

## **'It's Mine' - Examining when hotel middle-managers' psychological ownership influences their commitment and job satisfaction**

Michael Mustafa, M.Sc.

Associate Professor

Nottingham University Business School, University of Nottingham Malaysia,  
Jalan Broga, 43500 Semenyih,  
Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

Email: Michael.Mustafa@nottingham.edu.my

Michael Mustafa studied Economics at the Australian National University, specializing in international and development economics, and received a Master's in Management from the National Graduate School of Management. His current research interests include internationalization strategies of family firms, transnational entrepreneurship and corporate entrepreneurship.

Oliver Mansilla, M.A.

University Teaching Fellow

Division of Organizational and Applied Psychology, University of Nottingham Malaysia,  
Jalan Broga, 43500 Semenyih  
Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

Email: Oliver.Mansilla@nottingham.edu.my

Oliver is a Teaching Fellow at the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus since 2017. He graduated with an MA in Psychology (2003) and a BA in Philosophy (1997) from the Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines.

Dr Mark T. Gibson, Ed.D.

Senior Lecturer

School of Education

Oxford Brookes University

Harcourt Hill Campus

Email: m.gibson@brookes.ac.uk

Dr Mark T Gibson has taught in schools in England for more than 30 years with 10 of those in senior leadership. He is a senior lecturer at Oxford Brookes University, UK and was previously an Assistant Professor at the University of Nottingham in Malaysia. His specialism is educational leadership and management. He possesses a doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of Birmingham, UK.

**\*\* Corresponding author**

### **Abstract**

This study sought to examine the pro-organizational attitudes of hotel middle-managers. The ability of hotel middle-managers to contribute to the effectiveness and performance of their hotels is often dependent on their job satisfaction and affective commitment to the organization. By introducing the concept of psychological ownership, this particular study seeks to understand the determinants of hotel middle-managers' job satisfaction and affective commitment. Additionally, this study examines whether the tenure of hotel middle-managers is likely to attenuate the relationship between psychological ownership and pro-organizational attitudes. Empirical evidence is drawn from a sample of 110 middle-managers in a 4- and 5-star hotel chain in Malaysia. Findings from the study add a new dimension and insights into understanding how and when hotel middle-managers are satisfied with their jobs and committed to their organization.

**Keywords:** hotel middle managers; psychological ownership; tenure; Malaysia

## **Introduction**

Despite the hotel sector's rapid growth and vital contributions towards economic success (Thomas & Long, 2001; Zuo & Huang, 2018), the sector continues to be plagued by high turnover rates, increased employee stress and low levels of job satisfaction, labor and skill shortage (Ashton, 2018). Consequently, understanding how employees remain committed to their organizations, experience enhanced levels of job satisfaction and are willing to go 'the-extra-mile' for their organization remains of great scholarly and managerial interest (see Kong et al., 2018; Maroudas, Kyriakidou, & Vacharis, 2008). Recently, there has been growing awareness regarding the role of middle-managers in contributing to the effective functioning and performance of hotels (Burgess, 2013; Gunlu, Aksarayli, & Şahin, 2010). Hotel middle-managers not only supervise employees, handle paperwork and attend to customer needs, but they also respond to guests' needs and criticisms (Buick & Thomas, 2001). Additionally, hotel middle-managers are also being increasingly required to engage in innovative and entrepreneurial behaviors (Burgess, 2013) in order to ensure core service production and innovation (Sigala & Kyriakidou, 2015). Hotel middle-managers are more likely to perform such vital roles when they are not stressed or burnout (Buick & Thomas, 2001) and when they feel committed to their organization and satisfied with their job (Gunlu et al, 2010).

Currently, within the literature there is wide spread consensus regarding a range of organizational, job-design and individual demographic features that influence hospitality, employees job satisfaction and affective commitment (Kong et al., 2018; Kara, Uysal, & Magnini, 2012; Madera, Dawson, & Neal, 2013; McPhail, Patiar, Herington, Creed, & Davidson, 2015). While such factors are important, they may not sufficiently explain why and when an individual may experience job satisfaction and affective commitment (Mustafa, Martin & Hughes, 2016).

Correspondingly, there has been a growing acknowledgement concerning the influence of individual emotions and feelings on employee job commitment and satisfaction (Chen et al., 2012; Chu, Baker, & Murrmann, 2012; Jung & Yoon, 2015; Karatepe & Karadas, 2015; Hofmann & Stokburger-Sauer, 2017). While concepts related to emotions and feelings such as emotional labor, emotional intelligence, positive/negative affective have been investigated extensively in the literature, corresponding research regarding the concept of Psychological Ownership (PO) remains sorely under investigated (Avey, Avolio, Crossley, & Luthans, 2009; Pierce, Jussila, & Cummings, 2009).

Psychological ownership (PO) refers to a "state in which individuals feel as though the object of ownership or a piece of that object is "theirs" (Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2003). Prior research on PO in the hospitality industry has examined the concept with respect to employees positive feelings towards a brand (Xiong, So, Wu, & King, 2018), employee loyalty and relational marketing activities (Asatryan & Oh, 2008) as well as tourists' attitudes and feelings towards a destination (Kumar & Nayak, 2019). In addition to such positive benefits, PO is also highly beneficial towards understanding employees' commitment and satisfaction (Avey et al., 2009). Yet, despite a rich literature exploring the role of psychological ownership within organizations (Avey et al., 2009; Pierce et al., 2009), studies are yet to examine its implications for hospitality employees and middle-mangers in particular.

While PO is said to positively influence pro-organizational attitudes such as job satisfaction and affective commitment, the conditions under which such relationships exist warrants further investigations (Dawkins, Tian, Newman, & Martin, 2017). In order to provide further clarity in understanding this relationship, this particular study examines the moderating effects of hotel middle-managers organizational tenure. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964),

the study argues that the positive effects of hotel middle-managers feelings of ownership on their job satisfaction and commitment, will be attenuated by the length of their organizational tenures.

Being cognizant of the determinants of hotel middle-managers job satisfaction and affective has not only important implications for their pro-organizational behaviors and attitudes, but also the performance implications for the hotels they are involved with. Individual emotions and feelings may be considered as essential antecedents of hotel middle-managers pro-organizational attitudes and behaviors. Accordingly, this particular study suggests that hotel middle-managers feelings of attachment towards their respective hotels, in the form of psychological ownership, may act as a significant driver of their job satisfaction and affective commitment.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationships among hotel middle-managers' Psychological Ownership, tenure and their job satisfaction and affective commitment.

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. Determine the relationships among ownership feelings, tenure and hotel middle-managers pro-organizational attitudes.
2. Explore the effects of the direct effects of hotel middle-managers' Psychological Ownership on their job satisfaction and affective commitment.
3. Evaluate whether hotel middle-managers' tenure moderates the relationship between their Psychological Ownership, job satisfaction and affective commitment.

## **Literature review**

### ***Hotel middle-managers' psychological ownership***

Scholars have been interested in understanding the factors that lead to increased employee retention, discretionary efforts and innovation (Yen & Teng, 2013). Such employee behaviors are

particularly important in the hospitality industry where they are associated with increased service quality, customer service experience (Kaminakis, Karantinou, Koritos, & Gounaris 2019) and overall customer satisfaction (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, & Gruen, 2005). Recently, there has been a growing interest in understanding how employees' feelings or psychological attachment to their organization can influence their pro-organizational attitudes and behaviors (Brown, Sokal, & Friedman 2014;). Accordingly, the concept of psychological ownership (PO) has emerged as key construct in understanding how employees' feelings can translate to their pro-organizational attitudes and behaviors. Pierce et al. (2003) defined PO as "a state in which individuals feel as though the target of ownership (or a piece of that target) is theirs (i.e., it is 'MINE')"(p. 86).

The concept of PO has evolved from the broader literature concerned with the psychology of "mine," possession, and property (e.g., Dittmar, 1992; Furby, 1978). PO is often referred to as a state of mind rather than a stable personality trait (Pierce et al., 2003), as it represents possessive tendencies a person refers to when it is suggested that an object is "theirs" (Etzioni, 1993). By satisfying certain human motives, some of them genetic and others social in nature, PO is thought to serve three fundamental human needs, namely efficacy, self-identity, and belongingness (a sense of "place").

Firstly, and according to Beggan (1992), ownership can induce feelings of efficacy and control, which can lead to the perception of it being the cause of something that has the power to alter the circumstances surrounding them. Secondly, ownership enables individuals to express some of their identity to others and maintain their sense of continuity of the self (Curasi, Price, & Arnould, 2004). Thus, an individual's identity and self-continuity can be partially maintained through their actual or perceived possessions (Pierce, O'driscoll, & Coghlan, 2004). Finally, a sense of place and the need for territoriality and security can also be provided through ownership feelings

(Porteous, 1976). Numerous studies have demonstrated how ownership feelings need not emerge from formal ownership alone (Pierce et al., 2004). Specifically, it has been shown that even in the absence of formal ownership, feelings of possession or ownership can arise and become part of the feelings of the self (Dittmar, 1992). Indeed, the reverse can also be true, in that it is possible for the legal or formal owner of an object to not feel ownership (Pierce & Furo, 1990).

Numerous studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between PO and desirable employee attitudes such as organizational commitment (Han, Chiang, & Chang, 2010; Hou, Hsu, & Wu, 2009; Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004; Vandewalle, Van Dyne, & Kostova, 1995) and affective commitment (Liu, Wang, Hui, & Lee, 2012; Sieger et al., 2011). Within hospitality research, feelings of ownership have been positively linked to employee voice behaviors (Xiong et al., 2018), employee and customer loyalty and relationship marketing efforts (Asatryan & Oh, 2008). In this particular study, the focus is on the effect of hotel middle-managers psychological ownership on their affective commitment and job satisfaction. A sense of possession, which lies at the heart of PO, can lead individuals to evaluate targets or objects in a more favorable manner (Nesselroade, Beggan, & Allison, 1999). Hence, feelings of ownership can exist towards a particular organization and/or role or job within an organization (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004), towards a particular brand (Chang, Chiang, & Han, 2012; Xiong et al., 2018) and as a collective phenomenon (Pierce & Jussila, 2010) without actual ownership being in place. Recently, there has been a growing recognition among scholars that psychological ownership can exist across all organizational levels (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997; Sieger, Bernhard, & Frey, 2013).

Sieger et al. (2013) found senior managers PO to be an important determinant of their entrepreneurial actions and views of their respective organization's performance. Similarly, Mustafa et al. (2016) showed how middle-managers' PO can lead to enhanced feelings of

satisfaction towards their roles in the organization. This study focuses on middle-managers' PO. Within hotels, middle-managers can be considered as core points of the service production as they are directly involved in reconciling top management's perspectives with the implementation that appear at lower management levels (King, Fowler & Zeithaml, 2001). Moreover, given their centralized organizational positioning and authority, hotel middle-managers are not only well-positioned to develop intimate knowledge about their workplace roles and responsibilities but also have the necessary authority to exercise control over their workplace role and responsibilities, and invest their energy, labor, ideas, into their workplace role and responsibilities (Burgess, 2013; Mustafa, Martin, & Hughes, 2016; Yang, Zhang & Tsui, 2010 ). Such situations may be considered as highly conducive in developing hotel middle-managers sense of psychological ownership.

#### ***Hotel middle-managers' job satisfaction, affective commitment, and psychological ownership***

Hotels form an integral part of the service industry, and wherein many of their services are provided by employees (Kong et al., 2018). In this respect, when hotel middle-managers are satisfied with their jobs and committed to the organization, they may be more willing to provide high-quality service to customers, be more productive, positive, innovative and develop more positive and committed work environments (Burgess, 2013; Elbanna, Eid, & Kamel, 2015; Ling, Lin & Wu, 2016). Locke (1969) defined job satisfaction as "the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one's job values" (p. 316). Within the context of the hospitality industry, job satisfaction has been positively related to service quality, extra-role customer service behaviors, cooperation, organizational commitment, intention to stay and other positive organizational citizenship behaviors (Gu & Chi Sen Siu, 2009; Jung & Yoon, 2015) and overall increased job performance (Lu and Gursoy, 2016; Ziegler, Schlett, Casel, & Diehl, 2012). Much of the reasoning behind such findings rests on the



notion that satisfied employees will perform their work more effectively (Crede, Chernyshenko, Stark, Dalal, & Bashshur, 2007).

Prior research into job satisfaction in the hospitality industry has identified the importance of positive psychological states such as emotions and feelings in influencing job satisfaction (Chu et al., 2012; Jung & Yoon, 2015; Karatepe & Karadas, 2015). Because of their unique organizational positioning, hotel middle-managers are able to develop unique insights and knowledge about their hotel's functioning and organizational strategies. Moreover, the authority and responsibility attached with their organizational positioning also permits them considerable influence and control over their own and the work of others (Mustafa et al., 2016). Hence, feelings of psychological ownership may therefore help hotel middle-managers feel invested in their organizational roles and become more likely to perceive a degree of ownership over what they do and where they work. Similarly, it is suggested that job satisfaction grows as the employees obtain more information about their job, and results in a complex and emotional evaluative process that goes beyond simply objectively assessing work conditions (Agho, Mueller, & Price, 1993; Dormann & Zapf 2001). Therefore, when hotel middle-managers develop possessive tendencies towards their organizations, they are likely to experience higher levels of general satisfaction, which in turn should influence their job satisfaction. In line with the above reasoning, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*Hypothesis 1: Hotel middle-managers' psychological ownership is positively related to their job satisfaction.*

Affective commitment refers to the "affective or emotional attachment to the organization such that the strongly committed individual identifies with, is involved in, and enjoys membership in the organization" (Allen & Meyer, 1990, p. 2). Affective commitment has shown to have a more

positive influence on employee attitudes and behaviors compared to continuance commitment and normative commitment. Committed employees are more likely to view their organization as their 'home' or as a place of comfort, belonging, and personal space (Redman and Snape, 2005). Hence, such employees are more likely to continue with their organization (Dhar, 2015), be more faithful and committed towards it, and may also show a greater willingness to go the "extra mile" for their organization (Garg & Dhar, 2016). Similar to Pierce et al. (2004), it is expected that hotel middle-managers are likely to experience higher levels of PO compared to other employees because their organizational positioning, which allows them to exercise control over their work environment. Moreover, when hotel middle-managers experience feelings of ownership, they feel that they have more intimate knowledge about their hotel, have developed new technical, operational, and interpersonal skills and have also invested themselves in their organizational roles by participating in decision 'making ensuring the financial success of the hotel. Therefore, such feelings of ownership by hotel middle-managers should also enhance evaluations of their personal adequacy and self-worth in their role, thereby also heightening their sense of commitment towards their hotel. In line with the above reasoning, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*Hypothesis 2: Hotel middle-managers' psychological ownership is positively related to their affective commitment.*

### ***Moderating effects of middle-managers' organizational tenure***

Organizational tenure is often considered by scholars as playing a critical role in determining the extent of organizational behaviors and feelings (Ng & Feldman, 2013; Woods, Mustafa, Anderson, & Sayer, 2018). For hotel middle-manager experiences in the workplace, time can ultimately shape their work attitudes such as job satisfaction (Riza, Ganzach, & Liu, 2018) and affective commitment (Beck & Wilson, 2000), as well as their feelings towards the hotel they work for. This

study examines one of the most important metrics of time in an organization; organizational tenure. Consistent with Kooij, de Lange, Jansen, & Dijkers (2013) and others, organizational tenure is viewed as the passage of time within an employees' employment contract with a specific organization (Ng & Feldman, 2013). Hence, tenure is not only a proxy for job-related skills, knowledge and experience, but also for changing job demands and challenges (Woods et al., 2018). While organizational tenure itself may not be a "job characteristic" of hotel middle-managers, it is conceivable that hotel middle-managers may experience dynamic job demands which may require their psychical and psychological investment. In this regard, hotel middle-managers' organizational tenure is not only an important source of intrinsic work motivation, but also a personal investment in one's job.

Prior research has reported considerable variation with respect the tenure, job satisfaction and commitment relationships (Riza et al., 2018). Regarding job satisfaction, scholars have reported a positive (Ng & Feldman, 2013), negative (Riza et al., 2018) or no relationship (Culpin et al., 2015) with organizational tenure. On the other hand, others have found the existence of an inverted-U shaped relationship between tenure and job satisfaction, suggesting that job satisfaction falls during early tenure and rises during longer tenure (Kalleberg & Matsteakaasa, 2001). Similar patterns of relationships have been reported with respect to organizational tenure and commitment. For example, meta-analytical findings by Cohen (1993) showed that the relationship between commitment and tenure was strongest among longer tenured employees. In contrast, Beck and Wilson (2000) found commitment was to decrease, rather than increase, as a result of increasing experience within the organization. Such inconsistent findings suggest that additional contextual and personal factors may affect tenures relationship with job satisfaction and commitment. To this

end, examining the interaction of psychological ownership with tenure may add further clarity to such findings.

Social-exchange theory (SET) (Blau, 1964) is used to frame the nature of the relations between psychological ownership and tenure with job satisfaction and affective commitment. Social-exchange theory has been extensively used to understand employees' relationship with their organization (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). According to the SET perspective, managers and their organization maintain social exchanges, which can be characterized by mutual trust, investment and obligations (Shore, Tetrick, Lynch, & Barksdale, 2006). The feelings of personal obligation, gratitude, and trust generated by positive social-exchanges can ultimately lead managers to display positive work-related attitudes and behavior that benefit their organization (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Pierce, Kostova and Dirks (2001) suggested that enhanced feelings of psychological ownership are more likely to occur with the time invested in the target of ownership.

Scholars have suggested that feelings of ownership are likely to lead to favorable evaluations of possessions (Beggan, 1992) and judgements of owned objects (Pierce et al., 2003; Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004). In this respect, hotel middle-managers tenure is expected to influence the relationship between their PO and job satisfaction and affective commitment in two important ways. Firstly, hotel middle-managers with longer organizational tenures are more likely to experience greater levels of person-organization fit and greater sense of job embeddedness (Lee, Mitchell, Sablinski, Burton, & Holtom, 2004). Hence, in such situations, hotel middle-managers with greater feelings of ownership may experience greater opportunities to become more involved in hotel decision making process, shaping organizational structures, strategies, norms, and values due to their longer tenures. This increased participation and the sense of influence over their

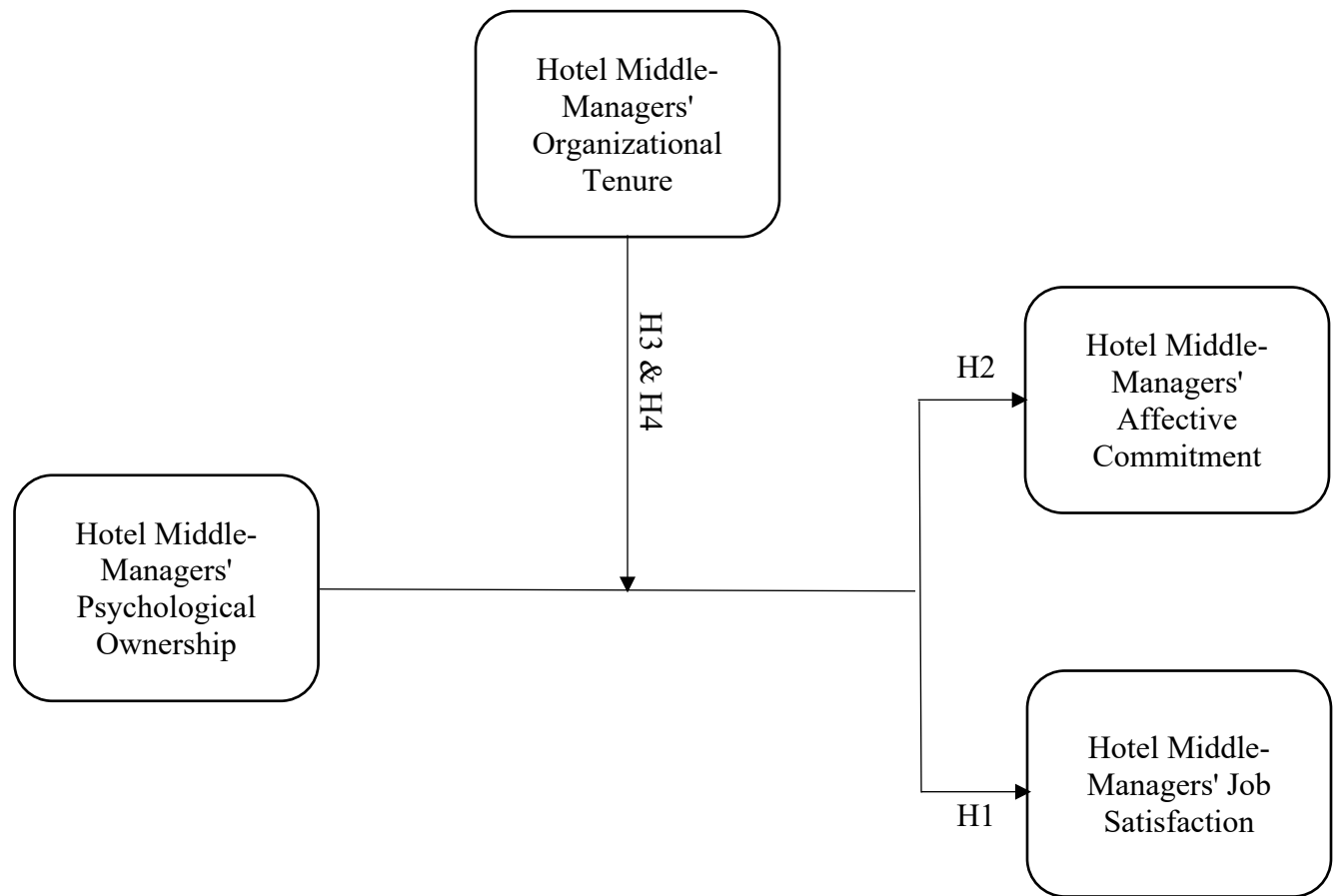
immediate work environments can be expected to have a positive impact on their affective commitment as well as their job satisfactions (Riza et al., 2018).

Secondly, increased tenure is also likely to capture many of positive effects associated with socialization into working environments. For instance, longer tenure periods in a middle management positions, may increase hotel middle-managers possessive tendencies towards their hotel by deepening their understanding of the hotel's traditions, goals, and values. In such situations, hotel middle-managers may feel more invested in their organizational roles and to also perceive a degree of ownership over what they do and where they work. This in turn may heighten their sense of obligation to serve both the hotel's and the customer's interests and feel the need for the employment provided by that hotel. Additionally, longer tenured hotel middle-managers with greater feelings of ownership may also perceive themselves as have greater opportunities for promotion, status, and power in the hotel (Kalleberg & Matsteakaasa, 2001). Hence, such hotel middle-managers may also be more likely to engage in retrospective rationalization to justify their current work situation (London, 1983). Collectively such factors may be attributed with a greater sense of job satisfaction. Based on the above reasoning the following hypotheses are:

*Hypothesis 3: Hotel middle-managers' organizational tenure will moderate the relationship between their psychological ownership and affective commitment.*

*Hypothesis 4: Hotel middle-managers' organizational tenure will moderate the relationship between their psychological ownership and job satisfaction.*

Figure 1 shows the conceptual model of the proposed hypotheses and relationships in this study.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual model and hypotheses.

## Method

### *Participants and study design*

This study sought to examine the proposed relationships between middle-managers' psychological ownership, tenure and their job satisfaction and affective commitment. Hotel middle-managers were defined as those “*employees who link the activities of vertically related groups and who are responsible for at least sub-functional workflow, but not the workflow of the organization as a whole*” (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997, p. 157). Typically, hotel middle-managers act as department heads and are thus often afforded with a high span of control in their organization and their authority is high when they make the decisions and they have the responsibility to carry the departments to the organizational goals.

Data for this study came from middle-managers at 4- and 5-star hotels, who were part of a single local hospitality chain in Malaysia. The hospitality chain in question manages a total of 17 hotels ranging from 2 to 5 stars throughout Malaysia. Of the 17 hotels managed by the local hospitality chain, this particular study only collected data from eight of its hotels which were rated as either 4 or 5-star. Six of the eight hotels from which data was collected were rated as 4-star, while only two were rated as 5-star. With the assistance of the hospitality chain's Human Resource department and director and using the chain's electronic mail service, questionnaire packages were distributed to a total of 215 participants across the eight participating hotels who were designated as middle-management by the hospitality chains Human Resource department. Participants were given two months to complete the online questionnaire. Regular fortnightly emails were also sent out to participants to remind them on completion of the questionnaire.

As the hotel chain uses English as the main language internal communication, all 215 questionnaires in English were distributed. Only fully completed questionnaires were used for analysis. A total of 110 useable responses were obtained representing an overall response rate of 51.2%. 51.4% were male, had an average age of approximately 36 years ( $SD=8.37$ ) and average tenure of 5.13 years ( $SD=4.86$ ). Approximately 48.2% held a basic undergraduate degree, while 39.1% held a postgraduate degree.

### ***Measures***

The questionnaire used in the study consisted of the following three sections. The first section asked participants for their employee identification, demographic and basic work information. The second section asked participants' information regarding their attitudes towards their organization as well as their job and role. The final section asked participants to indicate their feelings towards

their organization. Additionally, the authors contacted the hotel chains' human resource department to ask for information regarding the participants' length of tenure.

Hotel middle-managers' psychological ownership was measured using Pierce, Rubenfeld and Morgan's (1991) seven-item scale. All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Sample items include "This is my organization" and "I feel a very high degree of personal ownership for this organization." The Cronbach alpha for psychological ownership was 0.89

Similarly, hotel middle-managers' commitment to their organization was measured using 8 items from Allen and Myers' (1990) Affective Commitment Scale. All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Example items included "I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it" and "This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me". The Cronbach alpha was 0.83.

Middle-managers Job Satisfaction was measured using an 8-item Job Satisfaction scale (Chuang, Yin, & Dellmann-Jenkins, 2009). The scale encompasses intrinsic and extrinsic components of middle-managers job satisfaction such as the work itself, responsibility and growth. Middle-managers' were asked to rate their satisfaction with their jobs on a 7- point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *very dissatisfied* to 7 = *very satisfied*. The Cronbach alpha was 0.92.

Middle-managers tenure was measured as number of actual years the middle-managers had been working in the organization. Data regarding middle-managers tenure was gathered directly from the organizations HR records. In order to maintain confidentiality, only information regarding the participants' length of tenure was requested from the organisations HR using their unique employee ID. At no point during the study, was the responses of individual participants provided directly to management or the HR department.



Additionally, age (number of years) was included as a control variable as prior research has shown feelings of commitment and satisfaction to increase with age. Finally, respondents were asked whether they received performance-based pay or not (1 = Yes, 0 = No). The type of work the respondents did in as part of their job/role (e.g., sales, front desk, finance, etc.) was also controlled for. The rationale here was that certain jobs/roles may permit middle-managers to have greater autonomy and eventually impact on the hotel operations. Such autonomy and the perceived impact arising from it may induce increased job satisfaction and commitment.

## Results

Table 1 below presents the findings regarding the descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for the study's main variables. Pearson's correlation was used to investigate the relationships between variables. The intercorrelations indicate that the control variables (i.e., age, work-type and performance pay) largely failed to correlate with the dimensions of psychological ownership, job satisfaction, and affective commitment. However, both age and work-type showed a significant correlation with organizational tenure, which is expected as older individuals are more likely to have longer organizational tenure. Psychological ownership was found to be significantly correlated with both job satisfaction and affective commitment.

**Table 1.** Mean, standard deviation, and correlation between variables.

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Psychological ownership	3.11	0.82	1.00						
2. Job satisfaction	4.86	1.20	0.41**	1.00					
3. Affective commitment	3.11	0.68	0.62**	0.54**	1.00				
4. Organizational tenure	5.13	4.86	0.15	0.05	0.09	1.00			
5. Age	35.8	8.37	-0.11	0.00	0.02	0.46**	1.00		
6. Work-type	4.43	2.28	0.04	0.10	0.06	-0.21*	-0.10	1.00	
7. Per pay	0.57	0.50	0.12	0.03	-0.04	0.08	-0.01	-0.18*	1.00

\*  $\rho < 0.05$  level (1-tailed), \*\*  $\rho < 0.01$  level (1-tailed).

### *Hypothesis Testing*

In order to analyse the direct and indirect effects of psychological ownership and organizational tenure on job satisfaction and affective commitment, hierarchical multiple regressions were carried out. Preliminary checks were made prior to analyses. First, predictors were examined for multicollinearity. According to Field (2013), predictors in a regression model should not correlate by more than 0.80. As shown in Table 1, none of the predictors reached this level. Second, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance statistics were examined. All VIF statistics for each regression model were below the cut-off of 10 as recommended by Field (2013), while tolerance statistics were all in the region of 0.30 to 0.90 which is above the 0.20 recommended cut-off.

The control variables of age, work-type and performance pay were entered into the first step of the regression model, followed by psychological ownership (PO) and organizational tenure in the second step, and the interaction term between PO and organizational tenure in the third step. Results of the regression analyses can be found in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Regression models.

	Job Satisfaction			Affective Commitment		
	$\beta$	t	Sig	$\beta$	t	Sig
<b>Step 1</b>						
Age	0.015	0.151	ns	0.024	0.247	ns
Work role	0.106	1.071	ns	0.057	0.575	ns
Performance pay	0.052	0.525	ns	-0.027	-0.275	ns
	F=0.420, p=.0.739; R <sup>2</sup> =0.012			F=0.173, p=0.915; R <sup>2</sup> =0.005		
<b>Step 2</b>						
PO	<b>0.424</b>	<b>4.556</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.656</b>	<b>8.304</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Org. Tenure	-0.031	-0.292	ns	-0.045	-0.507	ns
	F=4.580, p=0.001; $\Delta$ F=10.704, p=0.000 R <sup>2</sup> =0.182, $\Delta$ R <sup>2</sup> =0.170			F=14.414, p=0.000; $\Delta$ F=35.606, p=0.000 R <sup>2</sup> =0.412, $\Delta$ R <sup>2</sup> =0.407		
<b>Step 3</b>						
PO x Org. Tenure	0.059	0.635	ns	<b>0.220</b>	<b>2.887</b>	<b>0.005</b>
	F=3.862, p=0.002; $\Delta$ F=0.403, p=0.527 R <sup>2</sup> =0.185, $\Delta$ R <sup>2</sup> =0.003			F=14.257, p=0.000; $\Delta$ F=8.335, p=0.005 R <sup>2</sup> =0.456, $\Delta$ R <sup>2</sup> =0.044		

As shown in Table 2, the control variables (i.e., age, work-type and performance pay) did not significantly predict either job satisfaction or affective commitment. In the second step, both psychological ownership and organizational tenure were entered.

*Hypothesis 1: Hotel middle-managers' psychological ownership is positively related to their job satisfaction.*

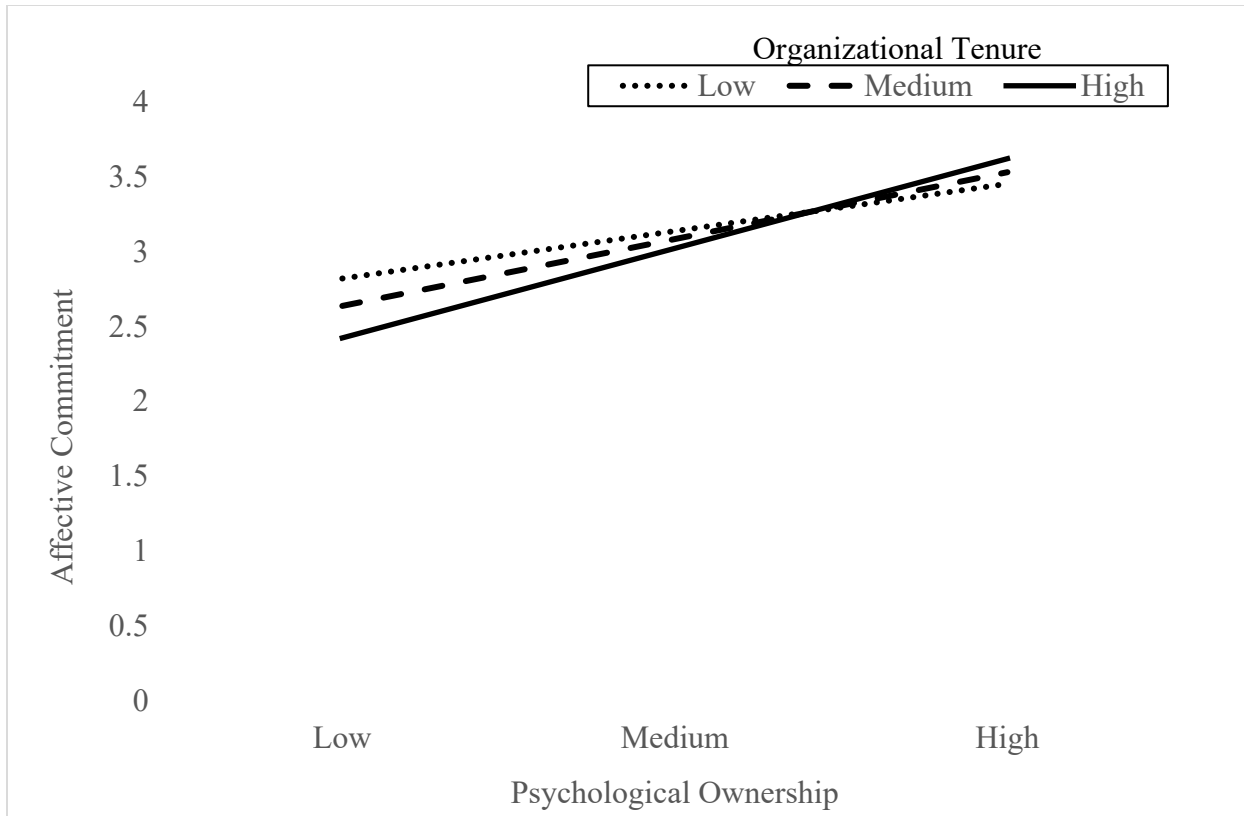
As shown in Table 2, PO was found to have significantly predicted job satisfaction ( $\beta=.424$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Hypothesis 1, which predicted hotel middle-managers' level of psychological ownership would have a significant direct effect on job satisfaction, was supported. This suggests that hotel middle-managers with higher levels of PO were more likely to experience higher levels of job satisfaction. Moreover, PO accounted for 17% of the variance in job satisfaction. In contrast, organizational tenure was found to have no significant effects on job satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 2: Hotel middle-managers' psychological ownership is positively related to their affective commitment.*

Similarly, Hypothesis 2 was supported when PO was found to significantly predict affective commitment ( $\beta=.656$ ,  $p=.000$ ). The finding suggests that hotel middle-managers with higher levels of psychological ownership were more likely to experience higher levels of affective commitment. PO accounted for 41% of its variance. On the other hand, organizational tenure did not have a significant effect on affective commitment.

*Hypothesis 3: Hotel middle-managers' organizational tenure will moderate the relationship between their psychological ownership and affective commitment.*

In the third step, the interaction term (PO x organizational tenure) was entered into the regression. The interaction accounted for 4% of the variance in affective commitment. As shown in Table 2, hypothesis 3 was supported when organizational tenure was found to significantly moderate the



**Figure 2:** Interaction effects of organizational tenure on hotel middle-managers' psychological ownership and affective commitment.

relationship between hotel middle-managers' psychological ownership and affective commitment ( $\beta=.220$ ,  $p=.005$ ). As can be seen from Figure 2, higher psychological ownership and longer organizational tenure among hotel middle-managers resulted in higher affective commitment.

*Hypothesis 4: Hotel middle-managers' organizational tenure will moderate the relationship between their psychological ownership and job satisfaction.*

In contrast to theoretical expectations, organizational tenure was found to not moderate the relationship between psychological ownership and job satisfaction ( $\beta=.059$ ,  $p=.527$ ). Hence hypothesis 4 was not supported. The finding suggests that the length of a hotel-middle managers organizational tenure did not influence the relationship between their psychological ownership and

job satisfaction. Furthermore, the interaction term (psychological ownership x organizational tenure) accounted for only 0.3% of the variance in job satisfaction.

## **Discussion**

Employee job satisfaction and affective commitment have long been regarded as key factors to maintaining high performance and efficient services in the hotel industry (Patiar & Wang, 2016). Given that the pro-organizational attitudes of hotel managers in particular may be of critical importance to the success of organizations in the sector, the mechanisms through which such attitudes are developed ought to be explored. Accordingly, this study seeks to deepen understanding regarding how hotel middle-managers job satisfaction and affective commitment develops, by focusing on the role of their emotions in the process. Specifically, the concept of Psychological Ownership (PO) provides a means of better understanding the emergence of such pro-organizational attitudes. Additionally, whether hotel middle-managers' organizational tenure may attenuate PO's relationship with job satisfaction and affective commitment was also examined. Consequently, the findings from the study contribute to the literature about hotel employees' job satisfaction and affective commitment in two important ways.

Firstly, the findings support the results of previous studies regarding the positive effects of psychological ownership on employee's job satisfaction and affective commitment (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004). The findings also reaffirm psychological research on the attitude-behavior relationship (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1970). Specifically, the findings suggest that, in the absence of formal ownership, hotel middle-managers may develop a sense of ownership through experiencing meanings and emotions with the notions of "my or mine and our" (Pierce et al., 2003, p. 86). When hotel middle-managers experience a sense of belonging and identification with the hotel's values, they may experience increased feelings of "mineness". Such feelings might generate heightened

sense of satisfaction with their jobs as well as more commitment to their hotel. Collectively, the above findings address calls in the hospitality literature to better understand the determinants of hotel manager's pro-organizational attitudes (Ashton, 2018; Gunlu et al., 2010; Jung & Yoon 2015).

Secondly, our findings also serve to reaffirm the positive role of employees' organizational tenure in hospitality and tourism research. For instance, Karatepe and Karatepe (2009) and Jung Yoon and Kim (2012) demonstrated that employees with longer tenures tended to have excellent capabilities to cope with stress and burnout in their organization. By examining the moderating role of organizational tenure in the relationship between PO and job satisfaction and affective commitment, this particular study deepens our understanding of how and when hotel middle-managers may be committed to their organizations and satisfied with their jobs (Gunlu, Aksarayli & Şahin, 2010; Kim & Brymer, 2011). Specifically, the findings suggest that hotel middle-managers with high PO and longer tenures were more likely to be committed to their organizations. This may be due to the fact that hotel middle-managers with longer tenures may have developed a deeper appreciation and sense of understanding regarding their hotels. Furthermore, such in depth knowledge about the workings of their hotel may heighten their sense of place and belongingness to their hotel. Ultimately, such feelings may encourage hotel middle-managers to remain committed to their hotels and to take specific actions to care and look after their hotels' well-being and performance. Not only does such a finding add to the literature on how and when PO has beneficial behavioral and attitudinal effects (Dawkins et al., 2017), it may also enhance hospitality and tourism scholars' understanding of the important effects of employee tenure on their pro-organizational attitudes.

## **Conclusions**

This study sought to investigate three objectives. In the first objective, laid out the themes to be investigated and was approached through the literature review. The second objective exploring direct effects of hotel middle-managers' Psychological Ownership on their job satisfaction and affective commitment generated two hypotheses. This study found psychological ownership was significantly correlated with both job satisfaction and affective commitment. Hotel middle-managers with higher levels of psychological ownership were more likely to experience higher job satisfaction and were more likely to result in stronger affective commitment to their role. The final objective wished to evaluate the moderating effects of hotel middle-managers' tenure on psychological ownership, job satisfaction and affective commitment. Higher psychological ownership and longer organizational tenure resulted in higher affective commitment among hotel middle-managers, however organizational tenure was shown to not affect the relationship between psychological ownership and job satisfaction. The critical factor here is psychological ownership; it is this that senior managers need to increase in their middle managers.

## **Managerial implications**

Middle management is key to organizational success, it is at the heart of all organizations, and such workers are frequently at the policy-practice interface; they implement policy and are often key in ensuring others do also. For a successful organization then it is important that employees such as middle-managers remain highly effective in their roles. The findings from this study also provide some practical implications for hotels to increase their middle-managers affective commitment and job satisfaction through developing their sense psychological ownership. There are several practical ways in which this might be achieved. The emphasis being placed here is on managerial and work practices that may not be financially intensive and extrinsically motivating

(e.g., reward systems of bonuses or share ownership), but instead on practices that are intrinsically motivating.

One particular strategy that hotels may adopt is to increase middle-managers sense of belonging to their respective hotels. For examples, hotels may allow their middle-managers to create their own physical “space” in the workplace, their area that they can call “mine” by given them the freedom to decorate an office wall with favourite posters, family pictures or by letting them chose their own work title. Not only may this help them to develop their sense of psychological ownership, but it will also help them in building a stronger buy into the organization and its goals.

A second strategy may involve ways to develop middle-managers sense of belongingness and self-efficacy within their respective hotels (van Zyl, van der Vaart, & Stemmet, 2017). A particular useful way of doing this may to get middle-managers to be actively involved in the activities of their respective hotels by involving them during critical decision making process. For instance, senior managers may consult regularly with their middle-managers during senior-level meetings and encourage them to come up with ideas and suggestions to improve the performance of their respective hotels. Additionally, hotels may always want to explore ways in which they can increase the authority and thus responsibility bestowed on their middle-managers. Pierce et al., (2001) and Avey et al., (2009) both indicated that PO in the workplace can be increased by providing further autonomy for workers, information sharing of the projects and roles and identifying where they fit in the organisational vision. Hotels can do this through several practical initiatives. Firstly, hotels may re-design their traditional reporting relationships in such a way that middle-managers are given greater discretion and autonomy over both short and medium term decisions concerning their hotels. Not only will this increase the accountability of middle-managers actions, but it will also likely make them feel that their role is important to the hotel and that their actions are also



impactful. Secondly, hotels may want to focus increasing the quality and the nature of communication between senior and middle-management.

Ideally, hotels should not only be reliant on traditional top down communication (i.e., between senior and middle managers) via emails and newsletters, but instead should seek to encourage bottom-up communication (i.e., middle to senior managers). This might involve encouraging middle-managers to voice their issues or ideas directly with senior management through regular ‘away-days’ or through town-hall style meetings. This might involve encouraging middle-managers to voice their issues or ideas directly with senior management through regular ‘away-days’ or through town-hall style meetings. Equally important may be for senior-management to have an open-door policy would as it would enable middle-managers to directly interact with senior management and suggest new ideas for their respective hotels. Such initiatives may not only increase the accountability of middle-managers actions, but it will also likely make them feel that their role is important to the hotel and that their actions are also impactful.

A third strategy may involve focusing on the personal and long-term career development of middle-managers through continuous training and developments initiative. Karwowski (2008) suggested that training, both behavioural and technical, is critical for the development of individual knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes. For instance, Chang et al (2012) suggested that the development of psychological ownership is not only about employees ‘buying into’ a particular brand but ensuring that the brand image becomes an extension of their self-image. Ideally, this can be done through providing middle-managers with regular brand sportsmanship training or seminar in order to develop a sense of altruism and ultimately positive attitudes. Finally, middle-managers are likely to model their own actions and behaviours on that of successful people. Accordingly, it is important that in order to help the development and growth of their middle-managers, hotels

provide them with one-on-one mentoring opportunities. Ideally, senior managers may be well positioned to act as mentors for middle-managers. Through regular meetings, may begin map out a long-term personal development strategy for themselves and during the process also become more cognizant of how they can contribute to hotels long-term development. Additionally, such mentoring schemes may also provide a useful means through which a hotels management can communicate its values and vision to middle-management, while also highlighting to middle-manager how they personally fit in with that of the hotels. Collectively such mentoring activities may increase middle-managers psychological ownership through increasing their self-efficacy and sense of belongingness (van Zyl et al., 2017). To conclude, the strategies outlined above may help middle-managers to organisationally empower them and to increase their brand awareness, brand vision and mission and ultimately their sense of ‘mine’.

### **Limitations and directions for future research**

The limitations of this design include its cross-sectional nature and that although the sample was some 110 middle-managers, they were from 4- or 5-star hotels in single chain. Accordingly, future research should ideally consider sampling hotel managers from a broader array of hotel types (e.g., 2, 3, 4 and 5 star) and comparing the findings among them. This may be necessary, because lower star rated hotels may not have the budgets to acquire a large workforce. Hence, they may depend very heavily on their middle-managers to ensure service quality. This may effect a middle-managers sense of control and territoriality and ultimately their PO, levels of commitment and/or job satisfaction. Future work may include longitudinal work on specific cohorts addressing development of PO during organizational tenure, does PO increase with time or is it a case that those people already with PO for the organization remain employed? Additionally, future research

may also wish to focus on a range of HR related practices and job-specific factors which may affect the PO – Job Satisfaction, Affective Commitment relationship.

However, the main direction of future research may well be in developing more insight into PO and emotional connections of work in the hospitality industry as a whole, how this can be developed within workers looking at successful practice case study (Dawson et al., 2017). This may also involve qualitative data to generate a deeper understanding on workers' emotional connectivity to the workplace.

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