

The Impact of Leadership Styles and Stress on Employee Turnover Intention in Terengganu Hotel Community

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Abstract

In the contemporary hotel industry of Terengganu where tourists' arrivals and competition among firms are encouraging, employees and hotel community are expected to work and upgrade their services which is up to the customers' expectation. In order to improve customer service, effective leaders could build a culture of trust within their organization and constantly motivating employees to better handle job stress. The employees in hotel industry who need to deal with long working hours, trouble customer, and troubled relationship with supervisor could potentially develop job stress at the workplace. Responding to this issue that requires precise understanding, the objectives of this study are to examine which style of leadership (transformational, transactional and laissez faire) that have significant relationship towards employee turnover intention and to determine stress as a mediator role between leadership and employee turnover intention. A sample of 225 hotel employees from all level of positions of Terengganu hotels was gathered and results of the study showed several significant findings. The most important finding is the significant negative influences of transactional leadership style on employee turnover intention has been found and partial mediation was established when job stress was included. The findings therefore will help to address that the effect of transactional leadership (TL) on employee turnover is increased upon the addition of stress as mediator where subsequently, effective leader could negatively reduce stress and employee turnover intention in hotel industry.

Keywords: transactional leadership style (TL); transformational leadership style (TF); laissez faire leadership style (LF); stress; employee turnover intention

1. Introduction

The great amount of tourist arrivals over the years has resulted in the rapid development and construction of hotels in Malaysia. Based on the recent statistic, until May 2014, there were about 1858 hotels with 170,464 rooms in Malaysia (Malaysia Hotel Association). The service sector contributed about 57 percent towards the nation's real GDP in 2002 (Malaysian Ministry of Finance, 2002). Within the service sector, hotel and tourism industry has been identified as an important income earner to Malaysia.

Until May 2014, the number of hotels that located in the East Coast Economic Region (ECER) which is comprised of Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan was recorded to be around 347 hotels. However, compared to the other economic region in Malaysia such as Iskandar Development Region and North Corridor Economic Region (NCER), East Coast Region (ECER) was a bit slow in term of development in hotel and tourism industry even though there were surrounded by beautiful beaches of South China Sea.

As become one of Southeast Asia's top travel destination, competition in tourism and hotel industries has become more intense. Malaysia who is constantly competes with neighboring countries like Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia in other field or industries,

this particular industry is no exception where they also provide interesting tourist destinations. Therefore, to preserve and boost tourist preferences level towards Malaysian tourism and hotel industries, enhancement in job performance of employees in order to make sure they give the best quality of services for example, are essential. But in order to make it in a perfect way, some employees may face stress which is the reaction to weak individual capabilities and the work environment. Jamal & Baba, (1), said that stress will manifest itself when the required task is beyond the capability of an individual and does not have the right tools to handle the job situation.

2. Problem Statement

The hospitality industry is distinguished for having high employee's turnover rates and hard elements to fill vacancies and attracting suitable employees remains an on-going challenge. Turnover in the hospitality industry was reported to be "nearly twice the average rate for all other sectors"(2). To further complicate concerns over the high rate of turnover, the economic downturn has temporarily dampened this high turnover rate but is expected to rapidly rise once the downturn improves (2). In a typical organization, the cost of poor leadership and employee turnover can results into the hundreds of dollars where it all depends on an organization's current turnover rate and the specific position that need to

be replaced. Branham (3), through Saratoga Institute found that employees leave the companies or organization for a multiple of reasons closely associated to leadership competencies like do not have some respect or support by supervisor, supervisors' lack of leadership skills, poor relationship between supervisor, lack of appreciation from supervisor and lack of skills by supervisor.

3. The Aim of Research

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify which style of leadership (transformational, transactional and laissez faire) that have significant relationship towards employee turnover intention and to determine stress as a mediator role between leadership and employee turnover intention.

4. Literature Review

Effective managerial leadership is very important since the hospitality organizations are constantly under pressure to meet change, to develop their structures and improve their performance (4). Northouse (5), defines leadership as a process whereby one individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Meanwhile, Jong and Hartog (6), describe leadership as a process to influence people to get desired result. However Gil (7), indicates that leadership as a skill to help stimulating, motivating, encouraging and recognizing followers in order in order to get key performance results. Northouse (5), defines leadership as a process whereby one individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Meanwhile, Jong and Hartog (6), describe leadership as a process to influence people to get desired result. However Gil (7), indicates that leadership as a skill to help stimulating, motivating, encouraging and recognizing followers in order in order to get key performance results.

It can be found that in the hospitality industry, the manager of hotel needs to emphasize his or her vision and focus on customers and employees as individuals via transformational (TF) or transactional leadership. Transactional leadership (TL) is defined as focusing on clarifying the effort-reward relationships which is by using reward systems (personal material) to achieve maximum motivation. According to Bass (8), active leader will explore actively for deviations from rules and standards in order to avoid improper behavior. If needed, corrective actions will be taken to improve the standard. However, it does not happen to the passive leader where they are only intervenes when mistakes have been detected or standards have been breach by the employees.

While Burns (9), who believes that transformational leaders (TF) should encourage subordinates to control and place the well-being of the organization based on their own interest that leaders could have deep and special impacts on subordinates. Leaders and subordinates can develop each other's moral motivation level, express moral values such as freedom, fairness, equality, to raise the strength of will of group members (10-14). Leaders can appropriately apply their own authorities in coordination with situational factors, achieve organizational vision and mission, stimulate desire for innovation and change from subordinates, and develop their capability to face change and put their thoughts or ideas into action, so that organizations can still develop successfully.

Luthans (15), has defined laissez fair style (LF) as avoid taking the responsibilities and making decisions. Although the third type of leadership styles is different than the previous two types, it is interesting to examine the significant of this type of leadership in the hotel industry environment. Laissez fair style of leadership is when the leader is not really interested to involve in the work of the unit. Past researchers defines that in this style the leaders normally don't want their interference in decision making process. They usually allowed their employees to have the power by using their personal decisions regarding of work. Employees are free to do work by their own manner and they are also responsible for

their decision. The reason why this kind of leaders avoids to making decision and don't involve in working units because the leaders gives to subordinates completely freedom to make decision. For certain cases, the leaders provide them with important material and they just involve in the answer and question session but avoiding feedback.

4.1. Stress in Hotel Industry

In the hotel sector, emotional exhaustion is influenced by various factors including facial expression procedures that should be followed. According to Samad (16), employees must have a smiley face for hours until end in serving the needs of customers. This leads to stress that could prevent employees from reaching their goal for instance in handling organizational politics, inflexible bureaucracy, job demands and excessive anxiety and frustration (17-19). Other than that, stress could create poor performance by the employees (19, 20).

Due to the working environment, employees in the hospitality industries are burdened with various difficulties in regard to the stress. This statement is supported by Karatepe & Sokmen (21), who claimed hotel employees were often faced with a conflict of roles and role ambiguity leading to stress. When there was no proper written procedure, employees often felt hesitant to react to various customers' complaints and this would eventually make the employees feel unsure on how to interact with their customers (22). Hoynala (23), who stated that keep repeating the same job every day without any variety in the work activities would create "worn-out" employees. A large number of customers that want to be served at the same time will also create a dilemma as it will put excessive constraints on the skills and abilities of the employees (22). A lack of autonomy in work situations will also add to the existing stress levels.

Stress among employees and their turnover intention have always been important issues for managers. Studies have attempted to answer the question of what determines people's intention to quit by investigating any possible factors intention to quit. It is identified that the experience of job that relate to stress make employees to quit the organization. It can be a result of misunderstanding what is expected, how to meet the expectations or the employee thinking the job should be different. Insufficient information on how to perform the job adequately, unclear expectations of peers and supervisors, extensive job pressure and lack of consensus on job functions or duties may cause employees to feel involved and less satisfied with their jobs and careers, less committed to their organizations, undergo stress and eventually display a tendency to leave the organizations (24). Lack of job security and status dissimilarity among employees and the same level also cause stress which may lead their intention to leave the organization (25).

However, it has been found that transformation leaders reduce the stress level of their subordinates. Transformation leaders together with transactional leaders especially on commitment effort, performance and job satisfaction of the followers, which these could reduce level of stress. Transformational leadership adopts long term perspective and focuses more on future needs while transactional leadership focuses on short term leadership. This kind of leadership styles has position the employees to be under pressure in order to make them follows the desired standards, unfortunately the leader do not support employees' resources. At the end, it will start to show a signal of positive associations with chronic stress. Kelloway and colleagues (26), stated that poor leadership, including laissez-faire leadership, may be a core source of particular workplace stressors such as role conflict, role ambiguity, and the perceptions of low-quality interpersonal treatment by the leader, with subsequent consequences in the form of stress reactions.

Dewettinck & Buyens (22), have proved that stress can affect the quality of services as well as the labors productivity. Other researchers also argued that continuous exposure to stress will reduce the performance of employees in the workplace. (27-29). Gill (30), believed that employees who had a positive outlook, such as

a high regard towards their organization, would feel more satisfied in their jobs. This feeling would be manifest in a reduction in the employees' intention to resign from their job. Through high job satisfaction, higher levels of commitment among employees can be generated, thus reducing the turnover rate (31, 32).

4.2. Theoretical Framework

The study enclosed the influence of leadership styles and stress on employee turnover intention among the hotel industry at Terengganu. The first objective of this study is to determine the relationship between leadership styles and stress on employee turnover intention among the hotel industry at Terengganu. Secondly, this study examines stress as mediator role between leadership styles towards employee turnover intention among hotel industry at Terengganu. Figure 1 depicts the theoretical framework of the present study.

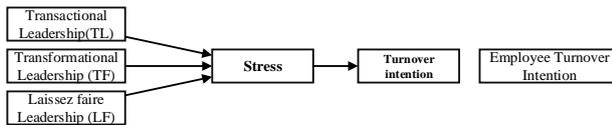


Fig. 1: Theoretical Framework

- H1: There is a significant association between leadership styles and employee turnover intention in hotel industry at Terengganu
- H1a: There is a significant association between transactional leadership and employee turnover intention in hotel industry at Terengganu
- H1b: There is a significant association between transformational leadership and employee turnover intention in hotel industry at Terengganu
- H1c: There is a significant association between laissez faire leadership and employee turnover intention in hotel industry at Terengganu
- H2: Stress mediates the relationship between leadership styles and employee turnover intention in hotel industry at Terengganu

5. Method of Research

5.1. Sample and Data Collection Method

The samples for this study are the employees of hotels at Terengganu. The employees include both males and females working from front desk to the upper management. The prerequisite is that employee should have at least one person that supervises his or her work. In determining the total sample size for the population, the number of samples was determined by using Krejcie and Morgan(33) calculation and around 300 employees have been taken randomly as needed to represent a cross section of the population. A structured self-administered questionnaire using 5-point Likert scale was used in assessing the employees' perceptions towards their supervisor's leadership styles, stress and intention to turnover. Respondents were approached via HR Managers of each hotel.

5.2. Instrumentation

The following Table 1 indicates the measures of the study variables used in the study for questionnaire development. The instrument items were adopted from previous studies by (34-37). To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted before the distribution of the final questionnaires. A total of 250 questionnaires were sent directly to employees of selected hotel in Terengganu. The questionnaire was translated to the Malay language to remove the language barrier that can possibly occur while answering. The responses from the completed question-

naires were tested using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient values and all indicated acceptable values to be adopted in the real survey.

Table 1: Instrumentation of variables and results of reliability tests

| Variables | No. of Items | Source of Scale | Cronbach's Alpha |
|-----------------------------|--------------|--|------------------|
| Transformational leadership | 12 | Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ by (35). | 0.938 |
| Transactional leadership | 10 | Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ by (35). | 0.856 |
| Laissez faire leadership | 4 | Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ by (35). | 0.664 |
| Stress | 12 | (36). | 0.913 |
| Employee turnover intention | 5 | Norwegian Setting (37). | 0.745 |

6. Findings and Discussion

6.1. Demographic Profiles of Respondents

A total of 225 responses have been analyzed for the present study. The majority of the employees who work at hotel industry at Terengganu were female with 124 respondents (55.1%), whereas 101 male respondents accounted for 44.9% and most of them are 26-35 years old. Compare to the other races, 95.1% of respondents were Malays who more interested in this field (214 Malay respondents). This study was distributed in two types of hotel which are 3 star and above (54.2%) and below 3 star accounted for 45.8%. Most of the respondents join the hotel industry after complete their SPM level which is around 26.2% (59 respondents).

6.2. Multiple Regression

The result of Table 2 indicates that the multiple correlation coefficient (R) which using all the predictors is 0.244 and R square is 0.059 which means that only 5.9% of the variance in identification employee turnover intention can be predicted from the factors of leadership styles where balance around 94.1% will be on the other factors or variables.

Table 2: Relationship between Leadership Styles and Employee Turnover Intention

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .244a | .059 | .047 | .95081 |

- a. Predictors: (Constant), LF, TS, TL
b. Dependent Variable: ETI

Based on table 3, transformational leadership indicates significant negative relationship ($\beta = -0.223$, $P > 0.05$) towards employee turnover intention while other predictors are not significant. The value indicates that as leader at hotel industry practices transformational leadership by one standard deviation, the rate of employee turnover intention will decrease by 2.23 standard deviations. Therefore, H1a is accepted.

Table 3: Relationship between Employee Turnover Intention and Each Predictor

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | Sig. |
|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | |
| (Constant) | 3.836 | .442 | | 8.684 | .000 |
| 1 TL | -.307 | .125 | -.223 | -2.467 | .014 |
| TS | -.096 | .152 | -.057 | -.632 | .528 |
| LF | .122 | .112 | .078 | 1.088 | .278 |

Dependent Variable: ETI

Consistent with the formulated hypothesis, results from this study indicated a significant negative influence of TL leadership on ETI.

Alexandrov et al. (38), argued that employees' perception of management concern for both employees and customers has a significant influence on turnover intention. This finding also supports to the study of (39) which found, in a quantitative study, on how a fit between LS and followers' regulatory focus will mitigate followers' turnover intention that TF leadership negatively related to turnover intention for highly promotion-focused followers. As transformational leader's behavior is likely to increase employees' effectiveness and productivity in the organization where employee will feel better and this may also reduce the intention to leave.

The findings failed to support next hypotheses that TS and LF leadership is negative predictor of ETI. Therefore, H1b and H1c are rejected. The study finding that there is not significant relationship between both leaderships towards ETI. The explanation involve a social desirable confound. Sample respondent may felt too threatened to express their honest perception. In reality, the nature of the hospitality sector being people oriented and most of the respondents are from 3 star above employees as the unit of analysis may truly make transactional leader style a moot point. In other reason, they are facing load of works that could influence their emotion directly or indirectly where employees need a strong support, motivation either from other employees and their leader or supervisor.

6.3. Mediation Analysis

The step described in Baron and Kenny (40) was adopted in conducting mediation analysis in this study. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (41), the mediation analysis of Baron and Kenny (40) involves four steps which can be tested by using regressions. Fritz and MacKinnon(42) noted that Baron and Kenny's casual steps have been widely applied in mediation analysis by far.

A variable is confirmed as a mediator when in the first step of analysis; there is a significant relationship between the two variables. Here there is significant relationship between TL and ETI ($\beta = -0.231$, $p < 0.001$). Secondly, there was not significant relationship between TL and mediator (stress) with ($\beta = 0.13$, $p > 0.001$). In the third step, the mediator must affect ETI after controlling for TL in the hierarchical regression, which it does ($\beta = 0.576$, $p < 0.05$). Finally, the fourth step indicated that the relationship between the IV (TL) and the DV (ETI) is increased when the mediator is included in the equation of analysis ($\beta = -0.239$, $p < 0.001$). In partial mediation, it is acceptable for C' to be significant and this make sense given that complete mediation is probably unrealistic in much social science research because of the many cause of behavior (40).

Therefore, the results of the first mediation analysis indicated that partial mediation was established for this particular analysis when the relationship between IV (TL) and the (ETI) is diminished but not zero. The effect of TL on ETI is increased upon the addition of stress as mediator to the model as can be seen in Figure 2.

The constructs of leadership styles (LS) on employee turnover intention (ETI) and stress become as a mediator have been examined extensively. This study was an initial attempt to understand and empirically test hypothesized effect of transformational leadership (TF), transactional leadership (TL) and laissez faire leadership (LF) on hotel employees. The model postulates that the effect of TL on ETI is mediated by the stress, therefore H2 is accepted.

H2 stated that stress mediate the relationship between LS towards ETI. The result showed that negative influence by the stress where it support the hypothesis. As stated above, stress appears to be factor in ETI where it also could reduce service quality (36), especially in hotel industry where employees regularly communicate with the customer. Unhappy employees cannot make customer happy. The date also showed even TS leadership and LF leadership has no significant relationship towards ETI, however it proves that stress could increase the rate of ETI and it could be in different study.

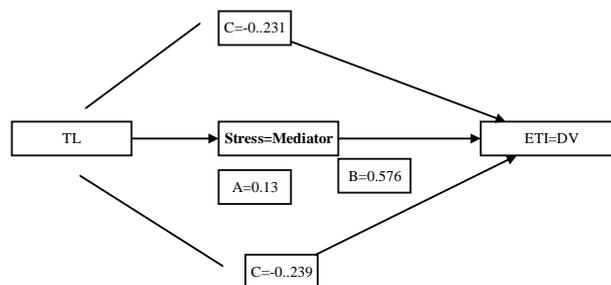


Fig. 2: Mediation Analysis

7. Conclusion

The result has proved that LS still could affect ETI but in the small rate base on the current data where managers that practices TF leadership in the hotel industry where TS and LF leaderships are insignificant in this study. The findings proved that stress could be as a mediator when increase the level rate of ETI. Therefore, in order for management to fully appreciate the turnover phenomenon and effectively mitigate it, it is imperious for management to employ TF leadership behaviors as an efficient tool to addressing the bedeviling consequences of turnover in hotel industry.

Based on the findings of the study, there is positive outcome from TF leadership which helps to reduce the rate of ETI. Cutting down the ETI rates will help in cutting down costs of recruitment and retraining of new staffs as well as increasing time based expertise among the staffs. Therefore, this paper suggests that hotel managers should be train and encourage them to improve their reciprocal relationships with their employees. With a greater awareness of this, managers should be better able to detect the direct and indirect influences of TF leadership. In addition, by training managers to utilize TF leadership could help employees to improve their satisfaction and loyal to the organization. Practicing TF leadership is a good thing and highly recommended. TF leadership serves to reduce the employee turnover intention.

Understanding how LS influence ETI should empower hotel leaders to create best working environment that would mitigate the negative effects of the work place while improving employee's quality services. In the business world of hotel industry that facing with more competitions, it is essential to have employees who have abilities and experiences that considered as valuable assets that organization need to nurture and retain.

For future studies, researchers can investigate the turnover intention among the different genders. This is because men and women would have different way of thinking how they could bear the stress at workplace that is being influenced by many external and internal factors.

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