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Leadership and Performance of Academic Staff in Developing Countries

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Abstract

Employee performance in business organization is intensively investigated. However, studies that are pertaining to performance of academic staff (PAS) are limited. The purpose of this study is to develop a conceptual framework to examine PAS in developing countries. Based on the literature, the study proposed that leadership style can affect PAS. In addition, job satisfaction can mediate the effect of leadership style on PAS. Propositions are developed and discussed.

Keywords: Performance of academic staff, Leadership, Job satisfaction.

Introduction

Performance of academic staff (PAS) is one of the important topics that has attracted the attention of academics and practitioners (Ahmad et al., 2016, 2015). Governments, around the world, have given their utmost importance to the subject of education at all levels, especially at the university level (Johnson et al., 2016). Universities play an active and important role in the development process as a scientific and academic organization that will bring about more processes of social and economic aspects into society (Hanssen and Solvoll, 2015; Reed and Kennett, 2017; Taylor, 2018). However, to a large degree, the performance of a university is dependent on the performance of its academic staff. Accordingly, PAS plays an important role in the progress of universities and the prosperity of societies (Abba and Mugizi, 2018). This is because a better performance of employees will lead to a better organizational performance (Alaaraj et al., 2018; Alaaraj et al., 2017a, 2016). However, most of previous studies focused on the performance of employees in business organizations and few have investigated PAS at universities (Ghabban et al., 2018; Muda et al., 2017).

Since the factors of business organizations differ from those of academic staff at universities, previous studies indicated that the leadership is an essential factors that affect the performance of employee in general (Breevaart et al., 2014; Jaiswal and Dhar, 2015; Lam and O'Higgins, 2012). However, the leadership was examined in business organization and few examined this variable in the context of educational institutions. Thus, there is a need to examine the effect of new styles of leadership such as the transformational and transactional leadership on PAS.

Universities and academic staff plays essential roles in all countries and their role is more important in developing countries where there is a need to develop these countries and enhance their scientific productivity as well as their contribution to the knowledge and advancement of the human kind (Ahmad et al., 2017). The PAS in these countries are vital and identifying the predictors could lead to better productivity not only for the university but also for the society in these countries.

Literature Review

Leadership

Transformational and transactional leaderships are among the most recent managerial concepts in the context of leadership (Ahmad et al., 2013). The transformational acts as an opposite of the transactional leadership (Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978). In the transactional leadership, the relationship between the leader and the subordinates is based on the principle of transaction. However, in transformational leadership, leader follows the course of action and intervenes to correct the path when necessary (Haliday, 2018). More importantly, the transformational leadership works on converting individuals into leaders, focuses primarily on ethics, values, standards and long-term goals and includes incentives, motivations, satisfying followers' needs and dealing with them politely (Bass and Avolio, 2013). On the other hand, the transactional leadership, is characterized by fairness, honesty, responsibility, and honouring commitments, developed by Burns and expanded by Bass and Avolio (Bass, 2000; Bass and Avolio, 2013, 1994). Findings of previous studies are inconclusive regarding the importance of each leadership to improve the performance (Afolabi et al., 2008; Kalsoom et al., 2018). Accordingly, to solve this contradiction in the previous studies especially in the context of developing countries, this study proposed to examine the effect of both leadership on PAS.

Two-Factor Theory

Two-factor theory proposed that there is differences between motivation factors and hygiene factors (Hackman and Oldham, 1976). Recently researchers attempt to examine the applicability of the model in the context of tourism, construction, and higher education. In the study of Lundberg, Gudmundson and Andersson (2009), the authors examined the two factors theory in hospitality and tourism. The findings indicated that the theory is applicable to explain the job satisfaction in these sectors. The study of Alshmemri, Shahwan-Akl, and Maude (2017) examined the literature related to nursing studies that used the theory of two factor. The findings indicated that the theory is applicable and able to explain the job satisfaction and its relationship with performance in the context of nursing. In public sector context, Hur (2018) examined the applicability of the theory and found that the assumption related to the hygiene factors and the motivation factors are in agreement with the theory. This theory is deployed in this study due to its capability in explaining the mechanism of job satisfaction as a mediating variable in the context of leaders.

Performance of Academic Staff

The importance of performance is increasing due to its ability to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of organizations. The high job performance enables different organizations to achieve their objectives and ensure that these organizations survive and thrive. Due to the increasing competition among organizations, both educational and services, it has become imperative for the organizations to improve their performance and focus on their human component to ensure excellence and prosperity (Alaarj et al., 2017b). Employees' job performance enables senior management to assess the performance of the organization and to develop programs and frameworks that can help in improving the overall performance of the organization (Salau et al., 2018). The job performance of employees is important in all organizations, but its importance increases in educational organizations in general and in universities

in particular, because the pivotal role played by the academic staff of universities in creating and nurturing future generations that are capable of advancing the country and the society. Thus, academic staff has important role and contributes to the society in term of teaching and conducting scientific research that increases the efficiency of the university and society (Dhillon et al., 2015; Ghabban et al., 2018).

Proposed Conceptual Framework

Based on the theory of leadership, and two factor theory, this study proposes that the leadership style will affect directly and positively PAS. Further, the study proposes that the job satisfaction will mediate the effect of leadership style on PAS. Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework.

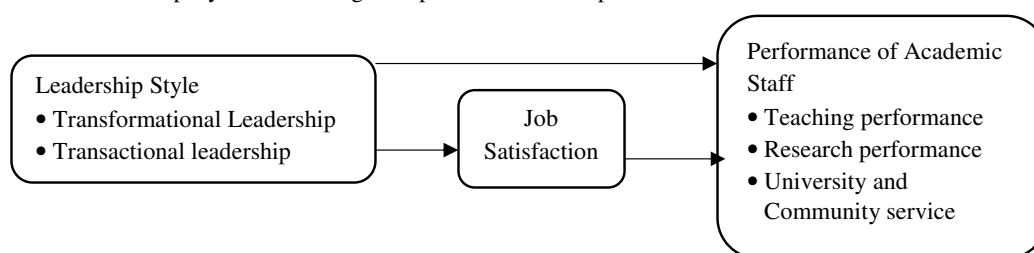


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Leadership Style and PAS

Leadership styles have significant and substantial effects on the performance of individual and organizations (Iqbal et al., 2015). Effective leadership style has always played a positive role in increasing the performance of employees while the ineffective leadership style led to negative performance of employees (Aboassin and Abood, 2013). Iqbal et al. (2015) investigated the effect of leadership style on the performance of employees in business organization and found that leadership style has a significant effect on performance of employees. In the context of academic staff, few studies examined the effect of leadership style on PAS. LiLin (2018) found that the leadership style has positive effect on PAS in China. In this study, it is proposed:

Proposition 1: Leadership styles has a significant positive effect on PAS.

Transformational Leadership and PAS

Most of previous studies examined the effect of transformational leadership on the performance of employees in business organizations (Kalsoom et al., 2018). In academic context, the effect of transformational leadership on PAS was investigated in few studies. In Iraq, Hussain et al. (2014) found that transformational leadership has a significant effect on the job satisfaction of Iraqi academic staff. Vatankhah et al. (2017) found that transformational leadership has a significant effect on the PAS in Iran. Accordingly, it is proposed:

Proposition 2: Transformational leadership has a positive significant effect on PAS.

Transactional Leadership and PAS

Advani and Abbas (2015) found that the effect of transactional is significant on employee performance. Afolabi et al. (2008) also found that the effect of transactional leadership on employee performance is

positive and significant. In UAE, Cedwyn Fernandes and Raed Awamleh (2004) examined the effect of transactional leadership on performance of employees working in the business sector and found the effect is insignificant. In academic context, Sundi (2013) examined the effect of transactional leadership on PAS in Indonesia. The findings indicated that there is a significant effect of transactional leadership on PAS. Thus, it is proposed:

Proposition 3: transactional leadership has a significant positive effect on PAS.

Job Satisfaction as mediator

Job satisfaction could lead to increase and enhance the productivity, innovations and quality services (Ahmad and Jameel 2018). Few studies focused on the role of job satisfaction and its mechanism in developing countries (Al-Abdullat and Dababneh, 2018). Most of previous studies focused on job satisfaction as a predictor of organizational and individual outcome (Kim-Soon et al., 2018, 2017). However, the mediating role of job satisfaction was investigated in a few studies. Wulandari et al. (2015) investigated whether job satisfaction is a mediating or moderating variable between leadership and organizational commitment. The findings indicated that job satisfaction is a mediating variable and it mediated the effect of leadership on organizational commitment of employees in Indonesia. Job satisfaction mediated the effect of emotional intelligence on organizational commitment (Güteryüz et al., 2008), emotional intelligence on performance of project manager (Rezvani et al., 2016). Job satisfaction also mediated the effect of organizational culture on KM creating, disseminating, and applying knowledge (Al-Abdullat and Dababneh, 2018).

Few studies examined the mediating effect of job satisfaction between leadership style and PAS. Wulandari, Mangundjaya and Utoyo (2015) found that the effect of leadership on organizational commitment is mediated by job satisfaction. The job satisfaction also mediated the effect of transformational leadership on quality of work life among accountant in Malaysia (Vianne and Murcia, 2016). Accordingly, it is proposed:

Proposition 4: Job satisfaction mediates the effect of leadership style on PAS.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper proposed that the leadership will have a direct effect on PAS. The research in developing countries are far behind the developed countries and there is a need to enhance the ranking and quality of education in the universities of the developing countries. It is believed that the job satisfaction regarding work environment, salary, and bounce can enhance the relationship between leadership and PAS. Having innovative and supportive leadership in the university along with high level of satisfaction by the academic staff could fundamentally support and improve their performance. Leadership was proposed to have a direct effect on the PAS while the job satisfaction is expected to mediate the positive effect of leadership on PAS. This study was specifically designed to be tested in a developing country. In the future, the authors will examine empirically the proposed model by deploying a population of academic staff in either private or public universities. Stratified sampling or random sampling could be used to collect the data using a questionnaire.

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