

## Benevolent Leadership and Its Organisational Outcomes: A Social Exchange Theory Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between benevolent leadership and employees' organisational citizenship behaviour with organisational commitment as a mediator. Social exchange theory is applied in supporting the proposed relationship. A total of 163 employees from four- and five-star hotels in the Klang Valley participated in the questionnaire survey. Structural Equation Modeling was employed to analyze the data and test the four hypotheses in this study. The empirical results show that there is a full mediation effect of organisational commitment on the relationship between benevolent leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour. Limitations of the study and directions for future research are suggested.

**JEL Classification :** L20 and M21

**Keywords:** Benevolent Leadership, Hotel Industry, Organisational Citizenship Behaviour, Organisational Commitment.

### INTRODUCTION

Stiff competition in the current business world has resulted in organisations developing survival strategies to gain competitive advantage. These strategies include corporate layoffs, downsizing, reengineering, merger, acquisition and so on. However, these survival strategies that involved reduction and changes in labour has led to a drop in confidence on leadership (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2012). In order to rebuild the trust between employees and their leaders, leaders must be sensitive towards the needs

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of employees and provide holistic care to the employees. This is where benevolent leadership comes into the picture and the purpose is to build leader-employee trust.

Benevolent leadership is defined as a leadership style that focuses on having individualised and holistic concern to subordinates' personal and familial well-being (Cheng *et al.*, 2004; Wang & Cheng, 2010; Chen *et al.*, 2011; Chan & Mak, 2012). In the past it has been widely studied in the Chinese context as one of the components under paternalistic leadership (Niu *et al.*, 2009; Chu *et al.*, 2009; Chen *et al.*, 2011). The construct of benevolent leadership is preserved while China is experiencing vast transition in realising globalisation and swift societal modernization (Farh *et al.*, 2008). It has been viewed as the most preferred leadership style (Chan & Mak, 2012) compared to the other two components under paternalistic leadership (morale leadership and authoritarianism) and scholars have eventually focused their interest of study exploring only benevolent leadership.

The study on Malaysia has been considered to be important due to the pluralistic nature of its people (Zawawi, 2008). The author further explained that the understanding of the differences among the employees in a country with a variety of races like Malaysia is essential for organisations. This is to ensure that performance management can be tackled efficiently and effectively in a consistent manner. There are evidences to show that more than half of the Malaysian employees perceived their leaders are not helping them effectively to build their career and do not guide them along in their career (The Star Online, 2012). Malaysian employees have a low satisfaction level of management's leadership style (Kelly Services, 2012a). This dissatisfaction towards management has led to employees counterproductive behaviours. Only half of the Malaysian employees are willing to speak highly of their employers to outsiders (Kelly Services, 2012a) and almost one-third of Malaysian employees admit that they have taken sick leave even when they were not sick (Goh, 2012). The world's hospitality/travel/leisure industry is one of the industries that have the lowest level of satisfaction towards their management's leadership style (Kelly Services, 2012a). In the Malaysian context, scholars have also pointed out that there are high turnover issues in the hotel industry (e.g. Abdullah *et al.*, 2010; Saad *et al.*, 2012; Albattat & Som, 2013) and half of the total turnover rate of the tourism industry in Malaysia is contributed by hoteliers (Saad *et al.*, 2012).

The effectiveness of benevolent leadership in developing a productive workforce has been highly proven in the Chinese context (Farh & Cheng, 2000; Farh *et al.*, 2006). To improve the low satisfaction towards management's leadership style and high turnover situations in Malaysia's hotel industry, benevolent leadership is proposed in this study to assist in recovering the satisfaction level and retaining talents. Past studies suggest that Malaysian workers value highly the workplace interpersonal relations (e.g. Ayupp & Kong, 2010) and the relationship between leader and hotel employees has a significant impact on a hotel's turnover rate (Abdullah *et al.*, 2010). Hence, benevolent leadership style that emphasizes on employees' personal well-being in both work and non-work domains may improve and enhance the relationship between leaders and employees in the hotel industry.

Benevolent leadership has been viewed as a leadership style which is aligned with Confucian teachings in the Chinese context (Niu *et al.*, 2009; Wang & Cheng, 2010). The deeply-rooted

Confucian teachings that have been practiced in the Chinese culture are not only being confined to Mainland Chinese but also overseas Chinese in East Asia and Southeast Asia including Malaysia (Wang & Hong, 2009). Malaysian Chinese practice a certain level of Confucian teachings (Wang & Hong, 2009) as they are highly exposed to Chinese culture, traditions and education. Malaysian society differs from the West in terms of family composition and structure, values, norms, and behaviour (Md Sidin, Zawawi & Teo, 2014). As the characteristic of Malaysian workers in valuing workplace interpersonal relations is aligned with mutuality in social relations promoted in Confucian teachings, the multi-culture context has made Malaysia a good ground of study to examine the influence of benevolent leadership. In brief, this study intends to examine the effect of benevolent leadership in improving employees' commitment and encourage employees' to contribute more to employers in the hotel industry of Malaysia.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

### Benevolent Leadership

Benevolent leadership is defined differently by Chinese and Western scholars. It is widely recognised as a leadership style that provides holistic care to subordinates' personal well-being in the Chinese context (e.g. Cheng *et al.*, 2004; Wang & Cheng, 2010; Chen *et al.*, 2011; Chan & Mak, 2012). However, Karakas and Sarigollu (2012), who have conducted benevolent leadership research in Western context, interpreted it distinctively by proposing four components which emphasizes on creating the common good. This study focuses on the conceptualization of benevolent leadership in the Chinese context due to the uniqueness of benevolent leaders being concern about employees beyond the work domain.

Chinese scholars argued that the personalised care given by benevolent leaders has an impact on the relations between leaders and subordinates. Wang & Cheng (2010) suggest that benevolent leaders practice mutual obligations in social relations due to awareness of deeply-rooted Confucian teachings in their culture. The authors provided examples of benevolent behaviours such as offer opportunities to correct mistakes, avoid embarrassing employees in public, and provide coaching and mentoring, as well as taking employees as family members. Chan and Mak (2012) articulated that the quality and merit of holistic concern provided by leaders may be unequal as the discrepancy among employees' contribution and interest may affect the unique dyadic relationship between leaders and employees.

Karakas and Sarigollu (2012) defined benevolent leadership as "the process of creating a virtuous cycle of encouraging and initiating positive change in organisations through (a) ethical decision making; (b) creating a sense of meaning; (c) inspiring hope and fostering courage for positive action; and (d) leaving a positive impact for the larger community". The four components of benevolent leadership proposed are ethical sensitivity, spiritual depth, positive engagement and community. The authors argued that these four streams of ideology enable leaders to overcome challenges and crisis in a competitive business world and lead the workforce to adapt and react opportunely to organisational changes.

Desrosiers and Thomson (2011) have viewed benevolent leadership in a more comprehensive way. The scholars pointed out that benevolent leadership refers to the leaders who express benevolence, goodwill, good intentions, and take actions for the greater good. Besides, benevolent leaders possess capability in leading, and capacity and know-how to supervise and guide others.

Previous research studies have investigated the relationship between benevolent leadership and 1) creativity with creative identity role and autonomy as moderators (Wang & Cheng, 2010); 2) followers' performance with leader-member exchange as mediator (Chan & Mak; 2012); and 3) organisational performance, affective commitment, and organisational citizenship behaviour (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2012).

### **Organisational Commitment**

Allen and Meyer (1990) explained that organisational commitment is a psychological state that is present in employee's relationship with the company which reduces his/her likelihood to leave the company. This study follows the definition of organisational commitment proposed by Allen and Meyer (1990) as it is widely adopted by scholars.

Allen and Meyer (1990) developed three dimensions of organisational commitment, namely, affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Affective commitment emerges when employees desire to preserve the relationship with the organisation as they have gained personal competence and are comfortable with the job (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Continuance commitment refers to employees' intention in remaining in the current position as there is no better alternative at the time being (Geh, 2010; Khan & Rashid, 2012). Normative commitment implies employees' sense of feeling obliged to stay with the company for the sake of co-workers and management (Ahmadi & Avajian, 2011).

Among the three dimensions of organisational commitment, affective commitment is viewed as the more favourable type of commitment compared to the other two dimensions (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer *et al.*, 1998). It has been argued as the commitment that encourages broad, open-ended and long-term relationship by stimulating socioemotional elements in human (Meyer *et al.*, 1998). Continuance commitment arises only when employees realized the cost of leaving incurred if they quit the job (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Ahmadi & Avajian, 2011) and there is no other job opportunity. The cost of leaving involves abolishment of pension and benefits, relocation for new position, loss of training provided by current employer and skills that are not transferable to future employment (Peterson & Xing, 2007). Employees' normative commitment is aroused when they have received favours from the company and believe that repayment is needed (Meyer & Allen, 1991). However, scholars argued that if the investment given by company to the employees is reduced, normative commitment would be reduced (Meyer *et al.*, 1998).

Organisational commitment is suggested in numerous past researches as the predictor of employees' turnover (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Blau & Boal, 1989; Bozeman & Perrewé, 2001; Shahnawaz & Jafri, 2009; Culpepper, 2011). If employees believed that they have not received fair treatment and expectations are not achieved, they are likely to generate destructive feeling,

attitudes and interactions in their workplace, and their loyalty is reduced (Ayers, 2001). Sense of commitment is not only limited to the relationship between employees and organisation but can be applied to occupation, personal career development, customers and union (Meyer *et al.*, 1998).

## **Organisational Citizenship Behaviour**

Organisational citizenship behaviour has been studied extensively in numerous past researches. It covers a range of organisational behaviours that are able to enhance efficiency and productivity of employees and improve organisational performance (Geh, 2010). The effectiveness of organisational citizenship behaviour in leading to organisational success had been proven soundly in past researches (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000). Organisational citizenship behaviour has been explained in several definitions which include the extra contribution made by employees that are: 1) not stated in the company policies (Bateman and Organ, 1983); 2) not required in job description or directed by leaders (Organ, 1988); and 3) not clarified in the reward system (Organ, 1990). This study adopts the definition proposed by Bateman and Organ (1983) which asserts that beneficial behaviours and gestures can neither be enforced on the basis of formal role obligations nor elicited by contractual guarantee of recompense.

Organ (1988) is deemed as the pioneer of organisational citizenship behaviour research. The author has derived five elements for organisational citizenship behaviour which consist of 1) altruism; 2) courtesy; 3) sportsmanship; 4) civic virtue and 5) conscientiousness. Altruism indicates employees' willingness to assist co-workers in performing relevant tasks; Courtesy implies the respect shown by employees to each other; Sportsmanship connotes constructive behaviours of employees and willingness to accommodate less ideal situations without grievance; and civic virtue describes the obligation of employees in protecting the benefits of company.

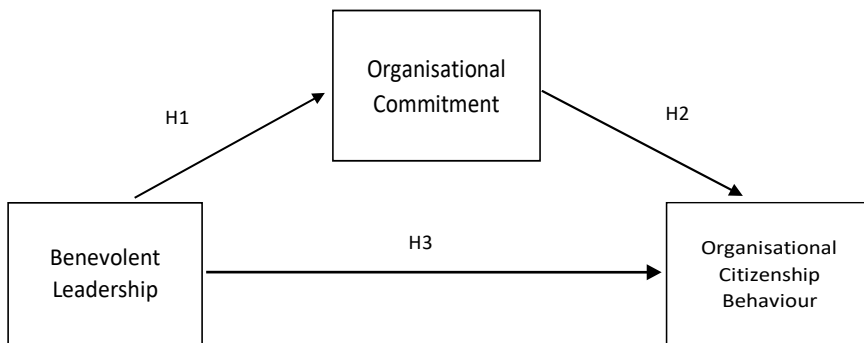
Moorman and Blakely (1995) suggested four dimensions of organisational citizenship behaviour based on Graham's (1989) research, which are 1) interpersonal helping; 2) individual initiative; 3) personal industry and 4) loyal boosterism. Interpersonal helping represents the helping behaviours between co-workers when assistance is demanded. Individual initiative reflects the active engagement of employees in communicating with others to improve individual and team performance. Personal Industry indicates employees' performance that is beyond the requirement of job. Loyal boosterism signifies the employees' loyalty to the extent that they will promote the organisational image outside the company.

Podsakoff and Mackenzie (1997) have made a major contribution in conceptualising and developing the dimensions of organisational citizenship behaviour. The ideology has been developed diversely by different researchers since the interest of scholars towards organisational citizenship behaviour had expanded to various fields and disciplines in the late 20th century (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000). The researches on organisational citizenship behaviour were disseminated promptly and have led to a scanty consensus in categorisation of extra-role dimensions. Hence, Podsakoff and his colleagues (2000) have restructured all these dimensions developed by the scholars into seven dimensions, which are: 1) Helping Behaviour,

2) Sportsmanship, 3) Organisational Loyalty, 4) Organisational Compliance, 5) Individual Initiative, 6) Civic Virtue, and 7) Self Development.

**Social Exchange Theory**

The framework of this study depicted in Figure 1 is proposed on the basis of social exchange theory. Social exchange is defined as “voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from others” (Blau, 1964; pg. 91). Social exchange theory is a popular management theory in explaining workplace behaviour (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). It is based on the idea that resources exchange occurs in an interaction between two parties (Brinberg & Castell, 1982). Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) argued that social exchange is considered as an interdependent relationship between two parties as it is a bidirectional transaction which requires something to be given and something returned. Homans (1958) stated that social behaviour is a kind of exchange which involves both material and non-material output. Social exchange arises when the interactions between two parties lead to the emergence of sense of obligation to reciprocate each other even though the nature of reciprocation is not clarified (Blau, 1964). There are “rules” to be obeyed in an exchange process to form an exchange relationship, which is the reciprocation behaviours triggered to respond the favours given by initial party (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). If the reciprocity does not exist, the social interaction will come to an end (Lee *et al.*, 2010).



**Figure 1** Proposed Conceptual Framework

In a nutshell, social exchange begins when one is taking initiative to show kindness and offer benefits and another party reciprocates by returning the favour (Moore & Cunningham, 1999; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This study argues that benevolent leaders who demonstrate holistic care to employees work performance as well as personal well-being have initiated the social exchange process. The conceptual framework in Figure 1 is proposed by arguing that the benevolent behaviours as the initial favour displayed by leaders would be reciprocated by employees’ commitment and citizenship behaviours to return the favour. Employees who benefited from benevolent leadership behaviours feel the supportive action from leaders which is able to relieve their stressfulness and make them to be more attentive to their job. Social theorists asserted that employees are willing to exchange their commitment

for their employers' support (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986; Eisenberger *et al.*, 1990; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). To complete the social exchange cycle, employees return the favour by rendering a higher level of commitment.

The commitment displayed by the employees might transcend to the extent that they will put more effort in performing extra-role tasks which are not demanded by their leaders or company. Cook and Emerson (1978) argued that interpersonal attachment between two exchange parties supports the iteration of continuing to exchange favours with the same party. Consequently, benevolent leaders will continue to behave benevolently to enjoy the reciprocation given by employees. Organ (1990) suggested that when there is an unspecified and informal social exchange relationship between leaders and employees, employees are more likely to perform organisational citizenship behaviours. This is known as the self-reinforcing cycle of the social exchange process (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

### **Hypotheses Development**

Commitment has a significant influence in a social exchange process (Moore & Cunningham, 1999; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Erben and Güneşer (2008) stated that benevolent behaviours encourage organisational commitment as it is aligned with social exchange theory where the benevolent care given by leaders should lead to reciprocation of employees in committing further. Benevolent behaviours of leaders inspire employees and create an emotional bond between leaders and employees. This emotional connection discourages employees to leave the company as they might not receive benevolent treatment from other leaders. There are still limited studies in exploring the relationship between benevolent leadership and organisational commitment. Previous studies have only proven this relationship by considering benevolent leadership as a component of paternalistic leadership (Erben & Güneşer, 2008) or examining only one of the components of organisational commitment (e.g. Karakas & Sarigollu, 2012). This study intends to evaluate the effect of benevolent leadership on all three components of organisational commitment.

*Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between Benevolent Leadership and Organisational Commitment.*

Chan and Mak (2012) pointed out that employees will reciprocate leaders' personalised care by providing extra benefits to organisation if there is a high quality of exchange. There are previous studies which have found that benevolent leadership is positively related to organisational citizenship behaviour (e.g. Chan & Mak, 2012; Karakas & Sarigollu, 2012). Chu *et al.* (2009) have proven that the component of benevolent leadership under paternalistic leadership is positively associated with organisational citizenship behaviour. Chen *et al.* (2011) have also found that the dimension of benevolence under paternalistic leadership is positively related to in-role and extra-role performance. This study hypothesized that benevolent leadership is related to organisational citizenship behaviour.

*Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between Benevolent Leadership and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour.*

Organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour were argued as the reciprocation actions of employees towards the benevolent leaders (Erben & Güneşer, 2008; Chan & Mak, 2012). There is a vast amount of past studies which has examined the antecedents of organisational citizenship behaviour as it has been viewed as a vital predictor of the effectiveness of an organisation (Khan and Rashid, 2012). Organisational commitment has already been highly recognised as the antecedent of organisational citizenship behaviour (Organ and Ryan, 1995; MacKenzie *et al.*, 1998; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000, Riketta, 2002; Peterson & Xing, 2007; Ahmadi & Avajian, 2011). Therefore, this study hypothesized that organisational commitment contributes to organisational citizenship behaviour based on the enormous researches in the past.

*Hypothesis 3: There is a positive relationship between Organisational Commitment and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour.*

The mediation effect of organisational commitment on the relationship between benevolent leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour has not been explored yet. However, organisational commitment has been proposed numerous times as a mediator between other variables and organisational citizenship behaviour. For instance, these variables are: participation in decision-making and organisational citizenship behaviour (VanYperen *et al.*, 1999); spirituality at work and organisational citizenship behaviour (Geh, 2010); perceived organisational support and expatriate organisational citizenship behaviour (Liu, 2009); perceived reciprocal support in mentoring and organisational citizenship behaviour (Ghosh *et al.*, 2012); and organisational culture, leadership, organisational justice relationship and organisational citizenship behaviour (Khan & Rashid, 2012).

Baron and Kenny (1986) proposed three equations in proving the mediation effect of the construct, which include 1) the independent variable must affect the mediator; 2) the independent variable must affect the dependent variable; 3) the mediator must affect dependent variable. There are evidences that benevolent leadership is associated with organisational commitment (Erben & Güneşer, 2008; Karakas & Sarigollu, 2012); benevolent leadership influences organisational citizenship behaviour (Chu *et al.*, 2009; Chan & Mak, 2012; Chen *et al.*, 2011; Karakas & Sarigollu, 2012); and organisational commitment is related to organisational citizenship behaviour (Organ & Ryan, 1995; MacKenzie *et al.*, 1998; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000, Riketta, 2002; Peterson & Xing, 2007; Ahmadi & Avajian, 2011). Since the relationships between benevolent leadership, organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour are supported, this study proposed that there is a mediation effect of organisational commitment on the relationship between benevolent leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour.

*Hypothesis 4: Organisational Commitment mediates the relationship between Benevolent Leadership and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour.*



## METHOD

### Measures

This study adopted the measurement instrument of benevolent leadership scale in Cheng, Chou, Wu, Huang, and Farh's (2004) study. It is the instrument for benevolent leadership as a component under the instrument of paternalistic leadership proposed by Cheng, Chou, and Farh (2000). The Cronbach's alpha value of this construct in Cheng *et al.* (2004) is 0.94. There are a total of 11 items in the benevolent leadership scale. Each item in this instrument was evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale (i.e. strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree). The sample item of this construct is "My supervisor is like a family member when he/she gets along with us".

Allen and Meyer's (1990) "Organisational Commitment Scales" was adopted for measuring employees' commitment in this study. The 24-item scale is the most widely adopted instrument of organisational commitment in previous studies. There are 8 items for each of the three components (affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment) under this scale. The Cronbach's alpha values for each of the component are: 1) affective commitment = 0.87; 2) continuance commitment = 0.75; 3) normative commitment = 0.79). Each item of this scale was determined by using a 5-point Likert scale (i.e. strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree). The sample items for each component are as below: 1) "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organisation" (affective commitment); 2) "Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decide to leave my organisation now" (continuance commitment); 3) "One of the major reasons I continue to work in this organisation is that I believe loyalty is important and therefore feel a sense of moral obligation to remain" (normative commitment).

The last instrument adopted in this study to measure organisational citizenship behaviour is proposed by Moorman and Blakely (1995). There are four dimensions under this scale, namely, interpersonal helping, individual initiative, personal industry, and loyal boosterism. The Cronbach's alpha values for each of the dimension are: 1) interpersonal helping = 0.74; 2) individual initiative = 0.76; 3) personal industry = 0.61; 4) loyal boosterism = 0.86. Moorman and Blakely's (1995) instrument does not cover a wide range of citizenship behaviours but it is adequate for this study to evaluate the fundamentals to achieve organisational effectiveness. All dimensions of this scale have 5 items respectively except for personal industry which has only 4 items. The 19-items scale is rated using a 5-point Likert scale (i.e. strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree). The sample items for each of the dimension are: 1) "Goes out of his/her way to help co-workers with work-related problems" (interpersonal helping); 2) "For issues that may have serious consequences, expresses opinions honestly even when others may disagree" (individual initiative); 3) "Rarely misses work even when he/she has a legitimate reason for doing so" (personal industry); 4) "Defends the organisation when other employees criticize it" (loyal boosterism).

## Sample and Procedures

The target population is employees in the hotel industry. The hotel industry is selected as scholars have raised their concern towards the high turnover rate of the hotel industry in Malaysia (e.g. Abdullah *et al.*, 2010; Saad *et al.*, 2012; Albattat & Som, 2013). The turnover issues will hinder the development of the tourism industry of Malaysia (Abdullah *et al.*, 2010). The tourism industry has been one of the main sources of income for Malaysia (Salman & Hasim, 2012) and a growth contributor to the Malaysian economy for the past decades (Jaafar *et al.*, 2011). In 2011 it was listed as the seventh largest industry in terms of contribution towards Gross National Income (GNI) (AsiaOne News, 2012). The Economic Transformation Programme (2012) showed that there were 25.03 million tourist arrivals and 60.6 billion ringgit was generated, which placed the tourism industry as one of the top three contributors of foreign exchange in the Malaysian economy. However, the turnover rate of the tourism industry was 16% of the total turnover rate in Malaysia and half of the turnover comes from hoteliers (Saad *et al.*, 2012).

The respondents of this study are employees from all levels and departments and are working in the 77 four- and five-stars hotels in the Klang Valley (Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya). This study adopted a probability sampling method, which is cluster sampling in the selection of respondents. The total number of hotel workers in the Klang Valley is one-third of the total number of hotel workers in Malaysia, which are: 1) Selangor: 10.06%; 2) Kuala Lumpur: 22.18%; and 3) Putrajaya: 1.15% (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2011). The sample frame is limited to four- and five-stars hotels as they are large-scale hotels which are well-structured and more dependent on leadership to improve business processes. The data were collected through questionnaire in both printed and electronic form. The questionnaires are bilingual, which are English and Malay, as this study targeted employees from lower and management level.

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Statistics

A total of 325 questionnaires were distributed and 163 usable questionnaires were collected. The response rate of this study is 50.46%. The details of demographic information are shown in Table 1. The demographic of respondents indicates that more than half of the hotel employees are below age 30 (52.8%). The female employees (54.6%) are slightly more than male employees (45.4%), which imply that the distribution of gender is almost equal. Almost half of the employees have a job tenure between one to three years (48.5%) and almost one-fourth of the employees have worked less than a year (24.5%), which reveals the turnover issues in the hotel industry.

**Table 1** Distribution of Employees Based on Demographic Data

No.	Demographic Variable	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	<b>Age</b>		
	<30	86	52.8
	31-40	62	38.0
	41-50	11	6.7
	>50	4	2.5
		163	100
2.	<b>Gender</b>		
	Male	74	45.4
	Female	89	54.6
		163	100
3.	<b>Race</b>		
	Malay	84	51.5
	Chinese	37	22.7
	Indian	22	13.5
	Others	20	12.3
		163	100
4.	<b>Religion</b>		
	Islam	87	53.4
	Buddhism	27	16.6
	Hinduism	17	10.4
	Christianity	29	17.8
	Others	3	1.8
		163	100
5.	<b>Job Tenure</b>		
	<1	40	24.5
	1-3	79	48.5
	4-6	28	17.2
	7-10	5	3.1
	>10	11	6.7
		163	100
6.	<b>Department</b>		
	Accounting & Finance	10	6.1
	Management	3	1.8
	Sales & Marketing	16	9.8
	Human Resource	9	5.5
	Engineering	4	2.5
	Information Technology	1	0.6
	Front Office	22	13.5
	Food & Beverage	41	25.2

**Table 1 (cont.)**

	Housekeeping	22	13.5
	Security	11	6.7
	Others	24	14.7
		163	100
<b>7. Position</b>			
	Support Staff	87	53.4
	Administrative Staff	44	27.0
	Supervisor	15	9.2
	Assistant Manager	5	3.1
	Others	12	7.4
		163	100

N=163

### Reliability and Validity

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied to satisfy assessment of unidimensionality, validity and reliability of the constructs and to ensure the internal consistency and effectiveness of the measuring instruments in reflecting the desired meaning of construct before executing the structural model. According to Awang (2012), the required values for absolute fit, incremental fit and parsimonious fit are as follows: 1) Root Mean Square of Error Approximation (RMSEA) < 0.08 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993); 2) Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) > 0.90 (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1984); 3) Comparative Fit Index (CFI) > 0.90 (Bentler, 1990); and 4) Chi Square/Degrees of Freedom (Chisq/df) < 5.0 (Marsh and Hocevar, 1985). The unidimensionality is fulfilled through the process of model respecification by deleting redundant items and items with low factor loadings until the required fitness indices are attained. The construct validity is satisfied as the requirement of at least one of the fitness indices under each fitness category has been fulfilled. The convergent validity is achieved as most of the average variance extracted (AVE) values of the construct are above .50. Lastly, the reliability of the model is achieved based on the results of Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR) and AVE. The Cronbach's alpha values for benevolent leadership, organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour are 0.90, 0.80 and 0.93 respectively, which indicate a high level of internal consistency of the construct. The values of composite reliability (CR) for all constructs and sub-constructs are above the required value of .60 (Awang, 2012). Lastly, most of the values of AVE for all constructs and their sub-constructs are above the accepted level of .50 (Awang, 2012). The final results of CFA are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2** The CFA Results for the Measurement Model

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
BL	BL1	0.73	0.902	0.903	0.540
	BL3	0.80			
	BL4	0.82			
	BL5	0.72			
	BL6	0.74			
	BL7	0.74			
	BL9	0.69			
	BL10	0.62			
OC			0.802	0.851	0.455
Affective Commitment	OC1	0.77	0.791	0.788	0.484
	OC2	0.68			
	OC3	0.73			
	OC4	0.59			
Normative Commitment	OC17	0.76	0.664	0.671	0.416
	OC19	0.69			
	OC20	0.44			
OCB			0.933	0.958	0.566
Interpersonal Helping	OCB1	0.63	0.866	0.872	0.580
	OCB2	0.85			
	OCB3	0.73			
	OCB4	0.80			
	OCB5	0.78			
Individual Initiative	OCB6	0.66	0.887	0.888	0.616
	OCB7	0.84			
	OCB8	0.82			
	OCB9	0.79			
	OCB10	0.80			
Personal Industry	OCB11	0.45	0.682	0.703	0.454
	OCB13	0.80			
	OCB14	0.72			
Loyalty Boosterism	OCB15	0.65	0.848	0.852	0.539
	OCB16	0.63			
	OCB17	0.80			
	OCB18	0.81			
	OCB19	0.76			

Note: CR =  $(\sum K)^2 / [(\sum K)^2 + \sum (1 - K^2)]$ ; AVE =  $\sum K^2/n$ ; K = Factor loading of every item; N = number of items in a model

### Structural Model Results and Hypotheses Testing

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed in testing the hypotheses proposed in this study. To test the mediation effect of organisational commitment on the relationship between benevolent leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour, the complete structural model with all three constructs was tested first. Next, the structural model for only benevolent leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour was tested to evaluate if there is a full mediation or partial mediation effect of organisational commitment. The results of fitness indices and path analysis of the structural model with all three constructs are illustrated in Table 3 and Table 4.

**Table 3** The Assessment of Fitness of the Constructs Benevolent Leadership, Organisational Commitment and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

Name of Category	Name of Index	Index Value	Comment
1. Absolute Fit	RMSEA	.060	The required level is achieved
	GFI	.777	The required level is not achieved
2. Incremental Fit	CFI	.902	The required level is achieved
3. Parsimonious Fit	Chisq/df	1.591	The required level is achieved

**Table 4** The Standardised Regression Weights and its Significance for Each Path between Benevolent Leadership, Organisational Commitment and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

Hypothesis	Construct	Path	Construct	Estimate	P-value	Result
1	OC	←	BL	.739	.000	Supported
2	OCB	←	BL	-.102	.504	Not Supported
3	OCB	←	OC	.849	.000	Supported

Note: BL indicates benevolent leadership,  
 OC indicates organisational commitment,  
 OCB indicates organisational citizenship behaviour

Table 3 indicates that at least one of the fitness indices under each category of fitness has achieved the required level. The results in Table 4 demonstrate that benevolent leadership is positively and significantly associated with organisational commitment (Estimate = .74,  $p < .01$ ) and organisational commitment is positively and significantly related to organisational citizenship behaviour as well (Estimate = .85,  $p < .01$ ). Hypothesis 1 and 2 are supported based on the results above. However, there is a non-significant relationship between benevolent leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour (Estimate = -.10,  $p = .504$ ). Further analysis of mediation was conducted to examine if there is a full mediation effect of all constructs in the structural model. The results of fitness indices and path analysis of the structural model with only benevolent leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour are illustrated in Table 5 and Table 6.

**Table 5** The Assessment of Fitness of the Constructs Benevolent Leadership and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

Name of Category	Name of Index	Index Value	Comment
1. Absolute Fit	RMSEA	.066	The required level is achieved
	GFI	.809	The required level is not achieved
2. Incremental Fit	CFI	.914	The required level is achieved
3. Parsimonious Fit	Chisq/df	1.707	The required level is achieved

**Table 6** The Standardised Regression Weights and its Significance for the Path between Benevolent Leadership and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

Hypothesis	Construct	Path	Construct	Estimate	P-value	Result
2	OCB	←	BL	.524	.000	Supported

The assessment of fitness in Table 5 illustrates that at least one of the fitness indices under each fitness category has met the minimum value required. The result in Table 6 shows that there is a significant relationship between benevolent leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour if organisational commitment does not exist as a mediator. Hence, hypothesis 3 is supported. According to Awang (2012), if the indirect effect (standard regression weight of exogenous construct to mediator\*standard regression weight of mediator to endogenous construct) is greater than direct effect (standard regression weight of exogenous to endogenous) and the direct effect is not significant with the existence of mediator, it indicates that there is a full mediation effect. The indirect effect of the mediation model in this study is .627 (0.739\*0.849) while the direct effect is .524. The direct effect becomes not significant when mediator enters the structural model. It can be concluded that hypothesis 4 is supported as there is a full mediation effect of organisational commitment on the relationship between benevolent leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article discusses how benevolent leadership affects employees' organisational citizenship behaviour through organisational commitment and tested it empirically. The model was proposed to provide solutions on turnover issues in the hotel industry of Malaysia. As organisational commitment has been acknowledged as an indicator of turnover rate (Blau & Boal, 1989; Allen & Meyer, 1990; Bozeman & Perrewé, 2001; Shahnawaz & Jafri, 2009; Culpepper, 2011) and also as an antecedent of organisational citizenship behaviour (Organ & Ryan, 1995; MacKenzie *et al.*, 1998; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000, Riketta, 2002; Peterson & Xing, 2007; Ahmadi & Avajian, 2011), this study looked at the effectiveness of benevolent leadership in enhancing hotel employees' commitment and willingness to make extra contribution to the company.

In this study, benevolent leadership has been proven to have significant relationship with organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour. Organisational commitment is found to have a full mediating effect on the relationship between benevolent

leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour. All the hypotheses proposed are supported. The arguments are developed based on the social exchange theory which emphasise that the initial favour given by a party will be reciprocated by the other party who received the favour. The significance of benevolent behaviours of leaders in intensifying employees' commitment and extra-role performance has been strengthened.

### **Implications of Study**

This study has strengthened the conceptualization of benevolent leadership. The model suggested in this study serves as a base for future research to further expand the links between this model and other variables. There are limited researches examining the relationship between benevolent leadership and organisational commitment. Past studies only considered benevolent leadership as a component under paternalistic leadership (Erben & Güneşer, 2008) or examined benevolent leadership on its own with only part of the components under organisational commitment (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2012). This study has contributed to the body of knowledge of benevolent leadership by testing the association of benevolent leadership as an individual variable with all three components of organisational commitment. Furthermore, there has been no study which suggested the mediating effect of organisational commitment on the relationship between benevolent leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour. The result of this study has proven that organisational commitment mediates the above mentioned relationship. In accordance with the social exchange theory, it is argued that employees who received benevolent care from leaders will reciprocate leaders' kindness to be more committed and willing to make even more effort to perform unrequested tasks which are beneficial to the company.

This study helps in understanding the feasibility of benevolent leadership in a multicultural context. Benevolent leadership is mostly studied in the Chinese context. This study proposed benevolent leadership model and conducted empirical study in a multicultural context to prove the hypotheses in the model. The result of this study has expanded the generalisation of benevolent leadership theory since the effectiveness and influence of benevolent leading behaviours on positive organisational outcomes are discovered not only in the Chinese context but also in the multicultural context. As one of the countries in Southeast Asia, the contribution of this study may be advantageous to other countries in the region which have only one ethnic group as majority in the population.

The effectiveness of benevolent leadership in the Malaysian hotel industry has been proven in this study. The significant positive relationship between benevolent leadership, organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour suggests that benevolent behaviours of leaders are indeed influential on employees' commitment and contribution to extra-role task. As the importance of benevolent leadership has been confirmed, this study contributes in improving the turnover issues of the hotel industry in Malaysia by assisting management to recruit benevolent talents or identify and cultivate benevolent leadership behaviours from the existing workforce. The management should develop effective training programs or reconsider the allocation for personnel matters to ease turnover issues. Tourists regard Malaysia as one of



their favourite long-haul destination (Salman & Hasim, 2012). The fluctuation of workforce in the hotel industry could be detrimental to development of the tourism industry. If the turnover situation in the hotel industry is stable, the competitiveness of the tourism industry in Malaysia can be assured.

## LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

The time and cost constraints have brought about several limitations in this study. As there is a high turnover rate in the hotel industry, a quarter of the respondents (24.5%) have job tenure of less than 1 year. It may contaminate the result of leaders' rating as employees may yet to have a holistic understanding of their leaders. The result acquired may not accurately and precisely explain the real situation about the interaction between leaders and employees in the hotel industry. In future, longitudinal or qualitative research may be necessary to investigate specifically on the target group of respondents with sufficient research time frame to discuss possible antecedents and organisational outcomes of benevolent leadership.

In addition, extending the result of this study to other industries may be questionable. This study focused only on the hotel industry which acts as an important contributor to the national income. The study merely concentrated on four- and five-stars hotels. It may not be appropriate to implement the suggestions of this study to lower star-rated hotels, budget hotels, apartments, motels, homestays or backpacker hostels. It may not be appropriate to apply strategies developed based on suggestions of this study to other industries such as manufacturing, agriculture, public and other private sectors. Future researches need to investigate the discrepancies of the results between public and private sectors, manufacturing and service industries, multinationals and small-and-medium corporations, or enterprises in urban and rural regions in order to increase the generalisation of benevolent leadership studies.

Research on benevolent leadership theory is still at its infant stage especially in Malaysia. Future studies may identify possible antecedents that predict benevolent leadership in leaders' personality factors or situational variables. Besides, other mediators of the relationship between benevolent leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour apart from organisational commitment could be suggested.

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