Abstract

Teachers’ organizational commitment is a critical aspect in determining the success of education reform and school effectiveness because highly committed teachers are willing to contribute their extra effort to achieve school vision and goals. Thus, it is important to identify the factors that could enhance teachers’ organizational commitment. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship of perceived transformational leadership behavior and organizational commitment. 186 secondary school teachers in the district of Klang were selected based on two-stage random sampling. Data were collected using the survey method and were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Based on the data collected, the findings showed that secondary school teachers in the Klang district have high level of organizational commitment and perceive their principals practicing strong transformational leadership behavior. The findings also revealed that there was a positive and strong linear relationship between transformational leadership behavior and organizational commitment. The findings of this study have implications to the role of principal in exercising transformational leadership behavior to ignite teachers’ organizational commitment.

Keywords: Organizational commitment; transformational leadership behaviour

1. Background of study

As an impact of globalization, quality education becomes the ultimate goal of Malaysian education reforms due to insufficient numbers of the right human capital (The Star, June 18, 2011). One of the most crucial factors is the role of teacher. According to Fredriksson (2004), teachers hold the responsibilities to lift up the school effectiveness because they have actual power to make a difference in students’ capital development during teaching and learning process. Thus, teachers’ organizational commitment is a critical aspect in determining the success of education reform and school effectiveness (Abd Razak, Darmawan & Keeves, 2009) because they will highly perform their duties as if the school belonged to them (Joffres & Haughey, 2001). However, due to stressful profession, teachers tend to show low organizational commitment (Williams, 2010). Conversely, stress
is not the only reason for teacher’s low organizational commitment. Teacher’s traditional role had expanded to become more complicated (Bartlett, 2004). Ross Acura & Normah (2011) explains that teachers have too many obligations towards parents, education reform and principal which results in work overload (Stoddard & Kuhn, 2008). Additionally, Leithwood (2006) reports that not only overwork has reduced teachers’ organizational commitment but also teachers poor relationship with the principal. Blase & Blase (2006) provide evidence on existing cases of principal mistreatment to teachers which include denying leave, restricting them to express views and opinions, avoiding, swearing, screaming, finger pointing, favouritism, unfair job appraisal, unreasonable monitoring, threaten transfer or terminate their service, public criticizing and humiliating, unfair assignment, dishonesty, sexual harassment and racism. These phenomena are rarely reported, thus causing it to continuously occur and decrease teacher’s organizational commitment (Blase & Blase, 2003).

Research reported that teachers with low organizational commitment often come late to work and tend to be frequently absent from work by abusing sick leave (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Rosenblatt, 2010) which caused lose of valuable instruction time due to ineffective substitute teacher or class cancellation (Gaziel, 2004). Besides, teachers with low organizational commitment intend to migrate to another school or resign from the teaching profession (Labatmediene, Endriulaitiene & Gustainiene, 2007). The inexperienced replacement teachers may cause the school to struggle to maintain its quality of education (Xaba, 2003) because the less effective inexperienced teachers may contribute to low student achievements (Rinke, 2008). Subsequently, teachers who show low organizational commitment are only interested with their own success rather than the organization’s success (Fresko, Kfir & Nasser, 1997) which affects their involvement to provide quality education and their ability in helping students towards academic achievement.

Organizational commitment is a multidimensional construct of psychological state that describes an employee’s relationship with his or her organization that has implication on employee’s decision to remain or leave the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The multidimensional construct of organizational commitment consists of affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Affective commitment refers to employee’s identification with, involvement in, and emotional attachment to the organization while continuance commitment refers to employee’s awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization. On the other hand, normative commitment is employee’s commitment to the organization based on a sense of obligation to the organization. It is important to enhance organizational commitment as a whole because an employee who demonstrates strong organizational commitment will be engaged in positive work behavior such as low levels of absenteeism, tardiness and turnover which result in organizational effectiveness (Angle & Perry, 1981; Iverson & Buttitigie, 1998). For instance, Mathieu & Zajac (1990) and Allen & Meyer (1996) provide evidence that employees with high level of affective commitment and normative commitment could contribute to high job performance and were more likely to have less turnover intention. Highly affective committed teachers could also be good instructional leaders in the classroom because they are able to master the contents of the subjects that they taught, thus they would demonstrate effective teaching. Additionally, teachers with high level of affective commitment might always monitor the students’ work, able to control the classroom and involved in extra-curricula activities because they tend to demonstrate organizational citizenship behaviour. On the other hand, affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment provide similar positive outcome (Allen & Meyer, 1996). They suggested that employees with strong affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment were less likely to be absent from work.

Given this juncture, there is a critically need to examine factors that could enhance teachers’ organizational commitment. One of the factors which have been found to influence organizational commitment is transformational leadership behavior (Lai, Luen & Hong, 2011). According to Leithwood (1994), transformational leadership behavior consists of eight elements namely, develop a widely shared vision, build consensus about school goals and priorities, hold high performance expectations, provide individualized support, provide intellectual stimulation, model behavior, strengthen school culture and build collaborative structure. Transformational leadership behavior refers to principal leadership behavior which are exercising and setting direction, developing people and redesigning the organization that raise teachers’ commitment to the school to achieve school success (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins, 2006). Thus,
it could be said that principal transformational leadership behavior is a form of leadership where the primary focus is facilitating teacher commitment and capacities to accomplish school goals. However, relatively few studies have been conducted to examine the relationships of perceived transformational leadership behavior and teacher’s organizational commitment especially in the local setting. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap in the research of organizational commitment among secondary school teachers and how it is influenced by principal transformational leadership behavior.

2. Objective of the study

The objectives of the study are three-fold, namely to determine (a) the level of organizational commitment among secondary school teachers in Klang district (b) perceived transformational leadership behavior among secondary school teachers in Klang district (c) the relationship between perceived transformational leadership behavior and organizational commitment among secondary school teachers in Klang district.

3. Methodology

This study utilized a survey method and descriptive in nature. A self report questionnaire was used to gather information related to the objectives of the study. The instrument measuring multidimensional construct of organizational commitment was adapted from Meyer, Allen & Smith (1993) with modification to suit the purpose of the study. It consists of 16 items with a seven point Likert scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. As for principal transformational leadership behaviour, the instrument was adapted and adopted from The Nature of School Leadership Survey by Leithwood (1997). The instrument was chosen because it measures principal transformational leadership behavior based on eight dimensions: develop a widely shared vision for the school, build consensus about school goals and priorities, hold high performance expectations, model behavior, provide individualized support, provide intellectual stimulation, strengthen school culture and build collaborative structures. A six point Likert scale has been altered to a seven point Likert scale which ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. The samples were drawn from daily secondary school teachers mainly from the district of Klang, Selangor, Malaysia. Hence, using the two stage cluster sampling, a sample size of 346 was determined. In this study, the sample was permanent teachers who are teaching at daily secondary schools in the district of Klang and excluded private secondary schools, national religious secondary schools, fully residential school, technical secondary school, premier schools, centennial schools and special model schools. Therefore, the findings are limited to permanent teachers who teach at daily secondary schools in the Klang district. However, only a total of 186 permanent secondary school teachers participated in this study.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Teachers’ Level of Organizational Commitment

| Level | Frequency (n=186) | Percentage % |
|-------|-------------------|---------------|
| Low   | 3                 | 1.6           |
| Moderate | 85              | 45.7          |
| High  | 98                | 52.7          |
| Total | 186              | 100           |

Table 1 displays the levels of organizational commitment among secondary school teachers in the Klang district. The findings revealed that majority of them, that is, 52.7% (98) demonstrated high level of commitment
to their schools and 44.6% (36) showed moderate organizational commitment level. On the other hand, only 1.6% (3) of respondents showed low level of organizational commitment. Further analysis was conducted to determine mean and standard deviation scores of each organizational commitment component as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: The Organizational Commitment Components’ Scores of Secondary School Teachers

| Component          | Mean   | Standard Deviation | Indicator |
|--------------------|--------|--------------------|-----------|
| Affective Commitment | 5.16   | 1.121              | High      |
| Continuance Commitment | 4.76   | 1.085              | Moderate  |
| Normative Commitment | 4.53   | 0.959              | Moderate  |

Table 2 displays the mean and standard deviation scores of the three components of organizational commitment. The mean scores are arranged in descending order and the result depicts that the mean scores of all the three components range from 5.16 to 4.53, which indicates that the scores are between high to moderate. The result also indicates that affective commitment mean score (mean=5.16, SD=1.121) was higher than continuance commitment mean score (mean=4.76, SD=1.085) and normative commitment mean score (mean=4.53, SD=0.959).

The findings revealed most of the respondents were highly committed to their schools while only a few respondents showed low levels of commitment to school. As suggested by Meyer & Allen (1991), it could be inferred that most of the teachers were more likely to stay in the current schools and only a few of them would leave the current schools. The findings also depicts that respondents’ affective commitment was higher as compared with continuance commitment and normative commitment. This finding is supported by Noordin, Mohd Rashid, Ghani, Aripin & Darus (2010) who also discovered that most of Malaysian teachers have high level of affective commitment and moderate level of continuance commitment and normative commitment. However, the finding contradicts that of Meyer & Allen (1997) who suggest that government employees tend to show high level of continuance commitment due to job security. Based on the findings, it could be said that majority of teachers remain in the school because they are emotionally attached to the school and not because they ought to or need to maintain the school organization membership (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Perhaps, as suggested by Meyer & Allen (1991), the teachers demonstrate strong affective commitment to the school because their job roles were clearly defined. They perceived the principal satisfies their physical and psychological needs by allowing them to grow professionally and recognize their contributions. In contrast, the moderate level of continuance commitment implied that teachers feel they need to stay in the school because they had invested their time and effort to the school (Meyer & Allen, 1997) and they would lose their seniority and good friends when they leave the school (Becker, 1960). The findings also revealed that normative commitment received the lowest mean score among all organizational commitment components. This may indicate that these teachers maintain their school organization membership due to sense of obligation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This may be a reflection of family socialization whereby before joining the school, the teachers have been taught to be loyal to the school (Wiener, 1982 as cited in Meyer & Allen, 1991). Other possible reasons that teachers’ could develop normative commitment are when they feel that school expects their loyalty (Meyer & Allen, 1991), principal provides beneficial training or they received educational scholarship to pursue their studies (Scholl, 1981 as cited in Meyer & Allen, 1991).
3.2 Perceived transformational leadership behavior among secondary school teachers in Klang district

Table 3. The Dimensions of Transformational Leadership Behavior

| Dimension                                      | Mean  | Standard Deviation | Indicator |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------|--------------------|-----------|
| Hold high performance expectations            | 5.38  | 1.011              | High      |
| Develop a widely shared vision for the school | 5.16  | 1.054              | High      |
| Build consensus about school goals and priorities | 5.07  | 0.998              | High      |
| Strengthen school culture                      | 5.03  | 1.081              | High      |
| Provide intellectual stimulation               | 5.02  | 1.035              | High      |
| Model behavior                                 | 4.86  | 1.052              | Moderate  |
| Build collaborative structures                 | 4.87  | 1.082              | Moderate  |
| Provide individualized support                 | 4.79  | 1.044              | Moderate  |

Table 3 reports the mean and standard deviation scores for eight dimensions associated with transformational leadership behavior. The mean scores for each transformational leadership behavior are arranged in descending order to rank them from the most exhibited dimension of transformational leadership behavior to the least exhibited dimension of transformational leadership behavior. The daily secondary school teachers in the district of Klang perceived the most exhibited dimension of their principal transformational leadership behavior as holding high performance expectation (mean=5.38, SD=1.011). Secondly, the data analysis suggested that most of the principals exercised developing a widely shared vision for the school (mean=5.16, SD=1.054) in their transformational leadership behavior as perceived by the teachers. Other dimensions of transformational leadership behavior that received high mean scores were building consensus about school goals and priorities (mean=5.07, SD=0.998), strengthening school culture (mean=5.03, SD=1.081) and providing intellectual stimulation (mean=5.02, SD=1.035). Meanwhile, the teachers perceived that their principals moderately practiced these three transformational leadership behavior dimensions: models behavior (mean=4.86, SD=1.052), building collaborative structures (mean=4.87, SD=1.082) and providing individualized support (mean=4.79, SD=1.044). As a whole, it could be said that the respondents perceived their principals exhibited stronger transformational leadership behavior.

The findings suggested that daily secondary school teachers in the district of Klang perceived their principals exercised strongly the transformational leadership behavior. Therefore, it can be inferred that transformational leadership behavior occurs when principals make much effort in setting direction, developing people and redesigning the school organization (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006). The findings of this study were inline with Yu, Leithwood & Jantzi (2002) which revealed these teachers perceived that the most exhibited element of principal transformational leadership behavior was holding high performance expectation and the least exhibited element of principal transformational leadership behavior was providing individualized support. The reason could be due to principals’ behavior of always communicating their high expectations for teachers to maintain quality and effectiveness of the school (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1997). The findings also show other dimensions of transformational leadership behavior that received high mean scores were developing a widely shared vision for the school, building consensus about school goals and priorities, strengthening school culture and providing intellectual stimulation. As suggested by Leithwood & Jantzi (1997), the principals make an effort to explain school vision and goals to teachers and support them in achieving school vision and goals. The findings also implied that principals encourage teachers to try new practices relevant to teaching and learning (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1997) and promote the importance to develop shared norms, belief and values among teachers (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). Comparatively, the teachers perceived that their principals moderately practiced models behavior. This indicated that the principals were less likely to model desirable professional practices for teachers to follow (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1997). Based on the findings, it could be inferred that the principals might not practice punctuality, are not actively involved in all school activities, moderately show their enthusiasm towards work, less likely to change their current leadership practices for school well-being and less
likely to gain feedback from staff or teachers about their works. The findings also depict that building collaborative structures dimension received moderate mean score. This implied that there is a possibility that teachers were not given the opportunity to build their leadership capacity and principals were less likely to engage teachers in decision making process (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1997) because Malaysia is a country with highly centralized public organization and practices bureaucratic top-down approach (Khaliq & Singh, 2001), thus, leaders tend to practice paternal leadership style (Abdullah, 1996). Leithwood et al. (2006) also suggests the possible reason teachers perceived the principals moderately demonstrated this dimension could be due to lack of trust in principal and teachers relationship. Finally, the findings revealed the lowest mean score among all elements is providing individualized support. As suggested by Karsli & Iskender (2009), perhaps, teachers feel that the principal does not consider their needs and feelings. This occurrence might be due to large number of teachers in a school. The findings also implied that there are possibilities that the principals were not really approachable, they might treat teachers unequally and they were less likely to appreciate teachers’ contributions.

3.3 The relationship between perceived transformational leadership behavior and organizational commitment among secondary school teachers in Klang district.

Table 4. Correlation Matrix Analysis of Perceived Transformational Leadership Behavior and Organizational Commitment

| Variables                        | 1   | 2   |
|----------------------------------|-----|-----|
| 1. Transformational Leadership Behavior | 1   |     |
| 2. Organizational Commitment     | 0.539** | 1   |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed), Cronbach Alpha, p<0.005

Based on Table 4, transformational leadership behavior and organizational commitment showed a strong and positive (r=0.539, p=0.000) linear relationship. To further investigate the relationship between the dependent variable, organizational commitment and each of the dimensions of transformational leadership behavior, similar analyses were performed as shown in Table 5.

Table 5  Correlation Matrix Analysis of Perceived Transformational Leadership Behavior Dimensions and Organizational Commitment

|     | SV  | SG  | HP  | MB  | IS  | I   | SC  | C   | OC  |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| SV  | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| SG  | 0.855** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| HP  | 0.864** | 0.866** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| MB  | 0.764** | 0.824** | 0.776** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |
| IS  | 0.744** | 0.834** | 0.732** | 0.831** | 1   |     |     |     |     |
| I   | 0.731** | 0.830** | 0.760** | 0.740** | 0.844** | 1   |     |     |     |
| SC  | 0.784** | 0.868** | 0.800** | 0.811** | 0.885** | 0.863** | 1   |     |     |
| C   | 0.655** | 0.760** | 0.633** | 0.780** | 0.852** | 0.771** | 0.863** | 1   |
| OC  | 0.565** | 0.542** | 0.540** | 0.535** | 0.482** | 0.455** | 0.459** | 0.386** | 1.00 |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed), Cronbach Alpha, p<0.005

SV=develop a widely shared vision for the school, SG= build consensus about school goals and priorities, HP=hold high performance expectations, MB=model behavior, IS= provide individualized support, I= provide intellectual stimulation, SC= strengthen school culture, C= build collaborative structures and OC= organizational commitment.

The correlation matrix analysis in Table 4 indicates the strength of the association between the elements of transformational leadership behavior and organizational commitment. The Pearson’s Product Moment correlation coefficients in Table 5 showed that there were strong and significantly positive linear relationships between the
four elements of transformational leadership behavior and organizational commitment. The strongest linear relationship existed among all the elements of transformational leadership behavior and organizational commitment of developing a widely shared vision for the school \((r=0.565, p=0.000)\). The next strongest relationship was building consensus about school goals and priorities \((r=0.542, p=0.000)\). The Pearson’s Product Moment correlation analysis reported that holding high performance expectations \((r=0.540, p=0.000)\) and modeling behavior \((r=0.535, p=0.000)\) also showed strong and linear relationship with organizational commitment. However, the remaining elements of transformational leadership behavior; providing individualized support \((r=0.482, p=0.000)\), providing intellectual stimulation \((r=0.455, p=0.000)\), strengthening school culture \((r=0.459, p=0.000)\) and building collaborative structures \((r=0.386, p=0.000)\) were found to have only moderate and positive linear relationships with organizational commitment.

Transformational leadership behavior showed positive and strong linear relationship with organizational commitment. The findings of the study were consistent with the study conducted by Koh, Steers & Terborg (1995) and Emery & Baker (2007) but contradict with Marmaya Hitam, Muhammad Torsiman & Balakrishnan (2011) who suggested that transactional leadership behavior were likely to influence more strongly organizational commitment than transformational leadership behavior and Chandna & Krishnan (2009) who revealed that there was no relationship between transformational leadership behavior and organizational commitment. In terms of the correlation between elements of transformational leadership behavior and organizational commitment, the correlation matrix analysis showed that all elements of transformational leadership behavior and organizational commitment gave a positive and linear relationship. However, the correlation strength varied from strong to moderate. Only four elements of transformational leadership behavior showed strong relationship with organizational commitment. Development of a widely shared vision for the school showed the strongest linear relationship with organizational commitment. The next strongest relationship with organizational commitment was shown by building consensus about school goals and priorities, followed by holding high performance expectations and modeling behavior. However, the remaining elements of transformational leadership behavior; providing individualized support, providing intellectual stimulation, strengthening school culture and building collaborative structures were found to have only moderate and positive linear relationships with organizational commitment. The findings were inline with Amoroso (2002) thus confirming Bass & Riggio (2006) suggestion that each element of transformational leadership behavior could affect differently employees’ commitment to the organization. As suggested by Leithwood & Jantzi (1997, 1999), it could be implied that principal who practices strongly developing a widely shared vision, building consensus about school goals and priorities, holding high performance expectations and modelling behavior could enhance level of teachers’ commitment to school. On the other hand, the result also suggested that the teachers tend to have low commitment to school when principal did not provide individualized support and intellectual stimulation, did not strengthen school culture and build collaborative structure. Thus, it could be inferred that when teachers perceived their principal strongly demonstrated the transformational leadership behavior, the levels of their commitment to school might increase (Koh et al., 1995).

4. Conclusion

As Malaysia’s National Mission aims to attain a developed country status by 2020, the quality of education is a crucial factor in producing first class human capital. The finding of this study suggests that principal’s transformational leadership behavior is strongly correlated to teacher’s organizational commitment. Therefore, the role of principal in creating teachers’ commitment to school is vital. For future research, it is suggested that the perceptions of other stakeholders such as parents and students should be considered to measure teacher’s organizational commitment.
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