# MALAYSIAN VALUES AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT A STUDY OF DIFFERENCES AMONGST VARIOUS RACES

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### ABSTRAK

kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji perhubungan d Tujuan Malaysia seperti kolektiviti antara nilai orang menghormati orang tua-dan harmoni dengan tanggungjawa organisasi di antara tiga bangsa : Melayu, China da dalam India. Data-data telah dikumpulkan daripada 236 oran pekerja yang bekerja di beberapa organisasi yang terleta di kawasan Utara Semenanjung Malaysia. Daripada 236 oran pekerja ini, terdapat 94 orang Melayu, 85 orang China da 57 orang India. Keputusan kajian ini menunjukkan bahaw pekerja-pekerja India adalah lebih bertanggungjawab kepad organisasi diikuti oleh orang Melayu dan China. Kolektivit menunjukkan perhubungan yang negatif dan tidak berert dengan tanggungjawab dalam organisasi. Tetapi, menghormat orang tua dan harmoni menunjukkan perhubungan yang positi dan bererti dengan tanggungjawab dalam organisasi. Saling tindakbalas di antara nilai dan bangsa tidak menunjukka bererti dengan dalaı perhubungan yang tanggungjawab organisasi. Walau bagaimanapun, orang China dalam golonga harmoni rendah menunjukkan tanggungjawab dalaı yang organisasi yang rendah sekali.

### ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to examine Malaysian val of Collectivism, Respect for Elders and Harmony and th relationship with organizational commitment amongst th races : Malay, Chinese and Indians. Data was colleč 236 employees working in several organizāti from operating in the Northern region of Peninsular Malays Of these 236 respondents, 94 were Malay, 85 Chinese and Indian. The results of the study showed that Ind employees are more committed to organizati followed by Malay and Chinese respectively. Collectiv showed negative but insignificant relationship W organizational commitment. On the other hand, Respect Elders and Harmony were found to be positively correlà with organizational commitment beyond the conventio of significance. Values in interaction with r levels failed to show any significant variation by and lar though Chinese low on Harmony showed lowest organizatio commitment.

#### Chapter 1

#### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

culture of a country moulds, directs and sanctions th The way people behave. It also plays a significant role i determining and developing the culture of an organization Malaysia has often been described as a "minefield o As multicultural sensitivities" (Abdullah, A. 1992c) due t its diverse racial and ethnic composition, organizations i Malaysia employ in varying proportions the different race and ethnic groups (Malays, Chinese and Indians). Eac ethnic groups brings to organizations its rich and distinc culture which has been handed down from one generation t the next through the age-old beliefs, traditions an practices. The cultural traditions of all the major ethni woven their intricate threads into th groups have Malaysian management fabric.

multi-racial society like Malaysia, culture has In strong influence on the way work is done by employees. I is demonstrated by their behavior. Employees bring into th workplace differing systems of values which have a bearing on their motivation and needs, and how they perform thei daily corollary, it is believed work. As tha a

organizational commitment is affected by diverse cultural factors such as attitudes and values, personal beliefs and aspirations, interpersonal relationships and socia structure. The primary objective of this study therefore i to examine if differences in cultural orientation exis among the Malaysians of different ethnic origins and t ascertain if such differences influence the organizationa commitment.

### 1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational commitment has been defined and measured i a wide variety of ways. However, there seems to be a agreement amongst most definitions that organizationa commitment as an attitude includes three things. These ar (1) a strong desire to remain as members of particula organization, (2) a willingness to exert high levels o efforts on behalf of the organization and (3) a definit belief in, and acceptance of, the values and the goals o the organizations (Mowday, Porter and Steers, 1982) Research in the area of organizational commitment has, b and large focused on these components.

Despite increasing interest in organizational commitment the understanding of commitment to work organization remains limited. Although progress has been made i clarifying the meaning of this construct, a generall accepted model of organizational commitment has yet emerge.

A large numbers of studies are published that have tried examine the relationship of organizational commitment w individual and situational variables. Steers (1977) fo that personal characteristics influence the organizatio commitment greatly.- Such personal characteristics (Hrebiniak, 1974), opportunities for advancement (Bro 1969; Hall, Schneider, and Nygren, 1970), education (K and Steers, 1976), role tension (Hrebiniak and Alut 1972) and central life interest (Dubin, Champoux Porter, 1975) have been found to relate significantly w organizational commitment.

Certain organizational conditions, such as rew structures (Bennis et al., 1958; Grusky, 1966) and design (Hall, 1968) appear to be linked to the membe organizational - commitment. As studied by Oscar Gru (1966), the greater the rewards received as a result upward career mobility, the stronger the commitment to organization.

Parsons (1964) suggested that the work orientation behavior of individuals result from the interaction personality and organizational factors. Two personal characteristics that could be related to the level organizational commitment are interpersonal trust

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authoritarianism. Levels of interpersonal trust, for example, reveal the extent to which individuals see the social environment as benign, cooperative or friend (Hrebiniak, 1971). The less an organization is seen these terms, the less one is likely to be committed to i Other studies have suggested that interpersonal trust important for the structure of social systems and the attitudes and behaviors of participants within them. (Ned 1971; Almond and Verba, 1963). As far as authoritarianis is concerned, research shows no relationship betwee authoritarianism and organizational commitment (Hrebiniak Alutto, 1972).

Studies on background factors such as father's occupation have shown to affect professional commitment (Werts, 1968 Colomboto's finding (1962) of a direct relationship between the socioeconomic status and commitment to professional norms, for example, suggests that commitment to employing organization can also vary as a function of blue versus white-collar status.

Studies on the relationship between cultural values an organizational commitment, particularly in the context of Malaysia are almost non existent.

At the core of every culture, there exists a set of value that are the unseen aspect of culture. Values represenbasic convictions that "a specific mode of conduct or end

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state of existence is personally or socially preferable an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state existence." (Rokeach, 1973). Values are beliefs people ha about what they consider to be right or wrong, good or ba desirable or undesirable. Values are internal to t individual and develop from family, friends, school religion and work. Values typically represent ideal mod of behavior or ideal terminal goals. As such, values a important because they serve as standards and as expressi of human needs. Values, have a great influence on the w we think, feel, act and our perception of reali (Anantaraman, 1984).

Values, according to Graves (1970), change in a regressiv progressive fashion when each set of existential problem are solved and initiate movement to a higher level psychological system. The pressure of changing condition will first produce a regression and disorganization values. Disorganization is not however, decay but rather stage in preparation for a higher level of organization.

The current thinking is that values determine the busines An organization's values, what it stands for and what i people believe in are crucial to its competitive succe (Abdullah, A. 1992a). It gives shape and character to t organization, and in turn the organization giv recognition to actualizing the values through shar practices.

Culture can be defined as a shared and commonly held body of general beliefs and values which define the 'shoulds' and 'oughts' of life of certain ethnic communities. These beliefs and values-were usually learnt so early in life that one is usually unaware of their influence (Abdultah A. 1992a). As stated by Hofstede (1984), "Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another..... the interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influences a human's response to its environment." Culture manifests itself both in the patterns of language, thought and in the forms of activity and behavior.

the world, Unlike other countries in Asia and perhaps Malaysia 'is a multi-ethnic or multi-cultural society with three major races; the Malays, the Chinese and the Indians, existing side by side. Individuals and groups will tend to turn towards their respective cultural norms and values thus negating the cultural ethos of the wider society. By and large, Malays are loyal, soft spoken, "image conscious, peace loving and male-dominated. Chinese though аге of characterized by oriental focus, do also show traces western values. Indians, generally aspire to lead a righteous, materially successful, pleasantly joyful and spiritually pious life (Nirenberg, 1979).

Because of the dominant cultural values of the three major cultures in Malaysia, nature of business and management practices in Malaysia are greatly influenced by the According to Asma Abdullah (1992c), Malaysians, regardless of ethnicity, are generally group-oriented, relationship oriented and have respect for old and wise. They are als conscious of social hierarchy, prefer compromise confrontation and seek harmony in relationship. Preservin face is equally important to them. All this affects th Malaysian workers' attitude and behavior towards their organization especially in the area of their performance and organizational commitment.

Studies on values which have been carried out in the pass are related directly with organizations and people is organizations. In these types of studies, values are used as organizational variables to predict performance Organizational performance such as efficiency, quality of output, innovation has been reported to show stron relationship with values. Kashefi-zihagh (1970) found that effective organizations and executives tend to have similar patterns of values. Guth and Tagiuri (1965) showed that the executive's value systems may play a major role in the critical choices they make, therefore values have a stron influence on the organization's performance. Values have also been found to predict organizational innovation (Hag and Dewar, 1973).

When focusing on Malaysian context, the influence of values on the Malaysian management practices becomes the subject of the local researchers' concerns. Abraham (1989) studied race and ethnic relations in the electronic factories in Penang. She found that while at work, workers irrespective of ethnic affiliation or gender seemed to identify themselves as workers/employees and see having common problems, yet once outside the factory gates they see themselves as different from each other both in terms of ethnic groupings and gender differences.

A study carried out on 6 Asian and 6 Western countries or the four cultural dimensions (Individualism, Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity) by Hofstede (1980) concluded that Malaysia ranks second lowest in individualism and highest in power distance. That is to say that Malaysians are rather more within the dimension of collectivist culture where they see themselves as belonging to collectives such as employment which, are supposed to protect the interests of members and at the same time the expect their permanent Toyalty towards employers.

Two studies closely related to the study of human values o Malaysians were undertaken by Scott in 1968 an Charlesworth in 1974. Scott (1968) using an in-dept interview technique studied the political beliefs of 1 Malaysian civil servants in Kuala Lumpur. Scott profile Malaysian civil servants as tradition-oriented, having th

view that human actions are prompted by egoism that controllable only by threats emanating from externation authorities, - whether - governmental or supernatur Malaysians are fatalistic - men subjected to nature, see nature as too hostile and threatening to be approact and they see life as a struggle for a 'constant pie' struggle for a fixed scarcity of desired material goods.

Charlesworth (1974) studied the role stress of Malays entrepreneurs. He suggested that "newcomers in the busine world in developing countries experience considerable ro strain between social and economic roles and that the conflict impedes development of their entrepreneuring potential."

With the common assumption that cultural values influer work-habits and orientation to a great degree, Muhammad M Ghani (1978) discovered that values such as respect f elders, being thankful to God, belief in the supernatur and peace-loving tend to make the planner-manag appreciate more the wisdom of age instead of co rationality, conservative in probing into futu possibilities, skeptical in shaping a self-desired futu and more prone to avoiding problems rather than confronti and solving them. Furthermore, a Malay executive normal respects his workers and is also concerned with preservi an image of respectivity. This can indeed induce him fr being effective in his job towards the organization. Nik A. Rashid Ismail (1982) explored the study on system of work values of Malay and Chinese managers. indicate that Malay managers, like Chin findings managers are existential with respect to vi their concerning the importance of money, the role of prof and company rules. Malay managers, however, dif work from the Chinese managers in their views about comp loyalty, job freedom, big company behavior and leadersh Loyalty to a Chinese manager means sacrificing for the g of the organization; while to a Malay manager, loyalty a limit, i.e. for as long as the goals of the organizat do not go against his principles.

Asma Abdullah (1992a) emphasized that Malaysian managand HRD professionals must be aware of the values of the employees in their organization before developing managerial practices in the form of styles and technique to support those core values and beliefs. And, also in 1 seminar of "Corporate-Culture of an American Multination Company" (Abdullah, A. 1992b) in Malaysia, she said the "Any attempt to build and strengthen corporate culture mu be based on commonly shared values of the workforce so the the shared practices are looked upon as purposeful means achieve the desired ends." Additionally, she suggested the "To achieve growth there has to be a focus on what ea employees group uniquely values and manage them responding to their values."

### 1.3 PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

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The above survey of literature on values and organization commitment shows that the existing literature on the valu of Malaysians and their relationship with organization commitment is far from conclusive. Furthermore, the studi do not provide substantial empirical evidence and there a general lack of effort in this particular area.

The purpose of this study is to examine Malaysian valu and their relationship with organizational commitmen Specific values of collectivism, respect for elders a harmony which are significant from the cultural point view of Malaysia have been chosen. Additionally, the stu also focuses on differences in values across the thr major ethnic groups and their implication. T organizational commitment.

#### Chapter 2

#### METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 METHODOLOGY

Since the study was concerned with the relationship betwe the independent variables of collectivism, respect f elders and harmony amongst three races and the depende variable of organizational commitment, brief definitions these variable \_ and the tools for their measurement a presented below :

### 2.1.1 Organizational Commitment

Proter, Steers, Mowday and Boulian (1974), define organizational commitment as the strength of individual's identification with, and involvement in, particular organization. They characterized it by three psychological factors : a strong desire to remain in the organization, -a willingness to exert considerable effort of its\_behalf, and a strong belief in and acceptance of it goals and values. Following this definition, organizationa commitment was measured by a 15-item Organizationa Commitment Questionnaire developed by Porter (1974). The items in the questionnaire consisted of statements to whice the respondent indicated disagreement/agreement by checkin one of the six categories ranging from "strongly disagree to "strongly agree" as specified below :-

Strongly Agree = 6Slightly Disagree-Agree = 5DisagreeSlightly Agree = 4Strongly Disagree

### 2.1.2 Collectivism

Collectivism is characterized by tight social frame-work which people distinguish between their own gro ("in-groups" such as relatives, clans and organization and other groups. People expect in-groups to look af their members, protect them and give them security exchange for members' loyalty (Adler.1986).

Collectivism was measured on a six-point scale f "strongly disagree" (6) to "strongly agree" (1). A 10 i Value Profile Scale (Factor IV) was adopted from Bales Couch (1969). The items in the questionnaire cover individualism values but the scoring procedure was alter through reverse+scoring in the present study to get measure of collectivism.

### 2.1.3 Respect For Elders

According to Asma Abdullah (1992c), Malaysians are expected to be obedient and loyal to their elders in their specand behavior. Leaders are always considered as "wis elders" and their authority is not often challenged Usually, subordinates will show their respect by allowin the most senior and experienced staff to speak first an set the tone for the meeting.

Respect for elders was assessed by a 10-item Value Profil Scale (Factor I) developed by Bales and Couch (1969). Th items were adapted to measure respect for elders. The item in this section of the questionnaire were answered by th respondents indicating their disagreement/agreement on six-point scale where 1 referred to "strongly disagree" an 6 referred to "strongly agree".

#### 2.1.4 Harmony

Asma Abdullah (1992c) focused the definition of harmony in the perspective of superior and subordinates for they arless likely to be in conflict. Every attempt is made to avoid damaging self-esteem or face. The subordinates feel secure if others in the organization especially their superiors treat them with understanding, encouragement kindness and consideration.

Using this description of harmony, 12 items for asuring harmony were developed. The harmony quests ire was circulated to a group of 54 employees which consisted o Malays, Chinese and Indrans. Using frequency of response those items with less than 40% endorsement we dropped Consequently, only 7 items qualified to be included in Harmony Questionnaire. The respondents were asked to rank these 7 statements from least to extremely important with scores ranging from 1 (least) to 4 (extremely important).

In addition, the respondents were also requested to provide some general biographic information about themselves. The final questionnaire is presented in Exhibit 1.

The questionnaire was translated in Bahasa Malaysia. This done to add effectiveness to the survey was as those respondents with Bahasa Malaysia educational background be more comfortable answering questions would in Bahasa Malaysia. Statements in both Bahasa Malaysia and English were presented to all the respondents.

### 2.2 POPULATION AND SAMPLE

population for this study comprised of employees The in several organizations operating in the Northern region of Peninsular Malaysia. The selection of sample was confined three major categories of races :- Malays, Chinese to and Indians. Care was taken to include a cross section οf employees of these major categories of races to yield large and representative samples. In each of the groups, sufficient respondents were randomly selected.

### 2.3 DATA COLLECTION

Data for this study were obtained from employees in 10 organizations as listed below :

- (a) LRC Malaysia Sdn. Bhd.
- (b) LRC Hospital Products (M) Sdn. Bhd.
- (c) Hewlett-Packard (M) Sdn. Bhd.
- (d) Komag USA (M) Sdn. Bhd.
- (e) ICHIA Rubber Industries (M) Sdn. Bhd.
- (f) Northern Telekom Malaysia Sdn. Bhd.
- (g) Globetronics Sdn. Bhd.
- (h) Sonic Electronics (M) Sdn. Bhd.
- (i) Super Enterprise (Penang) Sdn. Bhd.
- (j) Applied Magnetics (M) Sdn. Bhd.

Through company channels, employees were informed about the of the study and were general nature encouraged to participate. It was made clear that participation i s voluntary and all were assured of the confidentially of their responses. The questionnaire required approximately 30 minutes to complete. A total of 500 employees were given be completed as the questionnaire to shown below :

Race	Population	Sample	Return rate (%	)
Malay	250	94	18.80	-
Ghinese	150	85	17.00	
Indian	100 '	57	11.40	5
Total	500	236	47.20	-
				-

Of these, fully complete, usable data were provided by 236 employees representing 47.2 percent response rate.

### Chapter 3

### RESULTS

### 3.1 RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the study.

### 3.1.1 Sample Profile

Table 3.1 presents the profile of the sample based on age, years of formal education, length of employment and gender.

### TABLE 3.1

#### SAMPLE PROFILE

Demographi	c 、				
features		Malay	Chinese	Indian	
Age	 M	25.44	28.34	29.44	
	SD	5.15	6.39	6.37	
	Ν	94	85	57	
Years of	M	-10.27	13.38	11.26	
formal	SD	3.73	3.50	2.97	
education	N	94	85	57	
Length of	M	- 3.69-	5.06	6.04	
employment	SD	3.90	5.53	4.35	
	Ν	94	8 5	57	
Gender		i			
Male		38.3%	45.8%	43.8%	
	Ν	36	39	25	
Female		61.7%	54.2%	56.2%	
	N	58	46	32	

N = sample size; M = average

SD = standard deviation estimates

Results' in Table 3.1 indicate the following :

- \* Malays in the sample are relatively younger than Chinese and Indians. The Indians have the highest average age (M=29.44) while the range of difference is about 4 years between the highest and lowest age averages. This difference is statistically significant with F=9.620; df=2/233; p < .01.</p>
- \* Chinese sample seems to have highest averages as far as formal education is concerned (M=13.38). This is followed by Indians and Malays respectively (M=11.26 and M=10.27). The results of analysis of variance are statistically significant (F=18.28; df=2/233; p < .01) showing that Malays, Chinese and Indians are differing in their formal years of education.
- \* As far as length of employment is concerned, the Indian sample has an average 6.0 years of employment. This is followed by Chinese and Malay samples respectively. The averages in the length of employment by races were found to be statistically significant (F=4.793; df=2/233; p < .01).</li>
- \* By and large, there are more female employees in the sample as compared to men. However, the Malay sample seems to have a larger number of female as against male. However, the value of Chi-square indicates that the distribution of male versus female by race is not

significantly different from expected. (Chi-square=1.11; df=2; n.s.)

### 3.1.2 Organizational Commitment

Based on the earlier studies, 15 statements measuring organizational commitment were presented to the sample to be measured on a six-point disagreement/agreement scale. Inter-item correlation was calculated to identify items that should be included to get a single score. The inter-item values of correlation of coefficient are presented in Table 3.2.

#### TABLE 3.2

#### INTER-ITEM CORRELATION

### (ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT)

RCOA	ORCOB	ORCOC	ORCOD	ORCOE	ORCOF	ORCOG	ORCOH	ORCOI	ORCOJ	ORCOK	orcol	ORCOM	orcon	ORCOO -
.000**	.3694** 1.000**	.2533**	.2577** .2867** .0160	.2600** .3536** .2199** .2840**	, 3233**	.0592 0452 .1323* 1805** 0937 0216	.2307*** .4289** .1247* .3283** .3410** .4573** .0622	0376 .0942 1303* .0218 .0580 .0989 1724**	.2047** .3233** .2087** .2068** .2889** .2841** .1366*	.2760*** .2807** .3500** .1951** .2172** .3858** .1492**	.2196** .1551** .2944** .0123 .1853** .2334** .1652**	.3394** .3187** .2853** .1990** .3359** .3894** .0931	.3183** .4468** .1714** .3865** .3667** .5129** .0830	.1823** .1581** .3646** .0092 .1723** .2444** .2147**
		<b>-</b> '.	۰.			· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	1.000**	.0790	.0248 -	.2191**. .3246**	.1810** .2058** .2045** .4463** 1.000**	.0578 .3494** .3725** .2112**	.1001 - .4995**	0895 .3588** .4104** .4065** .3013**

.05 0.01 In terms of the values of coefficients, the results in Table 3.2 shows that all statements except statement 9 correlate with each other significantly. Statement 9 correlates significantly with 8 out of 14 other items. Hence, it was dropped from further analysis. The scores on rest of the statements were added to get a single score on organizational commitment indicating a range of 14 - 84.

### 3.1.3 Value Measures

Three values (collectivism, respect for elders and harmony) were the focus of this study. They were measured by responses of the sample on a series of statements measuring each of these values. To be able to get a single score for each of the values, inter-item correlations were calculated for statements measuring each of these three values. These values are presented in Tables 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5.

## TABLE 3.3

## INTER-ITEM CORRELATION

# (COLLECTIVISM)

ITEMS	COLA	COLB	COLC	COLD	COLE	COLF	COLG	COLH	COLI	COLJ
	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
COLA	1.00									
COLB		** 1.00	.640	.394	** .336 **	.282	.232	.307	.469	.410
COLC	· ·		1.00		•295 **					
COLD	r ř		<b></b>	1,.00	.406 **		.140			
COLE	·				1.00	.433				+
COLF							** .208 .**	.323	.299	** .325 *
COLG					-			.203	.194 **	.138
COLH								1.00	.420	327 **
COLI									1.00	.525 **
COLJ		•	-	**						1.00

\*\* P < 0.01

### TABLE 3.4

### INTER-ITEM CORRELATION

### (RESPECT FOR ELDERS)

ITEMS	RESA	RESB	RESC	RESD	RESE	RESF	RESG	RESH	RESI	RESJ
	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
RESA							.263 **		.297	.315
RESB		1.00					-:179 **			
RESC			1.00				.214 **			
RESD							.214 **			
RESE						.448	.235 **	.324	.212	.262
RESF				·,		1.00	.356	.387	.151	.241
RESG							1.00		.227 **	
RESH	4						•	1.00	.423 **	.554 **
RESI						-	-		1.00	•438 **
RESJ			'-	<u>م</u> - د						1.00

### TABLE 3.5

# INTER-ITEM CORRELATION

### (HARMONY)

			•			,	
ITEM	HARMA	HARMB	HARMC				HARMC
	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
HARMA	1.000	.2949 **	.2046 **	.2084 **	•2982 **	.2306 **	•2874 **
HARMB		1,.000	.5714 **	.3578 **	.2910 **	.3310	2564. **
HARMC			1.000	.4237 **	.3929 **	•2762 **	.1869 **
HARMD				1.000	.3002	•2935 **	.3118
HARME					1.000	.3015	•2941 **
HARMF						1.000	.4205
HARMG							1.000
** ₽ <	0 01						

As none of the values of correlations were found to be insignificant, all the statements measuring each of the values were added together to get a single score for each of the values. This exercise gave the following ranges of scores for each of the values.

### <u>Range</u>

Collectivism	10	-	60
Respect for elders	10	-	60
Harmony	07		42

The averages and standard deviation estimates on organizational commitment along with the size of the sample for each of the three ethnic groups are presented in Table 3.6.

### TABLE 3.6

#### AVERAGES AND STANDARD DEVIATION ESTIMATES

### (ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT BY RACES)

	Malay	Chinese	Indian
Average Standard deviation	58.32	54.54	59.71
estimates Sample size	9.16 94	9.87 85	8.76