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Effects of Leadership Types on Job Satisfaction Among Malaysian Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

Employee job satisfaction is an important component of any job and could be influenced by different types of leadership. Keeping employees happy and satisfied while at the same time being a great leader is an extremely difficult balance, especially in educational leadership, where there are two different types of employees, mainly administrators, and educators. It requires a leader who can balance between the lines and choose the proper leadership style to motivate different types of employees. This study looks at three different leadership types: laissez-faire, transformational and transactional leadership. A purposeful sampling of 393 participants was utilized to sample educators from Malaysia's private and governmental education institutions. Data were collected using questionnaires. The findings indicated that transformational leadership and laissez-faire have a significant relationship to job satisfaction where laissez-faire (β = 0.608, t = 16.576, p = 0.000) and transformational leadership (β = 0.865, t = 8.498; p = 0.000), while transactional leadership has an insignificant relationship with job satisfaction (β = -0.019, t = 0.747, p = 0.227).

Keywords: Job satisfaction, laissez-faire leadership, Malaysian higher education, transactional leadership, transformational leadership

1. Introduction

Educational leadership is a crucial component of any institution. At universities, leaders set the tone for how the academicians and students perform. Ministry of Education Malaysia (2015) has mentioned quality in leadership as an essential essence to improve the quality of education. Successful principals indicate that utilizing various forms of leadership behavior, not just one, will lead to a better school outcome (Kafa & Pashiardis, 2020). Wise implementation of leadership styles will increase the teacher's performance and affect student results.

Higher education has been designed to meet world-class standards of excellence and has placed increased demands on applying various leadership styles. In an academic learning environment, leadership is concerned not just with the organization's needs but also with the mission of the country (Voon, Ngui & Peter, 2009). Existing literature on leadership in education indicates that institutions' leadership studies constantly evolve (Jensen & Vennebo, 2016). Only 23.6 percent of the data collected in previous research on leadership in Malaysian higher education came from

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public universities. In contrast, 68.6 percent came from private universities, data adapted from Lo, Ramayah and Min (2009) and Voon et al. (2009).

A strong leader is crucial in enhancing the teaching and learning process (Treffinger & Isaksen, 2016). University leaders are responsible for the success or failure of their institutions or organizations, and they significantly influence academic programs. Leaders' success in promoting and safeguarding the university's various stakeholders' welfare can significantly impact the academic program. A clear vision, action, modeling the way, ethical connections, congruence, trustworthiness, and collaboration are traits, attributes, and behaviors associated with leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). It is impossible to categorize leadership experiences into either transactional or transformational styles since the experiences of a leader are multidimensional and multi-layered. Social-political, economic, personal, and professional factors present in the leaders' lives impact their personal and professional experiences (Day, 2000). Because effective academic leadership for teaching and learning can only be understood in the context of a leader's experiences, this study aims to look into the features of effective academic leadership for teaching and learning.

1.1. Problem Statement

Job satisfaction, followers' well-being, positive relationships, turnover and organisational productivity are all influenced by relationships with leaders (Boyatzis, Rochford & Taylor, 2015). Having the right type of leader, thus promoting the right organisational culture, is vital to organisations. Unsatisfied employees could lead to high turnover, as leadership and job satisfaction are highly correlated (Nguyen, Nguyen, Mai & Tran, 2020). Nguyen et al. (2020) also mentioned a correlation between trust and corporate governance, where if the employees trust their employers or leaders, the employees are more likely to perform better. This research aims to see the contributing factors to job satisfaction in the staff of higher education institutions in Malaysia. It is also to see whether these factors could predict their satisfaction. This research aims to contribute to the existing studies by examining if transactional leadership, transformational leadership and laissez-faire leadership predict job satisfaction among employees at HEIs in Malaysia.

1.2. Literature Review

1.2.1. Malaysian Higher Education Institution (HEIs)

The modern Malaysian Higher Education system started right after the country's independence in 1957 by establishing the University of Malaya as the first public university in Kuala Lumpur (Wan, 2019). The development of the modern Malaysian higher education system can be divided into three stages. The first phase of action starts from the year 1957 until 1970 (essential education frameworks and additional training), the second phase from the year 1970 until 1990 (democratization of higher education), and the third phase from the year 1990 until the present (development of higher education ecosystems) (Zain et al., 2017). Ministry of Education Malaysia (2015) defined higher education institutions in Malaysia include public and private universities, university colleges, university branches, colleges and polytechnics, and community colleges.

Malaysian public institutions, including polytechnics and community colleges, are government-funded higher education institutions overseen by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (Wan, 2019). Meanwhile, universities and colleges that are privately owned and rely on corporate investment, alumni, and student finance are referred to as Malaysia's private higher education institutions. In sustaining its activities, including overseas branch campuses, private higher education is governed under the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act 1996. (Arokiasamy, Maimunah, Aminah & Jamilah, 2009). As of September 5, 2021, Malaysia has 104 community colleges, 36 polytechnics, 20 public universities, and 437 private higher education institutions, including ten international or overseas branch campuses (MOHE, 2021). Malaysia is one of the countries with an increased number of branch campuses, especially institutions from the United Kingdom and Australia within the ASEAN region (Zain, Aspah, Mohmud, Abdullah & Ebrahimi, 2017). The number of international branch campuses reflects the well-structured higher education system under the education internationalization agenda. The internationalization agenda was first introduced in 2017 under the Malaysia Higher Education Strategic Plan 2007-2015 (Wan, Sirat & Razak, 2018). One of the strategies was to increase the quality of teaching and learning by focusing on leadership as one of the vital agenda projects, one of the seven criticalaction plans in the plan his agenda has been strengthened by additional supplementary policy: Through AKePT Infrastructure, the National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2 Beyond 2020: Intensifying Malaysia's Global Reach aims to provide structured training programs for academic and non-academic employees in teaching and learning, governance, research, innovation, and commercialization (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). The Malaysia Higher Education Strategic Plan 2007-2015 agenda continues to the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) 2015-2025. This plan focuses on the ten agendas to transform higher education delivery and output. The University Transformation Program (UTP) was introduced under the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) starting 2015-2025 to strengthen career pathways and leadership development.

1.2.2. Transformational Leadership Versus Transactional Leadership

The study of different types of leadership, mainly transactional and transformational leadership, provides a unique insight and could significantly contribute to leadership theory (Mufeed, 2018). Transformational leadership changed how leadership theories evolved from focusing on leader quality characteristics aspect (Derue, Nahgrang, Wellman & Humphrey, 2011; Yukl & Mahsud, 2010) into an element of the relationship between leaders and their members (Barnett, 2017; Bateh & Heyliger, 2014; Li & Hung, 2009). Transformational leaders appear to bring value and motivation to produce excellent workplace relationships, leading to effective work outcomes (Li & Hung, 2009). Transformational leadership acts as a caretaker to promote and maintain workplace 'social networks' both lateral and vertical, which will increase firm task performance and dynamic participation community (Ribeiro, Yücel & Gomes, 2018). Besides that, a dimension of transformational leadership can promote employees' job satisfaction when they anticipate self-determination, competency, impact, and high meaning from their work and ikely instill pride charisma from their leaders (Joo & Lim, 2013; Kim, Kim & Jung, 2018).

Appealing to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, transactional leadership can be defined as the leader who ensures and protects their power by providing for their member's lower-order needs, which contrasts with transformational leaders that support their members to approach self-realization (Bass & Riggio, 2005). Thus, transactional leadership in the organization will assess the needs of subordinates and give more attention to administrative issues to compensate for those needs in exchange for work (Chen, Ning, Yang, Feng & Yang, 2018). The distinctions between transactional and transformational leadership typically favor one over the other, but this is not always the case. Productive and effective leaders use transformational and transactional leadership (Tepper et al., 2018) by applying dualistic techniques through adjacency between transformational and transactional leadership (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). One characteristic of influential leaders is adapting one's leadership style depending on the situation (Schulze & Pinkow, 2020).

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) development meets the benchmark to analyze organizational leadership styles that stretch over transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles has undergone many alterations. Bass and Riggio introduced the first leadership style in the 1980s transformational leadership model (Bass & Riggio, 2005). MLQ can identify a vast dimension of leader behavior and tell the difference between transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership (Rowold, 2005). MLQ factor analysis results found significant correlations between transactional contingent reward leadership and individualized consideration, which contingent reward leadership can be a tool to build trust between leaders and teams underworks performance and fairness (Rowold, 2005). Besides that, transactional leadership is considered a basis for developing transformational leadership (Kabeyi, 2018). Finally, contingent reward (compensation) plays a role in job satisfaction in the organization (Bass & Riggio, 2005).

Bass' Transformational Leadership Theory as the foundation for MLQ development has gained substantial scholarly attention until today (Siangchokyoo, Klinger & Campion 2020). It has been criticized for being too broad and less clear where the theory focuses on the heroic aspect of leadership (Northouse, 2019). The critics have disputed that the leader's charisma is just one of the transformational leadership variables (Lee, 2014). Transformational leadership theory from Bass clarifies the criticism of the original leadership theory by stressing leader behavior to occupy follower transformation, leaders method used to transform follower and leader-follower connection consequences (Siangchokyoo et al., 2020). Even though the current organizational change is evolved due to the dynamic environment, the transformational leadership theory is still relevant to promoting a stakeholder mindset to encourage the organization to innovate (Asbari, Santoso & Prasetya, 2020).

1.2.3. Job Satisfaction

An early definition of job satisfaction is how the person is at ease with their job (Paul, 1997). Job satisfaction can also be defined as a person's contentment with their work (Aziri, 2011), and the productivity of a contented worker is better than the uncontented ones (Sageer, 2012). Job satisfaction measurement results can differ depending on the affective (feeling) or cognitive weight (Bhattarai, 2020; Thompson & Phua, 2012). The benefit of an employee with reasonable job satisfaction is that their performance will improve, develop a positive attitude, increase morale, and have a friendly relationship with co-workers (Natasha & Francisco, 2016). Besides that, job satisfaction also showed that employees become more innovative and creative and participate more in meetings or group discussions (Davidescu, Apostu, Paul & Casuneanu, 2020).

1.3. Hypothesis

1.3.1. Laissez-faire and Job Satisfaction

Previous research has shown that the leader's leadership style significantly impacts job satisfaction (Barling, Kelloway & Iverson, 2003). According to studies at profit university online adjunct faculty in the United States, administrators' laissez-faire leadership style is insufficient to show their permanent link with job satisfaction. (Barnett, 2017). A recent Albagawi (2019) study found that an institution's laissez-faire leadership style is a negligible predictor of employee satisfaction. Multiple research within the academic setting found a correlation between laissez-faire attitude to job satisfaction (Barnett, 2018; Munir & Iqbal, 2018; Musinguzi, Namale, Rutebemberwa, Dahal, Nahirya-Ntege & Kekitiinwa, 2018; Albagawi, 2019; Budiasih, Hartanto, Ha, Nguyen & Usanti, 2020). A study in Ha'il City, Saudi Arabia, found a positive relationship between leadership styles and job satisfaction among hospital staff and managers, exemplified by laissez-faire leadership (Albagawi, 2019). In a study conducted in Jakarta, Indonesia, private sector organizations demonstrated a significant relationship between employee job satisfaction and adopting of laissez-faire leadership (Budiasih et al., 2020).

H1: There is a positive relationship between laissez-faire and job satisfaction.

1.3.2. Transformational leadership and job satisfaction

Employee job satisfaction appears to be influenced by transformational leadership (Barnett, 2017). Some research defends transactional and transformational leadership's importance for employee satisfaction (Lok & Crawford, 2004). Compared to transactional leadership, transformational leadership showed a greater significance toward job satisfaction (Hassan, Ab. Wahab, Mat Halif, Ali, Abdul Aziz & Abd. Hamid, 2018). Employee job satisfaction seems to be enhanced by transformational leadership. (Albagawi, 2019; Asghar & Oino, 2018; Barnett, 2018; Budiasih et al., 2020; Kebede & Demeke, 2017; Musinguzi et al., 2018; Mwesigwa, Tusiime & Ssekiziyivu, 2020). Prior studies found that transformation leadership in retail outlets in the UK helps stimulate staff to solve challenging problems creatively, thus developing positive relationships toward job satisfaction (Asghar & Oino, 2018). By maximizing academic staff autonomy, transformational leadership styles positively link with staff job satisfaction in Ethiopian public universities (Musinguzi et al., 2018). Finally, transformational leadership styles of 'university managers,' such as employees being recognized, motivated, and rewarded, are favorably connected with job satisfaction among academic staff in Ugandan Public Universities (Mwesigwa et al., 2020).

H2: There is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction.

1.3.3. Transactional leadership and job satisfaction

Transactional leadership is associated with rewards such as promotion and salary bonuses for those who achieved the target and punishments such as the cut in salary or contract termination for those who fail to achieve the target (Jansen, Vera & Crossan, 2009; Saleem, 2015; Specchia et al., 2021). Transactions (reward or punishment) could be a basis for motivation. Therefore transactional leadership could have a long-term impact on satisfaction and performance. However, it may not be effective in all scenarios (Bass & Riggio, 2005). Prior studies discussed that neither transactional nor transformational leadership could improve employee job satisfaction. Barnett (2018) showed that transactional leadership is more toward remittance and job monitoring, thus negatively affecting overall job satisfaction. Another study found that transactional leadership positively impacts job satisfaction through regulating job worth or equity and meeting desired needs inside the workplace (Albagawi, 2019). Some studies also found that leadership styles positively affect employees’ job satisfaction (Budiasih et al., 2020; Hassan et al., 2018). A prior study showed that job satisfaction was positively correlated with transactional leadership (behavior and attributed) in health workers in Uganda (Musinguzi et al., 2018).

Furthermore, among police officers in Bukit Aman, Malaysia, some research discovered a positive association between transactional leadership style and employee work satisfaction, considerably influenced by contingent compensation (Hassan et al., 2018). Lastly, a study in Uganda public universities showed a positive correlation between transactional leadership stay and employee job satisfaction by rewarding them via incentive programs or fringe benefits (Mwesigwa et al., 2020).

H3: There is a positive relationship between Transactional leadership and job satisfaction

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

Research design is the use of processes, protocols, and recommendations based on empirical evidence that sets the framework for a research. Quantitative research method deals with measures and analysis variables in order to get results. This research employs a quantitative cross sectional research design as the data was collected at one point in time using questionnaires as the instrument.

2.2. Population-Sampling

The authors employed a non-probability purposive sampling procedure to sample participants. Based on the input parameters of 0.80 β Power, an α of 0.05, medium effect size (f^2), and three predictors for the model, G*Power (Erdfelder, Faul, Buchner & Lang, 2009). A Priori power analysis showed that the proposed sample size needed for the model is 77. Purposive and snowball sampling were used to get respondents by sending educators emails and a link through Google Form for the respondents to fill out. The total data gathered for this study was 401, but only 393 were useable. Before embarking on data analysis, the G*Power (Erdfelder et al., 2009) post hoc power analysis showed that 393 useable datasets yielded a power of 0.9999 for three predictors, further than the threshold of the suggested power of 0.80. Therefore, the 393 datasets gathered have the required power to reject the null hypothesis (Erdfelder et al., 2009).

Table 1 depicts the demographics of those who took part in the survey. Three hundred ninety-three respondents embrace this study. The respondents were informed and explained the study's goal before the data was collected. The descriptive statistics indicate that the majority of respondents were male. The 36-40 age range represented the largest age group. Most of the respondents in this study are married. For ethnicity, most of them were Malays, followed by Chinese and Indian. As for education background, the largest education cluster was denoted by the doctorate holder, mainly from the humanities field, working with private higher education institutions and already served more than ten years.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

N: 393		
Items	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Gender		
Male	218	55.5
Female	175	44.5
Age		
20-25	16	4.1
26-30	29	7.4
31-35	52	13.2
36-40	126	32.1
41-45	74	18.8
46-50	96	24.4
Marital Status		
Single	154	39.2
Married	239	60.8
Ethnicity		
Malays	185	47.1
Indian	83	21.1
Chinese	125	31.8

Table 1. (continued)

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Education		
Bachelor's Degree	17	4.3
Master's Degree	163	41.5
Doctorate	213	54.2
Field		
Humanities	198	50.4
Sciences	195	49.6
Years of Service		
Less Than 5 Years	90	22.9
5 Years to 10 Years	38	9.7
More Than 10 Years	265	67.4
Higher Education Institution		
Government	155	39.4
Private	238	60.6

2.3. Instruments and Data Collection

The instrument used for this research was questionnaires. Questionnaires were used because the research wanted to capture the perceptions and opinions of participants on their organizational leader. The questionnaire was first drafted, and given to a subject matter expert to vet the content for content validity. After contents have been verified, a pilot study was conducted on a small sample of participants to see if they understand the questions and if there were anything that was inappropriate. After the pilot test, the questionnaires were emailed to the full group of participants.

2.4. Validity and Reliability

The statistical software of Smart PLS 3.3.3 (Henseler, Ringle & Sinkovics, 2009; Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2014; Sarstedt, Ringle, Smith, Reams & Hair, 2014; Sarstedt, Ringle, Cheah, Ting, Moisescu & Radomir, 2019) was employed for the measurement model and SPSS process to conduct the study's hypothesis. The analysis examines the measurement model's reliability, convergence, and divergent validity. The study evaluates the structural model and answers the hypotheses once the measurement model is confirmed according to the prescribed threshold.

2.4.1. Measurement Model

All of the indicators' loadings are over the required level of > 0.7, as shown in Table 2. (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2014) except JS4. The indicators' loading values ranged from 0.694 to 0.935. The results indicated that all the indicators are loaded significantly for their constructs, showing that it belongs with that construct and less on the other constructs. (Henseler et al., 2009, 2014). Item JS4 did not drop from this study as AVE for job satisfaction construct is higher than .500. Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) are used to assess the measurement's internal consistency. According to Hair et al. (2014), reliability shows the degree to which a set of indicators displays internal consistency to the construct. Table 2 showed that all reliability values of Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.877 to 0.919, and CR ranged from 0.904 to 0.938 for all constructs, which exceeds the lowest proposed value of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1994).

The value of the average variance extracted (AVE) is also examined in this study. To assess AVE, the value should be higher than 0.50 for it to have adequate variance (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2014). Results indicate that the constructs' AVE values ranged from .654 to .773, showing a sufficient degree of convergent validity. Social science research needs valid and reliable data (Cabrera-Nguyen, 2010).

Table 2. Measurement Model for Convergent Validity of the Reflective

Construct	Indicators	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Transformational Leadership	TFL1	0.912	0.919	0.938	0.753
	TFL2	0.824			
	TFL3	0.856			
	TFL4	0.841			
	TFL5	0.904			
Transactional Leadership	TSL1	0.931	0.882	0.904	0.654
	TSL2	0.811			
	TSL3	0.760			
	TSL4	0.784			
	TSL5	0.742			
Laissez-Faire	LF1	0.935	0.877	0.910	0.773
	LF2	0.902			
	LF3	0.793			
Job Satisfaction	JS1	0.821	0.896	0.918	0.692
	JS2	0.874			
	JS3	0.916			
	JS4	0.694			
	JS5	0.839			

Note1: CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted.
Note2: AVE = (summation of the square of the factor loadings) / [(summation of the square of the factor loadings) + (summation of the error variances)].
Note3: CR = (square of the summation of the factor loadings) / [(square of the summation of the factor loadings) + (square of the summation of the errorvariances)].

The discriminant validity is verified via tougher criteria, i.e., the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) (Henseler et al., 2009, 2014). Hamid, Sami and Sidek (2017) study showed that the HTMT criterion has high sensitivity in discovering discriminant validity instead of the cross-loadings approach and Fornell and Larcker criterion. The HTMT values in Table 3 demonstrate that they are less than 0.85. (ranging from .269 to .787). The results indicate that all constructs are realistically diverse (Henseler et al., 2014). As a result, the discriminant's validity is established.

Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Contruct	1	2	3	4
1. Job Satisfaction				
2. Laissez-Faire	0.335			
3. Transformational Leadership	0.545	0.440		
4. Transactional Leadership	0.434	0.269	0.787	

* Discriminant validity criteria are established at HTMT 0.85

Compared to other constructs in the PLS model, discriminant validity estimation ensures that a reflective construct strongly correlates with its items. (Hair, Hollingsworth, Randolph & Chong, 2017). The constructs' discriminant and convergent validity are determined using the criterion described above. The measurement model demonstrated excellent discriminant and convergent validity, and the confirmatory factor analysis results validated the study variable also was verified distinctively for further analysis.

2.5. Ethics Committee Permission

The researcher has obtained permission from the ethics committee confirming that no part of the questionnaire or informed consent form would harm any of the participant in any way on 4th January 2021 (approval number: CGSEC2021-FOELS01). The informed consent was also transparent in what was required from the participants when participating in the study.

3. Findings

Data were evaluated using variance-based SEM software, i.e., Smart PLS 3.3.3, to examine the measurement and structural models. Variance-based SEM software was used to calculate the relationship between constructs of the study model. Hair et al. (2017) proposed that this study examines data normality by looking at multivariate skewness and multivariate kurtosis. Results indicated that Mardia's multivariate skewness (b=9.465, $p<0.01$) and Mardia's multivariate kurtosis (b=31.432, $p<0.01$): hence this study decided to use non-parametric analysis software, i.e., Smart PLS.

3.1. Common Method Variance (CMV)

Common Method Variance (CMV) issue is raised when data are accomplished from a single source, and respondents answered both exogenous and endogenous simultaneously. According to (Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2011), single-source data could trigger the issue of CMV. Overcoming the problem of CMV, this study suggested the statistical method proposed by (Kock, 2015) by examining the full collinearity. Table 4 denotes the examination for the test. The full collinearity method regresses all the variables to a common variable.

Table 4. Full Collinearity Test

Job Satisfaction	Laissez-Faire	Transformational Leadership	Transactional Leadership
2.867	2.305	5.084	2.573

Table 4 shows that Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for job satisfaction is (2.867), Laissez-Faire (2.305), Transformational Leadership (5.084), and transactional leadership (2.573). The full collinearity method generated a VIF of 5 for transformational leadership and less than 5 for other constructs (Hair et al., 2014). Thus, single-source bias is not a threat to this study model.

3.2. Structural Model

Table 5. Path Coefficient for Main Model

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta	SE	t-values	p-value	VIF	Result
H1	LF → JS	0.608	0.038	16.576	0.000	1.244	Supported
H2	TFL → JS	0.865	0.101	8.498	0.000	2.938	Supported
H3	TSL → JS	-0.019	0.085	0.747	0.227	2.572	Not Supported

Note 1: JS-Job Satisfaction, LF-Laissez-Faire, TFL-Transformational Leadership, TSL-Transactional Leadership

Before embarking on the structural model, it is essential to ensure no collinearity threat. Table 5 demonstrates that VIF values are lower than the threshold value of 3.3 (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2006), thus indicating that there is no collinearity drawback in this study. The coefficient of determination value (R^2) of 0.651 advocating transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire could justify 65.1% of variances in the exogenous job satisfaction. To calculate the structural model, beta value, standard error, t-values, p-value, and VIF via bootstrapping technique with a resample of 5,000 were analyzed. The results reveal that transformational leadership and laissez-faire have a significant relationship with the job satisfaction with laissez-faire ($\beta = 0.608$, $t = 16.576$, $p = 0.000$) and transformational leadership ($\beta = 0.865$, $t = 8.498$; $p = 0.000$), Thus, H1 and H2 is supported. While, results reveal that transactional leadership have an insignificant relationship with the job satisfaction ($\beta = -0.019$, $t = 0.747$, $p = 0.227$) hence, H3 is not supported.

4. Discussion

This study found a statistically significant link between laissez-faire, transformational, and job satisfaction, which aligns with previous research. In a study of local government employees in Ghana, Mickson and Anlesinya (2019) discovered that transformational and transactional leadership impacted job satisfaction. Although some research has identified a link between transactional leadership and job satisfaction (Mickson & Anleisha, 2019; Dartey-Baah & Ampofo, 2016), our study found no such relationship. This finding is consistent with a prior study on transactional leadership in Malaysia, which revealed no or a weak relationship between work satisfaction and transactional leadership (Lor & Hassan, 2017). Transactional leadership may not impact Malaysian HEIs because government employees do not receive bonuses and are rarely punished other than receiving a warning letter from higher-ups. According to previous studies, transformational leadership contributes more to job performance and turnover intentions than transactional leadership (Siew, 2017).

Since transformational and transactional leadership styles have substantial positive and statistically significant correlations, it is recommended that university administrators do not choose a single leadership style while managing the academic staff (Asrar-ul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016) to inspire and encourage academics using transformational and transactional leadership elements. Therefore, transformational and transactional leadership reinforce each other. To keep motivation high in the near term, rewards for task accomplishment are required (Li & Hung, 2019). Empowering academics and challenging them would motivate them to succeed at or above their current ability level. There are several implications for future research. It can be expanded geographically (for example, a comparative analysis of different countries) or institutionally (e.g., in other educational institutions, such as schools or pre-schools).

4.1 Implications for Practice

Supervisors should increase faculty members' job satisfaction by defining their role as a leader and demonstrating certain leadership behaviours. Supervisors should also give more responsibility to the academic members to show trust. Academics believe their work mainly controls their career advancement, with little influence from leaders. People may continue to expect leaders to play supporting roles due to the negative correlation between rank and desire for a laissez-faire leadership style. This data, however, challenges the concept that tenure and passion for a laissez-faire leadership style are positively related (Gemeda & Lee, 2020). However, higher-ranking academics may view leaders as meddling with their tasks and prefer a more laissez-faire leadership approach. Higher-ranking academics receive a key performance index (KPI), a list of things they need to achieve for the year, which drives them to push their employees. Through the leader’s KPI, it would be cascaded to the academics. The academics would set their own pace on how to achieve each item on the list. The significant positive link between academics and transactional leadership ($p < 0.005$) style also demonstrates that higher-level academics favor leaders who focus on rewarding good performance while allowing them to grow their careers in ways they choose. The findings generally show that a single strategy does not guide academic leadership in Malaysian public universities. At certain stages of their careers, academics need to change the ways of leadership styles.

5. Conclusion

This research indicates that there should not be one type of leadership style implemented in higher academic institutions in Malaysia. Previous research findings from Che Cob and Zainal Abidin (2020) indicates that Malaysian university leaders inclined more towards transactional leadership, as Malaysians work well with rewards and punishment. This research indicated the opposite, as transactional was not statistically significant. This might be due to circumstances such as COVID 19, where most of the work was conducted from home, providing the academics with more freedom to do their work without constant supervision. This shows that a situational approach would be a better way of leading higher academic institutions (Mews, 2019). In order to facilitate this, leadership development programs should be offered in Malaysia or abroad to help both new and veteran academicians and deans. These programs could help new leaders reach their full potential, develop new skills, and inform experienced leaders with validated skills. Then, to prepare new educators for their new role as new leaders, authorities must establish a well-structured orientation program that is theoretically and culturally grounded. This program can help new instructors succeed by easing their transition into the organization (Mews, 2019). Higher Education can improve educator quality by providing proper training and knowledge-based workshops (Priest & Seemiller, 2018). Educators must be prepared by attending training to impart knowledge to pupils efficiently and effectively. For institutions to have great educators, they must have a strong leader to guide them in the right direction.

To gain interactive teaching methods, academic leaders must be skilled in identifying learning programs, engagement activities, strategic advances, research initiatives, methodologies, structures, quality improvements, and priorities that support their goals (Guterresa, Armanu & Rofiaty, 2020). They must also guarantee that agreed-upon improvements are executed, maintained, and sustained. Universities must engage in academic innovations that offer targeted support at particular strategic levels if they are serious about boosting academic standards and quality (Priest & Seemiller, 2018). The advantage of academic leadership is that it can influence student learning and raise teacher and staff performance standards (Al-Malki & Juan, 2020). These can be achieved by improving the academician working environment, skills, motivation, knowledge, and commitment (Andriani, Kesumawati & Kristiawan, 2018).

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Ethics Committee Permission

The researcher has obtained permission from the ethics committee confirming that no part of the questionnaire or informed consent form would harm any of the participant in any way on 4th January 2021 (approval number: CGSEC2021-FOELS01). The informed consent was also transparent in what was required from the participants when participating in the study.