

Please cite this article as: A. Abdul Majid, R. Abdullah Hashim, R. Mahmood. Organisational Culture, Affective Commitment, Employee Competency and Malaysian Rail Employees' Job Performance. The Asian Journal of Professional and Business Studies, Volume 3(1).

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE, AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT, EMPLOYEE COMPETENCY AND MALAYSIAN RAIL EMPLOYEES' JOB PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Rail transport sector in Malaysia is one of the major economic growth contributor. Due to its importance, government has been allocating large sum of fund to improve rail transport sector among others include new railway lines, maintenance of trains and systems improvement. The ultimate aim is to provide effective and efficient train services to the users in improving quality of life. In this regard, rail employees play major role in ensuring efficient services. However, problems still prevail which include quality of services and accidents that affecting users and government's image. The problems are closely related to the employees in respect of their performance in managing train operations. Hence, there is great significance to examine factors that influence rail employees job performance. This paper provides a literature review on the relationship between organisational culture, employee competency and affective commitment on job performance..

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Organisational
culture, affective
commitment,
employee
competency,

1.0 Introduction

Rail transport is an important public transportation in Malaysia that has existed since 1885 (Land Public Transport Agency, 2013). Malaysia has seen significant advancements in rail transportation services over the years, including among others, the extension of Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) and Light Rail Transit (LRT) lines, the development of East Coast Rail Lines and the Rapid Transit Link Johor Bahru to Singapore.

Given rail transportation is significant to Malaysia's economic growth, the government has given its primary attention. As highlighted by National Transport Policy 2019-2030, with a total value of RM 48.8 billion, the transportation and storage

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subsector contributed 3.6 percent to GDP and 6.6 percent to services sector value-added in 2017. This subsector grew at a 5.6 percent per annum from 2005 to 2017 and is expected to grow at a rate of 8.9 percent or higher in the future (Ministry of Transport, 2019).

In addition, the government has allocated one of most funds to the rail transport sector. According to the Estimated Federal Expenditure 2021, the Eleventh Malaysia Plan allotted RM 37.9 billion to implement different rail-related projects under the Ministry of Transport's jurisdiction (Ministry of Finance, 2020). The government's commitment highlighted the significance of rail industry in which its development is chiefly driven by the government (Amiril et al., 2017). In light of the government's huge investment, it is clear that the government's primary objective is to ensure that users obtain quality and efficient railway services.

Rail transportation is in fact, a type of service provided to customers. As of today, rail transport services such as those in the Klang Valley, continue to be in high demand. According to Malaysia's Land Public Transport Agency, overall rail passengers climbed from 2017 to 2019, reaching 283,290,816 pax in 2019. However, total passengers fell to 137,396,082 pax in 2020 (Land Public Transport Agency, 2020). This is due to the movement control order (MCO) to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Furthermore, rail transport has several advantages including land development, job creation, reduced travel time, attracting foreign investment, low CO2 emissions, the ability to carry more passengers and freight and reduced traffic congestion (Catalano et al., 2019; Sahrir Abd Aziz et al., 2018; Shaharudin et al., 2018).

With positive spill over effects from rail services, employees' attitudes and behaviours have a significant impact on consumer attitudes and behaviours, affecting organisational productivity and performance (Robbins & Judge, 2005; Roelofsen, 2002; Viswesvaran & Ones, 2005). Consequently, in order to achieve resilience performance, the rail transport sector must be carefully planned and managed, and good work practises must be fostered among railway employees (IMPROVER, 2019; MOWE-IT, 2019; RailAdapt, 2019) as cited in Bešinović, (2020). This can be accomplished by concentrating on improving employee job performance which can then be translated into efficient and dependable services.

Malaysia's public transportation system is still in poor shape with glaring problems such as accidents, delays, the quality of customer service and ticketing systems which all needing to be addressed and improved (Mat et al., 2019). Unfortunately, on 24th May 2021, a tragic accident occurred when two LRT trains crashed on the same track in a tunnel, injuring 47 passengers with three passengers diagnosed with critical injuries. The Minister of Transport stated that there is an element of human error in the train operation (Basyir & Yusof, 2021).

Furthermore, few studies have found that Malaysian rail users are dissatisfied with the services. Inefficiency of employees, lack of management commitment, train timeliness and bad service at ticketing counters are among the problems cited. In addition, employees should be more empathic, courteous, and professional in their work (Bambale et al., 2020; Ibrahim et al., 2019, 2021; Isai et al., 2020). These studies demonstrated the importance of rail employees performing their duties diligently and consistently. Their actions and behaviours have a substantial impact on customer satisfaction, as shown by Mat et al., (2019) who found that all SERVQUAL aspects are crucial in influencing rail customers' contentment.

As indicated, problems that emerged require immediate attention because it reflect the degree of performance among employees and affecting the image of government. Employees, particularly in the service sector are key drivers in maintaining good performance such as building positive relationships with customers (Ojo, 2009).

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Job Performance

Individual employees' actions and behaviours are reflected in job performance (Campbell, 2012; Campbell et al., 1990). The actions should be scalable or measurable (Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000) and necessary to achieve the intended outcome wanted by the organisation based on what they give during work situations (Sonnetag & Frese, 2002; Sonnetage et al., 2008).

Motowidlo et al., (1997) divided job performance into two categories: task performance and contextual performance, both of which have been frequently used in prior researches (Pradhan & Jena, 2017). Task performance refers to the formalised activities that employees are required to execute, whereas contextual performance refers to non-core tasks such as assisting team members and participating in social organisation programmes that are not technically direct related to the day to day tasks but still contribute to overall organisation performance.

Both categories can be separated empirically, as a study indicated that experience has a significant impact on task performance, whilst personality has a significant impact on contextual performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 2009; Campbell, 2012; Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994). In general, task performance varies depending on the type of employment, whereas contextual performance may be applicable to any sort of job such as being helpful to coworkers and persevering in making extra efforts. In gist, job performance can be inferred as what employees are expected to do or specific activities they do in the workplace which contribute to the organization's value.

According to Campbell et al., (1990)'s job performance model, declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge and motivation equally influence job performance. Pursuant to the theory, Schmitt et al., (2003) asserted that the job performance resulted in distal outcomes such as productivity, customer satisfaction, safety/accidents and efficiency. In their job performance model, employees who develop more actions closely connected to organisational goals are more efficient and productive.

Recent studies have been conducted around the world to improve the performance of rail employees. In China, factors like cognitive abilities, mental workload, strained work-family conflict, job insecurity, occupational calling, and safety leadership have been found to predict rail employee performance (M. Guo, Hu, et al., 2019; M. Guo, Liu, et al., 2019; Z. Guo et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2019; Wei et al., 2016). In addition, because tasks are monotonous, railway work activities can cause boredom and demotivation among employees. As a result, a study of Kenyan railway employees found that job enlargement has a major impact on employee performance in the rail transport sector (Gichuki & Munjuri, 2018). Given the opportunity on job enlargement, employee should also be mindful on what they do. Employee mindfulness and openness to change were revealed to be important predictors of rail employees' adaptive performance in Iran (Hashemi et al., 2019). In Thailand, important factors such as human resource management, organisational culture and total quality management practises were found to significantly affect State Railway of Thailand employees' performance (Sivalai & Rojnirutti, 2018).

These findings demonstrated the importance of maintaining rail employees' performance to provide users with efficient services. Their job performance is critical in lowering safety risks such as accidents that could endanger the lives of several other users. To conduct operations properly, railway employees must be able to perform tasks with the necessary skills and knowledge.

However, a research found that the safety climate among Malaysian rail employees is at moderate level (Derahim et al., 2019). It raises the unsettling question of whether the disaster may recur in the future, as users' safety is crucial. As a result, it is critical to investigate predictors of railway employees' performance in Malaysia. Given that rail transport sector is recognised as one of Malaysia's growth engines, the performance of rail transport sector employees should be given special attention to boost their productivity.

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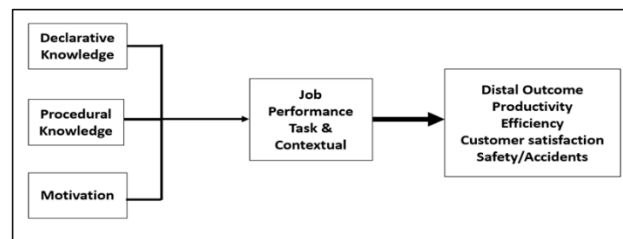
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This review adapts Schmitt et al., (2003) job performance model as shown in Figure 2.1. Employee competency (skill and knowledge) is associated with procedural and declarative knowledge, whereas affective commitment and organisational culture are inextricably linked with motivation. Employee motivation is fuelled by the organization's shared values and beliefs, which are developed by organisations with strong cultures. Furthermore, individuals who demonstrate their affective commitment are more likely to be motivated in their work (Wiener & Vardi, 1990; Meyer et al., 2004). Therefore, employee competency, organisational culture and affective commitment should all have direct effect on railway employees' job performance.

Figure 2.1

Job Performance Model



Source: Adapted from Schmitt et al., (2003)

2.2 Organisational Culture and Job Performance

Organisational culture is defined as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another” (Hofstede, 2011; Sun, 2009). It implies that culture is a collective phenomenon based on societal acceptance of ideologies, values and atmospheres (Hofstede et al., 2010). According to Schein, (2004), organisational culture is defined as a set of shared basic assumptions that a group has learned as it solves problems of external adaptation and internal integration and that has proven to be valid enough to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel about those problems.

In any organisations, culture shapes and nurtures how situations are handled and the practises that employees accept. Previous research has identified a number of noteworthy organisational culture models, which are shown in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1

List of Organisational Culture Proponents and Dimensions

Source: Authors' own summarization

Proponents	Dimensions
Wallach (1983)	Innovative Bureaucratic Supportive
Denison & Mishra (1995)	Involvement Consistency Adaptability Mission
Cameron & Quinn (2011)	Clan Adhocracy Hierarchy Market
Hofstede et al. (2010)	Power distance Individualism Masculinity Uncertainty avoidance Long term orientation
Sashkin & Rosenbach (2013)	Managing change Achieving goals Coordinating team work Building strong culture Customer satisfaction

Organisational culture has been highlighted as a valuable resource for its substantial contributory role on job performance, which includes adaptability, consistency, mission and involvement. All of which have favorable impact on effectiveness and productivity levels of employees (Ojo, 2009; Zheng et al., 2010). Previous studies substantiated the positive effect of organisational culture on work behaviour such as job satisfaction (Meng & Berger, 2019), organizational commitment (Arokiasamy & Hon Tat, 2019; Lau et al., 2017), clan and adhocracy culture also found to reduce work deviant behaviors (Di Stefano et al., 2019).

The predictive effect of organisational culture on job performance have been widely researched in various context and industries such as telecom sector in Pakistan (Fareed et al., 2016), South Korean sports industry (Jeong et al., 2019), consulting companies in Indonesia (Raharjo et al., 2018), among SMEs in Pakistan (Soomro & Shah, 2019) and steel industry in Taiwan (Kuo & Tsai, 2019). In Malaysia, similar results were found among multinational company in Sarawak (Lau et al., 2020) and SME employees' in Johor, Penang, Selangor and Perak (Krishnan et al., 2020).

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Majority studies found that employees in respective industries pointed the importance of culture in nurturing their motivation and performance. In contrast, few studies had also indicated weak prediction of organizational culture on job performance in various industries which include government (Hasan et al., 2020; Saad & Abbas, 2018) and hospitality (Bhardwaj & Kalia, 2021). Others revealed insignificant relationship such as within government sector (Habba et al., 2017), health sector (Sahertian et al., 2020) and banking (Sapta et al., 2020).

According to previous studies, Malaysian employees value favorable work culture that improves positive outcomes such as satisfaction, commitment, well-being and performance. Accordingly, it is imperative to examine relationship between organisational culture and employees' job performance especially in the Malaysia's rail transport sector.

2.3 Affective Commitment and Job Performance

Employees' emotional attachment and devotion to the organisation is measured by affective commitment. It also has to do with how deeply employees identify with the organisation. Employees with affective commitment, according to commitment theory, have the motivation to associate themselves with the organisation, which results in better job performance (Meyer & Allen, 1990).

In a meta-analysis of the antecedents, correlates and consequences of affective, continuance and normative commitment to organizations, Meyer et al., (2002) revealed that affective commitment had the strongest and most favourable correlations with organisation-relevant (attendance, performance, and organizational citizenship behaviour). Furthermore, Mercurio, (2015) discovered in an integrative review of previous studies that affective commitment is defined as the core essence of commitment that relates to being enduring, demonstrably indispensable and a central characteristic of organisational commitment. Individual behaviour such as performance, turnover, absenteeism and organisational citizenship are influenced by affective commitment as a core component of commitment.

Studies had indicated positive direct relationship of affective commitment and job performance in various context that include, among nurses in India (Sharma & Dhar, 2015), employees of SMEs in France (Swalhi et al., 2017), industrial employees and hospital in Turkey (Kaplan & Kaplan, 2018; Yücel et al., 2020), takaful industry employees in Malaysia and Indonesia (Mihardjo et al., 2021) and among banks employees in Jordan and Lebanon (Alghusin & Al-Ajlouni, 2020; Bizri et al., 2021).

Nonetheless, Steers (1977), who previously examined the antecedents and outcomes of organisational commitment, discovered that job performance as an outcome variable is unrelated to organisational commitment. Similarly, Mowday et al., (1982) claimed that the link between performance and job performance produced a weak relationship. When compared to perceived organisational support, affective commitment has a low predictive effect on organisational citizenship behaviour, indicating that employees feel obligated to reciprocate organisations when they are properly supported (Shore & Wayne, 1993).

Recent studies, for example among nurses in Bosnia Herzegovina (Dinc et al., 2018) and employees in Cape Verde (Semedo et al., 2016), found insignificant relationship between affective commitment and job performance. Their findings were consistent with those of Cesário and Chambel (2017) and Eliyana et al. (2019), who discovered that all commitment components were not significant predictor of job performance.

According to commitment theory, affective commitment is the most powerful predictor of job performance, and it is clear that few studies have found a positive relationship between affective commitment and job performance, while others have found the opposite.

Clearly, there is a need to investigate the interacting effect of affective commitment and job performance in a Malaysian context. Importantly, a person with a high affective commitment will not always contribute to better job performance, as other factors may be present to strengthen the relationship between these two constructs (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1996). This could be due to inconsistencies in the findings of the affective commitment and job performance relationship, which calls for further research in Malaysia's rail transport sector.

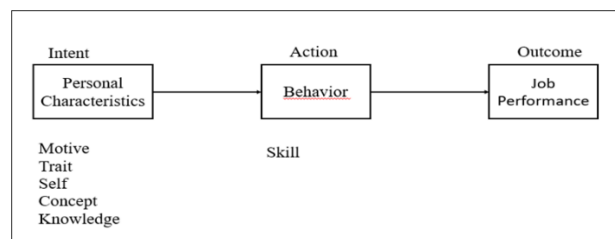
2.4 Employee Competency and Job Performance

Spencer & Spencer, (1993) created the concept and signification of competency. Their competency theory is divided into two categories. The first is skill and knowledge, which are visible competence or surface characteristics that are easy to develop. Second, self concept, traits and motives are hidden competencies that are difficult to develop because they are deeply rooted in oneself.

Based on that concept, they proposed the competency causal flow model depicted in Figure 2.2. The model explains the relationship between intent (traits, motives, self concept, and knowledge) and behaviour as it relates to job performance. The model also states that in order to achieve a certain level of performance, one must have the intent to do so.

Figure 2.2

Competency Causal Flow Model



Source: Adopted from Spencer & Spencer, (1993)

Prior research in Malaysia found significant positive relationship between competency and job performance among employees in the service industry (Ismail & Zainal Abidin, 2010; June & Rosli, 2011) and among expatriates working in the ICT industry (Singh & Mahmud, 2018). Job performance is also linked to team performance, with team skills significantly predicting team performance among Malaysian public hospital nurses (Zawawi & Nasuridin, 2020). Others have demonstrated that employee competence significantly predicts job performance in Indonesia (Kindarto et al., 2020; Meswantri & Awaludin, 2018). In Taiwan, a few studies in the educational and e-commerce industries revealed that employees' competency is critical to improving organisational citizenship behaviour and job performance (Chuang et al., 2019; Lin, 2021). While similar result was obtained in Sri Lanka, indicating that service sector competency is important for employee service recovery performance (Hewagama et al., 2019). Competency also relates to capacity buildings of employees in textile industry in Pakistan which is found as significant predictor on job performance (Wassem et al., 2019).

Employee competency studies have also revealed that it is related to the psychological need of employees to be competent, which include competency development and emotional competency, resulting in better job performance (Kim & Liu, 2015; Singh & Mahmud, 2018; Yu & Ko, 2017). Their studies provide important insight that employees tend to make self-assessment on their emotional abilities that affecting performance. It also explained that employees possess desire to be competent in delivering tasks.

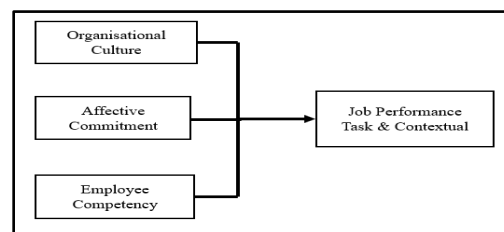
Recent findings showed that competency significantly predict job performance such as among bank employees in Indonesia (Dewi et al., 2020; Novita et al., 2021) and nurses and physicians in public hospitals in Norway (Olsen & Mikkelsen, 2021). Previous research have shown that having competency is critical to improving job performance for the majority of employees. Alternatively, studies have found insignificant relationship between competency and job performance (Beltrán-Martín & Bou-Lluis, 2018; Swanson et al., 2020) and indicated weak relationships (Abu Hassan Asaari et al., 2017; Jacobs & Roodt, 2019; June et al., 2013). In relation to competency theory in which job performance is determined by skill, knowledge and attitude, these findings call for more research into the strength of competency in predicting job performance.

Since the inception of the competence concept by White (1959), the majority of literatures had focused on developing its concept and definition. While empirical studies on the importance of competence are gaining traction among researchers, which only began in 2016 till present day (Salman et al., 2020). Majority organisations are concerned on their effectiveness that can be achieved by augmenting employees' competencies (Potnuru et al., 2019) and capabilities (Patro, 2020). Even though competencies are widely used in organisational studies, there is limited empirical evidence to support their relationship with performance (Boyatzis, 2008). In view of extant literatures, there is need to examine relationship between employee competency and job performance of rail employees specifically in Malaysia.

2.5 Proposed Research Framework

The proposed research framework is as indicated in Figure 2.3 below. This study examines the relationship between organisational culture and job performance, affective commitment and job performance as well as employee competency and job performance. The proposed questionnaires consist of a total 42 items measuring employees' perception and feedbacks on organisational culture (8 items), affective commitment (8 items), employee competency (12 items) and job performance (14 items). All items are adopted and adapted as well as validated by previous studies. In ensuring validity, the content and face validity will be conducted before the actual field survey. It will involve executives and managers at two main railway operators in Malaysia, Prasarana Malaysia Berhad and Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad. The sampling method to be used is simple random sampling. The two companies are chosen as they are the only rail operators owned by the government of Malaysia. The final analysis to measure the relationship among the variables will be conducted using SmartPLS version 3.3.

Proposed Research Framework



3. Conclusion

This paper contributes that there exists the relationship of organisational culture, affective commitment and employee competency in affecting employees' job performance in various industries.

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This review provides vital insight on the need to examine further the job performance of employees uniquely in Malaysia's rail transport sector pursuant to problem identified. Undoubtedly, employees are valuable resources in which their performance dictate attainment of organisational value. Most importance, rail employees play significant role in contributing Malaysia's aspiration towards sustainable growth as envisaged by Malaysia's aptly renowned policy, the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030.

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