted to be consistent with previous research and there is certain limitation that could be a challenge to the research success.

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