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The Mediating Role of Workplace Happiness on Teachers' Innovative Behavior and Affective Commitment for Malaysian Secondary Schools: A Cross-Sectional Questionnaire Survey

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to examine the mediating effects of workplace happiness on the relationship between school culture, affective commitment, and teachers' innovative behavior. The study also examines the correlation between all the variables. The study sample consists of 835 teachers from 167 secondary schools in Northern part of Peninsular Malaysia. Based on the results of the data analysis, it can be concluded that all the variables are inter-correlate positively. Meanwhile, workplace happiness has found a full mediation effect on school culture and innovative behavior. On the other hand, workplace happiness also act as a partial mediator in the relationship between school culture and affective commitment. Findings suggest that the education organizations should pay more attention on teachers' psychological aspect such as happiness in the workplace in order to generate better quality of teachers' innovative behavior and sustain the teachers' commitment especially in human capital formation work.

Keywords: Workplace Happiness, Teachers' Innovative Behavior, Affective Commitment, Secondary School

1. Introduction

Malaysian education system is undergoing changes dynamically to meet the demands of globalization through the implementation of the National Education Transformation program. Consequently, as the principal of the school educational leaders to take responsibility for managing and generating productivity in creative and innovative world-class education so that quality can be achieved. Thus, principals are required to diversify the leadership style that is effective in generating and strengthening prosperous working environment to optimize teachers' commitment. This is due to the many studies abroad showed workplace happiness which brings many positive benefits to the organization. For example, previous studies [1-8] proved the importance of workplace happiness is the cause of the increase in productivity, job performance, employee motivation, job quality, creativity and innovative employees, organizational excellence, job satisfaction, earning better revenue, reduction in failure, decreased absenteeism, reduce stress, reduce accidents and diseases career.

At the school level, the effectiveness of school improvement depends on factors such as leadership, school culture, teacher commitment and innovative teacher behavior [9]. The literature review shows the organizational culture has a relationship with commitment and teachers behavior innovative [10-11]. However, there are some recent suggestions from the researchers such as Mohammed, Fernando, Mario, Caputi and Peter [11]; Rego, Sousa, Marques and Cunha [12]; Shin and Shu [13]; and Wei, Chen and Cheng [14] so that the relationship is associated with the intermediate variables of happiness in the workplace to connect school culture with school improvement organization will optimize the innovative behavior and affective commitment.

2. Literature Review

According to Pryce-Jones [1], Seligman [7], and Lu, Gilmour, and Kao [15], workplace happiness associated with positive emotions which is one of the terms that often used in the definition of happiness. It is clearly seem through the studies of Shin and Shu [14], Pryce-Jones [1], Achor [2], Cynthia [3], Erica [4], Po-Keung [5], Boonchong [6], and Seligman [7] showed happiness in the workplace has a positive impact on the positive emotions of employees, employee performance, employee motivation, job quality, creativity and innovative employees, organizational excellence, job satisfaction, and employee commitment. In the context of the school, teachers want happiness in the workplace to enable them to be happy at work. The fact is that not all teachers can feel the happiness (positive mood), especially in the process of education transformation which demanding changes and reforms in schools because teachers are the first to receive waves that transformation.

Happiness in the workplace has to do with mood or emotional state of teachers. According to Diener, Larsen, Levine and Emmons [16], happiness is one of the elements of a positive mood. The positive mood encourages a person to think, feel and act towards increasing resource development and the achievement of goals [17]. It can be concluded that the happiness in the workplace among teachers are expected to be established through the establishment of a school culture that is healthy and balanced in terms of human relationship, a school system that is open, rational organizational goals and internal processes of the school [18]. While the findings of Daniels, [19], Diener [20], Lyubomirsky, King, and Diener [21] and Rego et al. [12] showed that there is a positive relationship between happiness in the workplace with a culture of organizations such as schools. Studies of Lu et al. [15] showed that there is a positive relationship between cultural values and the happiness in the workplace. While Yaakob studies [22] found a positive relationship between school culture, academic achievement, affective commitment and leadership of the school.

According to Bateman and Strasser [23], a multi-dimensional commitment involving loyalty of the teachers to the organization, the ability of teachers striving for the good of the schools, teamed values, vision and mission of the schools and remain the participation of teachers in the schools. Meanwhile, Mowday, Steers and Porter [24] also found that affective commitment has the strongest links with happiness in the workplace.

Affective commitment refer to teachers' attachment to the schools and positive dimension to the organization. Both dimensions are judged in terms of attitude and effort of teachers to work in schools, especially in the delivery of teaching and learning in the classrooms. The willingness of teachers to sacrifice their time and energy in planning, implementing, and evaluating programs and effort increase student academic and teachers involvement in generating creative ideas and innovative directly connected to all the efforts and activities of the organization toward improvement of school organization. Thus, this study only focused on the affective commitment which is based on the attachment towards the school and the positive dimension on the organization. Several studies showed that the direct effect on workplace happiness towards affective commitment [12].

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Participants

The probability proportional sampling method according to various school size or school category was used in this study to determine the proper sample size for representation of national daily secondary school type in Malaysia. First, the stratified sampling was done by choosing Northern part of Peninsular Malaysia which consist of three state namely Penang, Kedah and Perlis. Secondly, stratified according to schools size category (which set by Ministry of Education using standardized criteria across the country) was used to choose the schools. Then, 200 schools were randomly selected from 324 secondary schools in three states based on the ratio of stratified school sampling. Finally, the total of 1000 teachers (5 teachers representing a school) randomly chosen to be the respondents in this study.

3.2. Measures

In order to determine the external factors such as school size, educational attainment, and years of teaching experience, a set of questionnaire consisting four parts were used in this study to measure workplace happiness, school culture, affective commitment and innovative behavior.

3.2.1. Workplace Happiness

The adopted version of iOpener People Performance Questionnaire (iPPQ) developed by Pryce-Jones [1] consisting of 20 items was used. All the adopted questionnaires were translated using back to back procedures to formulate the workplace happiness questionnaires in Malay version. By using principal components analysis with varimax rotation, composed five dimensions of scale that account for 67.36% of the total variance was merged. A higher score indicates greater perceived workplace happiness in school settings. The Cronbach's reliability estimate for workplace happiness in school settings was 0.93.

3.2.2. School Culture

The revised school culture scale, adopted and translated by Yaakob [22] which originally developed by Maslowski [24], is a 20-item scale composed four subscales were used. Each component was measured by five items on a 5-point Likert scale in which number 5 indicated 'strongly agree' and 1 indicated 'strongly disagree'. Yaakob [22] conducted translation using back to back translation procedures to form the Malay version of school culture scale. The Cronbach's reliability estimate for school culture was .91.

3.2.3. Teacher Innovative Behavior

The teacher innovative behavior, a 9-item scale based on

the Jansen [25]. The translated Malay version using back to back procedures of teacher innovative behavior by Nik Azida [26] was used which consisting three subscale. A 5-point Likert scale was used in which 1 represented "strongly disagree' and 5 represented "strongly agree'. A higher score indicated higher innovative behavior practiced by teacher. The Cronbach's coefficient for school culture was .89.

3.2.4. Affective Commitment

The Malay version of affective commitment scale by Tengku Ahmad [27], 8-item scale originally developed by Meyer and Allen (1984) composed two subscales. Each sub-scale was measured by four items on 5-point Likert scale in which 5 indicated 'strongly agree' and 1 indicated 'strongly disagree'. The Cronbach's coefficient for affective commitment was .92.

3.3. Procedure

After obtained the permission from the Ministry of Education and State Education Department, survey packets including a cover letter, an informed consent form, and the questionnaire were distributed to the selected schools by mail. The envelopes were addressed to the particular schools rather than specific individuals. Participants were asked to

return the forms directly to the researcher within two weeks in an enclosed preaddressed and stamped envelope.

3.4. Data Analysis

To identify the correlation between the variables used, Pearson correlation analysis was used. Next, multiple regression was used to identify the mediating effect workplace happiness on the relationship between school culture, affective commitment and innovative behavior in this study.

4. Research Findings

4.1. Descriptive and Correlation Results

Only 167 secondary schools or 83.5 percent of the questionnaires were returned. Accordingly, a total of 835 teachers who participated in this study. Meanwhile, 283 male teachers (33.9 percent) and 552 female teachers (66.1 percent) involved in this study. The findings also found that 38.6 percent teachers have master degrees 38.6% (N=322). The average number of years of experience in teaching was 12.78 (SD=7.51), and average school size in number of class was 45.14 (SD=44.43).

Table 1. Descriptive and correlation results of variables.

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	School size (Class)	45.14	44.43	-					
2	Teaching Experience	12.78	7.51	-.06	-				
3	School Culture	3.88	.32	-.03	-.03	-			
4	Workplace Happiness	3.74	.89	-.07	-.05	.38**	-		
5	Affective Commitment	3.61	.61	-.15*	-.08	.41**	.63**	-	
6	Innovative Behavior	3.44	.50	-.01	-.20**	.58**	.48**	.61**	-

Note.
*p<.05, **p<.01

The results of correlation matrix (see Table 1) showed the significant relationships between the hypothesized variables. Thus the findings revealed that school culture and workplace happiness relate positively with innovative behavior and affective commitment. Meanwhile workplace happiness and school culture also inter-correlated positively. External factors such as school size and teaching experience also showed significant relationship with affective commitment and innovative behavior.

4.2. The Mediating Effects of Workplace Happiness

Multiple regression analysis was deployed to test the degree to which workplace happiness mediates the relationship between school culture, affective commitment and innovative behavior in this research. The procedure suggested by Baron and Kenny [28] was used to test the

mediation effects. Table 2 shows the results of the mediation tests: (a) workplace happiness act as partial mediator in the relationship between school size and teacher innovative behavior (Beta values decreases from .16 to .10); and (b) in the relationship between teaching experience and affective commitment (Beta values decreases from .18 to .15).

Meanwhile independent variable (school culture) and mediating variable (workplace happiness) entered in the regression for predicting innovative behavior and affective commitment. Thus the findings reveled a full mediation of workplace happiness in the relationship between school culture and innovative behavior (Beta values decreases from .26 to .06 -not significant). On the other hand, workplace happiness acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between school culture and affective commitment (Beta values decreases from .41 to .20).

Table 2. *The mediating effects of workplace happiness on all hypothesized variables.*

Independent Variables (IV)	Mediator (MV)	Dependent variables (DV)	Beta values of IV to DV		MV is a mediator Yes or No (F/P)
			Absence of MV	Presence of MV	
School size (Class)	WH	IB	.16*	.10*	Yes (P)
Teaching Experience	WH	IB	-.07	-.05	No
School size (Class)	WH	AC	-.05	-.03	No
Teaching Experience	WH	AC	.18**	.15**	Yes (P)
School Culture	WH	IB	.26**	.06	Yes (F)
School Culture	WH	AC	.41**	.20*	Yes (P)

Notes. WH = Workplace Happiness; IB=Innovative Behavior; AC=Affective Commitment; F=Full mediator; P=Partial mediator
*$p<.05$;**$p<.01$

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Unlike previous studies especially in Malaysian educational context, we found that workplace happiness exerts as a direct effect on teachers innovative behaviors and a statistically has merged as a partial mediator on the relationship between school culture and innovative behavior. A possible explanation for this apparent results could use Social Exchange Theory [29] which states that teachers feel indebted to the organization of the school which has given good service to them (the obligation), in return for teachers willing to give the best service to the school. This relationship can be explained that the teachers experienced prosperity in the workplace raising awareness within teachers about the work done by them is on the right track and in line with the personality of teachers, motivated, believing themselves to be effective and efficient, resilient, considers the work of teachers have a positive impact on the world, ready to receive feedback positively and feel valued at work [1]. School culture that is characterized by 'human relations' and 'internal processes' in which leaders act as mentors in developing the potential of individuals in favor and also as a facilitator to promote the spirit of cooperation [18] led to teachers to feel that the school concerned and cared for the welfare of them and feel their expertise is recognized to be mandated to perform tasks that are important to motivate teachers innovative behavior.

The results of this study were similar to those of previous studies [13-14] found that school culture and workplace happiness are both important predictors of teachers innovative behavior and indicating that workplace happiness has important mediating role between the school culture and teachers innovative behaviors. This finding supports the effect of the obligations set out in the Social Exchange Theory of Blau [29] that when someone does a favor to someone else then there is the expectation of future reward such kindness. This relationship can be explained that the teachers experienced prosperity in the workplace on aspects such as the contribution of teachers, school climate and teachers' involvement when led by principals who practiced human relationships and internal processes at school cause teachers to feel that the organization is always concerned about the welfare of them can motivate teachers to work more affective commitment towards the organization of the school.

This study has proved happiness in the workplace serves as a mediator of the relationship between school culture and teachers' and teachers' innovative behavior and affective commitment. This study is the first to test the mediating role of workplace happiness among school teachers in Malaysia. Additionally, this study support the theory of Social Exchange Blau [29] which states when teachers feel comfortable in an organization that cares for their welfare, it is believed that this teacher can produce high motivation to work which led to affective commitment and innovative behavior of teachers also rose. Practically, this study also proves that the interests of management of the school to emphasize the improvement of teachers to ensure positive psychological aspect such as happiness in the workplace so that teachers are more innovative and have a high affective commitment towards work.

Taken together the evidence from previous studies support the hypotheses that workplace happiness and school cultures can bring positive outcomes in the workplace. Positive school culture and happiness at workplace helping people with their jobs and greater productivity in the organizations. In conclusion, these findings can be used to help stakeholders in the school management to identify how variables such as school culture and happiness at workplaces can help increase teachers' innovative behavior of and affective commitment among the teachers.

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