

KEY DETERMINANTS OF ACADEMIC EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE IN MALAYSIAN ONLINE DISTANCE LEARNING INSTITUTIONS

Zahir Osman

Open University Malaysia
zahir_osman@oum.edu.my

Loo Sin Chun

Open University Malaysia
loosinchun@oum.edu.my

Raemah Abdullah Hashim

Open University Malaysia
raemah_abdullahhashim@oum.edu.my

Norsiah Aminudin

Open University Malaysia
norsiah_aminudin@oum.edu.my

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to evaluate direct effect of leadership style, employee commitment, organisational culture, self-efficacy and employee performance relationship in Malaysian online distance learning higher institutions (ODL). To analyse the casual relationships among leadership style, employee commitment, organisational culture, self-efficacy and employee performance, the Structural Equation Model (SEM) was adopted. The model was designed and later analysed by using the Partial Least Square (PLS) procedure on data collected from a survey that yielded 206 usable questionnaires. The results showed that leadership style, organisation culture and self-efficacy has a positive and significant influence on academic employees' performance in Malaysian ODL higher institutions. However, employee commitment did not show significant influence on academic employees' performance. It is vital to do the research utilising experimental design by using longitudinal data in Malaysian ODL higher institutions via vigorous measures. The findings suggest that ODL institutions should give greater emphasis on strengthening strong and positive leadership style, organisation culture and self-efficacy in ensuring strong performance of their academic employees.

Keywords: *Leadership Style, Employee Commitment, Organizational Culture, Self-efficacy, Employee Performance, Online Distance Learning*

INTRODUCTION

Human capital in any organisation plays a very vital role in ensuring that the organisation achieves its organisational goals. Employees of each organisation play an important role to realise its goals. To achieve the organisation task is the responsibility of its human capital and such human capital performance will reflect on the organisation performance. The same is also true in higher education institutions. Tertiary education sector in Malaysia is growing rapidly with the number of colleges and universities also keep increasing. The success of higher education greatly lies on the performance of the academics in delivering their duty. Students' achievement in academic depends largely on the performance of academic staff. In any education system in any country around the world, academic employees play a very important role since the success of any educational organisation rely on their most vital asset, academic employees, and in view of that academic employees' performance is the most concern among all educational institutions (Khan et.al., 2012). In the past decade, most of the research focused on the academicians' performance in conventional higher education institutions or conventional universities. It remains unclear the exact reason as to why the performance of online distance learning academicians is questionable since not many studies have been done on the subject. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to evaluate the factors that influence the performance of academicians in online distance learning institutions in Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Wall, Michie, Patterson, Wood, Sheehan & Clegg (2004), employee performance is one of the major factors when evaluating organizational performance. Munchinsky (2003) revealed that employee performance is a result of action that can be determined, studied and evaluated from achievement dimension at the individual employee level. Therefore, because of its significance, various studies have been conducted to examine and find ways to strengthen employee performance. Byars & Rue (2000), Kahya (2009) and Thamrin (2012) argued that employee performance is the result of organization rules and regulations, anticipations, or obligations for authorized role. Most of the studies concentrate on the leadership style and the job performance of employees (Raja & Palanichamy, 2011). Concept of leadership can be viewed extensively in both individual and organization. According to Bethel (1990), leadership has a powerful capability to influence employees. Also, Bohn and Grafton (2002) gave the definition of leadership as it creates fresh vision; enhance the employees' self-confidence via communication and coordination. Leadership is merely how the leader influences the followers to do their utmost effort voluntarily in achieving the organization goals (Igbaekemen, 2014). According to Alghazo & Al-Anazi, (2016), Leadership plays a vital role in making an energetic environment in any organization. Hurduzue (2015) suggested that the successful of the members' development in organizations can be achieved via right and effective leadership style. Employee commitment can be gauged on the achieving of goals by the employees, by looking how committed the employees are to their organization's goals mission and objectives (Bansal, Mendelson, & Sharma, 2001).

However, Darwish (2017) had an different view by looking that commitment is measured by considering the ability of employees to accept changes that take place in the organization. Herold et al (2008) in same opinion as Darwish (2017), they also pointed out that organizational commitment is the employees' attitude following the changes that happen in the organization, to be precise, they mean acceptance level of the change and whether the the changes that take place in organization is openly accepted by the employees. Organizational culture is one of the factors that can affect employee performance in the organization. In the study conducted by Mohammad, Rumana & Saad (2013) on telecommunication industry in Bangladesh, they have found that organization culture has a positive and significant influence on employee's performance. Stephen & Stephen (2016) when studied on the academic staff in Niger Delta University, Nigeria, have found that organizational culture plays a very important role and has a positive and significant impact on employee performance. Self-efficacy is a essential principle of Albert Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory. Self-efficacy is defined as the

belief, or confidence, that one can successfully implement a required behavior so that it can have an outcome such that the higher the level of self-efficacy will lead to the higher individual belief that he or she can execute the needed behavior to acquire a particular result (Bandura, 1977). Lunenburg (2011) suggested that self-efficacy influences how the employees choose the task and set the goals for themselves. Their effort the tasks employees choose to learn and the goals they set for themselves. Their effort and determination to deal with difficult task will also influenced by self-efficacy.

Based on the above conceptual development, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

1. There is a relationship between employee commitment and employee performance in online distance learning institutions in Malaysia.
2. There is a relationship between leadership style and employee performance in online distance learning institutions in Malaysia.
3. There is a relationship between organization culture and employee performance in online distance learning institutions in Malaysia.
4. There is a relationship between self-efficacy and employee performance in online distance learning institutions in Malaysia.

METHODOLOGY

For this study, survey instrument, questionnaires were utilized based on the comprehensively evaluation of literatures to come out with the right scales that been used in the previous studies with strong validity and reliability. There are 35 observed variables consist of leadership style 7 items, organization commitment 7 items, self-efficacy 7 items, organization culture 7 items, and employee performance 7 items. To measure each of the items, five-point Likert Scale was used from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree. The main respondents for this study are academic employees from local online distance learning institutions. From 290 questionnaire distributed, 217 were returned. This made up 75% response rate and it is adequate to do data analysis using SEM analysis. Out of 217 returned questionnaire, 212 were completed and after screening and deletion of outliers, 206 questionnaires were ready to be used for analysis.

Data Analysis

Model Measurement

In this study, partial least squares (PLS), SmartPLS to be precise, were utilized to assess the sufficiency of model measurement and the predictive relevance of inner model, and eventually test the four hypotheses. PLS focuses on the variance explanation using ordinal least squares, a technique suitable for link as mentioned in this study (Gudergan et al., 2008). The adequacy and the significance of reflective outer measurement models for the other constructs were gauged through a range of indices test including of individual indicator weights and loadings, composite reliability, average variance explained (AVE), bootstrap t-statistic (critical ratio), discriminant validity and convergent validity. In addition to that, the calculation of bootstrapped critical ratio of t-values was done to determine the significance of reflective outer measurement model.

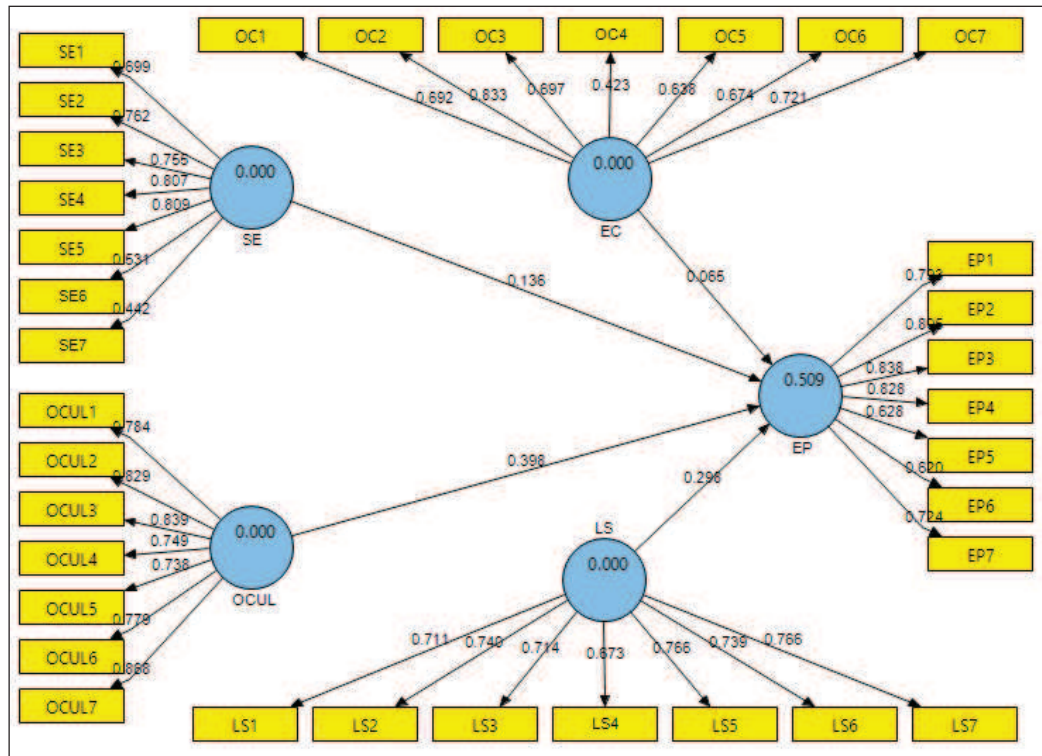


Figure 1: Specified Model

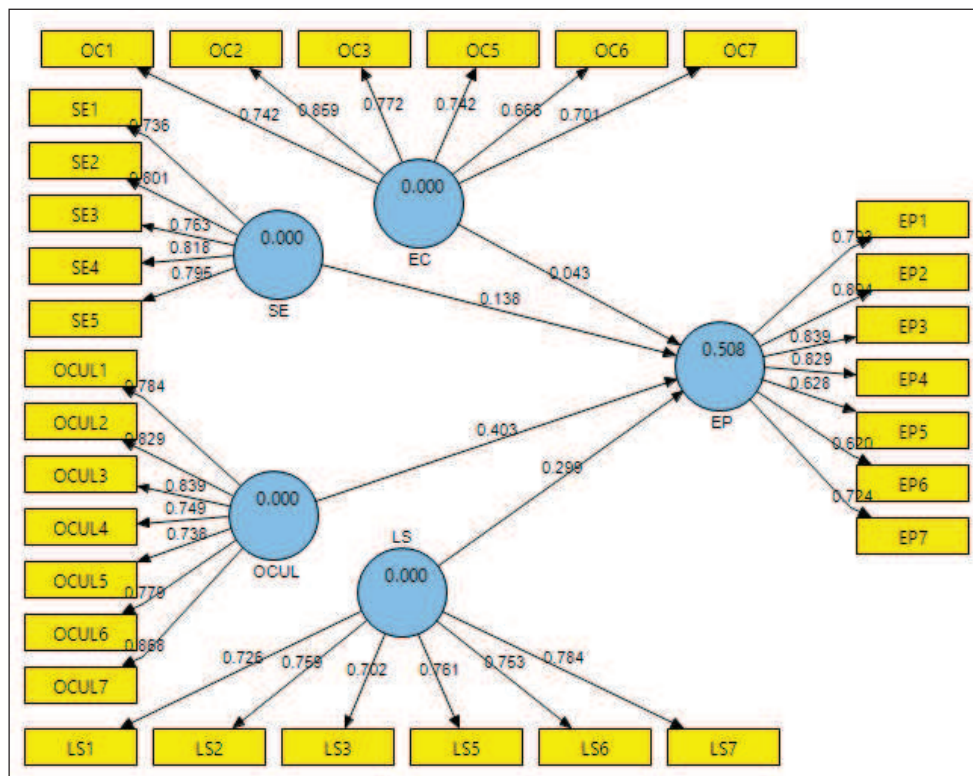


Figure 2: Re-Specified Model & Path Coefficient

Convergent Validity

The convergent validity of the adequacy of outer-measurement models was estimated by computing composite reliability (Hulland, 1999). The analysis for convergent validity results confirmed that the outer measurement models and their first-order factors in line with Nunnally's (1978) reliability criteria, 0.70. As shown in Table 1, the composite reliabilities of all constructs composite reliabilities and their first-order factors range from 0.884 to 0.925. Hence, the constructs connected with outer measurement models revealed adequate convergent validity.

Table 1: Construct Validity & Reliability and Outer Measurement Model

Content Performance	AVE	Composite Reliability	Loading	T-Value
Employee Commitment	0.562	0.884		
EC1			0.742	3.9015
EC2			0.859	5.928
EC3			0.773	4.4174
EC5			0.742	3.8589
EC6			0.666	4.694
EC7			0.701	4.5062
Self-Efficacy	0.613	0.888		
SE1			0.736	19.6253
SE2			0.801	33.7356
SE3			0.763	33.0949
SE4			0.818	49.0398
SE5			0.795	38.4388
Organization Culture	0.639	0.925		
OC1			0.784	40.074
OC2			0.829	50.7029
OC3			0.839	48.8571
OC4			0.749	33.6629
OC5			0.738	28.5057
OC6			0.779	36.5963
OC7			0.868	66.2624
Leadership Style	0.560	0.884		
LS1			0.726	28.1671
LS2			0.759	35.2605
LS3			0.702	24.3038
LS5			0.761	29.0501
LS6			0.753	35.1217
LS7			0.784	35.0519

Discriminant Validity

To determine the constructs discriminant validity, three methods were used. Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggest the utilization of AVE, which signifies that discriminant validity is existed if the square root of the AVE is higher than all corresponding correlations.

As disclosed in Table 2, the square roots of the AVE values are steadily greater than the off-diagonal correlations, showing the present of discriminant validity at the construct level.

An assessment of Table 2 shows that no single correlations (ranged from -0.018 to 0.651) were higher than their respective AVE (ranged from 0.7482 to 0.799), thus indicating adequate discriminant validity of all constructs. Lastly, all constructs show discriminant validity if every correlation is less than 1 by an amount greater than twice its respective standard error (Bagozzi and Warshaw, 1990). An evaluation of the standard error in PLS bootstrap outputs demonstrates that all constructs exceed the requirement for this third test. Therefore, adequate discriminant validity is exhibited for all constructs. The results shown in Tables 1 signify the outer model sufficient psychometric properties to move to the structural model assessment to test the hypotheses.

Table 2: Correlation against AVE Square Root

	EP	LS	EC	OC	SE
EP	0.753				
LS	0.585	0.748			
EC	0.091	0.109	0.750		
OCUL	0.651	0.559	0.045	0.799	
SE	0.490	0.408	-0.018	0.574	0.783

Hypothesis Testing and Results

Item loadings which shown in table 1 were acceptable. The hypotheses adequacy evaluation as represented in the model was carried out via R^2 , regression weights, bootstrap critical ratios (t-values) and path variance (Table 3). In H_1 , leadership style is predicted to have positive impact on employee performance. Results in Table 3 concurred this hypothesis with path coefficient of 0.299 and t-value of 7.251. Meanwhile, in H_2 , employee commitment is predicted to have positive influence on employee performance. From Table 3, the results give evidence not support H_2 with the path coefficient of 0.043 and the t-value of 1.238. In H_3 , it is predicted that organization culture has a positive impact on employee performance. The results in Table 3 supported H_3 with the path coefficient of 0.403 and the t-value of 8.635. Lastly, in H_4 , the path coefficient of 0.138 and t-value of 2.951 shows that self-efficacy has a positive and significant influence on employee performance and thus the hypotheses is supported.

Table 3: Direct Model Path Coefficient & T-value

	Path	T-value
LS==>EP	0.299	7.251
EC==>EP	0.043	1.238
OC==>EP	0.403	8.635
SE==>EP	0.138	2.951

Table 4: Hypotheses Result

	Hypothesized Relationship	Path Coefficient	T-value	Conclusion
H_1	LS==>EP	0.299	7.251	Supported
H_2	EC==>EP	0.043	1.238	Not Supported
H_3	OC==>EP	0.403	8.635	Supported
H_4	SE==>EP	0.138	2.951	Supported

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

This research aims to establish an understanding of the direct effect of leadership style, organization commitment, organization culture and self-efficacy on academic employee performance in Malaysian online distance learning institutions. This research is to develop probable causal relationship among the variables which are leadership style, organization commitment, organization culture and self-efficacy, and employee performance. Based on this, a review from the previous study in the area of leadership style, organization commitment, organization culture and self-efficacy, and employee performance was done. From the initial findings of academic studies, the model was constructed and it's found that leadership style, organization culture and self-efficacy have a positive and significant influence on employee performance except organization commitment. Theoretically, it is not easy to justify the superiority of any model, so empirical testing was performed. This study proposed model to empirically test and to confirm that are positive direct relationship among leadership style, organization commitment, organization culture and self-efficacy on employee performance. In order to achieve this objective, the PLS technique data analysis was adopted. From the above results, it clearly shows that organization culture has a strongest influence on academic employee performance. It is very important that the online distance learning institutions in Malaysia must adopt and promote the right culture in their organizations to ensure the better performance of their academic staff. The second strongest factor is leadership style. Online distance learning institutions top management must practice the right and effective leadership style to ensure they can lead and motivate their academic employees effectively so that it will result a good performance as expected by the organization. The third strongest factor that influences the academic employee performance is self-efficacy. Online distance learning institutions must promote self-efficacy among their academic employees since it has a positive and significant influence on their employee performance. This can lead the employees to perform better in their tasks with a desired quality of work in the organization.

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