

FACTORS INFLUENCING MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

Nowadays, the phenomenon of increased competition between organizations and their need to respond effectively to rapidly changing operational conditions, as well as to personnel requirements, has escalated the necessity to identify those factors that affect employee performance. Thus, this study aims to determine factors influencing employee performance of Malaysian Public Service employees. This study involved a total of 400 government personnel from 27 Malaysian ministries and departments. Correlation analysis and regression analysis were used. The study data is analyzed using SPSS. Results of the study found that there is a positive and significant relationship between recognition and job security towards employee performance. Multiple regression analysis found that job security had the strongest influence on employee performance, and recognition had the least influence on employee performance. The conclusions of this research have important practical implications, notably in the areas of policy formation and reference in the domain of human resource development expertise, among other things.

Keywords: Employee Performance, Job security, Promotion, Public service employee, Recognition

1. Introduction

In developing or industrialized countries, government performance is measured by the efficiency and effectiveness of the government organs, which is heavily dependent on the performance of employees (PE)(Nigatu et al., 2017). The performance of public service employees (PSEs) is an ambiguous, multi-dimensional, and complex concept. Several studies identify and categorize factors affecting PE in civil service institutions, among which this study will consider include motivation, training, organizational culture, work environment, and leadership (Nguyen et al., 2015). According to Asif and Rathore (2021), improving public sector organizations' performance is a formidable challenge for governments and public managers alike.

The PE of the Malaysian civil service has plateaued from its peak in 2014 which, threatens the country's long-term competitiveness (Noh & Yashaiya, 2019). This is not a good impression, as PSEs are the backbone of delivering excellent public service (Johari et al., 2018). The problem with this study arises from the need to improve PE in Malaysian public service delivery. PSEs were bombarded with public dissatisfaction over the level of public service

delivery which was deemed to be perfunctory and inefficient (Ammons, 2019). The main reason this study focus on the PE of PSEs in Malaysia is due to the measurement of public service performance has become an important issue related to the improvement of efficiency and effectiveness of the service delivered. Performing employees help the leaders to create a successful organization (Bin & Shmailan, 2015). There is a lack of studies on factors influencing PE, especially in the context of Malaysia. Leisink and Steijn (2009) studied motivational factors and public service employees' job performance. There are relatively few studies on recognition, promotions, and job security in the Malaysian public sector. The study includes pay, reward and recognition, and work environment as the independent variables and PE as the dependent variable. The purpose of this research is thus to explore the relations between recognition, promotions, and job security and PSEs' PE.

2. Theoretical framework and hypothesis development

The performance of the workforce relies on a variety of organizational factors (Janib et al., 2021). Increased PE correlates strongly with improved organizational overall performance (Arif et al., 2019). Performance is a measure of the efficacy or accomplishment of organizational objectives. According to Sverke et al. (2019), PE is an overarching term for all types of work performance. Moreover, Sverke et al. (2019) conceptualized work performance as the anticipated value for an organization of an individual's multiple compounded behaviors over time. According to Cooper et al. (2019), performance is what a company employs an individual to accomplish well. There are three (3) key work performance domains: 1) task performance, 2) contextual performance 3) counterproductive work behavior (Aziz et al., 2020; Fernández-del-Río et al., 2019). Based on the Social Exchange Theory perspective, the study assumes that employees will generate different influencing outcomes, which are in order, task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, job burnout, and counter-productive work behavior (Yin, 2018). According to Umar et al. (2020), past research has equated task performance with overall job performance and important work behavior traits. Contextual performance, on the other hand, refers to employee behavior that deviates from the stated job description but contributes to organizational success. The third dimension, counterproductive work behavior, is characterized as behavior that is harmful to the organization, such as absenteeism, poor work outcomes, and poor attendance (Forson et al., 2021). These domains can be included in the performance measurement tool for workers. PE is crucial to both the company and the individual.

Measuring the PE of the public service has become a key aspect of enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the service provided. According to Yang and Northcott (2019), performance measurement can assist non-profit organizations in identifying appropriate outcome measures, collecting meaningful data to monitor the achievement of outcomes, and enhancing their decision-making and accountability concerning the delivery of public service. Inputs, outputs, and outcomes are the three aspects of public service performance. Inputs represent the resources mobilized by the organization. Organizational methods are connected

with the organizational component of public performance, characterized by the suitable adaptation of human, financial, and technological resources, organizational culture, and organizational structure (Berberoglu, 2018). In the meanwhile, outputs represent the adaptation of public service delivery's quantity and quality. According to Wang et al. (2015), PE is the most significant factor in attaining organizational performance. Therefore, managers must determine the variables that lead to the excellent performance of their personnel.

2.1 Social Exchange Theory

The relevant theory for this study is the Social Exchange Theory (SET). There are four (4) dimensions in SET to investigate, namely, 1) supervision, 2) rule and norm of exchange, 3) resource exchange, and 4) the relationship that emerges (Cropanzano et al., 2017). According to the SET, social interactions or relationships are based on an exchange process, whereby people want maximum benefits and minimum cost or punishment. The benefit could be in monetary and non-monetary forms, such as recognition, promotion, and job security. Meanwhile, the cost or punishment could be embarrassment or disgrace. Intrinsic factors, assist in motivating the employee for superior performance and can lead to increase job satisfaction and motivation. Extrinsic factors, on the other hand, are the factors that are essential for the existence of motivation at the workplace such as salary, job security, peer relations, and a friendly environment. A study by Mardanov (2020) found that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation has a significant impact on job satisfaction, performance, and intention to stay in the organization. Public PE at the workplace is influenced by these factors of intrinsic and extrinsic that encourage workers to boost their performance in the organization.

2.1.1 Recognition

Recognition is used to motivate people to enhance their performance (Kurniawan & Anindita, 2021). Extrinsic and intrinsic rewards inspire employees in a firm, respectively. Recognizing outstanding performers motivates the company as a whole. It has been shown that organizations with a motivating strategy that includes employee recognition have greater staff morale and performance. It is essential to comprehend staff motivation since it influences service performance. The "public performance engine" places the person and their commitment to service for society at the center of governance in public administration. This is because workers feel their contributions are valued and their work quality is acknowledged. Recognition creates value, keeps people focused on their jobs, and encourages development and growth (Hee & Rhung, 2019).

Asaari et al. (2019) noted that employee recognition enhances PE and enables organizations to provide the highest level of service. In addition, Hussain et al. (2019) discovered in their research that acknowledgment had a good impact on PE. The research by Ali and Anwar (2021) emphasized the significance of employee appreciation since it influences work performance. These studies demonstrate that recognition has a significant effect on the overall performance of employees.

Recognition and rewards can positively impact organizational success by increasing PE (Masri & Abubakr, 2019). In addition, the study emphasizes that it is important to manage recognition for the employees to develop PE. According to Khan et al. (2011), when employees see other employees being rewarded for the work they have done, it becomes a chain reaction; whereby employees tend to repeat positive actions so that they will also be appreciated. It is human nature that wanted to be praised and recognized for the efforts they put into the work. Recognition is used to recognize desired employee behaviors. McAdams (1995) concluded that recognition can be either financial or non-financial. However, it is depending on the organization's culture and practices.

2.1.2 Promotion

Promotion or career advancement is a sort of exchange in which an employee gets reassigned to a higher position. Career promotion, according to Hanum (2020), is an organization's way of recognizing workers' efforts and contributions. It impacts the individual's character who is expecting a salary increase. Promotion is an important aspect of one's career and a crucial component of work satisfaction. According to Asaari et al. (2019), the promotion will motivate workers to work more efficiently and effectively as a result of their desire to earn management's confidence. In addition, the research revealed that this form of incentive motivates workers to improve accountability and responsibility since they acquire the management's confidence and autonomy.

In terms of work happiness, promotions provide employees with long-term contentment (Asaari et al., 2019). In the research by Lup (2018), however, there were disparities in promotion-related work satisfaction between men and women. Men are more content with their jobs than women, and fewer women are accepting promotions to higher levels of management. It may be because their career goals have shifted to accommodate their family or stress-free lifestyle commitments.

There are a few factors for measuring promotion, and according to Nanang et al. (2021), one such indicator is the employee's level of experience. It demonstrates that the employee is an expert in a particular field; (2) the level of education of the employee because higher level education employees are expected to have better thinking; (3) the loyalty of the employees; (4) honesty as certain positions require an honest individual to lead; (5) responsibility as it relates to an accountable employee; (6) the ability to get along with peers to maintain a harmonious workplace; and (7) the work performance of the employee because it is directly related to the employee's accountability. These indicators represent a high-performing employee.

Promotion is one of the factors that interest employees to retain in an organization because it is related to salary increments and an individual's economic growth. Promotion allows employees to do jobs that suit their experiences, abilities, and skills (Osibanjo et al., 2014). Employees' commitment to work correlates with promotion as it reflects achievement and the management's appreciation of the PE. However, in the public sector in Malaysia, promotion is also made according to seniority or in other words, time-based exercise. Employees that reach

a certain period will be promoted although they only meet the minimum job requirement (Asaari et al., 2019). Thus, it creates an unsatisfied feeling among the outstanding employees.

2.1.3 Job Security

Job security is the certainty that an individual can retain their position in the foreseeable future with minimum interference from outside forces. A high degree of job security indicates that workers will not be laid off shortly. According to the findings of Wang et al. (2021), there is a positive correlation between job security and PE. According to Karatepe et al. (2020), public personnel is motivated by a range of intrinsic and extrinsic benefits, such as public service motivation, merit pay, and job security. In his research, Jehanzeb and Mohanty (2018) found that job security was positively connected with organizational commitment and PE. Due to the high level of job security among workers in the public sector, few studies have been conducted on the subject. The majority of research examined job security or job instability in the private sector.

Job security influences the PE inside an organization. It includes the perspective of employees, which they cannot see but can feel. In the private sector, job security contributes to increased employee productivity. As employees begin to fear losing their jobs, their poor behavior will become evident (Karatepe et al., 2020). In contrast to the private sector, PSEs are renowned for their strong job security. Consequently, how can this aspect assist in maintaining PE in a public organization? The following hypotheses are applied in this study:

H₁: There is a significant relationship between recognition and PE of PSEs.

H₂: There is a significant relationship between promotion and PE of PSEs.

H₃: There is a significant relationship between job security and PE of PSEs.

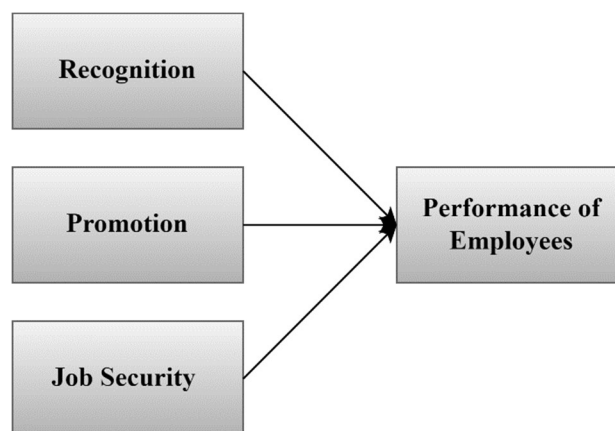


Figure 1. The Research Framework

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants and procedures

This study was conducted using a quantitative research method. This research employed descriptive and correlational study design. A cross-sectional survey approach in this study

allows researchers to collect data quickly and cost-effective from a large sample of respondents. Approximately 66,464 PSEs from ministries and departments in Putrajaya's public service comprised the population studied (Xi, 2018). The sample was comprised of PSEs from the Support Group (19-40 Grade) as well as the Management and Professional Group (41-54 Grade). They are selected because they have witnessed the formulation of the problem statement, as described in Chapter 1. According to the tables of Krejcie and Morgan, a suitable sample size for this study should not be less than 382. Considering the possibility of respondents not answering the questionnaires, the researcher has decided to increase the sample size by 40% to 50% (Salkind, 2000). Therefore, the sample size was set at 540 respondents.

This study was done using simple random sampling which ensures the sample mirror the population. To accomplish SRS, the researcher gathered the sampling frame from 27 ministries and departments in Putrajaya. 540 respondents were randomly selected using the Table of Random Numbers to ensure that all dedicated PSEs had an equal chance of being selected as respondents (sample). Data collection has been done through the online questionnaire and has been administered by the human resource division in selected ministries and departments using Google Forms.

3.2 Measures

PE was measured by adopting and adapting the validated Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) developed by Koopmans et al. (2014). This instrument consists of 25 items distributed across three scales: task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior. An example item is "I managed to plan my work so that it was done in time". The acceptable Cronbach alpha value scale was 0.846 for Task Performance, 0.927 for contextual performance, and 0.956 for counterproductive work behavior. Recognition was measured by the six-item instrument developed by Jean et al. (2017). An example item is "I treat recognition as means of appreciation". The Cronbach's alpha for this measure was 0.899. The promotion was measured by Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) Questionnaire by Siegrist et al. (2004) for measuring PE. It consists of Siegrist's three (3) main components: extrinsic effort, reward, and over-commitment (intrinsic effort). An example item is "Considering all my efforts and achievements, my work prospects are adequate". The Cronbach's alpha for this measure was 0.687. Job security was measured by Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) Model developed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007). In the context of Malaysian public service, the researcher only looked at the dimensions of remuneration and uncertainty about the future of this instrument. An example item is I will still be working here in one year. The Cronbach's alpha for this measure was 0.931.

3.4 Data analysis

The data analysis has been done by using SPSS (v.26). The statistic involved in the data analysis was descriptive statistics. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis was used to analyze the relationship between recognition, promotion, and job security with the

performance of PSEs. Besides, Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) analysis was used to identify the most influencing factors that contribute to the performance of PSEs. The Correlation test has been employed by applying descriptive statistics which involves frequencies, means, and standard deviation, to analyze the sample background.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic profile of respondents

The demographic profile consisted of gender, marital status, age, highest education, service group, ministry, and working experience comprised 400 respondents. Based on gender, there are 177 respondents (44.3%) are male and 223 respondents (55.8%) are females. It showed that the number of female respondents is higher than males. The classification of respondents based on age indicated that the majority of respondents are between 36 and 45 years old with 183 respondents (45.7%), followed by 26 to 35 years old with 101 respondents (25.3%), 46 to 55 years old with 79 respondents (19.8%), and 25 years old or younger with 21 respondents (5.3%). 16 respondents were older than 56 years of age, the minority of respondents (4%). 54 respondents (13.5%) are single, 297 respondents (74.3%) are married, 37 respondents (9.3%) are divorced, and 12 respondents (3%) are widowed, according to their marital status. It was determined that the majority of respondents are married, while the fewest are single. Two (2) respondents (0.5%) have PMR, followed by 18 respondents (4.5%) with SPM, 41 respondents (10.3%) with STPM/Diploma, 239 respondents (59.8 percent) with Bachelor's Degree, 88 respondents (22%) with a Master's Degree, and 12 respondents (3%) with Doctor of Philosophy. The majority of respondents have Bachelor's Degrees, while the fewest have PMR certification, according to the survey data. Next, the service group revealed that 301 respondents (75.3%) were from Management and Professionals group, while 99 respondents (24.8%) were from the Support Group. It was shown that the largest portion of respondents was from Management and professionals, and the lowest proportion was from the support group members. Six (6) respondents (1.5%) had less than one year of work experience, followed by 32 respondents (8%) with two to five years of experience, 112 respondents (28%) with six to ten years of experience, and 250 respondents (62.5%) with more than ten years of experience. The classification of respondents based on Working Experience is shown in Table 1 exhibit the detail of demographic respondents.

Table 1. Detail of demographic respondents (n=400).

| Demographic | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 177 | 44.3 |
| Female | 223 | 55.8 |
| Age | | |
| 25 and below | 21 | 5.3 |
| 26-35 years old | 101 | 25.3 |
| 36-45 years old | 183 | 45.7 |

| Demographic | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 46-55 years old | 79 | 19.8 |
| 56 and above | 16 | 4.0 |
| Marital Status | | |
| Single | 54 | 13.5 |
| Married | 297 | 74.3 |
| Others | 49 | 12.3 |
| Highest Education | | |
| PMR | 2 | .5 |
| SPM | 18 | 4.5 |
| STPM/Diploma | 41 | 10.3 |
| Bachelor's Degree | 239 | 59.8 |
| Master's Degree | 88 | 22.0 |
| Doctor of Philosophy | 12 | 3.0 |
| Service Group | | |
| Management and Professional | 301 | 75.3 |
| Support Group | 99 | 24.8 |
| Working Experience | | |
| Less than 1 year | 6 | 1.5 |
| 2-5 years | 32 | 8.0 |
| 6-10 years | 112 | 28.0 |
| Over 10 years | 250 | 62.5 |

4.2 The relationship between factors that influence employee performance

Findings of Pearson Correlation Coefficients explain that there was a positive and low correlation between recognition and PE, $r(398) = 0.285, p < .05$. There was a positive and low correlation between promotion and PE, $r(398) = 0.302, p < .05$. There was a positive and low correlation between job security and PE, $r(398) = 0.387, p < .05$. Thus, there was a significant correlation between the influencing factors and PE.

4.3 Factors explaining employee performance

Multi-regression analysis was used to explain the findings of the fourth objective of this study which is to determine the most influencing factors that contribute to the PE of PSEs in Malaysia. According to the ANOVA findings, $F(3,396) = 27.663, p=0.000$ for the overall regression relationship between recognition, promotion, and job security has a significant level of $p < 0.05$. Therefore, the research model has demonstrated that recognition, promotion, and job security have a substantial effect on PE. The significant value of the variable may be tested further using the coefficient table.

Findings indicate that the coefficient of determination value (R^2) is considerably low at 0.173. Therefore, the R^2 value of 17.3% means variations of PE can be explained by all independent

variables (recognition, promotion, and job security). It means that the remaining 82.7% variation of the PE is unexplained under this study and can be explained by other variables. The factors account for 41.6% of the variance in PE. The F value of this study demonstrates how well the variables fit in overall, $F = 27.663$.

The MLR findings revealed that two of the three hypotheses were supported by significant associations at $p = 0.01$ level of significance (see Table 2). Recognition was found to be significantly and positively associated with PE ($\beta = 0.12$, $t = 2.267$, $p < 0.024$). Consequently, this finding confirmed H_1 . In contrast, promotion was not significantly related to PE. Regarding this, the results rejected hypotheses H_2 . The results also displayed that job security ($\beta = 0.285$, $t = 5.112$, $p < 0.000$) was significantly associated with PE. Based on the standardized coefficients beta, job security ($\beta = 0.285$) influences PE the most, whilst recognition ($\beta = 0.120$) influences PE the least. Therefore, the findings confirmed H_3 .

Table 2. MLR Analysis between Influencing Factors and PE.

| Model | B | Std. Error | β | t | p | Decision |
|--------------|-------|------------|---------|--------|------|----------|
| (Constant) | 2.560 | .147 | | 17.466 | .000 | SU |
| Recognition | .081 | .036 | .120 | 2.267 | .024 | SU |
| Promotion | .048 | .029 | .095 | 1.670 | .096 | NS |
| Job Security | .122 | .024 | .285 | 5.112 | .000 | SU |

Note. Supported = SU; Not supported = NS.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The primary aim of this article was to identify the influencing factors in predicting PE of PSEs in Malaysia. The civil service in Malaysia has stagnated since its 2014 high, putting the country's long-term competitiveness at risk. This does not reflect well on PSEs, who are essential to providing first-class public services. The difficulty with this research stems from the Malaysian government's desire to enhance PE. As a result of popular unhappiness with the quality of public service delivery, PSEs were constantly inundated with complaints from the public. The quality of the service must be maintained by improving the PE. This helps to change the public's unfavorable impression of public service. This research was done at Putrajaya since it is the Federal Government Administrative Centre, where the majority of public employees in Putrajaya and its surrounding reside. The results are consistent with those of prior studies (Madu, 2017), which reported that greater recognition was closely linked to greater PE among PSEs in the Malaysian public sector. Other finding that was inconsistent with past studies is that a higher promotion is linked to higher levels of job PSEs' PE (Razak et al., 2018; Setyowati, 2020). This finding is also in contrast with Osibanjo et al.'s (2014) study that found promotion influences PE. According to Langer et al. (2020), promotion may have its disadvantages such as it can last for a short period of time and decreases organizational loyalty. Unsurprisingly, job security will influence PE. These findings are consistent with other studies such as Wang et al. (2021), that job security increases PSEs' PE. Therefore, seeking a high level of job security should be a priority, because failure to do so will result in health and psychological consequences on academics.

6. Implications

This study applied SET that intends to determine the impact of resource exchange that include intrinsic factors and extrinsic factors the PE. Recognition and promotion and job security are considered resource exchange. According to the results, there is a significant relationship between the factors of recognition and job security and the PE of PSEs in Malaysia. Because this study provided evidence in favor of the hypothesis that was put to the test, one possible theoretical interpretation is that the SET is appropriate for describing and making sense of the phenomena that the researcher looked into.

This research offers insight into the factors that influence PE in the public sector. Recognition, promotion and job security were selected as the three factors to explore. Within the context of the Malaysian Public Service, the findings of this research should be of interest, both on a philosophical and a practical level, to employees, leaders, departments, senior officials, and professionals involved in the area of human resource management. According to the findings of this research, the public servants identified recognition and job security as the elements that affect their PE, rather than the issue of promotion. When evaluating new policies or programs that promote or boost PE, the Malaysian Public Service should take into consideration the importance of focusing on these two aspects (recognition and job security). It is possible that recognition will not consist just of bestowing the Excellence Service Award to the recipient. The same is true concerning the security of one's career; this security may not only manifest itself in the form of facilities but also in the form of financial rewards and other types of incentives.

7. Limitations

The respondents of this study are among the employees in the ministries in Putrajaya, Malaysia. Therefore, the results of the study cannot be generalized to all organizations in the public sector or the private sector in different countries. It could be an opportunity for future research to involve different samples from other countries. Besides, there was a limitation in getting cooperation and genuine response from the respondents as well as response rate, considering the time given and the non-cooperative attitude among them. Ample time should be given in future research.

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