

The Role of Transformational Leadership Style in Enhancing Lecturers' Job Satisfaction

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Abstract

The challenges confronting Malaysia's Research Universities in their futuristic movement towards world Class University are enormous. Leadership styles employed in higher education institutions play crucial role in achieving lecturers' job satisfaction. This paper examines the influence of transformational leadership style employed by departments heads on improving lecturers' job satisfaction. The population comprised the lecturers from three leading Research Universities. The responses were subjected to multiple regression analysis. The findings uncovered 'inspirational motivation' and 'idealized influence' as most often used practices of transformational leadership by the departments heads and identified that transformational leadership improves lecturers' job satisfaction more than other leadership styles.

Key Words: Research University, Transformational leadership, job satisfaction

1. Introduction

The success of human capital development is closely related to quality of a national education system (National Higher Education Action Plan, 2007). Hence, higher education institutions play important role in influencing human capital development (Morshidi, 2010). This reveals outstanding position of higher education institutions as a fundamental section in cultivating human resources in each country for meeting developmental needs. To transform the country to an international center of higher education excellence until 2020 and beyond is the vision of Malaysia's government for higher education sector (Malaysia Ministry of Education, 2008; NHEAP, 2007). In order to facilitate this transformation, five public universities have been recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) as the leading Research Universities (RUs) alongside a magnificent budget allocating by the government (Mustapa Bin Mohamed, 2008). For fulfilling the government's demands, these universities should vigorously contribute in quality research and provide a center to attract international students from around the world (Musa Bin Mohamed, 2007). Therefore they need to increase their efforts; and their administrators and lecturers have to make tremendous strides to achieve the goals as well. In order to materialize their mission, however, higher education institutions need proactive leaders and satisfied lecturers (Zaidatol et al., 2011).

2. Departments Heads' Leadership Styles

In institutions of higher education departments heads are first line leaders who directly influence the quality of their departments. They have different responsibilities in their departments; such as, member of department, motivator, spokesperson, deep listener, syllabus designer, enabler, system designer, and mentor (Thomas, & Schuh, 2004; Bowman, 2002). Furthermore, departments heads are expected to play pivotal role to make the process of change faster in academic departments (McArthur, 2002). The field of higher education has been confronted with increasingly rapid advancement in the past thirty years (Oshagbemi, 1997).

In line with this advancement, higher education leaders are confronting with different changes in their institutions. Financial, operational, and legislative are some of these changes which affecting outcomes of institutions of higher education (Middlehurst, 2004). Focusing on their role, departments heads in Malaysian RUs can take action to transform Malaysia's higher education institutions to world class institutions (Sadeghi & Zaidatol, 2012). Therefore; higher education administrators should select effective leadership style to direct their institutions toward success. Transformational leadership is one of the integrative leadership theories; directing effective organizational change is the main characteristic of this theory (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Griffin & Moorhead, 2006).

2.1. Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership is a new paradigm of leadership that attracts scholars' attention (Northouse, 2007; Yukl, 2006). The concepts of transformational and transactional leadership are among the most popular and current approaches to understanding leader effectiveness. It was first mentioned in 1978 by James McGregor Burns (Hautala, 2006; Hinkin, & Schriesheim, 2008), and was developed as a new paradigm of leadership by Bass (1985), Bass and Avolio in 1994, 1999, and 2004 (Avolio, & Bass, 2004; Hinkin, & Schriesheim, 2008). This theory of leadership consists of three parts namely transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership.

Transformational leadership describes the process of constructing commitment to the organization's objectives and making followers more confident to achieve these objectives (Yukl, 2006). In this leadership style, leaders use their personal values, vision, commitment to a mission, and passion to energize and move others towards accomplishment of organizational goals (Pierce, & Newstorm, 2008). Transformational leaders are proactive in that they can develop followers' capabilities, help map new directions, mobilize resources, facilitate and support employees, and respond to organizational challenge. They consider change whenever it is necessary for the organization (Bass, 1990; Conningham, & Corderio, 2006). They act as agents of change and try to create it. This type of leadership increases organizational effectiveness and productivity. In comparison to transactional leaders, a transformational leader successfully leads an organization toward effectiveness, satisfies subordinates and motivates them to put their extra effort in success of the organization. Transformational leaders can encourage the followers to put the organizational vision and goals before their personal interest (Reuvers et al., 2008). Transformational leadership consists of five constructs namely idealized influence (attribute and behavior), intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration.

Transactional leadership emphasizes the transaction or exchange that takes place among leaders, colleagues, and followers. This leadership style concentrates on keeping the current situation and motivating people through mutual agreement (Bass, 1985). A transactional leader is not capable of developing a strong emotional relationship with subordinates or motivating them to perform more than what their ability permits them. Rather, a transactional leader is supposed to motivate subordinates by determining goals and setting rewards for any desired outcome. Ideally, transactional leadership can play a positive role in subordinates' satisfaction and level of performance. Using rewards by transactional leader does not result in the long-term change which is characteristic of transformational leadership (Bass, 1997). Transactional leaders are people whose goal is to ensure that standards are met; they interfere before or after noncompliance or mistakes occurred. It consists of three constructs namely contingent reward, management-by-exception active and passive.

Laissez-faire leader avoids active presence and makes decision. As Bass and Avolio (1994) noted "the laissez-faire style is the avoidance or absence of the leadership and is, by definition, the most inactive—as well as the most ineffective according to almost all research on the style" (p.4). Leaders who apply laissez-faire leadership avoid making decisions, are uncertain in taking action, and are absent when needed. These leaders give up responsibility, and do not use their authority (Zaidatol et al., 2011). They exhibit passive indifference about the task and subordinates by ignoring problems as well as subordinates' needs (Antonakis et al., 2003; Yukl, 2006). It is believed that laissez-faire is the non-leadership construct of the transformational leadership (Limsila & Ogunlana, 2008).

3. Lecturers' Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is an important factor affecting lecturers' performance. In higher education institutions lecturers' performance has a crucial role in facilitating the forward movement of the institutions (Sadeghi et al., 2012).

Obviously, academic members' beliefs and attitudes are significant factors and have a connection with their effectiveness and quality performance. Therefore, higher education administrators should pay attention to the organizational factors related to satisfaction levels among academic staff (Tu et al., 2005). Lecturers are the employees of higher education institutions, and their satisfaction with working environment can foster quality teaching and research. Lecturers' necessities must, therefore, be satisfied to better the working environment and make them capable to attain excellent research and teaching performance (Chen et al., 2006). In order to be able to improve its performance and increase the satisfaction of its students a university needs to improve the performance of the lecturers. Lecturers' performance could be increased by enhancing their job satisfaction (Chen et al., 2006; Sadeghi et al., 2012; Shieh et al., 2001). Lecturers as human capital have a crucial role for achieving the goal of RUs, therefore, improving their job satisfaction as an important factor that contributes to organizational effectiveness is the responsibility of RUs administrators. Most of the research on leadership styles of academic administrators and how they affect employees' job satisfaction has been conducted in western countries and very few of them have concentrated on developing countries (Lo et al., 2010; Voon et al., 2010; Sadeghi et al., 2012). Hence, this research intends to investigate which departments heads' leadership styles has predictive effect on lecturers' job satisfaction.

4. Method

4.1. Population and Sampling

The present study was conducted at three leading Research University in Malaysia. In this study, a quantitative descriptive survey design was employed. The population of this study consisted of 3400 lecturers including professors, associate professors, senior lecturers, and lecturers. The sample size was determined at 305 lecturers based on the G*Power 3.1 statistical software (Faulstich et al., 2007). The proportional stratified random sampling was used to ensure that an adequate number of subjects were chosen from each university.

4.2. Instruments

This study utilized two standard questionnaires including the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire 5x (MLQ 5x) developed by Avolio & Bass (2004) and the Wood Faculty Job Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction Scale (WFJSDS) developed by Wood (1976). These questionnaires were employed in several research studies (e.g. Wood, 1976; Bowen & Radhakrishna, 1991; Antonakis et al., 2003; Castillo & Cano, 2004; Avolio & Bass, 2004). Both questionnaires were well-established and had acceptable content and construct validity. In order to examine content validity of the questionnaires for the present study, a panel of judges was established who had professional knowledge in validation and a strong background in the field. They reviewed the instruments and advised the researchers in making the necessary modifications.

To check internal consistency of the questionnaires, Cronbach's alpha was calculated. The MLQ 5x had a α value of .93 and the WFJSDS had a α value of .97. Accordingly, the results of Cronbach's alpha made the appropriateness of internal consistency and indicated that the instruments were reliable to be used. The five-point Likert scale was utilized ranging from 0 (Not at all) to 4 (frequently if not always) for the MLQ 5x items; and 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied) for the WFJSDS items. Based on exhibition score, those constructs of job satisfaction which received mean score more than 3.67 were computed a new variable namely 'most satisfying variables'.

4.3. Data Analysis

Employing descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) the possible score for three constructs of departments heads' leadership styles, lecturers intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction were calculated and then categorized. A stepwise multiple regression was run to scrutinize predictors of most satisfying variables in the lecturers' job satisfaction.

5. Findings and Discussion

The findings revealed that departments heads in Malaysian RUs display transformational leadership style fairly often, transactional leadership sometimes and laissez-faire leadership style once in a while as perceived by the lecturers (Table 1). Although results of transformational and transactional leadership are in line with MLQ norm (Avolio & Bass, 2004), however, laissez-faire received mean score more than MLQ norm.

This means that RUs' departments' heads use this leadership behavior more than norm. The results also showed that the 'individualized consideration' is practiced less often than other constructs of transformational leadership such as 'inspirational motivation' and 'idealized influence', indicating that heads of departments do not highly practiced transformational leadership. Indeed, the term 'inspirational motivation' describes compelling vision of the future for followers, motivating followers to improve their expectations, and preparing challenges and meaning for subordinates' task (Hopton et al., 2013; Jung & Chow, 2008). Using 'inspirational motivation' RUs' departments heads can inspire lecturers, encourage their responsibilities, and envisage the future of departments by confidence. Exhibiting 'idealized influence', leaders concentrate on values, beliefs, and sense of mission (Antonakis et al., 2003). This reveals that the heads of departments are the type of leaders who fairly often talk about crucial values in organization and concentrate on attractive and worthwhile visions and the ethical aspects of their activities as values are very important for them.

Based on findings of the present study, among the transformational leadership's constructs, 'inspirational motivation' and 'idealized influence' received the highest mean scores. These constructs represent the charismatic aspect of transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Avolio, 1990). Hence, it can be concluded that departments heads are more often exhibiting charismatic leadership behaviors but not always. Leaders who follow charismatic leadership are powerful and confident. According to Antonakis et al., (2003), they play role models, concentrate on values, and focus on ambitious goals and future vision as well.

The results of the present study indicated that departments heads consider lecturers' concerns and satisfy their needs sometimes. This finding is consistent with several studies conducted in different disciplines and institutions in Malaysia (e.g. Zaidatol et al., 2004, Lo et al., 2009, and Voon et al., 2011). These relevant studies repeatedly found that the 'individualized consideration' and 'intellectual stimulation' as constructs of transformational leadership style received lowest mean scores indicating that they need to be more practiced by leaders in their institutions.

The 'contingent reward' includes clarifying those works which are eligible to receive rewards and utilizing incentives to influence motivation. The results also showed that departments' heads demonstrate the 'contingent reward' more often and the 'passive management-by-exception' less often than active management-by-exception indicating that they are consistent with MLQ norm. However, the 'management-by-exception' (active) received mean score more than MLQ norm. It may be concluded that RUs' departments heads are more authoritarian than what is needed. Regarding 'contingent reward' result indicating that the departments heads attempt to identify lecturers' needs and to satisfy recognized needs by organizing different rewards more often.

The results also showed that the 'laissez-faire' behavior is practiced more frequently than what is required for an effective leader (Table 1). This type of behavior is resulted in avoiding clear description of agreements, expectations, and goals (Bass et al., 2003). Laissez-faire leaders give no feedback, give up responsibility, and make little endeavor to help followers (Northouse, 2007). Regarding laissez-faire leadership this results in agreement with the result found by Voon et al., (2010). They found that 'laissez-faire' received a mean score more than the average. Toor and Ofori (2009), however, found a mean score of .68 for the 'laissez-faire' which is same as the MLQ norm.

With regard to lecturers' intrinsic, extrinsic, and overall job satisfaction, analysis of data indicated that the lecturers perceived themselves as having moderate satisfaction level (Table 2). These findings support those of Eyupoglu and Saner's (2009), Platsidou and Diamantopoulou's (2009), and Scheroder's (2008) who demonstrated that academic staff enjoyed moderate level of job satisfaction. Moreover, the findings of this study are consistent with the findings of Scheroder' (2008) and Brown and Sargeant (2007) who revealed that academic staff were more intrinsically satisfied than extrinsically. Among all constructs of intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction, the work itself, growth, and interpersonal relations received mean score more than 3.67. Therefore, these constructs were recognized as most satisfying variables of lecturers' job satisfaction. The highest mean score of the work itself emphasized that this construct of intrinsic satisfaction is the most important factor for the RUs lecturers. It additionally means lecturers feel content with the nature of their work. This implies the RUs lecturers have a sense of satisfaction and pride for working at their university. Regarding growth, the results imply that lecturers' opportunities for professional promotion such as promoting their academic rank are in a good and appropriate condition. In terms of interpersonal relations result emphasized the importance of having relation with others for the RUs lecturers. It may imply that these universities have a good interpersonal work climate.

This additionally may mean that department climate is friendly and collaborative, and that the respondents have good relations and cooperation with others such as their department head, colleagues, and students. The findings of this study support those of Sharma and Joyti's (2009), Scheroder's (2008), Worell et al., (2006), and Oberman's (2005) who reported the work itself, interpersonal relations and growth as most satisfying variables of job satisfaction in academic settings.

Result of regression analysis revealed that transformational leadership and laissez-faire were significant predictors of most satisfying variables of lecturers' job satisfaction, and that transformational leadership is the dominant predictor (Table 3). The results depicted that two variables could significantly contribute towards the variance of most satisfying variables of lecturers' job satisfaction as predictors. The combination of two predictors explained 14% of the variance in most satisfying variables of lecturers' job satisfaction. On the basis of standardized beta coefficients, the most prominent variable associated with job satisfaction was transformational leadership (beta=.30), followed by laissez-faire (beta= -.14). Negative beta coefficient weight for laissez-faire leadership demonstrates that utilizing this type of leadership style leads to a reduction in lecturers' job satisfaction level. It implies exhibiting more transformational leadership behaviors by the RUs' departments heads enhance lecturers' job satisfaction, and employing laissez-faire leadership behavior reduces lecturers' job satisfaction. The findings of this study support previous research which revealed the greater effect of transformational leadership on followers' job satisfaction (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Avolio et al., 1999; Bass, 1997; Bass & Avolio, 1990; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Webb, 2009). Finally, this study is in line with Mason (1998) and Webb (2003, 2009) that found laissez-faire as a significant negative predictor of job satisfaction.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

The paper's uncovering of the lecturers' job satisfaction and the identification of leadership styles that the departments' heads often use in the leading Research Universities in Malaysia can assist the RUs policy makers in enhancing lecturers' job satisfaction and generating effective leaders.

Although the present study found that a combination of three leadership styles is exhibited in the Malaysian Research Universities, however the low mean score achieved by the RUs' departments' heads indicated a lack of requisites exists for being an ideal transformational leader. Hence, further developmental training programs are still needed to boost required knowledge and ability for behaving in a transformational leadership style.

The RUs' lecturers who participated in this study were moderately satisfied with their job. Nevertheless, they were less satisfied with the 'policy and administration' practices such as meeting their needs by the universities' policies, following administrative policies and procedures, selecting process of department head, and participating in decision making. Hence, these results recommend developing targeted interventions aimed at assessing the policy and administration practices in order to address the revisions that need to be made.

Transformational leadership was the factor that best explained the variance of most satisfying variables of lecturers' job satisfaction. This study demonstrated that departments heads can be more effective in satisfying lecturers when they more frequently demonstrate transformational leadership behaviors. In conclusion, the findings of this study empirically contribute to existing body of knowledge regarding academic administrators' leadership styles particularly in developing countries by demonstrating the extent to which leadership styles influenced lecturers' job satisfaction.

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Table 1: Distribution of Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-faire Leadership Styles

Variables	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha	MLQ Norms
Transformational	2.52	.72		2.85
Idealized Influence (attribute)	2.55	.82	.91	2.94
Idealized Influence (behavior)	2.61	.80	.80	2.77
Inspirational Motivation	2.73	.84	.94	2.92
Intellectual Stimulation	2.37	.76	.88	2.78
Individualized Consideration	2.33	.79	.84	2.85
Transactional	2.02	.53		1.86
Contingent Reward	2.54	.82	.89	2.87
Management-by-Exception (active)	2.20	.83	.67	1.67
Management-by-Exception (passive)	1.33	.80	.70	1.03
Laissez Faire	1.14	.90	.77	.65

Exhibition Score: Not at all=0-.8; Once in a while=.81-1.6; Sometimes=1.61-2.4; Fairly often=2.41-3.2; Frequently if not always=3.21-4

Table 2: Distribution of Intrinsic, Extrinsic, and Overall Job Satisfaction

Variable	Mean	SD	Exhibition of Job Satisfaction
Intrinsic Satisfaction	3.65	.43	Moderate
Extrinsic Satisfaction	3.47	.52	Moderate
Overall Satisfaction	3.56	.45	Moderate

Exhibition Score: (1- 2.33) Low Satisfaction, (2.34 - 3.67) Moderate Satisfaction, (3.68 - 5) High Satisfaction

Table 3: Stepwise Multiple Regression of Most Satisfying Variables on Predictive Variables

Independent Variables	Beta	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	R ² change
Transformational Leadership	.304	.342	.117	.114	.117
Laissez-faire Leadership	-.141	.368	.135	.129	.018

Note: R²=.13.5, F {2, 295} = 23.085, Sig F=.000. Transactional Leadership was not significant and excluded.