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Analysis of Head of Departments Leadership Styles: Implication for Improving Research University Management Practices

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Abstract

Being an international center of excellence in higher education is considered as a comprehensive goal of the Ministry of Higher Education in Malaysia. In satisfying this goal, Malaysian higher education institutions and specifically Research Universities (RUs) are in center of attention, as they play a crucial role in developing the community. Administrators’ leadership styles have influenced on lecturers’ job satisfaction and play essential role in materialization of research university’s goals and vision. Utilizing a descriptive correlational design, this study aimed to determine head of departments’ leadership style and its correlation with lecturers’ job satisfaction. The target populations were the lecturers of three Malaysian RUs. The MLQ 5x and WFJSDS were used as the instruments of the study.

Based on lecturers’ perception, the head of departments applied a combination of three distinct leadership styles in terms of transformational leadership (fairly often), transactional leadership (sometimes), and laissez-faire (once in a while). Among three discernable leadership styles, the transformational and the transactional leadership styles were positively and laissez-faire were negatively correlated with the lecturers’ job satisfaction. In terms of job satisfaction RUs’ lecturers were moderately satisfied. The study concludes that head of departments in RUs are encouraged to practice transformational leadership since multiple regression analysis revealed that it is a significant predictor of lecturer’s job satisfaction.

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1. Introduction

The vision of Malaysian government for the country is to be a fully developed nation by 2020 (National Higher Education Action Plan, 2007). Aligned with the country’s vision, the vision of government for higher education sector is to transform Malaysia to an international center of higher education excellence until 2020 and beyond (Malaysia Ministry of Education, 2008; National Higher Education Action Plan, 2007). Regarding the national strategic plan, the tendency of higher education in Malaysia is to cultivate capable human capital to meet community demands as well as absorbing international students from around the world. In order to facilitate the transformation...
of the higher education sector, Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) has chosen four public universities as Research Universities (RUs).

To fulfill the expectations these universities must vigorously contribute in quality teaching and research, help to improve the knowledge industry, and be competent to fulfill human capital for confronting with the 21st century’s demand (Musa Bin Mohamad, 2007). Therefore, to materialize mentioned vision the RUs must increase their efforts and their administrators and lecturers have to make tremendous strides to achieve the goals. Based on National Higher Education Action Plan (2007) leaders and lecturers are two important factors for achieving goals of higher education transformation. They also are pivotal factors for organizational effectiveness.

2. Leadership as crucial factor of organizational effectiveness

Leadership is one of the basic and most important needs in each organization. It is often considered as the solution to most organizational problems (Daft & Marcic, 2006). It can direct human resources toward the strategic objectives of the organization and ensure that organizational functions are aligned with the external environment (Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2001). Moreover, effective leaders are able to predict the future probabilities and design choice strategies to satisfy uncertainties (Riaz & Haider, 2010). They can lead organizations to success by paying more attention to environmental changes, which in turn helps them set proper goals and objectives. One of the essential factors contributing to leadership effectiveness is the style of a leader. It is among the important components of a leader’s leadership situation (Hersey et al., 2001), which can cause success in organizations.

Leadership style is the typical pattern of behavior that a leader utilizes to influence his or her subordinates to attain organizational goals (DuBrin, 2006). This pattern appears as leaders are considered to respond in the same manner under similar conditions; they develop habits of action that become predictable to those who work with them (Hersey et al., 2001).

2.1 Transformational/Transactional Leadership

Several different approaches have evolved over the years to describe leadership styles. Integrative leadership theories are the new approach in leadership which have been established based on combining trait, behavioral, and contingency approaches and the transformational leadership is one of them (Abu Daud Silong, 2009).

It was first mentioned in 1978 by James McGregore Burns and was developed by Bass in 1985 and by Bass and Avolio in 1994 (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 2008; Northouse, 2007; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). This theory consists of three part transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership. Transactional leadership emphasizes the transaction or exchange that takes place among leaders, colleagues, and followers. This exchange is based on the leader discussing with others what is required and specifying the conditions and rewards these others will receive if they fulfill those requirements (Bass & Avolio, 1994). This type of leadership focuses on maintaining the status quo and motivating people through contractual agreement (Bass, 1985; Jung et al., 2008). This form of leadership is basically the same as management in which it involves usual and organized activities (Griffin & Moorhead, 2006). Transactional leadership consists of contingent reward, management by exception-active, and management by exception-passive. Transactional contingent reward relates to leader behaviors concentrated on explaining role and task necessities and providing followers with physical or mental rewards contingent on the fulfillment of contractual obligations (Antonakis et al., 2003). A leader using the active form of management-by-exception watches followers closely for mistakes or role violations and then takes corrective actions (Northouse, 2007). Active leaders check follower behavior, predict problems, and take corrective actions before the behavior makes severe difficulties (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Passive management-by-exception leaders wait for deviations, mistakes, and errors to happen and then take corrective action. (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Bass & Avolio, 1994). They do not actively seek out deviations from desired performance and only take corrective action after problems present themselves (Pounder, 2001).

Transformational leadership refers to the process of building commitment to the organization’s objectives and empowering followers to accomplish these objectives. It is a style which can improve employees’ ability and performance. Employees can act beyond their previous performance. This type of leadership refers to the leader moving the follower beyond immediate self-interests (Erkultlu, 2008). 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). Applying transformational leadership gives a set of capabilities to leaders to recognize the need for change, to create a vision to guide that change, and to carry out the change effectively (Griffin & Moorhead, 2007). This type of leadership increases knowledge of employees about their work, makes subordinates conscious of the importance of their jobs and performance to the organization and aware
of their own needs for personal growth, and motivates subordinates to work toward organizational effectiveness (Jones & George, 2008).

Transformational leaders are attentive to the needs and motives of followers and try to help followers reach their fullest potential (Northouse, 2007). They possess good visioning, rhetorical and impression management skills. They use these skills to develop strong emotional bonds with followers. They are believed to be more successful at driving organizational change because of followers’ heightened emotional levels and their willingness to work toward the accomplishment of the leader’s vision (Avolio & Bass, 2000; Bono & Judge, 2003; Hughes et al., 2006). Leaders with transformational leadership behavior can direct their organization toward effectiveness and productivity. They can motivate followers toward extra effort, increase their job satisfaction, improve their performance beyond expectation and cultivate creativity and innovation in organization. Also, transformational leaders are able to encourage followers to think critically and to seek new ways to approach their job (Walumbwa et al., 2004).

Transformational leaders achieve their results in one or more ways. They may inspire their followers through charisma. They may meet the emotional needs of their followers through individualized consideration, and they may intellectually stimulate their followers by stirring within them an awareness of problems, insights into solutions, and the passion to bring about resolution (Pierce & Newstorm, 2008; Bass, 1985). Transformational leadership affects important issues in organizations. This leadership is significant to the continued success of organizations because it enhances team cohesion, organizational commitment, and higher levels of job satisfaction (Avolio et al., 1999; Davis, 2009) which result in leadership and organizational effectiveness (Erkutlu, 2008). In addition to job satisfaction, which is an important subject in organizations led by transformational leaders, staff turnover is another critical issue in such organizations (Griffith, 2004). Transformational leadership consists of five constructs namely idealized influence (attribute and behavior), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. In summary, saving the present status in organizations is the essence of transactional leadership and endeavoring to change and enhance the current situation is the essence of transformational leadership.

Laissez-faire leadership is the avoidance or absence of leadership (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). 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 [leadership] style” (p.4). This type of leaders gives up responsibility, and do not use their authority. A laissez-faire leader exhibits passive indifference about the task and subordinates; for example, by ignoring problems as well as subordinates’ needs. Laissez-faire is generally considered the most passive and ineffective form of leadership (Antonakis et al., 2003; Yukl, 2006). It can be concluded that laissez-faire is the non-leadership dimension of the transformational theory in which leaders will always avoid getting involved when important issues take place and avoid making decisions (Limsila & Ogunlana, 2008). This type of leader tends to withdraw from the leadership role and offer little in terms of either direction or support (Kirkbirde, 2006).

While applying transactional leadership leads an organization to achieve its desired goal and objectives, employing transformational leadership results in performance beyond expectation by increasing subordinates’ motivation, enhancing their satisfaction as well as commitment (Avolio & Bass, 2004). It is clear that transformational leadership alone is more effective than transactional leadership (Limsila & Ogunlana, 2008); however, a combination of both leadership styles results in greater outcomes (Yukl, 2006). As Avolio and Bass (2004) stated, “transformational leadership augments transactional leadership in achieving the goals of the leaders, associate, group and organization” (p. 21).

2.2 Job Satisfaction

Leadership style as a key factor affects subordinates job satisfaction which in turn is essential for success of each organization. Job satisfaction is one of the crucial outcomes of leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Research findings have endorsed significant effect of transformational leadership on subordinates’ job satisfaction (Antonakis et al., 2003; Avolio and Bass, 2004; Bass and Avolio, 1994; Griffith, 2004; Wiratmadja et al., 2008). It has shown that job satisfaction has important effects on efficiency, productivity, employee relations, absenteeism, turnover, and organizational performance (Chen et al., 2006; Kouostelios, 2001; Okpara et al., 2005; Oshagbemi, 2003; Schroder, 2008). It is a crucial factor that influences positive employee behavior, when employees are satisfied with their job, they feel more responsible, accountable and committed to the organization (Sihombing & Gustam, 2007). They also have a tendency to remain within the organization longer (Santhaparaja & Seyed Shah Alam, 2005). Job satisfaction is probably the most familiar indicator of attitude toward and an evaluation judgment about one’s job (Dessler, 2004). It positively affects employees’ performance, commitment and reduces their absenteeism and turnover (Okpara et al., 2005; Lambert & Paoline, 2008; Schroder, 2008). This in turn leads to organizational
effectiveness and goal achievement. High level of job satisfaction helps employees to overcome barriers and obstacles of organizational goal achievement.

Academic staff are the main employees of RUs and they have important roles to improve and facilitate the forward movement of their universities. Hence, motivated and satisfied academic staffs help RUs to promote their futuristic movement. Satisfied employees are more effective and productive as compared to other employees (Eyupoglu & Saner, 2009; Schroder, 2008; Santhapparaja & Seyed Shah Alam, 2005). Nowadays academic staffs have to work harder in order to satisfy the progressively increasing expectations (Eyupoglu & Saner, 2009; Bilge, 2006). Nevertheless, achieving the high quality performance and meeting expectations when it is possible leads to high level of job satisfaction. Thus, RUs academic staffs’ job satisfaction is a significant issue that must be considered by administrators. Previous research findings showed that academic staff’s job satisfaction contributes to organizational effectiveness (Okpara et al., 2005; Lambert & Paoline, 2008; Schroder, 2008); therefore, higher education administrators need to be aware of academic staff’s level of job satisfaction. Since institutions of higher education can move forward only according to the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of their academics (Kusku, 2003), more research is needed to understand academic staff’s job satisfaction.

3. Methods

This research employed a quantitative correlational design. The study aims to investigate the relationship between heads of departments’ leadership styles and lecturers’ job satisfaction at Malaysian Research Universities (RUs). Therefore, the following research questions were addressed:

1- What are the RUs heads of departments’ leadership styles as perceived by the lecturers?
2- What are the RUs lecturers’ intrinsic, extrinsic and overall job satisfaction levels?
3- What is the relationship between RUs heads of departments’ transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles as perceived by the lecturers and their levels of intrinsic, extrinsic, and overall job satisfaction?
4- What are the predictors of RUs lecturers’ overall job satisfaction?

3.1 Participants

The participants of this study consisted of academic staff of three Malaysian RUs located in the Klang valley. Stratified proportional random sampling was employed as the sampling procedure to choose respondents of the study. To determine the sample size G-Power statistical software (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) was used (effect size=.25, α=.05, power (1-β)=.95). From all 400 distributed questionnaires 320 were returned and 298 were usable for analysis (response rate 74.5%).

3.2 Measures and analysis of data

This study employed two sets of survey questionnaires. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire 5x was utilized to collect data concerning leadership style of head of departments as perceived by lecturers of the Malaysian RUs. The lecturers’ job satisfaction, on the other hand, was measured by the Wood Faculty Job Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction Scale. A panel of experts judged validity of the research instruments. To test internal consistency of the questionnaires Cronbach’s alpha was calculated. The findings of pilot study demonstrated that the MLQ 5x had a α value of .93 and the WFJSDS had a α value of .97 indicating that questionnaires were reliable. The rating scale for the MLQ 5x items includes: Not at all (0), Once in a while (1), Sometimes (2), Fairly often (3), Frequently, if not always (4). The WFJSDS is based on five-point Likert scale ranging from 1(very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). Data were analyzed utilizing descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation), inferential statistics such as Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient, and stepwise multiple regression.

4. Findings

Results indicated that the lecturers perceived head of departments demonstrated transformational leadership style fairly often, transactional leadership sometimes and laissez-faire leadership style once in a while (Table 1).
Table 1: Distribution of Transformational, Transactional and Laissez Faire leadership styles

| Variables                      | Mean | SD  | Interpretation | MLQ Norms |
|-------------------------------|------|-----|----------------|-----------|
| **Transformational**          |      |     |                |           |
| Idealized Influence (attribute) | 2.52 | .72 | fairly often   | 2.85      |
| Idealized Influence (behavior)| 2.55 | .82 | fairly often   | 2.94      |
| Inspirational Motivation      | 2.61 | .8  | fairly often   | 2.77      |
| Intellectual Stimulation      | 2.73 | .84 | fairly often   | 2.92      |
| Individualized Consideration  | 2.37 | .76 | sometimes      | 2.78      |
| **Transactional**             |      |     |                |           |
| Contingent Reward             | 2.02 | .53 | Sometimes      | 1.86      |
| Management-by-Exception (active) | 2.54 | .82 | fairly often   | 2.87      |
| Management-by-Exception (passive) | 2.20 | .83 | sometimes      | 1.67      |
| **Laissez Faire**             |      |     |                |           |
|                               | 1.14 | .90 | once in a while| .65       |

Interpretation 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
MLQ Norms: Adapted from Avolio and Bass 2004, p. 70.

Regarding lecturers’ intrinsic, extrinsic, and overall job satisfaction analysis of data indicated they are moderately satisfied. In terms of intrinsic satisfaction the work itself and growth received highest mean scores at high level of satisfaction, all other constructs of intrinsic satisfaction were at moderate level (Table 2). With regard to extrinsic satisfaction interpersonal relations received highest mean score at high level of satisfaction, other constructs of extrinsic satisfaction were at moderate level. Among all constructs of intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction salary and policy and administration received lowest mean scores (Table 2).

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

| Variable                | Mean | SD  | Interpretation |
|-------------------------|------|-----|----------------|
| **Intrinsic Satisfaction** |      |     |                |
| Achievement             | 3.60 | .45 | Moderate       |
| Growth                  | 3.73 | .55 | High           |
| Recognition             | 3.52 | .65 | Moderate       |
| Responsibility          | 3.49 | .57 | Moderate       |
| The Work It Self         | 3.91 | .50 | High           |
| **Extrinsic Satisfaction** |      |     |                |
| Interpersonal Relations  | 3.82 | .54 | High           |
| Policy and Administration| 3.32 | .62 | Moderate       |
| Salary                  | 3.12 | .83 | Moderate       |
| Supervision             | 3.52 | .68 | Moderate       |
| Working Conditions       | 3.58 | .63 | Moderate       |
| **Overall Satisfaction** |      |     |                |
|                         | 3.56 | .45 | Moderate       |

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

The study revealed that among three discernable leadership styles, the transformational and the transactional leadership styles were positively correlated with the lecturers’ job satisfaction, while laissez-faire was negatively correlated with the lecturers’ job satisfaction. The results regarding the strength of the relationship showed that the correlation between transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles and the lecturers’ job satisfaction was weak, whilst transformational leadership style and job satisfaction were moderately correlated with each other (Table 3).
Table 3: The Descriptive Statistics, Zero-order Correlation of Head of Departments’ Transformational, Transactional and Laissez-faire Leadership styles and Lecturers’ Intrinsic, Extrinsic, and Overall Job Satisfaction

| Variables          | Intrinsic Satisfaction | Extrinsic Satisfaction | Overall Satisfaction |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Transformational   | .365**                 | .506**                 | .465**               |
| Transactional      | .263**                 | .297**                 | .297**               |
| Laissez-faire      | -.192**                | -.356**                | -.297**              |

**correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), n=298

Regression analysis indicated that transformational leadership and laissez-faire are significant predictors of overall satisfaction, and that transformational leadership is the dominant predictor (Table 4).

Table 4: Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis of Overall Job Satisfaction on Predictive Variables

| Independent Variables | Beta | R  | R²  | Adjusted R² | R² change |
|-----------------------|------|----|-----|-------------|-----------|
| Transformational       | .405 | .465 | .216 | .213        | .216      |
| Laissez-faire Leadership | -.21 | .507 | .257 | .251        | .041      |

Note: R²=.26, F {2, 294} = 50.726, Sig F=.000. Transactional Leadership was not significant and excluded.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study indicated that the lecturers perceived their heads of departments fairly often exhibit transformational and sometimes display transactional leadership behavior. However, the lecturers perceived head of departments once in a while exhibit laissez-faire leadership. The results of the study for transformational and transactional leadership styles are consistent with MLQ norm (Avolio & Bass, 2004), except laissez-faire leadership which, according to respondents’ perception, was displayed by heads of departments more than the norm. Based on MLQ norm, the ideal range for transformational leadership is ‘fairly often’, for transactional leadership is ‘sometimes’, and for laissez-faire leadership is ‘not at all’. Leaders who have mean scores in these ranges are more successful in accomplishing the best outcomes. However, the RU heads of departments regarding laissez-faire leadership did not meet the criterion. Regarding idealized influence (attribute and behaviour) and inspirational motivation findings of this study are in line with MLQ norm. Idealized influence attribute leaders are confident and powerful and concentrate on higher order ideals and ethics (Antonakis et al., 2003). Idealized influence behavior leaders concentrate on values, beliefs, and sense of mission (Antonakis et al., 2003). Using inspirational motivation behavior leaders motivate their followers by preparing challenges and meaning for followers’ task. They focus on ambitious goals, speak hopefully about achieving future goals, and inspire followers to achieve an optimal level of performance (Antonakis et al., 2003; Jung et al., 2008). This revealed 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. It also implies heads of departments motivate lecturers, encourage them to carry out their responsibilities, and envision the future of departments by optimism. They inspire lecturers to enhance team spirit toward achieving departmental goals. Intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration received the lowest mean scores, which signifies a low frequency range, ‘sometimes’, that is not consistent with MLQ norm. Exhibiting intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration less than norm may reveal that the RU heads of departments do not have enough information and knowledge about these constructs of transformational leadership. Based on intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration behaviors, leaders inspire followers to be creative and innovative and think about old organizational problems with a new point of view. They listen carefully to followers’ needs and are continuously
involved in the process of coaching (Northouse, 2007; Reuvers et al., 2008). They also delegate authority to followers to do their responsibilities.

The results demonstrated that amongst the constructs of transactional leadership, contingent reward received the highest mean score and was fairly often exhibited by the heads of departments. It means that the finding of the study for the mentioned construct meet MLQ criterion. Contingent reward leaders explain expectations and present recognition when goals are accomplished (Bass et al., 2003). They obtain essential resources, fulfill material and mental needs of subordinates, and present rewards on the gratification of contractual obligation as well as certain tasks (Antonakis et al., 2003; Nguni et al., 2006). They provide rewards for followers in response to their good performance (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004) and this reward is an exchange for subordinates’ effort (Northouse, 2007). With regard to management-by-exception (active and passive) findings of the study were consistent with MLQ norm.

In terms of laissez-faire the finding indicated lecturers perceived that their heads of departments exhibited this type of behavior once in a while. This finding is not consistent with MLQ norm and implies heads of departments display this leadership style more frequently than the norm. Based on MLQ norm, the mean score for laissez-faire leadership should not exceed .65 (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Laissez-faire leaders avoid describing agreements clearly, explaining expectations, and setting goals and standards to be obtained by followers (Bass et al., 2003), give no feedback, give up responsibility, and make little endeavor to help followers (Northouse, 2007). It implies that when heads of departments apply this leadership style, they do not call for meetings with lecturers, make little contact with them, avoid getting involved when important matters rise in their department, avoid making decisions, and delay responding to lecturers’ question. The possible explanation for employing laissez-faire leadership more than the norm and intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration less than norm by the RU heads of departments can be due to their insufficient knowledge regarding this leadership style. If they get appropriate knowledge and understanding, they will utilize these types of leadership behaviors according to the norm.

Based on the findings for intrinsic satisfaction, the work itself received the highest mean score, followed by growth, achievement, recognition, while responsibility had the lowest mean score. The findings demonstrated that according to lecturers’ perception the work itself and opportunities for growth in Malaysian RUs are most satisfying variables. In institutions of higher education the work itself is the most important satisfier for academic staff (Curry, 2007; Oberman, 2005). In terms of extrinsic satisfaction, interpersonal relations received the highest mean score at a high level of satisfaction, followed by working condition, supervision, policy and administration, while salary received the lowest mean score. Academic members are most satisfied with their relations with peers and students (Schroder, 2008). The highest mean score of interpersonal relations emphasized the importance of having relation with others for the RUs lecturers. It may imply that these universities have a good interpersonal work climate. In terms of policy and administration, the lecturers were moderately satisfied. It means administrative procedures cannot meet the RU lecturers’ satisfaction at a high level. Further, the procedures upon which the head of department is selected are not acceptable by the lecturers. For lecturers the integrity and fairness of this selection may remain under question. Consequently, it can be concluded that in Malaysian RUs policy and administration need to be revised and improved by policy makers. Among the constructs of extrinsic satisfaction, salary received the lowest mean score. This implies that for the RUs lecturers the amount of salary compared to their work load is not enough. Furthermore, the method used to determine the salary for lecturers is believed not to be equitable. This finding may imply when they compare their salary with the range of salary in other public universities, they are dissatisfied. According to Chen et al (2006), salary is an important issue for higher education employees. As Altbach (2009) argues, the expectation of higher education academic staff is having a middle class life, and in order to fulfill such an expectation they should receive an adequate salary.

In terms of the relationship between transformational leadership and respondents’ intrinsic, extrinsic, and overall job satisfaction, the findings demonstrated positive and moderate correlations between transformational leadership and intrinsic, extrinsic, and overall satisfaction. It means when heads of departments concentrate on lecturers’ needs and concerns, satisfy their requirements and necessities, inspire lecturers to go beyond what they are expected, and encourage lecturers to be innovative and present new suggestions to resolve department’s problems, lecturers’ job satisfaction increases. Transformational leadership increases followers’ motivation, job satisfaction, job performance, and organizational commitment (Bono & Judge, 2003). It is an effective leadership style when organizations are confronting with challenges of change (Bass et al., 2003). Findings revealed a positive and weak relationship between the heads of departments’ transactional leadership and lecturers’ intrinsic, extrinsic, and overall satisfaction. This finding implies when RUs heads of departments determine rewards in exchange with lecturers’ effort, set and focus on standards in the work environment, control lecturers’ mistakes, and take corrective action even before any mistakes happen, lecturers’ job satisfaction will slightly rise. These findings are in line with those of previous studies that stated transformational leadership has stronger effects on subordinates’ job satisfaction.
compared to transactional leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Bass & Avolio, 1994). In connection with laissez-faire leadership and respondents’ intrinsic, extrinsic and overall satisfaction, the findings disclosed that there are negative and weak correlations between laissez-faire leadership and respondents’ intrinsic as well as overall satisfaction. Also there was a negative and moderate relationship between laissez-faire leadership and the lecturers’ extrinsic satisfaction. Laissez-faire leadership is associated with high level job dissatisfaction (Rowold & Schlotz, 2009). This means that heads of departments should avoid laissez-faire leadership to enhance lecturers’ job satisfaction because their laissez-faire behavior reduces lecturers’ satisfaction. Lecturers are not satisfied under this type of leadership.

The results of stepwise multiple regression analysis demonstrated among the three different types of leadership, transformational and laissez-faire leadership styles were the significant predictors of overall job satisfaction. They explained 26% of the variance in overall satisfaction. Transformational leadership was the prominent predictor of overall job satisfaction (beta = .40), followed by laissez-faire (beta = -.21). It may mean in Malaysian RUs lecturers expect their heads of departments to demonstrate adequate energy and power, display self-confidence, be able to make lecturers feel confidence, act as role model, and encourage lecturers to take individual risk. Lecturers expect their immediate superiors to regard them as human beings with different developmental needs. Moreover, lecturers are more satisfied when heads of departments trust and create pride among them and finally demonstrate the least possible amount of laissez-faire behavior.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study in general contribute to the leadership style literature by determining the extent to which leadership styles of Malaysian RU heads of departments influenced lecturers’ job satisfaction. The findings revealed that RUs heads of departments exhibited a combination of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles. Research Universities, as forefronts of transforming Malaysian higher education into centers of excellence, require administrators who should pay more attention to lecturers’ creativity and innovation to solve the institutional problems with a new point of view. They should consider lecturers’ need as an important issue and try their best to delegate appropriate responsibility to them, coach lecturers as persons who can be capable individuals that can help RUs to confront with complicated situations. To be effective leaders the RU heads of departments should obtain more knowledge about transformational leadership to exhibit this leadership style more frequently to manage change in organization. In terms of job satisfaction, the results displayed that RUs lecturers have moderate levels of intrinsic, extrinsic, and overall job satisfaction and that these lecturers are more intrinsically satisfied than extrinsically. Since the RUs were selected to be the forefront of Malaysian higher education institutions in obtaining characteristics of world-class universities, moderate levels of job satisfaction are not sufficient for achieving their goals. Salary, policy and administration, as the constructs of extrinsic satisfaction, received the lowest mean scores. It is, therefore, essential that policy makers reconsider the importance of salary, policy and administration on lecturers’ job satisfaction. Since these constructs were identified by the lecturers as least satisfying variables, they should receive greater attention by the RUs administrators. These problems are likely to be solved by redesigning an appropriate method of determining the salary and different aspects of policy and administration in institutions of higher education. It may become valuable for the administrators of RUs to identify those satisfying factors that influence the lecturers in an effort to promote greater job satisfaction. The factors that best explained the variance of overall job satisfaction included transformational leadership and laissez-faire. Transformational leadership and laissez-faire accounted for the variance of overall satisfaction. Transformational leadership had a greater predictive effect. This study has shown that heads of departments can be more effective in satisfying lecturers when they demonstrate transformational leadership behaviors. Heads of departments can inspire and encourage lecturers to be innovative, creative and go beyond what they think that they can do to help RUs move towards a brilliant future.

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