

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion about the findings from data analysis. The chapter begins with the review about the focus of this study. Then, the chapter provides the discussion about the findings from data analysis. Following this, the chapter explains the implication of this study to the theory development and practical perspective. The chapter also explains the limitations of this study and suggestions for future study. Finally, the chapter makes a conclusion of this study.

5.2 Research Summary

Following the review of the research problems, this study was conducted to examine the factors that influence job performance among Malaysian academic staff in higher education institutions, specifically in Islamic university colleges in Malaysia. The motivation to pursue this study is the limited literature were conducted to understand the factor that influence job performance among academic staff at this context. Based on the literature review also, it could be seen that a limited number of studies have been conducted to examine the role of personality and work engagement as a mediator in the relationship between human resource management practices, leader-member exchange and job performance. Hence, this study aims to fill in the gap by exploring the issue, particularly among Malaysian academic staff at Islamic University College in Malaysia.

The theoretical framework for this study was developed according to the theory of Job Demand-Resource Model and Work Performance Theory that explain the influence of human resource management practices and leader-member exchange on job performance. The Work Performance Theory also became the underpinning theory to support the influence of personality and work engagement on job performance. While the role of personality and work engagement as mediator was explained through the Social Exchange Theory. In addition, the development of the research framework of this study was based on past research works.

This study was a cross-sectional study that employed an online survey method to collect the data. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select respondents from each Islamic university colleges that involved in this study. Overall, a total of 260 responses were obtained. SEM AMOS version 22 was used to run the measurement and structural model. The measurement model was used to determine the reliability and validity of construct. Specifically, all the constructs fulfilled the requirement with a value above .70 and were reported for composite reliability. Moreover, the convergent validity in this study is based on calculating the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for every construct. The value of AVE should be 0.5 or higher for the validity to be achieved. While discriminant validity is the correlation between exogenous constructs which should not exceed 0.85. Following that, the analysis through the structural model was determined to confirm the hypotheses. Overall, the findings of this study identified that seven hypotheses were supported and five hypotheses were not supported.

5.3 Discussion on Findings

There are twelve hypotheses proposed in previous Chapter 2. The following subsections will provide further discussion on the findings for each hypothesis.

5.3.1 HRM Practices and Job Performance

This study posits a positive and significant influence of human resource management practices on job performance. The result from data analysis indicates a positive influence of human resource management practices on job performance. However, the effect is not significant. In other word, the human resource management practices do not influence the job performance of academic staff at Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS), Kolej Universiti Islam Melaka (KUIM) and Kolej Universiti Islam Perlis (KUIPs).

The finding of this study is contradicts with previous studies that regard human resource management practices as an important factor to improve employees' job performance (Haddock-Millar et al., 2016; Hassan, 2016; Mira et al., 2019; Tadesse, 2018; Azim et al., 2017; Rodjam et al., 2020).

In this study, human resource management consists of four practices; remuneration and reward, training and development, career development, work-life balance (Presbitero et al., 2016). It could be that other practices of human resource management have greater influence on job performance of academic staff in the context of this study, which have been verified by previous studies. The practice includes job analysis, recruitment and selection, employee empowerment (Delery & Doty, 1996; Nataraja & Alamri, 2016; Albrecht et al., 2015; Dessler, 2006; Majumder & Hossain, 2012) and performance

appraisal (Rodjam et al., 2020). Another possible reason is due to other aspects of the job that contribute to job performance of academic staff in Malaysia. A recent study by Parni and Khair (2020) identified that a flexible work system contributes to academic staff performance in Malaysia.

In addition, the finding of this study is insignificant because the individual factor has been recognized as the main determinant of job performance in the context of this study. A study by Aman and Abd Shukor (2015) among employees at one Islamic university colleges in Malaysia revealed that the employees' organisational commitment is the only factor has a significant effect on job performance. A recent study by Abdul Shukor, Mustafa, Hassan, Yusof and Wan Lokman (2020) also highlights the importance of individual factors toward the academic staff at Islamic university colleges in Malaysia.

5.3.2 HRM Practices and Work Engagement

In this study, human resource management practices have been assumed to influence work engagement. The result from data analysis has confirmed a positive and significant influence of human resource management practices on work engagement. In other word, this study believes the human resource management is an important practice that leads to work engagement among academic staff, particularly in the context of Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS), Kolej Universiti Islam Melaka (KUIM) and Kolej Universiti Islam Perlis (KUIPs).

This finding is consistent with previous studies that also regard human resource management practices as an important factor to improve employees' work engagement (Anitha, 2014; Ruzic, 2015; Bailey et al., 2017; Alima & Fauzuniah, 2018).

There are several explanations to support the link. First, implementing human resource management practices produces a feeling of obligation on employees to repay the organisation because of their reciprocal relationship with the employer (Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015). Hoon Song and colleagues (2014) asserted that one of the ways for an employee to repay their organisation is through a higher level of engagement. Second, the implementation of human resource management practices such as training and development have been regarded by employees that their organisations are investing a lot in their development and reciprocate by showing a high level of engagement in their work role (Ling Suan & Mohd Nasurdin, 2014). Third, the employees feel engage with the organisation because the practice is able to assist them in improving their job performance (Bhatti et al., 2014), make them happy and willing to stay in the organisation (Abdul Khalid et al., 2014).

5.3.3 HRM Practices and Personality

The third hypothesis in this study assumes that there is a positive and significant relationship between human resource management practices and employees' personality. The result from data analysis shows a positive and significant influence of human resource management practices on personality. In other words, the human resource management practices is an important factor that contribute to personality of employees at Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS), Kolej Universiti Islam Melaka (KUIM) and Kolej Universiti Islam Perlis (KUIPs).

The finding of this study is consistent with the previous studies that indicate the human resource management practices can influence employee personality in the

organisation (Ivaskovic, 2014). A study by Shantz and colleagues (2016) argues that when employees perceive that their organisation's human resource management practices are intended to improve their job performance, they experience lower levels of emotional exhaustion. A well-designed HR system is to encourage employee engagement and work satisfaction. For example, consider performance management procedures that include goal-setting, feedback-giving, and performance-based evaluation of academic staff. These procedures may affect an academic staff member's motivation, sense of self and personality. Academic staff at private HEIs are more likely to have pleasant feelings and exhibit their personality traits positively when they feel respected, empowered, and supported at the workplace. On the other hand, a poorly planned or managed HR system that disregards academic staff well-being can cause dissatisfaction, tension, and perhaps even undesirable personality traits like cynicism or disengagement.

5.3.4 Leader-member Exchange and Job Performance

The fourth hypothesis in this study hypothesises that there is a positive and significant relationship between leader-member exchange and job performance. The result from data analysis shows a significant effect of leader-member exchange on personality. The significant effect of leader-member exchange and job performance is consistent with the previous studies (Shantz & colleagues, 2016; Katou & Budhwar, 2015; Rhee, Zhao & Kim, 2014; Martin et al., 2016).

However, the influence was negative. In other words, this study found that the practice of leader-member exchange in an organisation will reduce the job performance of academic staff in the context of this study. Such a scenario is possible because the

implementation of leader-member exchange in an organisation minimize the employees' level of job satisfaction (Erdogan & Bauer, 2010) and commitment (Schyns, 2006). From the perspective of higher education institutions, the negative link between leader-member exchange and job performance is possible because the academic staff members in this context do not need close supervision from their leader in carrying out their work. It is due to the nature of work in higher education institutions being very flexible, which enables the academic staff to manage their work by themselves.

5.3.5 Leader-member Exchange and Work Engagement

This study posits a positive and significant influence of leader-member exchange with work engagement. The result from data analysis provides support to the hypothesis. In other words, the leader-member exchange is an important factor that is able to enhance work engagement of employees at Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS), Kolej Universiti Islam Melaka (KUIM) and Kolej Universiti Islam Perlis (KUIPs).

This finding is consistent with previous studies that highlighted how crucial leader-member exchange to employee engagement was (Agarwal et al., 2012; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Employees feel engaged because the leader who practises leader-member exchange will produce a good and trustworthy relationship, which makes them more motivated, less stressed (Lagace et al., 1993) feel of high job satisfaction (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Graen, Novak & Sommerkamp, 1982) and less likely to leave the organisation (de Oliveira & da Silva, 2015). In addition, employees are willing to engage with the organisation because the high quality of leader-member exchange will increase the

predictability of the manager's and subordinate's attitudes and behaviours, which will help them better understand one another.

5.3.6 Leader-member Exchange and Personality

In this study, the leader-member exchange is assumed to have a positive and significant influence on personality. The result from data analysis shows a positive and significant influence of leader-member exchange on personality. In other words, the leader-member exchange is an important factor that is able to enhance the personality of employees at Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS), Kolej Universiti Islam Melaka (KUIM) and Kolej Universiti Islam Perlis (KUIPs).

The finding of this study is consistent with the previous studies that also indicate employees who enjoy a high-quality exchange relationship with their superior may show a positive personality (Sekiguchi, 2010; Van Dyne et al., 2008; Zhang et al., 2015). There are various personalities that can be produced through the leader-member exchange. For example, high-quality leader-member exchange involves high levels of interpersonal trust, which carry the relationship beyond the formal employment contract (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). In another study, Runhaar and colleagues (2013) suggested that to encourage employees to exert extra effort to ensure organisational success, managers should establish high leader-member exchange with their subordinates. A proactive work environment at private HEIs, such as leadership style, communication channels, and team dynamics, can influence how academic staff express their personalities. This work environment may encourage academic staff to be more open, collaborative, and authentic. Sekiguchi (2010) argues that employees who enjoy a high leader-member exchange may show a pleasant

personality (i.e., believing their managers are more likely to accept mistakes as learning experiences and encourage them to try things beyond their required tasks).

5.3.7 Work Engagement and Job Performance

This study argues that work engagement will have a positive and significant influence on job performance. However, the results from data analysis show insignificant influence of work engagement on job performance. In other words, work engagement does not have contribution to the job performance of employees at Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS), Kolej Universiti Islam Melaka (KUIM) and Kolej Universiti Islam Perlis (KUIPs).

The finding of this study contradicts previous studies that recognized the impact of work engagement on job performance (Leiter, 2010; Bakker & Leiter, 2010; Salanova et al., 2005; Bakker & Bal, 2010). It could be that the work environment factors have greater influence on academic staff job performance in the context of this study. A recent study by Hafeez, Yingjun, Hafeez, Mansoor and Rehman (2019) concluded that organisations must maintain a better environment in order to enhance employee job performance. A recent study by Parni and Khair (2020) identified that a flexible work system contributes to academic staff job performance in Malaysia.

5.3.8 Personality and Job Performance

This study posits personality could have a positive and significant influence on job performance. The results from data analysis provide support to this hypothesis. In other words, personality has a positive contribution to the job performance of employees at Kolej

Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS), Kolej Universiti Islam Melaka (KUIM) and Kolej Universiti Islam Perlis (KUIPs).

The finding is consistent with the previous studies (Ingarianti, 2014; John, 2014; Kappagoda, 2013; Chua Bee Seok, 2011; Cheng-Liang & Mark, 2014; Raja, Johns & Bilgrami, 2011; Nikolaou & Robertson, 2001; Abubakr et al., 2010) that recognized the importance of personality to the development of job performance of employees.

Specifically, this study reveals that if an organisation wants to improve their employees' performance, the organisation needs to make sure their employees have the big five personality traits. First, extraversion, which refers to those employees who are active, friendly, motivated, optimistic, and good in self-confidence. Second, conscientiousness, which refers to those employees who are slightly more ambitious, reliable, careful, and good at planning and hard work. Third, agreeableness, which can be shown through actions that help other people, like kindness, sympathy, and working together. Fourth, openness, which refers to those employees who have the idea of imagination, listening and accepting ideas. Fifth, neuroticism or emotional instability that represents the level of adjustment that can control stress and anxiety.

5.3.9 Work Engagement as a Mediator

In this study, work engagement has been positioned to play the role as a mediator between human resource management practices, leader-member exchange and job performance. In other words, this study argues that the work environment factors such as human resource management practices and leader-member exchange will increase the employees' level of work engagement, which in turn is able to perform their job.

However, these assumptions have not been supported by the data of this study. There could be other potential factors that are capable to becoming a mediator in the relationship such as organisational citizenship behaviour. Several recent studies already highlighted the ability of organisational citizenship behaviour as a mediator (Kadarningsih, Oktavia & Ali, 2020; Simamora, Sudiarditha & Yohana, 2019). Therefore, it is interesting for future study to examine the role of organisational citizenship behaviour as a mediator in the relationship between human resource management, leader-member exchange and job performance.

5.3.10 Personality as a Mediator

In this study, personality has been posited to play the role as a mediator between human resource management practices, leader-member exchange and job performance. In other words, this study argues that the work environment factors such as human resource management practices and leader-member exchange will influence employees' personality, which in turn is able to perform their job.

However, these assumptions have not been fully supported by the data of this study. Specifically, this study only confirmed the role of personality as a mediator between leader-member exchange and job performance.

This finding is essential to the development of knowledge in the field of management. It is due to the role of personality as a mediator in the leader-member exchange - job performance relationship has not been examined in previous studies. The previous studies only verified the role of personality as a mediator in the relationship between Islamic work ethics and employee performance (Awais et al., 2013), in the relationship between intrinsic motivation to accomplish and the student's Grade Point

Average (GPA) (Komarraju et al., 2009) and in the relationship between locus of control and depression (Clarke, 2004).

5.4 Implications of the Study

5.4.1 Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study extends the existing literature by simultaneously verifying the effect of organisational factors (leader-member exchange) and individual factors (personality) on job performance, particularly in the of context, the Islamic university colleges in Malaysia. The previous studies only verify the relationship between variables in this study separately in different contexts. For example, the relationship between personality and job performance has been tested in the study by Cheng-Liang and Mark (2014). While the link between leader-member exchange and job performance has been verified in another study by Power (2013). As a result, there is no adequate conclusion about the factors that influence job performance in a particular context. By simultaneously testing, the influence of human resources management practices, leader-member exchange, personality and work engagement on job performance, this study is able to make an adequate conclusion about the factors that have significant influence and the factors that have insignificant influence on academic staff job performance at the Islamic university colleges in Malaysia.

This study also contributes to the body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence about the role of personality as a mediator in the relationship between leader-member exchange and job performance, which has not been verified in previous studies. The previous studies only verified the role of personality as a mediator in the relationship between Islamic work

ethics and employee performance (Awais et al., 2013), in the relationship between intrinsic motivation to accomplish and the student's Grade point average (GPA) (Komarraju et al., 2009) and in the relationship between locus of control and depression (Clarke, 2004).

5.4.2 Practical Implications

From the practical perspective, the findings of this study provide adequate understanding to the management of higher education institutions in Malaysia, particularly the management at Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS), Kolej Universiti Islam Melaka (KUIM) and Kolej Universiti Islam Perlis (KUIPs) about organisational factors and individual factors that able to influence the academic staff job performance.

By having adequate understanding on the organisational and individual factors that able to influence the academic staff job performance, the managements of Islamic university colleges in Malaysia are able to plan an appropriate strategy and mechanism to improve the existing human resource management practices, the leader-member exchange program, and the academic staff personality. This study already highlights the five personalities that can influence the academic staff job performance. The personalities are extraversion (which refers to those employees who are active, friendly, motivated, optimistic, and good in self-confidence), conscientiousness (which refers to those employees who are slightly more ambitious, reliable, careful, and good at planning and hard work), agreeableness (which can be shown up through actions that help other people, like kindness, sympathy, and working together), openness (which refers to those employees who have the idea of imagination, listening and accepting ideas) and neuroticism (which represent the level of adjustment that can control stress and anxiety).

5.5 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

First, this study is a cross-sectional study in which the data was collected in one-point of time. Future study may improve this aspect by conducting a longitudinal study to verify the findings of this study. The benefit of a longitudinal study is that researchers can detect developments or changes in the characteristics of respondents such as their personality and job performance level.

Second, this study applies a quantitative method to test the research framework. Future study may replicate the study with the qualitative method to get further understanding on how the relationship between variables occurs (Creswell, 2018).

Third, the factors for job performance in this study are limited to human resource management practices, leader-member exchange, work engagement and personality. Future study may include additional factors such as the organisational learning culture and Islamic work ethic to enrich the understanding about the antecedents for job performance in a particular context. According to the Job Demand-Resource Model, aspects related to jobs are able to directly influence job performance of employees in an organisation (Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti & Xanthopoulou, 2007).

Fourth, the context of this study is Islamic university colleges in Malaysia. It is recommended for future study to re-examine the research framework in the context of public higher education institutions and private universities to validate the findings of this study. It is due to the human resources management practices between university colleges and universities are slightly different. For example, the minimum requirement to be a lecturer in the a public university in Malaysia is at least a PhD holder. While those who hold a master's degree can be accepted as a lecturer at the university colleges.

5.6 Conclusions

This study investigates the predictors of academic staff job performance in private higher education institutions, particularly the Islamic university colleges in Malaysia that participated in SETARA 2019 and achieved tier four (4) (competitive) and tier three (3) (moderately competitive). There are three higher education institutions that meet those criteria, namely as Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS), Kolej Universiti Islam Melaka (KUIM) and Kolej Universiti Islam Perlis (KUIPs).

Specifically, this study examines the effect of human resource management, leader-member exchange, work engagement and personality on the academic staff's job performance. This study also investigates the effect of human resource management practices and leader-member exchange on work engagement and personality. In addition, this study explores the mediating role of work engagement and personality in the relationship between human resource management and job performance, and the link between leader-member exchange and job performance.

The data of this study provides support to seven out of twelve hypotheses tested. Human resource management practices have an important role as a predictor to work engagement and personality, but not as a predictor to job performance. The data strongly support the proposed effect of leader-member exchange on personality, work engagement and job performance. In addition, the data do not support the proposed relationship between work engagement and job performance, but the relationship between personality and job performance is statistically supported. The data do not support the proposed work engagement as a mediator in the relationship between human resource management practices, leader-member exchange and job performance. The results also indicate that

personality does not mediate the relationship between human resource management practices and job performance, but it partially mediates the relationship between leader-member exchange and job performance.

