

# THE EFFECT OF INTERNAL MARKET ORIENTATION AND JOB SATISFACTION ON EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN MALAYSIAN CHILDCARE CENTRES

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## ABSTRACT

The childcare sector has grown enormously over the years in Malaysia due to a growing number of women who join the paid labour. However, childcare owners had facing with the high job turnover rate among the employees and difficult to retain the employees for a long period. Therefore, the childcare centres should execute the internal market orientation (IMO) behaviour in order to attain the highly satisfied and committed employees towards the childcare centres. Moreover, to the researcher's knowledge based on the literature review, till the date, there was a lack of study which investigated the mediation effect of employee job satisfaction (EJS) on the relationship between IMO behavior and employee organizational commitment (EOC) within childcare centres. Stranded by the Two Factor Theory-Herzberg and Equity Theory, and also based on literature, this study proposed a theoretical framework relating IMO behavior, EJS and EOC. A total of 360 front-line employees from registered childcare centres in 12 states from Peninsular Malaysia, representing a response rate of 72%, participated in this study. The researcher collected the data through self-administered survey questionnaires. The study employed exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to conclude the construct validity. The hypotheses were tested using Multiple Regression Analysis with SPSS version 19.0. The findings showed that: (1) IMO behaviour had a positive relationship with EOC, (2) IMO behavior had a positive relationship with EJS, (3) EJS had a positive relationship with EOC, and (4) EJS had mediated the relationship between IMO behavior and EOC. Accordingly, it was strongly suggested by this study that if the childcare centers want to increase job satisfaction level and organizational commitment level among their employees, they should make efforts to execute IMO behaviour which was viewed by the employees as the important element in influencing their job satisfaction and then their organizational commitment toward the organization.

**Keywords:** Internal Market Orientation Behaviour, Employee Job Satisfaction, Employee Organizational Commitment, Childcare Centres

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The childcare sector has grown tremendously over the years in Malaysia, due to the growing number of women who are joining the paid labour force (Omar, Abu, Sapuan, Aziz & Nazri, 2010). Statistic of labour force shows that labour force participate for female category has increased 0.1 percentage points from 38.3% in 2016 to 38.4% percent in 2017 (Department Statistic of Malaysia, 2017). In fact, the number of childcare centres in Malaysia has been steadily increasing and is expected to continue to increase in the future. A good formal early childhood education is importance in contributing

to the human capital building and to the nation's growth (Chiam, 2008), especially in achieving Vision 2020. Lately, many Malaysian childcare centres have been plagued with problems of well-being of children under their care. There have been occasions of children's death that may have been caused by negligence of the childcare centres' employees. These incidents and negligences could be due to poor commitment from the childcare centres' employees. In addition, Cleveland, Gunderson and Hyatt (2003) stated that appropriate salary, working conditions and benefits are necessary to attract and retain committed employees. As a result, the childcare centres were difficult to retain the employees due to high employee turnover which is believed to have a connection with uncommitted employees

(Huntsman, 2008). According to Cleveland and Hyatt (2000), it was difficult for childcare centres to get the high level of employees' organisational commitment since they offered low salaries and lack of other benefits. Uncommitted childcare employees resulted from lack of training and inadequate working conditions provided by childcare centres (Weaven & Grace, 2008). Similarly, Malaysian childcare centres also experience a high job turnover rate among their employees which resulted from lower organisational commitment (Persatuan Taska Negeri Selangor, 2011; Persatuan Pengasuh Berdaftar Malaysia, 2012). To date, there is a lack of studies that investigate the effects of internal market orientation on employee job satisfaction and employees' organisational commitment within childcare centres. It is appropriate to conducting this research due to the issue. Next, research question is do the different aspects of internal market orientation have relationships with employees' organisational commitment and employee job satisfaction, does employee job satisfaction have a relationship with employees' organisational commitment and mediate relationships between the different aspects of internal market orientation and employees' organisational commitment? The main objectives to investigate whether the different aspects of internal market orientation have relationships with employees' organisational commitment and employee job satisfaction and mediating effect among internal market orientation and employees' organisational commitment.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Employees' Organisational Commitment

Past research disclosed that employees' organisational commitment has become the most essential item to the organisation; perhaps this finding would lead to an increase in studies on employees' organisational commitment (Jamaludin, 2009). Albdour, A. A., & Altarawneh, I. I. (2014) said that high employees' job engagement can meaningfully affect employees' continuance commitment. Furthermore, Kalkavan, S., & Katrinli, A. (2014) also identified that satisfaction with work has a positive effect on the career commitment and organisational commitment. In addition, Fu, W., & Deshpande, S. P. (2014) stated organisational commitment had significant direct impact on job satisfaction. Porter (2006) pointed out that employees' organisational commitment is a vital link in identifying the success or failure of the organisation. Employees' organisational commitment indicates a level of employee job satisfaction at their workplace (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Grigg, 2009; Messmer, 2006; Meyer & Allen, 1988; Oliver, 1990).

The view of organisational commitment has been identified in various modes in the literature. Hassan (2002) stressed that employees' organisational commitment replicates the employee's intention to turnover or remain in a certain organisation. Next, Employees' organisational commitment is the connection with a certain organisation and recognition of its values and objectives (Padala, 2011; Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian, 2004). Bentein, Vandenberg, Vandenberghe and Stinglhamber (2005) and Grigg (2009) pointed out that employees' organisational commitment is the progress of employees' trust in their organisation, which is shown by their willingness to engage in the organisation's vision, mission and values. Grigg (2009) and McKay, Avery, Tonidandel, Morris, Hernandez and Hebl (2007) stated that employees' organisational commitment correlates with the level to which the employee is psychologically involved in the organisation. Besides, Lee and

Olshfski (2002) determined that employees' organisational commitment was a four-facet construct, comprising commitment to their superior, commitment to their teamwork, commitment to their organisation and commitment to an identity that was set up in a job.

Past studies like Herman (2005); Messmer (2006); and Porter (2006) conducted research that focused on three elements of employees' organisational commitment: affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Jamaludin (2009) conducted a research on organisational justice (distributive, procedural and interactional justice) and its relationship with employees' organisational commitment (affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment). Hence, this study intends to close the gaps in enriching studies on employees' organisational commitment.

### B. Internal Market Orientation

The root of internal market orientation can be traced to market orientation and also internal marketing concepts (McGrath, 2009). Generally, internal market orientation seeks to provide stability between employees' views of what they have given to their works and the views of what they will get from their works (Lings & Greenley, 2005). There are a few empirical researches for small-sized organisations that provide the same results as the large organisations, which show the importance of implementing the internal market orientation in order to ensure their growth and long-term survival (Inoguchi, 2011). In addition, Kara, Spillan and DeShields Jr (2005) revealed the significant correlation between market orientation or internal market orientation and business performance in small-sized service retailers in the United States. Furthermore, according to Carlos Pinho, J., Paula Rodrigues, A., & Dibb, S. (2014), the result suggest that higher levels of market orientation result in both high levels of organisational commitment and organisational performance.

Based on an extensive review of the pertinent literature, there are many parallels among market orientation, internal marketing and internal market orientation, especially in their meanings (Berry, 1981; Gounaris, 2006; Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Lings & Greenley, 2005). According to Lings (2004), internal market orientation can be defined as a completion of the marketing notion, which is concentrated on internal customers of the service organisation, or best known as employees. The internal customers (employees) are the main focus of internal market orientation, in contrast to the market orientation, which concentrates on the external customers (Gounaris, 2006; Lings, 2004; Lings & Greenley, 2005). Besides, Tortosa, Moliner and Sanchez (2009) defined internal market orientation as a multidimensional concept, which is developed by four elements; unofficial production of internal information, official production of internal information, distribution of internal information and reaction to the internal information produced.

McGrath (2009) stated that the components of internal market orientation are applied following the original market orientation dimension introduced by Kohli and Jaworski in 1990. Accordingly, Gray (2010) determined that the behavioural elements of internal market orientation can be categorised into three, namely, internal information production (market research), internal information distribution (internal communication) and internal awareness. Gounaris (2008) argued that internal market orientation can be divided into three dimensions, namely, internal market intelligence generation, internal communication and response to

intelligence. Moreover, internal market orientation facilitates the development of both market capabilities and enhances organizational performance. (Fang, S. R., Chang, E., Ou, C. C., & Chou, C. H., 2014). In addition, according to Ruizalba, J. L., Bermúdez-González, G., Rodríguez-Molina, M. A., & Blanca, M. J. (2014), the research on hotel sector results show that IMO is a strategic determinant of both job satisfaction and employee commitment.

Past result shows that internal market orientation is proven to have a positive and significant relationship with employees' organisational commitment since its notion is to encourage organisation's commitment towards the employees. Hence, this study intends to close the gaps in enriching studies on internal market orientation.

### C. Employee Job Satisfaction

The concepts of employee job satisfaction have been a focal point of study among the academicians and practitioners over the last two decades. Saif, Nawaz, Jan and Khan (2012) pointed out that employee job satisfaction is a persistent attitude and that it needs constant management. However, until now, there is no general explanation of employee job satisfaction that represents all these elements at the same time (Bernal, Castel, Navarro & Torres, 2005).

Feinstein and Vondrasek (2001) and Locke (1969) highlighted that employee job satisfaction is a condition of delight gained by the employees due to their work. Leimbach (2006) defined employee job satisfaction as a different thing to different people. Research conducted by several authors, such as Allen (2006); Boselie and Wiele (2002); Cuong and Swierczek (2008); Grigg (2009); Lambert, Hogan and Barton (2001); and Spector (1997) revealed that the higher degree of employee job satisfaction, the higher the degree of the decision to remain in the organisation. Furthermore, according to Kiani, Khurshid, Ahsan and Sajid (2007), employee job satisfaction is a main factor for organisations in order to maintain competitive advantage, especially in terms of quality and productivity. Hong and Waheed (2011) added that employee job satisfaction is basically related to the achievement, pay, empowerment, personal growth, occupational stress, company and administrative policy, the overall working conditions and the relationship with others.

Besides, much research has been done to clarify the mediating effects of employee job satisfaction. This is supported by Ding, Lu, Song and Lu (2012), employee job satisfaction played a mediating role on the relationship between servant leadership and employee loyalty among 186 MBA students of the Chinese University of Science and Technology and part of employees at the same university. In addition, according to Lin and Lin (2011), employee job satisfaction is definitely a mediating variable to the relationship between co-workers' relationship and organisational commitment. By contrast, a study by Wang and Yi (2011) in Chinese companies exposed that employee job satisfaction fully mediated the relationship between leader member exchange and the intention of turnover. On the other hand, Markovits (2011) pointed out that employee job satisfaction mediated the relationship between normative commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour. Hence, this study intends to close the gaps in enriching studies on employee job satisfaction.

### D. Underpinning theory

The researcher used the Two Factor Theory-Herzberg and the Equity Theory in describing the relationships among internal market orientation, employee job satisfaction and employees' organisational

commitment in the study.

### Two Factor Theory-Herzberg

The Two Factor Theory-Herzberg was developed in 1959 by Frederick Herzberg, also known as Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory and Dual-Factor Theory, explains that there are certain factors in the workplace that contribute to employee job satisfaction and other sets of factors that contribute to employee job dissatisfaction (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Basically, this theory tries to clarify why employees act the way they do and advises on factors and approaches that when applied, could get the best results of employees due to their organisational commitment (Baah & Amoako, 2011). Khalifa and Truong (2009) pointed out that job characteristics relate to what employees do, which is related to the nature of the work, such as achievement, competency, status, personal worth and self-realisation. In fact, both the hygiene (extrinsic) and motivation (intrinsic) factors of the Two Factor Theory-Herzberg have been proven to have significant and practical implications in order to forecast employee organisational commitment (Lahai et al., 2004). However, Kaptijn (2009) argued that the motivation factors had more influence on affective commitment compared to hygiene factors. In contrast, Hong and Waheed (2011) disclosed that the hygiene factors (in this case, it refers to the working conditions) lead the motivators in terms of employee job satisfaction among the sales people in Malaysia. Islam and Ismail (2008) argued that Malaysian employees are more concerned with hygiene factors (extrinsic factors), such as money and working conditions, compared to motivator factors (intrinsic factors), namely, full appreciation of work done. Therefore, it is important for organisations to build an environment in which employees are motivated to perform their tasks effectively, as, at the same time, they also have an opportunity to fulfill their own objectives (Samad, 2011). Furthermore, Sanjeev, M. A., & Surya, A. V. (2016) shows that the employees are satisfied in the presence of motivating factors only and hygiene factors do not have any influence on satisfaction levels among pharmaceutical sales and marketing professionals.

### Equity Theory

The Equity Theory was developed in 1963 by John Stacey Adam, which describes the relational satisfaction among the employee interpersonal relationships due to fair or unfair views in distributing the organisational resources (Carrell & Ditttrich, 1978). According to Lings and Greenley (2005), Equity Theory applies the concept of exchange between employees and managers which is one of the basic notions of internal market orientation. The employees feel they are treated fairly if they perceive the ratio of their inputs to their outcomes is comparable to their co-workers (Spector, 2008). In contrast, if the employees feel that their co-workers are getting more rewards and recognition, even though they have done the same quality and quantity of work, they will feel dissatisfied (Guerrero, Andersen & Afifi, 2007).

Khalifa and Truong (2010) pointed out that, clearly, many researchers have conducted studies on the relationship between perception of equity and employee job satisfaction. Deconinck and Bachmann (2007) in their study concerning the relationships among perceived pay fairness, employee job satisfaction, employees' organisational commitment and turnover intention of marketing managerial employees. Furthermore, Malik and Naeem (2011) disclosed that distributive and procedural justice had a significant and positive relationship with employees' organisational commitment

among junior faculty employees. Zawahreh and Madi (2012) argued that equity pay was a driver for three major factors in organisational outcomes, namely, employee job satisfaction, motivation and performance. According to Bakhshi, Kumar and Rani (2009), distributive justice had a significant and positive relationship with employee job satisfaction.

E. Gaps in Literature

The current study aims to fill the gap in the literature by focusing on examining the relationship among internal market orientation, employee job satisfaction and employees’ organisational commitment in a wider perspective. In respect of employee job satisfaction that leads to employees’ organisational commitment, previous empirical studies mostly focused on the positive relationship between two variables (Abdullah, Musa, Zahari, Rahman & Khalid, 2011; Doraisamy, 2007; Fields & Blum, 1997; Moody, 1996; Peltier, Dahl & Mulhern, 2009; Testa, 2001; Vlosky & Aguilar, 2009; Zaim & Zaim, 2008). However, based on the literature reviews, the researcher found that there is a lack of studies have been done on the relationships among internal market orientation, employee job satisfaction and employees’ organisational commitment.

In fact, only a few of the studies conducted in Malaysia within childcare centres focused on marketing approach, as most researchers focused on science education, such as the children’s development, the relationships between employees and children, the cognitive development and language used by the children and employees, and so forth. In addition, the studies were also more conceptual papers instead of empirical research (Shukran, Fazil, Adzra’ ai, Sharifuddin, Abdul Razak & Muaz, 2010).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts the quantitative research design to examine the interaction between variables: internal market orientation (internal market intelligence generation, internal communication, and response to intelligence); mediating variables (employee job satisfaction) and one dependent variable employees’ organisational commitment). All variables are measured by 103 statements obtained from previous studies, using 5-point Likert scale. A total of 692 questionnaires that were distributed. Of the 692 questionnaires circulated, a total of 364 questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 53%. The researcher divided the questionnaires into four sections. The first section measured the independent variable which consists of internal

Construct	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach’s Alpha
Internal Market Intelligence Generation	9	3.483	0.678	0.828
Internal Communication	8	3.706	0.721	0.845
Response to Intelligence	3	2.394	0.854	0.648
Employee Job Satisfaction	9	2.573	0.796	0.851
Employees’ Organisational Commitment	5	3.677	0.746	0.784

market orientation were adapted from the work of Gounaris (2008) and Gounaris et al. (2010). The second section measured the mediator which is employee job satisfaction adapted the work of Spector

(1985, 1994, 1997). The third section measured the dependent variable which is employees’ organisational commitment measurement from the work of Allen and Meyer (1990). The last section collected the demographic data concerning the respondents who are the front-line employees within the registered and licensed childcare centres in Malaysia. The information obtained from the respondents included their race, religion, age, tenure of service, education, income per month and job status.

Theoretical Framework

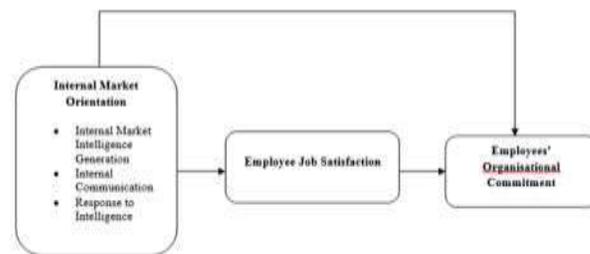


Figure 1: A theoretical framework

Research framework has been developed from literature review and research problem of study which is illustrated in the Figure 1 above. The current theoretical framework or research model investigates the relationships among employees’ organisational commitment, internal market orientation and employee job satisfaction. The main constructs to be examined are employees’ organisational commitment as a dependent variable, the different aspects of internal market orientation as independent variables and employee job satisfaction as a mediator variable.

4. FINDINGS

The factor loading values for the internal market intelligence generation component ranged from 0.524 to 0.753. The internal communication component showed factor loading values ranging from 0.541 to 0.739 and response to intelligence component disclosed that the factor loading values ranged from 0.688 to 0.788. Next, the findings showed that the factor loading of employee satisfaction value ranged from 0.525 to 0.758. The factor loading of employees’ organisational commitment values ranged from 0.654 to 0.819. Some of the items in internal market orientation, employee job satisfaction and employees’ organisational commitment were eliminated due to the low factor loadings (lower than 0.50).

TABLE I  
DESCRIPTIVES STATISTIC AND RELIABILITY OF  
CONSTRUCTS.  
(N=360)

Table 1 indicates that each variable maintains an acceptable level of Cronbach alpha reliability above 0.6.

TABLE II  
PEARSON CORRELATION ANALYSIS

	1	2	3	4	5
(1) Internal Market Intelligence Generation	1				
(2) Internal Communication	.648**	1			
(3) Response To Intelligence	.615**	.670**	1		
(4) Employee Job Satisfaction	.323**	.344**	.545**	1	
(5) Employees' Organisational Commitment	.456**	.408**	.476**	.264**	1

Note: \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

As shown in Table II above, all the 10 Pearson correlations coefficients were found to be statistically significant at the 0.01 levels of significance. In other words, the data of this study supported the existence of significant relationships between internal market orientation aspects and employees' organisational commitment within childcare centres in Malaysia, ranging from  $r = 0.408$  ( $p < 0.01$ ) to  $r = 0.476$  ( $p < 0.01$ ). Similarly, the findings also supported the existence of significant relationships between internal market orientation dimensions and employee job satisfaction within childcare centres in Malaysia, ranging from  $r = 0.323$  ( $p < 0.01$ ) to  $r = 0.545$  ( $p < 0.01$ ). Furthermore, the results also supported the existence of significant relationship between employee job satisfaction and employees' organisational commitment ( $r = 0.264$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) within childcare centres in Malaysia. In addition, correlations among internal market orientation dimensions were statistically significant, ranging from  $r = 0.615$  ( $p < 0.01$ ) to  $r = 0.670$  ( $p < 0.01$ ).

TABLE III  
MULTICOLLINEARITY TEST

Variables	Tolerance Value	Variance Inflation Factor
Internal Market Intelligence Generation	0.521	1.920
Internal Communication	0.460	2.172
Response to Intelligence	0.402	2.489
Employee Job Satisfaction	0.702	1.424

Table III above illustrates that the tolerance values of all the variables ranged between 0.402 and 0.702. In line with this, the values of variance inflation factor for all the variables were found to range between 1.424 and 2.489. The results revealed that the tolerance values of all the variables of the current study were more than 0.1 and accordingly, the variance inflation factor values were below the threshold value of 10 as proposed by Hair et al. (2010). Briefly, the tolerance values and variance inflation factor values of the variables incorporated in the study were within the suggested threshold values, therefore, it was decided that the issue of multicollinearity did not exist in the current study.

TABLE IV

REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable Employee Organisational Commitment Standardise	
	d Beta	T- Value
Internal Market Intelligence Generation	0.456***	3.833
Internal Communication	0.408***	0.863
Response to Intelligence	0.476***	4.511
Job Satisfaction	0.264***	5.176

Table IV shows the regression result of the different aspects of internal market orientation and job satisfaction on employees' organisational commitment. As shown in Table 4.13, all the three aspects of internal market orientation (internal market intelligence generation, internal communication and response to intelligence) were positive and significantly contribute to the prediction of employees' organisational commitment at the 0.001 significant level ( $\beta=0.456$ ,  $t=3.833$ ,  $p<0.001$ ;  $\beta=0.408$ ,  $t=0.863$ ,  $p<0.001$ ;  $\beta=0.476$ ,  $t=4.511$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) respectively. Besides, employee job satisfaction had a significant and positive impact on employees' organisational commitment at the 0.001 significant level ( $\beta=0.264$ ,  $t=5.176$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). In other words, Hypotheses 1, 2, 3 and 7 are supported. The regression result are the same to three aspects of internal market orientation (internal market intelligence generation, internal communication and response to intelligence) had a significant and positive impact on employee job satisfaction at the 0.001 significant level ( $\beta=0.323$ ,  $t=23.721$ ,  $p<0.001$ ;  $\beta=0.344$ ,  $t=6.927$ ,  $p<0.001$ ;  $\beta=0.545$ ,  $t=12.292$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) respectively. In other words, the findings revealed that Hypotheses 4, 5 and 6 are supported.

TABLE V  
MEDIATING EFFECT

Dependent Variable	Variables	Beta	Beta	Results
Employee's Organisational Commitment	Independent Variable Internal Market Intelligence Generation	Step 1 0.456***	Step 2 0.414***	Partially Mediate
	Mediating Variable Employee Job Satisfaction		0.130**	
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.206	0.219	
	Δ R <sup>2</sup>	0.208	0.015	
	F change	93.980	6.965	
	Independent Variable Internal Communication	Step 1 0.408***	Step 2 0.360***	Partially Mediate
	Mediating Variable Employee Job Satisfaction		0.130**	
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.164	0.179	
	Δ R <sup>2</sup>	0.166	0.017	
	F change	71.437	7.579	
	Independent Variable Response to Intelligence	Step 1 0.476***	Step 2 0.473***	Partially Mediate
	Mediating Variable Employee Job Satisfaction		0.130**	
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.225	0.223	
	Δ R <sup>2</sup>	0.227	0.000	
	F change	105.139	0.012	

Note: \*\*\*: p<0.001; \*\*: p<0.01; \*: p<0.05

The beta coefficient for the direct path (step 1) between internal market intelligence generation, internal communication and response to intelligence and employees' organisational commitment are 0.456, 0.408, and 0.476 respectively. When employee job satisfaction was included in step 2, the Beta coefficient dropped to 0.414, 0.360 and 0.473 meaning that mediation did exist in the relationship, but internal market intelligence generation, internal communication and response to intelligence are still significant, Therefore, it could be translated that employee job satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between internal market orientation (internal market intelligence, internal communication and response to intelligence) and employees' organisational commitment.

TABLE VI  
HYPOTHESES TESTING RESULTS

Hypothesis	Items	Result
H1	There is a positive relationship between internal market intelligence generation and employees' organisational commitment	Supported
H2	There is a positive relationship between internal communication and employees' organisational commitment	supported
H3	There is a positive relationship between response to intelligence and employees' organisational commitment	Supported
H4	There is a positive relationship between internal market intelligence generation and employee job satisfaction	Supported
H5	There is a positive relationship between internal communication and employee job satisfaction	Supported
H6	There is a positive relationship between response to intelligence and employee job satisfaction	Supported
H7	There is a positive relationship between employee job satisfaction and employees' organisational commitment	Supported
H8	Employee job satisfaction mediates the relationship between internal market intelligence generation and employees' organisational commitment	Partially Mediated
H9	Employee job satisfaction mediates the relationship between internal communication and employees' organisational commitment	Partially Mediated
H10	Employee job satisfaction mediates the relationship between response to intelligence and employees' organisational commitment	Partially Mediated

5. DISCUSSION

The current study attempts to investigate the relationship between the different aspects of internal market orientation, employee job satisfaction and employees' organisational commitment among employees of childcare centres in Malaysia. It is very important for children to have constancy of care through satisfied and committed employees at the childcare centres (Blau, 2000; Chipty, 1995). Davis and Ceglowski (2001) indicated that the stability of the relationship between the employees of childcare centres and children is vital for the healthy growth of the children. Previous research has shown that good quality childcare centres could have an influential effect on children's survival, growth and development (Doherty, Forer, Lero, Goelman & LaGrange, 2006; Iram & Butt, 2004; Liu, Yeung & Farmer, 2001).

The first research objective was to investigate whether the different aspects of internal market orientation have relationships with employees' organisational commitment. The findings disclosed that all the aspects of internal market orientation have positive and significant relationships with employees' organisational commitment. The finding shows that in the childcare setting, if the supervisors/managers/owners of the childcare centres have a good awareness of employment, current labour market conditions, another jobs offered in other business, competition within childcare industries and human resources policy, they will try to fulfill their employees' wants and needs in order to make sure the employees will remain in that childcare centre. The second hypothesis was established to examine the relationship between internal communication and employees' organisational commitment. The findings suggested that internal communication system between supervisors/managers/owners of the childcare centres and employees are very important in order to ensure that they have a high organisational commitment level towards the childcare centre. The third hypothesis examines the relationship between response to intelligence and employees' organisational commitment. The result indicated that supervisors/managers/owners of the childcare centres who respond to intelligence (which in the current study refers to providing good and adequate training and other wants and needs of employees) will make the employees remain committed to the childcare centre. In other words, the supervisors/managers/owners of the childcare centres respond to what employees want and need in their work, and try to fulfill those requirements by providing adequate in-service training for their employees. The finding of the current study coincides with previous research concerning the relationship between response to intelligence and employees' organisational commitment.

The second research objective was to determine whether the different aspects of internal market orientation have relationships with employee job satisfaction. The findings disclosed that all the aspects of internal market orientation have positive and significant relationships with employee job satisfaction. The findings disclosed that in the childcare setting, if the supervisors/managers/owners of the childcare centres have a good awareness of employment, current labour market conditions, jobs offered in other business, competition within childcare industries and human resources policy, they will try to fulfill their employees' wants and needs in order to make sure the employees are satisfied. The researcher found there is no specific relationship between internal market intelligence generation and employee job satisfaction from previous studies. The findings show that internal market orientation has a direct impact and positive relationship with employee job satisfaction. Besides, another findings implied that internal communication system between supervisors/managers/owners of the childcare centres and employees are very important in order to make sure that the employees have a high level of job satisfaction. In other words, the employees will feel satisfied with their jobs if they have a good communication system with their supervisors/managers/owners of the childcare centres.

The third research objective was to examine whether employee job satisfaction has a relationship with employees' organisational commitment. The findings disclosed that employee job satisfaction has a positive and significant

relationship with employees' organisational commitment. The finding implies that in the childcare sector, if the employees are satisfied with their job, it will lead them to have a high level of organisational commitment towards the childcare centres, which, in turn, would lead to them remaining in the same childcare centre for a long time.

The fourth research objective deals with the mediating role of employee job satisfaction. In particular, this objective aimed to clarify the mediating impact of employee job satisfaction on the relationship between the different aspects of internal market orientation and employees' organisational commitment. In testing for the mediating role of employee job satisfaction on the relationship between internal market intelligence generation and employees' organisational commitment, the researcher found that employee job satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between internal market intelligence generation and employees' organisational commitment. In addition, the researcher discovered that employee job satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between internal communication and employees' organisational commitment. Moreover, the researcher noticed that employee job satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between response to intelligence and employees' organisational commitment. Briefly, the findings of this study suggest that the efforts to increase employee's organisational commitment among childcare employees should focus on enhancing their job satisfaction first.

## 6. RECOMMENDATION

Throughout this study, many insights regarding the issues related to employees' organisational commitment within childcare centres have arisen. The findings of the current study can be explained through theoretical and practical contributions.

The findings of the current study show that all the theoretical relationships conceived in the theoretical framework are empirically supported. Specifically, the current study proves the relationship between the different aspects of internal market orientation (internal market intelligence generation, internal communication and response to intelligence), employee job satisfaction and employees' organisational commitment. This study also provides evidence concerning the function of employee job satisfaction as intervening variable between the different aspects of internal market orientation and employees' organisational commitment. Furthermore, this study contributes to market orientation literature by validating the significance of internal market orientation as multi-dimensional rather than unidimensional in the childcare setting. The study also provides empirical support for the proposed relationship between the different aspects of internal market orientation, employee job satisfaction and employees' organisational commitment. Most importantly, the study provides evidence concerning the mediating impacts of employee job satisfaction concerning the relationship between the different aspects of internal market orientation and employees' organisational commitment. Furthermore, the study also concurs with the Two Factors Theory-Herzberg. In other words, this study empirically supports the Two Factors Theory-Herzberg which conceives that employees tend to act the way they do and advises on factors and approaches (internal market orientation), that when applied, could get the best results from the employees (employee job satisfaction) due to their organisational commitment

(Baah&Amoako, 2011). Moreover, the findings of this study also match those of the Equity Theory. Briefly, the study empirically supports the Equity Theory, that perceived benefits and salary fairness (managerial activities, operationalised here as internal market orientation) have a significant and positive relationship with employee job satisfaction, which, in turn, positively contribute to their organisational commitment and negatively influence their turnover intention (Deconinck and Bachmann, 2007; Lings and Greenley, 2005).

From a practical viewpoint, the findings of this study provide important contributions and implications for practitioners and policy-makers. First, the results of this study could increase the understanding of the supervisors/managers/owners of the childcare centres concerning the significance of implementing internal market orientation in their childcare centres in order to enhance organisational commitment level among the employees. Second, the results of this study suggest that the childcare supervisors/managers/owners of the childcare centres should take the necessary action to build a supportive employee job satisfaction environment prior to implementing any strategy, in order to improve the level of employee job satisfaction among their employees. Finally, the supervisors/managers/owners of the childcare centres should recognise that the different aspects of internal market orientation have significant direct and indirect effects on employees' organisational commitment. Besides, the current study provides guidelines for policy-makers to develop a quality early childhood education and care for the children from zero to four years with the vision of producing future leaders who are able and charismatic.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The main objective of the current study is to examine the relationship between the internal market orientation and employees' organizational commitment. The findings of the current study validate the significant effects of internal market orientation on employees' organisational commitment. Specifically, this study investigates the relationship among internal market orientation, employee job satisfaction and employees' organisational commitment in childcare centres in Malaysia. It also analyses the mediating effect of employee job satisfaction on the relationship between internal market orientation and employees' organisational commitment. Basically, the current study was inspired by the lack of studies in the recent relevant literature relating to the relationships among internal market orientation, employee job satisfaction and employees' organisational commitment in small organisations, especially within the childcare industry.

From the results acquired, the proposed framework was significantly certified. The study variables were detected to have a substantial analytical on employees' organisational commitment. Employees' organisational commitment, however, could be a major link in clarifying the success or failure of the organisation (Porter, 2006). Additionally, employees' organisational commitment depicts the level of employee job satisfaction at their workplace, as suggested by Allen and Meyer (1990); Grigg (2009); Messmer (2006); Meyer and Allen, (1988); and Oliver (1990). Consequently, employees with low salary, no adequate in-service training and no other benefits could contribute to low job satisfaction and also a low organisational commitment level, which result in a high turnover rate among the childcare employees (Grigg, 2009).

Therefore, it could be concluded that the managers or owners of the childcare centres should implement internal market orientation in order to improve the intensity of employee job satisfaction, which would lead to higher organisational commitment level among their employees since the internal market orientation notion itself is based on the organisations' commitment and direction, which focus on their employees.

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### Appendix

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#### MEASUREMENT ITEMS

##### *Internal Market Orientation (IMO)*

1. My organisation takes the time to understand my needs
2. My supervisor sees that we all met regularly so that have the chance to say what we expect from the organisation
3. At least once per year I complete a questionnaire regarding my needs and wants about the organisation
4. The management team seeks to find out what competitors do to keep their employees satisfied
5. My supervisor assesses my job satisfaction as an important part of his or her job
6. My organisation stays aware of legal developments in the labour market
7. My organisation is aware of employments rates in our industry (unemployment)
8. My organisation is aware of jobs in other industries that could attract employees away from this firm
9. This organisation is systematically analyzing the working conditions of employees working for the competition
10. My supervisor informs me in advance of any pending policy changes
11. My supervisor sincerely listens to me about problems I am having doing with job
12. My supervisor is sincerely concerned about my personal problems that may affect my performance
13. My supervisor is never too busy to talk with me when I need him or her
14. My supervisor discusses my assignments and objectives, and takes the time to come to an agreement with me
15. The supervisors in every branch meet regularly to discuss subordinates' problems and listen to what the other supervisors have to say
16. If an employee in this organisation faced with a serious problem, the supervisors from other branches will be informed of it immediately
17. The organisation encourages my supervisors to meet and discuss issues concerning their subordinates
18. Many times the solution to a problem I had came from a supervisor from a different branch, not from my direct supervisor
19. In my organisation employees are identified in group based on our individual characteristics and needs
20. Before any policy change is introduced our individual needs are considered in advance
21. All employees are treated exactly the same
22. Individual needs are ignored (R)
23. My individual needs are systematically assessed in this organisation
24. Every important decision regarding human resource policies is always adapted to my individual needs
25. Groups of employees having a common set of needs are taken into consideration when deciding on specific human resources policies
26. The impact on groups of employees with common needs is evaluated before taking any action
27. Human resource related policies apply to everyone. Individual needs are not considered (R)
28. My job description allows me to satisfy my personal needs and goals

- through my work
29. Assignments are never given to me until my supervisor and I have agreed that I can really do it
  30. The tasks I am assigned will help me advance my career with this organisation
  31. My supervisor is required to justify my assignments and job descriptions with senior level management
  32. When I do something extraordinary I know that I will receive some financial bonus/reward
  33. My income and annual increases are not dependent on my individual performance but on the organisation's performance
  34. My income and the annual increases are very closely tied to my qualifications and individual performance
  35. Everyone gets an annual bonus regardless of their performance (R)
  36. My income and annual increases are similar to those with the same qualifications working in this or any other industry
  37. Training is directly related to the individual needs of each employee. Large group training seminars are avoided when possible (and given on topics that are needed)
  38. A newly hired employee will have to find his or her own answers to the requirements of the job. Training is not offered (R)
  39. Before the implementation of a major change in service rules/operations/activities/policies, I always get significant training regarding its impact on my daily activities and job description
  41. When someone is moved from one branch to another, the new supervisor will personally train him or her for a pre-specified period of time
  42. Senior management is very considerate of my individual needs and makes policies that reflect it
  43. Senior management will spare no cost to satisfy the specific needs of groups of employees
  44. Senior management is committed to solving my problems and giving me the support necessary to complete my jobs

**Job Satisfaction Level**

45. I feel I am being paid a fair amount for the work I do
46. There is really too little chance for promotion on my job (R)
47. My supervisor is quite competent in doing his or her job
48. I am not satisfied with the benefits I receive (R)
49. When I do a good job, I receive the recognition for it that I should receive
50. Many of our rules and procedures make doing a good job difficult (R)
51. I like the people I work with
52. I sometimes feel my job is meaningless (R)
53. Communications seem good within this organisation
54. Raises are too few and far between (R)
55. Those who do well on the job stand a fair chance of being promoted
56. My supervisor is unfair to me (R)
57. The benefits we receive are as good as most other organisations offer
58. I do not feel that the work I do is appreciated (R)
59. My efforts to do a good job are seldom blocked by red tape
60. I find I have to work harder at my job because of the incompetence of people I work with (R)
61. I like doing the things I do at work
62. The goals of this organisation are not clear to me (R)
63. I feel unappreciated by the organisation when I think about what they pay me (R)
64. People get ahead as fast here as they do in other places
65. My supervisor shows too little interest in the feelings of subordinates (R)
66. The benefit package we have is equitable

67. There are few rewards for those who work here (R)
68. I have too much to do at work (R)
69. I enjoy my co-workers
70. I often feel that I do not know what is going on with the organisation (R)
71. I feel a sense of pride in doing my job
72. I feel satisfied with my chances for salary increases
73. There are benefits we do not have which we should have (R)
74. I like my supervisor
75. I have too much paperwork (R)
76. I don't feel my efforts are rewarded the way they should be (R)
77. I am satisfied with my chances for promotion
78. There is too much bickering and fighting at work (R)
79. My job is enjoyable
80. Work assignments are not fully explained (R)

**Organisational Commitment Level**

81. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organisation
82. I enjoy discussing my organisation with people outside it
83. I really feel as if this organisation's problems are my own
84. I think that I could easily become as attached to another organisation as I am to this one (R)
85. I do not feel like 'part of the family' at my organisation (R)
86. I do not feel 'emotionally attached' to this organisation (R)
87. This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me
88. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organisation (R)
89. I am not afraid of what might happen if I quit my job without having another one lined up (R)
90. It would be very hard for me to leave my organisation right now, even if I wanted to
91. Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organisation now
92. It wouldn't be too costly for me to leave my organisation now (R)
93. Right now, staying with my organisation is a matter of necessity as much as desire
94. I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organisation
95. One of the few serious consequences of leaving this organisation would be the scarcity of available alternatives
96. One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organisation is that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice – another organisation may not match the overall benefits I have here
97. I think that people these days move from organisation to organisation too often
98. I do not believe that a person must always be loyal to his or her organisation (R)
99. Jumping from organisation to organisation does not seem at all unethical to me (R)
100. One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organisation is that I believe that loyalty is important and therefore feel as sense of moral obligation to remain
101. If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere I would not feel it was right to leave my organisation
102. I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one organisation
103. Things were better in the days when people stayed with one organisation for most of their careers
104. I do not think that wanting to be an 'organisation man' or 'organisation woman' is sensible anymore (R)

R = reverse keyed items

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