

**INFLUENCE OF MILITARY COMMANDER'S LEADERSHIP STYLE ON  
SUBORDINATE'S JOB SATISFACTION AND ORGANISATIONAL  
COMMITMENT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Studies have determined that job satisfaction level of military personnel is lower than employees of non-military organisation. Hardship such as long working hours and extended training or frequently being away from family for military missions require a strong sense of commitment to their organisation. In military, the commitment of its personnel is important beyond the reason of achievement in higher productivity, increase in retention of valuable talent. Strong commitment from soldiers in military often translates into their will to fight and preserve the sovereignty of their country. This study examined the direct effect of Military Commander's transformational and transactional leadership style towards subordinate's organisational commitment and the indirect effect of job satisfaction as a mediator variable. This research aims to determine whether the two different leadership styles have direct effect on the subordinate's commitment or it is indirectly mediated by job satisfaction. A quantitative approach was taken using PLS SEM approach and reliable structured questionnaires as research instruments. A simple random sampling of 54 Junior officers and 331 other ranks from the Royal Signals Corp were used as respondents. From this research, we found that a direct effect of transformational leadership to organisational commitment was significant while no significance in transactional leadership's direct effect to organisational commitment. It was also found that job satisfaction indirectly affects the relationship between transformational leadership, transactional leadership and organisational commitment.

This study, it must be pointed out that this is one of the few research studies on military leadership style and its effect on the soldier's job satisfaction and organisational commitment in the Malaysia. No empirical studies are available to aid in understanding

the level of military leadership style practices and its effect on the soldier's job satisfaction and commitment in Malaysian Army, especially in Royal Signals Corp. More studies in Malaysia replicated over samples covering a wide range of Armed Forces military personnel and geographical areas of military camp in Malaysia would help to enhance the understanding of Military Commander's leadership style practices and its effect on soldier's job satisfaction and commitment.

## ABSTRAK

Kajian terdahulu menunjukkan bahawa tahap kepuasan kerja di kalangan anggota tentera adalah lebih rendah berbanding pekerja-pekerja dari organisasi bukan ketenteraan. Kesukaran yang dialami seperti waktu kerja yang panjang, latihan yang berterusan atau seringkali berjauhan dari keluarga bagi memenuhi keperluan misi ketenteraan memerlukan anggota tentera mempunyai komitmen yang tinggi terhadap organisasinya. Komitmen yang tinggi anggota-anggota tentera selalunya diterjemahkan dengan kesanggupan mereka berjuang demi mempertahankan kedaulatan negara. Dalam tentera, komitmen anggotanya penting bagi mengujudkan peningkatan produktiviti, meningkatkan pengekalan anggota berbakat dalam organisasi. Kajian ini adalah mengenalpasti sama ada kepimpinan Komander tentera gaya transformasi atau kepimpinan Komander tentera gaya transaksi memberi kesan langsung terhadap komitmen di kalangan anggota bawahan atau memberi kesan tak langsung terhadap komitmen anggota bawahan melalui kepuasan kerja sebagai pembolehubah pencelah. Kajian ini bertujuan menentukan sama ada dua gaya kepimpinan Komander tentera yang berbeza iaitu kepimpinan transformasi dan kepimpinan transaksi memberi kesan langsung terhadap komitmen atau kesan tak langsung melalui pencelah pembolehubah kepuasan kerja. Pendekatan kuantitatif telah digunakan dengan menggunakan kaedah PLS SEM serta soalselidik berstruktur sebagai instrumen kajian. Sampel rawak mudah seramai 54 pegawai muda dan 331 Lain-lain Pangkat dari Kor Semboyan Diraja digunakan sebagai responden. Daripada kajian ini, kita mendapati bahawa kesan langsung kepimpinan transformasi Komander tentera kepada komitmen anggota bawahan adalah signifikan. Manakala kesan langsung kepimpinan transaksi Komander tentera terhadap komitmen anggota bawahan adalah tidak signifikan. Kajian ini juga mendapati kepuasan kerja anggota telah memberi kesan

secara tak langsung dalam perhubungan gaya kepimpinan transformasi dan gaya kepimpinan transaksi dengan komitmen anggota.

Hubungan gaya kepimpinan Komander tentera dengan kepuasan kerja dan komitmen, iaitu perkara yang dititikberatkan dalam kajian ini merupakan salah satu daripada sebilangan penyelidikan terhadap gaya kepimpinan ketenteraan dan kesannya terhadap komitmen anggota bawahan. Sehingga kini terdapat kurang kajian-kajian yang dilakukan secara empirikal dalam membantu memahami tahap amalan gaya kepimpinan Komander tentera dan kesannya ke atas kepuasan kerja anggota bawahan di dalam Tentera Darat Malaysia terutamanya dari Kor Semboyan Diraja. Kajian lanjut secara berulang dengan sampel merangkumi kumpulan kor yang lebih besar dan kawasan geografi lebih meluas di dalam Angkatan Tentera Malaysia perlu dilaksanakan bagi meningkatkan pemahaman terhadap kesan pengamalan gaya kepimpinan Komander tentera terhadap kepuasan kerja dan komitmen anggota bawahannya.

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Thank you

## **APPROVAL**

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Introduction

In this introductory chapter, six main areas of interest will be presented. The first section, the background of the study provides an overview of the study undertaken. The second section describes the problem statement. The third section will be the purpose of the study. A brief outline of significance of the study is in the fourth section. The fifth section discusses the scope and limitation of the study. The sixth section is operational definition and key terms of the research while the final section outlines the structure of chapters this thesis.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

A career in military is one that requires both mental and physical fitness (Sanchez et al, 2004; Sultan, 2013). They also often require long hours, frequent relocations, multiple deployments and the execution of life-threatening duties for an average amount of pay (Karrasch, 2003). In the military services, soldiers are expected to understand that they are subjected to organisational practices, norms and values which require a high sense of obligation, loyalty and duty (Griffith, 2009). Hardship such as long working hours and extended training or frequently being away from family for military missions require a strong sense of commitment to their organisation and satisfaction (Maj Ng Kwang Hong, 2007; Nixon, 2012). In military, the commitment of its personnel is important beyond the



reason of achievement in higher productivity, increase in retention of valuable talent (Maj Ng Kwang Hong, 2007). Strong commitment from soldiers in military often translates into their will to fight and preserve the sovereignty of their country. The manner soldiers in the military service respond to this variety of service demands have significant consequences to the duty they perform and their contribution to the organisation. In such condition, motivation from their military leaders becomes the key factor to enable soldiers overcome these adversities and stay focused on the military tasks at hand (Nixon, 2012). Spector (1985) refers that inspirational leaders are positively related to subordinates perception of commitment; Military Commanders play a vital role as a force that moves the soldiers to the obligation, loyalty and duty that the military organisation demands.

In military, leaders usually exert a direct influence upon subordinates attitude and behaviour, such as job satisfaction (Bokti & Talib, 2009). Spector (1985) state that job satisfaction influences people's attitude towards their job and various aspects of their job. Job satisfaction is affected by personal and organisational factors, which cause an emotional reaction affecting organisational commitment (Porter et al, 1974). The consequences of job satisfaction include better performance and a reduction in withdrawal and counter-productive behaviours (Morrison, 2008). Since job satisfaction involves employee's affect or emotions, it influences an organisation's well-being with regard to job productivity, employee turnover, absenteeism, and life satisfaction (Sempane et al, 2002; Spector, 1985). Motivated employees are crucial to an organisation's success, and therefore understanding people in their jobs and what motivates them could be a driving force in strengthening organisational commitment

(Tella et al, 2007). Organisational commitment has attracted considerable interest as attempts have been made to better understand the intensity and stability of an employee's dedication to the organisation (Lumley et al, 2011). Allen and Meyer (1990) identified a link between organisational commitment and employee turnover, and concluded that employees who were strongly committed to the organisation were less likely to leave it. Thereby this study examines the commitment to the military in order to increase understanding about the theoretical component of commitment and the practical knowledge on how commitment could be supported in the military.

Leadership has been identified as one of factors affecting job satisfaction (Loke, 2001; Martin, 2006). Loke (2001) and Martin (2006) identified a relationship between leadership and job satisfaction in business. There is a gap in the military. Several studies have determined the job satisfaction level of military personnel is lower than employees of non-military organisations (Alpass et al, 1997; Sanchez et al, 2004). Sanchez et al (2004) contend this lower level of job satisfaction may be attributable to inherent stress factors associated with the work environment of the military employees.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Subordinates level of satisfaction and commitment are importance ingredients in a Military Commanders ability to derive change (Hughes et al, 2012). Subordinates job dissatisfaction has been linked to the numerous negative outcomes to the organisation (Alpass et al, 1997; Loke, 2001; Nguni et al, 2009; Sanchez et al, 2004). Previous research has shown that military personnel who report greater job satisfaction are more

likely to stay or indicate an intention to stay in military (Alpass et al, 1997; Bokti & Talib, 2009; Sanchez et al, 2004; Sultan, 2013). According to Davey et al (1967) low job satisfaction was result of inconsistent promotion opportunity and lack of organisational support including recognition from supervisors and peers. Predictors of job satisfaction studied in military work context have included leadership, challenging job conditions and low levels conflict (Alpass et al, 1997; Sanchez et al, 2004). In general issues in studies examining job satisfaction, relate to motivating factors of employees, associated with employee turnover, effect of individual attributes relating to job satisfaction, commitment and involvement, organisational factors and effect of demographic factors to work satisfaction (Al-Hussami, 2008; Blair, 1983; Chang et al, 2009; Loke, 2001; Sempene et al, 2002) while others focus on interpersonal relationship and organisational performance (Ahmadi & Alireza, 2007; Sanchez et al, 2004; Testa, 2001; Yousef, 2000). The general outcomes from these studies are related to what satisfied employees bring out the best output that enhances organisational performance.

In the context of the military, issues in job satisfaction is related to minimizing the time and costs associated with training new personnel and to capitalize on the experience of seasoned personnel (Sanchez et al, 2004). Sanchez et al (2004) cited in his study that attrition in the military is both common and costly. About 30% to 35% of enlisted personnel in the U.S military leave the organisation before completing their term of service, and estimated cost of recruiting and training for basic skills is \$20,000 per person. Retention of skilled military personnel is therefore a major concern and top priority for the U.S Department of Defence. These studies illustrate that by understanding the predictors of job satisfaction, it may be possible to take steps to encourage completion

of full tours of duty and even reenlistment, thereby increasing the numbers of experienced personnel in Armed Forces and reducing the need for new recruiting. Other studies illustrate that the issues in job satisfaction relate to two types of elements; intrinsic and extrinsic (Armstrong, 2003). Military leadership is one of the extrinsic factors that had a significant impact on military employee work attitude. A leader's positive attitude towards soldiers improves attitudes towards work and the organisation; and a leader negative attitude has an adverse effect on employee attitudes. Thus leadership styles can cause soldier's positive or negative attitudes towards the job. Turnover experts, both academic and practitioner, have asserted that leadership plays a significant role in turnover decisions (Mowday et al, 1979).

Endry Nixon (2012) asserted that managing Malaysian Infantry during peacetime soldiering is more challenging compared to in wartime. In wartime, soldiers are highly committed to sacrifice in performing their military tasks, for example against the communist insurgents during the emergency (Ghows, 2006). Communist threat was the prime motivator among soldiers to fight (Sharom, 2006), but with the end of the threat from the Malayan Communist Party (Ghows, 2006), our military faced new situations, with new problem of managing soldiers associated with military retention. Frequent and long deployments, overnight duty, long work hours, and high tempo, work overload typical most military jobs (Gade, 2003) are likely to play a critical role in the decision to stay or leave the military. Furthermore, with the result of globalisation today without a strong level of long-term commitment and loyalty from the soldiers will jeopardize public confidence in the military. Soldiers are likely to behave like employees in the job market

continuously on the lookout for better job opportunities elsewhere (Maj Ng Kwang Hong, 2007).

A report from the BOI (Board of Inquiry) (see **Appendix A**) conducted by Royal Signals Corp's units, also showed that most of the soldiers involved in disciplinary cases were faced from two main factors, which involve of organisational leadership and organisational life (the file is classified confidential). From the report, there are indications that decisions to stay among soldiers are seemed to be on downward trend. The level of long-term commitment and loyalty from soldiers generally indicate gradual erosion. This situation leads to questions such as; Why and how do some soldiers have high motivation, morale, spirit de corps, loyalty, harmony and love towards their Corps while some do not? What makes some soldiers change their attitudes and behaviour within a short period? Why do soldier apply for premature termination (see **Appendix B**), request new postings or change appointment, and why is their behaviour passive or even ill-discipline? All those problems portray a negative image of the organisation. The Malaysian military as very structured organisation which has been entrusted to protect the country, it cannot afford to be burdened with these problems.

Multiple studies in the past have linked leadership to job satisfaction, organisational commitment, or employee happiness in business organisations (e.g., Al-Hussami, 2008; Blair, 1983; Chang et al, 2009; Loke, 2001; Sempene et al, 2002). There is no comprehensive Malaysian research that has been carried out on military leadership style and its effect on the soldier's job satisfaction and organisational commitment in the Army. However so far, there are only two informal studies by military personnel related

to soldier's motivation and Commanders leaderships in the Malaysian Army. Stevenson (2010) study on Military Officer's transformational leadership, and Endry Nixon (2012) study on Military Commanders leadership style, behaviour, and knowledge in motivating Malaysian Infantry. Endry Nixon (2012) investigates how the Military Commander's leadership style, behaviour and knowledge influence soldier's motivation. But, these research studies differ from in this research which conducted in similar area because in this study, researcher explores a selected leadership style; transformational and transactional leadership, not leadership in general. Moreover, it analyzes the perceptions of the subordinate personnel in the Royal Signals Corp rather than other Corp in Malaysian Army which ethic, ethos and job prospect is different (Training Doctrine). The Royal Signals Corp is combat support unit whereas the Malaysian Infantry is combat unit.

A few isolated studies have already been carried out by civilian researchers in the Malaysian military context, thus clarifying the role of leadership and its impacts on the employee's outcomes like job satisfaction (e.g., Bokti & Talib, 2009). Currently no studies have been conducted that explicitly examine the relationship of leadership styles and behavioural outcomes like job satisfaction and commitment using an integrated model in Malaysian military environment. In Malaysia, the military organisation and country defence policy rarely gets the attention of researchers, probably because of the difficulties in obtaining the proper authorization from the military in order to keep the military operations and defence policy confidential.

From the above statement it is evident that there is an urgent necessity for more in-depth research to answer the question "why do soldiers apply for premature termination?" in

terms of development of concept of job satisfaction, organisational commitment and its relationships with key variables such as leader leadership style practices. Wolf (1981) says staff turnover is a symptom of larger problems in an organisation. Aamodt (2007) and Kotze (2005) say employees who are satisfied are more likely to stay with an organisation. Meanwhile, Porter et al (1974) found that organisational commitment discriminated better between stay in and leavers than did the various facets of job satisfaction. Mohamad (2012) has confirmed the theory that suggests that job satisfaction acts as a mediator for influence of leaders on employee commitment. Based on the issues, this study intends to establish, first; to examine the direct effect between the Military Commander's leadership styles with their subordinate's organisational commitment. Secondly, based on motivational theories, this research intends to determine whether the soldier's job satisfaction has indirect effects on relationship between leadership styles with the subordinate's organisational commitment.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The leadership styles of the leaders have been found to contribute to job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Martin, 2006; Loke, 2001; Nielsen et al, 2009; Tella et al, 2007). This suggests that the various leadership styles portrayed by leaders influence the job satisfaction and commitment of the followers. Therefore, the aims of this study seeks to determine whether the two different leadership styles have direct positive effects on the subordinate's organisational commitment or it is indirectly mediated by job satisfaction. The general objective of the study is to examine the effect of dimensions of transformational leadership style (i.e., idealized influence leadership, inspirational

motivation, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation) and three dimensions of transactional of the Military Commander leadership styles (i.e., management by exception active, management by exception passive, and contingent rewards) on organisational commitment component (i.e., affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment) and an additionally, examine whether the relationship indirectly mediated by job satisfaction. Specifically, the study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the overall level of job satisfaction, organisational commitment among subordinates and the overall level of leadership style practices (transformational leadership style and transactional leadership style) by Military Commander.
2. To examine the direct effect of Military Commander's transformational and transactional leadership style towards subordinate's organisational commitment.
3. To examine the direct effect of Military Commander's transformational and transactional leadership style towards job satisfaction and job satisfaction towards subordinate's organisational commitment.
4. To examine the mediating role of subordinate's job satisfaction in the relationship between Military Commander's transformational leadership style towards subordinate's organisational commitment and Military Commander's transactional leadership style towards subordinate's organisational commitment.



## 1.4 Research Questions

In order to answer the research objectives stated above, the following research questions have been developed for the study:

1. What are the levels of job satisfaction, organisational commitment among subordinates and the level of transformational leadership style and transactional leadership style practices by the Military Commander?
2. Are there direct effects of Military Commander's transformational leadership style and Military Commander's transactional leadership style towards subordinate's organisational commitment?
3. Are there direct effects of Military Commander's transformational leadership style and Military Commanders transactional leadership style towards subordinate's job satisfaction and a direct effect of subordinate's job satisfaction towards subordinate's organisational commitment?
4. Does subordinate's job satisfaction mediate the relationship between Military Commander's transformational leadership style towards subordinate's organisational commitment and relationship between Military Commander's transactional leadership style towards subordinates organisational commitment?