
UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYEE LOYALTY: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW OF ITS ANTECEDENTS AND OUTCOMES

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Abstrak

Loyalitas karyawan merupakan faktor penting dalam keberhasilan organisasi karena berkaitan dengan retensi, kualitas layanan, dan kinerja perusahaan. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang berhubungan dengan loyalitas karyawan serta menjelaskan dampaknya berdasarkan literatur. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan konseptual dan deskriptif dengan sumber data berupa buku, artikel jurnal, tesis/disertasi, sumber internet, dan literatur terkait lainnya. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa loyalitas karyawan berkaitan dengan kepuasan kerja, budaya organisasi, gaya kepemimpinan, keseimbangan kehidupan kerja, keterlibatan karyawan, kepemimpinan etis, penghargaan, pengembangan karier, komunikasi dengan atasan, dan pengayaan pekerjaan. Loyalitas karyawan juga berkontribusi terhadap peningkatan kualitas layanan dan kinerja perusahaan serta dapat mengurangi kecenderungan turnover. Organisasi perlu memberi perhatian pada faktor-faktor tersebut untuk mempertahankan karyawan berkualitas. Penelitian selanjutnya disarankan memasukkan lebih banyak faktor agar pemahaman mengenai loyalitas karyawan menjadi lebih luas dan dapat digeneralisasi.

Kata Kunci: *Loyalitas Karyawan; Keterlibatan Karyawan; Keseimbangan Kehidupan Kerja; Budaya Organisasi; Gaya Kepemimpinan*

Abstract

Employee loyalty is an important factor in organizational success because it is associated with retention, service quality, and company performance. This study aims to identify factors related to employee loyalty and explain its impacts based on the literature. The study uses a conceptual and descriptive approach with data sources including books, journal articles, theses/dissertations, internet sources, and other related literature. The review indicates that employee loyalty is associated with job satisfaction, organizational culture, leadership style, work-life balance, employee engagement, ethical leadership, rewards, career development, communication with supervisors, and job enrichment. Employee loyalty also contributes to improved service quality and company performance and may reduce turnover tendencies. Organizations should pay attention to these factors to retain quality employees. Future studies are recommended to include additional factors to broaden and generalize understanding of employee loyalty.



Keywords: *Employee Loyalty; Employee Engagement; Work-Life Balance; Organizational Culture; Leadership Style*

A. Introduction

The introduction part explains the background of this study by describing several issues related to the topic of this study. There are also some references that prove the significance of conducting a study on this particular topic.

Background of the Study

One of important factors that supports organizations is people factor for people possess knowledge (Fahey & Prusak, 1998) and the one who sets, organizes, runs, and controls the system in organizations (Kulkarni, Ravindra, & Freeze, 2007). People (employees) are assets and main factors of organizations (Uzma, 2015); thus, it is vital for organizations to have high employees loyalty.

Rajput, Singhal, and Tiwari (2016) defined employees loyalty as a worker's commitment towards organization which is shown by being actively involved in the work and by having emotional attachment to the organization. In short, loyalty is having a sense of belonging. Employees loyalty is an important issue to be considered for based on researcher's personal experiences and observations for 14 years of working in a faith-based institution, there is likely a tendency of employees choosing to move to other

institution rather than being loyal to the institution. It is true that employees hold the power of choice and that the right to choose can never be controlled by leaders of institutions. However, if top management and leaders of institutions realize and/or know the factors that affect employees loyalty, then it will help leaders to create better strategies for employees.

I chose to study employee loyalty because employees loyalty is crucial for organization success; therefore, organization should pay extra attention to it. There are several reasons why employees loyalty is vital for organization: 1) it "pushes productivity in the workplace", 2) it improves "customers experience" that can contribute to organization success, 3) it "improves corporation's image", 4) and it "speeds up production in a short time" (Collins, 2019). Research proves that organizational culture and leadership style have significant effects on employees loyalty (Abbas, 2017).

Today, it is still a challenge for companies to find and encourage employees to be satisfied with their job, especially the best employees (Mehta, Singh, Bhakar, & Sinha, 2010). One of the main challenges that most organizations are facing is "staff retention" (Mwangi & Omondi, 2016). A studied conducted in



banking sector in Nigeria showed that within a long period of time, banking sector in Nigeria has witnessed never-ending labors turnover from time to time. This is why conducting research to find out factors that can motivate “employee loyalty” and “employee retention” is necessary (Adedeji, Ugwumadu, & Obianuju, 2018).

In other words, employees loyalty is needed in order to improve competitiveness and company’s survival because employees are the one who control and use the resources. For this reason, organization leaders should identify and know the factors that can improve employees loyalty so that employees can endure or satisfy with their work. It is one of many responsibilities of human resource manager to create employees retention strategy in order to reach employees’ and organization’s goal (Kassa, 2015).

Based on the arguments above, there is an urgent need to find out the factors related to employees loyalty in order for organizations and/or institutions to design organizational culture and leadership style.

Purpose of the Study

This study focused to find out factors suggested by the literature that are related to employee loyalty topic. Through this study, leaders in organization or institution may know what factors that affect employee loyalty;

thus, this study can give suggestions and/or ideas on how to make strategies to design organizational culture and leadership style.

Significance of the Study

This study is conducted because it can give more insights about employees’ loyalty. This study can also give contributions toward human resource practices, academics, and practitioners. Next, this study can give assistance to leaders to design strategy that can improve employees’ loyalty. Finally, this study can give positive effects to employees, and to improve work commitment.

Statement of the Problem

Employees loyalty is one of several aspects that affect success of an organization; it comes from both top management and employees. When top managements or leaders treat employees well, it is more likely employees will give loyalty in return. As the result, employees will probably choose to remain and develop in the institution rather than move to other institutions. A study by Chen, Chen, Tsui, and Chiang (2016) showed that some major contributing factors that may increase employees loyalty are proper monetary reward, opportunity for leaning, career development, and communication with supervisors.



However, based on researcher's experiences and observations, there is a tendency of employees to move to other institutions. If this phenomenon keeps happening, institutions may decrease in potential lecturers and more likely to impact the quality of the institution. As the result, institutions may need some times to make new recruits.

This is why it is urgent to study this topic and find out factors related to that topics such as factors that can declines and improves employees loyalty, impact of employee loyalty on institution, and so on, so as to become suggestions or ideas for leaders in designing organizational culture and leadership style.

Based on several models from experts and other researchers, I chose research model from Abbas (2017) to be the base model of this study. The result of Abbas' study showed that organizational culture and leadership style through employee engagement affect employee loyalty.

Figure 1

Adopted Research Model from Abbas (2017)

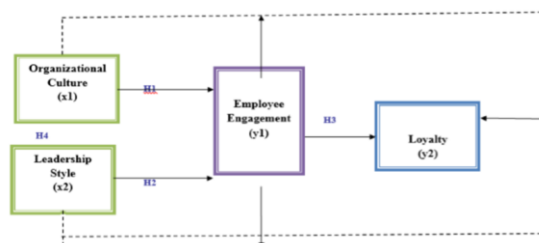


Figure1. Indirect variables that affect employee loyalty according to Abbas (2017).

Abbas' study presented several suggestions for further studies, one of the suggestions was to make more variables so as to increase the "scope of applicability". Therefore, the following figure is the plan for researcher's further study adapted from Abbas' research model presented above. Besides Abbas' two indirect variables, there is one more added variable which is work-life balance.

Figure 2

Adapted Research Model for Further Study

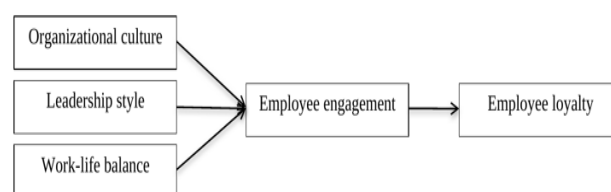


Figure 2. Indirect variables that affect employee loyalty

This literature review was consisted through several steps. First step was to find out articles and journals that related to employee loyalty and only from the last seven years. The journals and articles pointed out information, definitions, factors that can affect, mediating variables, and the impacts. Second step was to find journal articles that related to employee loyalty. The journals gave information that can be re-analyzed and reviewed; only the best and most relatable information to the topic was included. Third step was to group all information. The groups were: 1) definition, 2) factors related to employee loyalty, 3) mediating variables, and 4) impacts. Fourth step was to analyze which variable has the most

studies and which has the least. The fifth step was to find “gap”. The last step was to decide possible variables for further studies.

Employee Loyalty

Generally, being loyal is similar to being faithful or devoted. Oxford dictionary (2008) defined loyal as “always firmly supporting” something or someone while loyalty as “the quality of staying firm in your friendship or support for someone or something” (Collins COBUILD dictionary, 2006). Both dictionaries use the same word to define loyal or loyalty: firm. So, someone loyal means someone who cannot be swayed, moved, or changed (Oxford dictionary); one who is certain and determined of the choice he/she makes (Collins COBUILD dictionary). Becker (1960) defined loyalty as a process that employee goes through throughout his/her working period.

Employee loyalty is the feeling and action of devotion or faithfulness toward the company by doing the job well, expecting the best outcome for the company, and not moving to other company (Hoek, 2013) even when there is better job offered to the employee (Van Vugt & Hart, 2014). Loyalty is shown not only to company as a whole but also to the employers (Masakure, 2016) and it is shown through full commitment to the loyalty (Niehoff, Moorman, Blakely, & Fuller, 2001). The word loyalty here refers to long term commitment for the sake of

organization success (Gill, 2011). Pina e Cunha (2002) stated that employees can show their commitment through pride and full support toward organization. Several examples of employee loyalty are by defending the company from harsh criticisms, focusing on positive aspects of the company, and hold up company's reputation in public (Niehoff, et.al., 2001). Antoncic and Antoncic (2011) emphasized that employees are considered loyal when they believe and accept the company to be part of their goal.

Factors that Effect Employee Loyalty

According to Ineson, Benke, and László (2013), there are some antecedents of employee loyalty, such as employee commitment, personal satisfaction, work environment, social benefit and monetary rewards. From the above information, employee satisfaction is mostly stated as factor that mainly affects employee loyalty in several studies such as Han, Meng, and Kim (2017), Masakure (2016), Collins, Burrus, and Meyer (2014), and Ineson, et.al. (2013). Lee, Hom, Eberly, and Li (2017), Longo and Mura (2011), and Bhattacharya (2015) added that employees will remain and will not move to other company when they feel satisfied of their current job. This was supported by Rhoades, Eisenberger, and Armeli (2001) and Neves (2011) who stated that employees satisfaction can decrease employees' intention to move to other companies. In other words, the higher



employees satisfaction, the more loyal they will become toward their job and company; thus, the increase in employee loyalty will result to increase in organizational performance. In additional, employee satisfaction, particularly job satisfaction, will affect to increase in customer service quality (Esmaeilpour & Ranibar, 2017).

Nevertheless, there are also studies of the academicians which found that job satisfaction does not have significant impact to employees loyalty (Rajput, Singhal, & Tiwari, 2016). Besides employee satisfaction, there is also other factor that affect employee loyalty which is ethical leadership. Ethical leadership according to Tseng and Wu (2017) has a strong impact on creating employee loyalty, especially in financial organizations. Employee loyalty could improve if leader shows ethical leadership to employees.

Considering "turnover" issues, it is crucial to find out what cause employee loyalty. Some factors that may improve employee loyalty are "proper monetary reward, opportunity for learning, career development, and communication with supervisors" (Chen, Chen, Tsui, & Chiang, 2016). Other factor that can also affect employee loyalty is job enrichment. The less development of job enrichment, the less tie and loyalty employees will show toward organization (Niehoff, et.al., 2001).

Organizational culture. I believe that organization has spent a lot of money and investment on human resource starting from marketing to promote a position, recruitment process, and choosing the right person for certain job in order to get organization's support to reach its goal. After having the right person, organization will develop necessary skills through training program so that organization can engage with its employee and as much as it can to retain employee and make them love their job. According to Aninkan and Oyewole (2014), the biggest challenge for organization nowadays is how to make employee stay and not move to other company. Shuck and Herd (2012) suggested that organizational culture might impact employee engagement. Apparently, there are two types or organizational culture which is "proficient" and "defensive". If the culture is proficient or positive, it will give good effect to employee engagement and employee will enjoy their job, understand each other, and support each other in their work (Gilson, 2008).

Cheki (1996) explained that organizational culture is a "set of codes and custom" that was made so that all parties may know how to behave as expected to create good environment for all. Organizational culture will have positive impact toward employee engagement if employees are satisfied or



enjoy the culture, environment, norms, and values that organization creates (Aninkan & Oyewole, 2014).

Leadership style. Leadership role is vital in organization since leaders are the one to organize employee development, especially level of engagement of each employee (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Leaders also direct or lead all that relate to organization in order to support the organization to reach its goal (Yukl, 2006). This facts show that there is positive relationship between leadership style and employee engagement (Ghafoor, Qureshi, Khan, & Hijazi, 2011). However, in organization, leadership needs cooperation from all sides (Antonakis, Cianciolo, & Sternberg, 2004) and good leadership style will show support to its employees by giving trainings and promotions (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004). Positive support that leaders or supervisors show will make employees more engaged to their job, produce good and better job result, and show full, efficient, and effective cooperative from the employees (Gilson, 2008).

Work-life balance. Work-life balance (WLB) refers to one's activity that is related to his/her job (work), "hobbies, interests, activities related to own beliefs" (life), and effort to balance work and life in order to have meaningful and "fun" life (Hughes, Kinder, & Cooper, 2018). There are several factors that can make good or

bad WLB according to Wong and Ko (2009): Seven factors: 1) enough time-off from work, 2) workplace support on work-life balance, 3) allegiance to work, 4) flexibility on work schedule, 5) life orientation, 6) voluntary reduction of contracted hours to cater for personal needs, and 7) upkeep the work and career.

The above study showed that WLB is connected to employee loyalty and organizational support. In other words, employees will have good WLB when organization shows support toward the employees and employees show loyalty toward the organization. Moreover, factors that have the most positive affect on WLB are employees independence in doing their job and leaders/supervisors' support (Haar, Sune, Russo, & Ollier-Malaterre, 2018).

According to Beauregard and Henry (2009), WLB has moderate relationship with organizational performance because there is not enough literature or data to support high significant relationship between WLB and organizational performance. However, a study by Sturges and Guest (2006) proved that employees who focus more on work are more likely to feel "unsatisfactory relationship between home and work"; nonetheless, this can change if the organization helps their employees by paying attention to organizational policy and support the employees so that the employees can develop commitment



toward the organization. Shabir and Gani (2020) in their study proved that there is a significant relationship between WLB and organizational commitment. The study showed that employees will more likely to feel pressure or stress when WLB is poor as the result of poor organizational policies that fails to support employees need: good WLB. Therefore, in order for employees to have good WLB that can result to employee loyalty toward organization, the organization has to take care of its employees through its policies and support.

Employee engagement. Employee engagement is connected to employee loyalty (Milliman, Gatling, & Kim, 2018) and that both have significant relationship with each other (Ibrahim & Falasi, 2014). The higher employee loyalty, the stronger employee engagement (Nitin, 2005) and more loyal employees toward organization, the more loyal they are toward their work; thus, turnover will decrease (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Syahrizal, Patrisia, and Abror (2019) supported this by saying that organization should focus to employee engagement in order to be able to improve employee loyalty.

The Impact of Employee Loyalty

People factor holds a crucial part in preparing quality service to customers. Quality service has become marketing issues for a long time and many researchers have studies this issue for

three decades (Izogo, 2015). Customer quality service is used as tools in business competition (Yee, Yeng, & Cheng, 2010) and employee loyalty can increase customer quality service (Esmaeilpour & Mohammad, 2018) which result to increase in organizational activities and customer loyalty. Research proved that there is a significant relationship between employee loyalty and company performance (Dadkhah, 2010; Tomic, Tesic, Kuzmanovic, & Tomic, 2018).

B. Methodology

This is a conceptual paper that is based on several studies of several sources such as the internet, books, journals, thesis/dissertation, and other related articles. This paper is also a descriptive paper because according to McCombes (2020) this type of paper can accurately explain the phenomenon under this study which is employee loyalty.

C. Discussion

Employee loyalty and long-term commitment toward organization will strengthen employee's line in organization which results to organizational success. Employees with mature level of loyalty toward organization are more likely to be in harmony with organizational policy, strategy, mission, and advantages. It means that the need to train employees below that level will decrease and organization can focus to skill



development. On the contrary, if employee loyalty decreases, there will be need of turnovers which will result to organizational loss as the result of frequent basic training cost (Makizadeh, Karimi, & Jamalieh, 2010).

Personally, maintaining quality employee and encouraging them to be loyal to organization is the best choice. Loyal employees tend to be more productive compared to new employees since the loyal ones have already known the customers and got used to giving the best quality to the customers (Lavlak & Right, 2003). It is time for organization and leaders to focus more on factors that can improve employee loyalty for organizational success is the result of "people factor" and quality that customers get is also from "people factor".

D. Conclusion And Recommendation

This paper aims to discuss several factors that have relationship with employee loyalty. This paper also gives several impacts of employee loyalty. Various studies have proven the importance of employee loyalty to organization or company.

Further studies may need more factors that affect employee loyalty in the literature review section in order to have broader reach and to generalize the study.

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