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The Path towards Healthcare Sustainability: The Role of Organisational Commitment

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Abstract

The demand for quality healthcare service has been increasing due to consumer awareness on the importance of health and quality of life. The mushrooming of healthcare institutes has further forced these organisations to relook, design and formulate strategies that is able to fulfil not only customers' but also other stakeholders' demand. Hence, in order to stay competitive in the industry, healthcare institutes need to further ensure that proven strategies are sustained and continued in its implementation in long term until a better strategy is introduced. Past studies has indicated various dimensions that influence healthcare sustainability. These dimensions such as training and mentoring, leadership that leads to retention and satisfaction, effective management practices, the readiness to adapt, and the willingness to collaborate are related to human behaviours or attitudes. However, study on one of important human attitude, organisational commitment, and its role in healthcare sustainability is still lacking. This study tends to provide the basis that indicates the role of organisational commitment on healthcare sustainability. The study will provide a good platform in future study where an empirical study can be conducted.

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1. Introduction

The demand for a better quality of life is being pursued when a country continues to develop and progress. According to Andaleeb, Siddiqui, and Khandakar (2007), the status of healthcare in a country determines the country's development in term of well-being and life quality of its citizen. Individuals have realised the importance of health in order to pursue quality of life and they begin to realise the importance of healthcare services provided by healthcare institutes. This has increased the demand for healthcare services (Noor Fadzlina Mohd Fadhil, Mariana Jusop, and Abdul Aziz Abdullah, 2012). This ever increasing demand has forced healthcare institutes, especially the private and self-funded ones to find ways and formulate strategies to continuously cater these demands. Things get even more challenging when private healthcare institutes are mushrooming and the competition among these institutes has increased (Chan and Wang, 2013). As to remain competitive in the healthcare industry, hospitals have begun to design and formulate strategies that are able to fulfil customers' demand through quality service delivery (Ament, Gillissen, Maessen, Dirksen, van der Weijden, and von Meyenfeldt, 2012). However, issues such as high raising cost, limited resources and limited budget have always been a major constrain for healthcare businesses to grow continuously (Martin, Weaver, Currie, Finn, and McDonald, 2012). Therefore several researchers stressed that quality improvement strategies need to be designed and implemented in a sustainable manner to ensure long term benefits can be achieved (Ament et al., 2012 and Hovlid, Bukve, Haug, Aslaksen, and von Plesson, 2012).

According to Noor Hidayah Jamaluddin et al. (2013), healthcare institutes have been actively seeking for sustainable practice in its organisation. A report from National Health Service (NHS) from the United Kingdom has reported that new and effective strategies and practices that proven to be able to provide benefits somehow fails to remain and sustain over time (Martin et al., 2012; Ament et al., 2012). The institute refers this as "improvement-evaporation effect" (Martin et al., 2012; NHS institutes, 2007). It is important to understand that successful change and implementation of strategies in any organisations does not occur and remains in long term (Martin et al., 2012) without the good support of human capital (Unger, Rauch, Frese, Rosenbusch, 2011).

With this, it is important to ensure healthcare institutes to execute sustainable strategies in delivery of quality healthcare services to meet the ever increasing demand from the society. Past studies have indicated various dimensions such as training and mentoring, leadership that leads to retention and satisfaction, effective management practices, the readiness to adapt, and the willingness to collaborate which affect strategy sustainability that lead to organisation's performance. According to Ramirez et al. (2013), all dimensions of sustainability need to be focused in order to build a sustainable organisation. For the purpose of this paper, the study examines medical employees' commitment to organisation for sustainability practices in the context of healthcare. Organisational commitment has been seen as one of the most important dimension in determining organisation performance. However, there is a limited study that link organisational commitment dimension to sustainability practices and performance in healthcare settings.

2. Sustainability of healthcare institutes

Corporate organisations have realised the importance of sustaining business operations and practices as to further improve the organisations'performance in the long run. This awareness has caused organisations to pursue sustainable practices for the benefits of the company, employees and its customers in the long run (Benn, Dunphy, and Griffiths, 2006). The implementation of sustainability practices have extended in the healthcare industry.

The term sustainability has been defined differently by various researchers. Although a group of studies on sustainability in healthcare has focused on the efficient use of resources and management of capital, some other researchers see sustainability as a dynamic continuous process of improvement. Ament et al. (2012) defined sustainability as the implementation and continuous use of new practices that are able to produce intended outcome in a long period of time. As for Mendel, Weinberg, Gall, Leuschner, and Kahn (2014) who conducted a study on system improvement sustainability in healthcare, the authors concluded that sustainability relies on the improvement of components of the healthcare systems and the support of these components provide for each other. A study conducted by Ramirez et al. (2013), feel that sustainability may occurs with the balance focus on environmental, social, and economics development in healthcare institutes. Noor Hidayah Jamaludin et al. (2013) in their study stress that a sustainable healthcare institute depicts a system that focuses on the development of various approaches

such as management of human health and environment, economic competitiveness, and social development. In a nutshell, sustainability of healthcare can be defined as the constant implementation of successful strategies in satisfying the stakeholders of the institutes based on various dimensions such as human resource, social, economic, and environmental development. Thus sustainability refers to the approach on how the strategies are being implemented.

Sustainable strategy is said to be able to reduce risks, enable waste reduction, efficient usage of energy and raw materials, and create environmentally friendly products and services (Noor Hidayah Jamaludin et al., 2013). Noor Hidayah Jamaludin et al. (2013) and Ling, Pedersen, Drabble, Celia, Brereton, and Tiefensee (2012) suggested that the leaders who design a strategy of sustainability should leads the public, patients, staffs and other organisations towards a sustainable health service in a country. According to Ament et al. (2012), there are many dimensions that will determine or affect the sustainability of a strategy in healthcare settings. However, there are relatively limited study on sustainability of healthcare institutes' performance (Benzer, Young, Burgess, Baker, Mohr, Charns, and Kaboli, 2013). Within the context of human based resources, Ramirez et al. (2013) suggested that managers need to look into issues such as management of financial issues, patient care quality, collaboration with others, engaging in social community, strong governance, and policy regulation that will assist in sustaining the healthcare institutes.

Generally, the dimensions or factors that influence sustainability in healthcare sector are very much related to management practices, human behaviour and attitude towards the hospitals' sustainable strategies. The implementation of sustainable strategies is a continuous effort and it requires the right leaderships and management policies that guide and motivate human resources that are willing to commit to the healthcare institutes' visions and objectives. Looking at the importance of human resources, Benjamin and David (2012) and many other researchers see human capital as an important asset for organisation that pursue for sustainable competitive advantage (Akinyemi, 2007; Becker, Huselid, and Ulrich, 2001; Kearns, 2004; Mercer Human Resource Consulting, 2003; Pfeffer, 1998; Torraco and Swanson, 1996; Ulrich, 1998; Wright, 1999). As past studies had indicated the importance of employees' commitment to organisation in determining the organisation performance, it is believed that employees' long term commitment to the hospitals will ensure a sustainable performance for the hospital.

3. Organisational commitment in healthcare industry

Organisations such as hospitals are a social system that requires human resources for its effective and efficient operations (Mosadeghrad, Ferlie, Rosenberg, 2008). Baptiste (2008) added that effective development of human resources will assists the organisation towards achieving competitive advantage. Bhatti and Qureshi (2007) stated that management of human resources is a challenging task to the management, but if the strategies are effectively executed, it will help to improve organisation performance and accountability. Hospitals management have realised the importance to focus and keeping employees happy and committed to the organisation as the fundamental requirement to hospital efficiency in healthcare service delivery (Velickovic, Visnjic, Jovic, Radulovic, Sargic, Mihajlovic, MPharm, and Mladenovic, 2014). With organisational commitment being seen as the main area of focus in human resource management (Guest, 1998; Baptiste 2008), there is a need to look into the employees' commitment to their job and organisation to ensure employees well-being is secured and will further drives organisation performance (Baptiste, 2008). Various studies have claimed the importance of employees' organisational commitment as determinants of performance (Benjamin and David, 2012; Mosadeghrad et al., 2008; Baptiste, 2007, and Jackson 2004). With this, to ensure a long term success or positive performance, it is crucial to ensure the attitude of commitment to the organisation is always there among the employees.

Meyer and Allen (1991) define organisational commitment as a psychological linkage between employees and their organisation that causes employees' likeliness to remain in the organisation. A three-component model of organisational commitment developed and proposed by Meyer and Allen (1991) indicates three types of organisational commitment; affective, continuance, and normative commitments that bind employees to their organisation. As suggested by Meyer and Allen (1991), these components may exist individually or collectively to define employee organisational commitment. An employee that poses affective commitment shows his or her commitment through emotionally feelings that drive the employee to conduct certain actions to remain in the organisation (Meyer and Allen, 1991; Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001). Continuance commitment sees employees'

perception on the cost of leaving the organisation (Meyer and Allen, 1991; Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001). If the cost of leaving is higher compared to the cost of staying, employees will tend to remain in the company to avoid unintended cost of leaving. Normative commitment shows an employee's intention to remain with the organisation as he or she feels obligated to do so (Meyer and Allen, 1991; Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001).

Past studies and literatures such as studies from Cohen (2003), Redman and Snape (2005) and Gutierrez et al. (2012) have shown the need to focus on multiple types commitments. Schoemmel and Jonsson (2013) further propose that multiple commitments may have direct or indirect effects on organisation outcomes. As the three components of commitment from Meyer and Allen (1991)'s model depicts human attitudes that would influence the decision on whether to commit or not, it is crucial for organisations to look into all these commitments so that proper strategies can be designed to promote employees' commitment to the organisation and further reap the benefits that organisational commitment can provide to the organisation in the context of sustainability.

Previous studies on corporate sustainability have concluded various dimensions that provide the path to healthcare institutes sustainability. This is consistent with the statement of Linnenluecke and Griffiths (2010), stating that corporate sustainability is a complex concepts that require changes in organisational practices and human ability to adapt to new policy and strategies. Literature review from Linnenluecke and Griffiths (2010) also discovers that internal organisational factors such as support from the management, human resource management, employees training and empowerment, and teamwork are the main areas to focus in achieving corporate sustainability. These findings seem to be very much related to human attitude and behaviour. In general human resource has been seen as an importance determinant to organisational sustainability. Benn et al. (2006) who conducted a study on corporate sustainability stressed that employees' commitment is crucial in assisting organisation in formulating strategies that create the pathway to sustainability. In fact, Lega, Prenestini, and Spurgeon (2013) also see the importance of leadership in influencing the performance of healthcare institutes. Hence, organisational commitment may seem to have direct or indirect effect on corporate sustainability. Thus, there is a need to further investigate the influential strength of organisational commitment to achieve the sustainability of healthcare institutes.

4. Conclusion

Just as other organisations, healthcare institutes also have been seeking for sustainable practice to be implemented in the organisation (Noor Hidayah Jamaluddin et al, 2013) in order to stay competitive in the industry. Past studies have concluded various managerial and non-managerial dimensions that influence the sustainability of healthcare institutes. With the importance of organisational commitment as the driver towards performance, study that look into the influence of this dimension towards sustainability is still lacking. Past literatures have indicated various dimensions of sustainability that were related to human attitude and management of human resource. With this, it is believed that organisational commitment is able to influence the sustainability of healthcare institutes. The paper believes that if employees' commitment to an organisation can be maintained in a long term, it will have a significant direct or indirect effect on sustainable performance of healthcare institutes.

This paper provides the basis for future investigation on the role of organisational commitment on healthcare sustainability. An empirical study should be conducted to further understand healthcare employees' commitments to the organisation for sustainable practices As employees from different job scope might have different ways in pursuing corporate sustainability (Linnenluecke and Griffiths, 2010), it will be more proper to conduct a study that is based on the job scope of the employees. Future studies may want to look into the various types of commitments (affective, normative, and continuance) of hospital employees such as nurses, administrative staffs, and medical officers separately. The empirical findings of the study will assist the healthcare institutes' managers and policy makers in understanding the importance of commitments and further assists them to formulate and design strategies that would craft a pathway towards sustainability.

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