

WORKLOAD AND INNOVATIVE WORK BEHAVIOR AS DETERMINANTS OF JOB PERFORMANCE AMONG ACADEMICIANS IN TVET INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract: *Job performance is essential for achieving organizational goals, making it a key focus for scholars and HR practitioners. However, the factors influencing job performance and their underlying mechanisms require further investigation. This study proposes a framework to examine the relationships between workload, innovative work behaviour (IWB), and job performance among TVET academicians in Malaysia. Academicians are central to educational institutions, shaping knowledge, fostering innovation, and driving excellence. The National TVET Policy 2023 and the Twelfth Malaysia Plan highlight the need for skilled TVET educators to support Malaysia's transition to Industry 4.0. Additionally, the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 emphasizes improving TVET enrolment and graduate outcomes, which are directly linked to the performance of academicians who play a critical role in delivering quality education. The empirical studies suggest that both workload and IWB significantly impact job performance. This paper concludes that effective management of workload and fostering an innovative work environment are crucial to improving job performance among academicians in TVET institutions, ultimately contributing to the development of Malaysia's education system.*

Keywords: *Job Performance, Workload, Innovative Work Behaviour, TVET Institutions, Academician*

Introduction

Transformative changes on global education system have been driven by rapid evolution of technology and knowledge, forcing institutions to produce a workforce matched to societal needs and economic demands. As a focal point of national policy, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector in Malaysia has been emerged and as a result, the frameworks such as Twelfth Malaysia Plan (12MP), Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 and the National TVET Policy were developed to bridge education to industry needs. These initiatives are critical, as they mentioned the importance of building the talent that can thrive in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0) where automation and advanced technologies require a technically proficient and adaptive workforce (Sa'dullah & Hidayatullah, 2020; Ali et al., 2022).

However, these forward-looking policies still continue to face pressing challenges of the Malaysian TVET system that hinders academicians from effectively preparing students for industry demands. Studies suggest large gaps in which instructors are not adequately upskilled, there are problems recruiting qualified staff for specialized courses, and there are not enough resources for professional development that matches industry standards (Jamaludin et al., 2023; Subramaniam & Bush, 2022). These challenges not only influence the quality of the teaching process but also create a misalignment between educational outcomes and job market expectations, and therefore, the role of continuous professional growth of TVET academicians is very critical to improve workforce competitiveness and adaptability.

Additionally, academicians play a critical role in fulfilling Malaysia's educational goals as they become more and more responsible in the need for rigorous accreditation standards in TVET institutions. Academicians' expertise in teaching, research, and community engagement are important to the credibility and reputation of an institution, and are crucial for the quality of high quality TVET education (Wahyudi et al., 2021). TVET academicians are important in bridging the gap between industry requirements and academic preparation as Malaysia strives to realise the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025 and respond to the demands of Industry 4.0 (4IR). TVET educators are unlike traditional academics because they have to align technical training with industry standards, while at the same time dealing with teaching and administrative tasks. Future research is needed to develop workload management strategies and organizational support frameworks that are in line with the needs of the TVET context as proposed by Herdiana and Sary (2023). The use of this approach will mean that the quality of teaching and job performance will be optimized, which is consistent with the broader aspiration to produce graduates ready for the challenges of a dynamic industrial environment.

To support Industry 4.0, Malaysia has introduced the Industry4WRD Readiness Assessment under the National Policy on Industry 4.0 (MITI, 2022) to accelerate digital transformation in manufacturing and related services. This initiative targets four national objectives: improving labor productivity, increasing manufacturing's economic contribution, enhancing innovation capacity, and creating high-skilled jobs. Additionally, Mission 2 of the New Industrial Master Plan 2030, titled "Tech Up for a Digitally Vibrant Nation," emphasizes adopting advanced technologies such as automation, robotics, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and additive manufacturing to boost innovation and productivity. In response to these technological advancements, TVET academicians face the challenge of rapidly updating curricula, teaching methods, and skill-building strategies to align with industry needs. Their role is crucial in preparing a skilled workforce for Industry 4.0, as they must constantly adapt to new standards and skills, making their work highly innovative.

Malaysia has a huge manufacturing sector that generates RM1.2 trillion in GDP and hosts key sub sectors such as chemicals, automotive and electrical and electronics industry (MIDA, 2024). But, as Shahzad et al. (2023) point out, a depressed focus by government in digital literacy and innovation has limited access to technology which, coupled with large investments in technology and talent, has produced a workforce that is unable to take advantage of the rapid change and is plagued by additional challenges. This exists as a gap that highlights the significance to study IWB among TVET academicians whose performance directly and highly relates to education quality, not to mention their alumnus' adaptability to industry 4.0 landscape.

This paper explores the factors influencing the job performance of TVET academicians, addressing the strategic importance of empowering educators to elevate TVET's impact on national development, economic resilience, and Malaysia's positioning in the global arena.

Literature Review

This literature review focuses on two key aspects: the development of hypotheses based on previous empirical studies and the proposed conceptual framework that supports these hypotheses.

Job Performance

Scholars and human resources professionals alike consider understanding the factors that drive job performance essential for improving organizational success (Juyumaya et al., 2024). In all sectors, organizations seek to improve employee performance through leadership, human resources, or individual motivation driven initiatives. However, the mechanisms that connect job performance to other influential factors are not well explored, and there is a need to understand what factors positively affect workplace performance (Muecke & Iseke, 2019).

Job performance consists of task and contextual performance, that is, performing core responsibilities and behaving in ways that support organizational goals. Conceptualizing job performance in academic settings, especially in TVET institutions, is difficult because of the peculiar demands placed on academicians. This includes not only teaching tasks, but also curriculum development in line with industry, and adjusting to changing educational standards (Ciftci & Karadag, 2022; Saleem et al., 2023).

There are several theories that provide some insight into the factors that shape job performance. According to social exchange theory, employees are motivated by the reciprocal benefits they receive and supportive work environments can greatly improve performance and retention (Zeb et al., 2022). Self-determination theory also states that meeting psychological needs such as autonomy, competence and relatedness leads to both well-being and optimal performance (Ryan and Deci 2022). These theories emphasize that job performance is not determined by a single variable but by a complex work environment, which is particularly relevant for academicians whose jobs are both multifaceted and changing. It is important to recognize and understand these influential factors to enhance the high level of job performance in TVET academicians by matching their contribution to the institutional objectives and national educational priorities (Davidson et al., 2023; Shahzad & Khan, 2023).

Hypothesis Development

Based on the literature review conducted, this paper presents the main independent variables, namely workload and IWB, with job performance as the dependent variable. The hypotheses of this paper are formulated and tested, with the discussion of all variables grounded in previous research.

Workload and Job Performance

Workload and job performance among academicians is a significant topic in TVET institutions with a view that the more workload an academician works the better the performance in the job. Institutions of TVET around the world are designed to fill the gap between education and industry through industry aligned curricula and technical skill development (Md Saleh et al., 2023). However, TVET educators have a heavy workload, in addition to teaching and administrative tasks, to continuously revise the curriculum to be in line with industry changes. Despite substantial government investment and reform of TVET policy to support the sector, issues with workload continue to be priorities, as they affect the quality of teaching and, ultimately, student outcomes.

Studies suggest, TVET academicians are required to manage their workload in order to optimize job performance. The balanced workload provides educators to have complex responsibilities such as research, tutoring, and administrative work but without compromising teaching quality (Herawati et al., 2023; Wahid & Rahim, 2023). However, excessive workloads may cause stress, fatigue, and lack of motivation, which in turn can lead to decreased job satisfaction and negatively affect academic performance (Sumiyati et al., 2021; Niere et al., 2024). Interestingly, these workload imbalances are not only bad for the educators, but also for institutions as a whole.

Contrasting perspectives highlight that workload does not uniformly affect job performance across all educational settings. Some research claims that heavier workloads decrease productivity because of higher stress levels, while other research claims that moderate workload increases can lead to performance improvements through offering the necessary challenges that stimulate optimal engagement levels (Ashar et al., 2021). The mixed evidence reveals the need to achieve a workload balance that is appropriate to the institution's objectives and to the educator's capabilities so as to improve TVET academicians' job performance.

Thus, in light of these insights, this paper proposes a hypothesis aimed at further examining this relationship in the specific context of TVET academicians. This hypothesis builds on the premise that appropriately managed workloads, aligned with individual competencies, can foster productivity and improve job performance.

Innovative Work Behavior and Job Performance

In the knowledge driven sector such as consulting, where innovative solutions to existing problems are required, IWB has become a critical driver of organizational success (Arthachinda & Charoensukmongkol, 2024). In a dynamic environment, employees with IWB help solve organizational challenges and, therefore, enhance the performance of the team in general (Charoensukmongkol & Pandey, 2023). The development of innovation driven culture is not only the way to promote creativity, but also the way to help the organization adapt to the changing market environment, so as to enhance the competitive edge.

Among knowledge workers, the ability to innovate is vital for achieving superior job performance. Ghlichlee and Larijani (2024) claim that high levels of innovation result in better performance outcomes and argue that individual creativity leads to better job performance. Additionally, employees often need to bridge knowledge gaps, and acquire new expertise, to remain relevant, which also encourages innovative work behaviour (Vuong et al., 2022). With the acceleration of technological changes and the diversification of job tasks, organizations

must focus on innovation in order to sustain long term growth and success, particularly in industries which rely on knowledge and creativity to solve complex problems.

It is found that in educational settings, IWB could help academicians to solve the complex academic challenges, since it is favorable for students and educators to adapt to the changing job market (Zainal & Matore, 2024; Samadova & Tursunova, 2021). Similarly, the emphasis of studies has been on developing an innovative culture in educational institutions to enhance academic excellence and institutional performance (Budur et al., 2023). Given these findings, it is evident that encouraging IWB among academicians is essential for improving both individual and institutional performance in the educational sector.

Based on the existing literature, it is hypothesized that increased IWB is positively related to enhanced job performance among academicians in TVET institutions. This hypothesis underscores the importance of fostering an innovation-driven culture within TVET institutions to improve the performance outcomes of academicians, thereby contributing to the overall effectiveness and growth of the institution.

Conceptual Framework

This paper is underpinned by the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model introduced by Demerouti et al. (2001). The JD-R Model identifies two key mechanisms influencing job performance: (1) excessive job demands that lead to burnout and (2) sufficient job resources that enhance engagement and performance. Job demands, such as workload, require sustained effort and are linked to strain, while job resources, like IWB, assist in achieving goals and fostering growth (Demerouti et al., 2001). In this paper, workload is conceptualized as a job demand, while IWB is considered job resources. The JD-R Model's flexibility allows for the integration of these factors, making it a suitable framework to explore academicians' job performance within TVET institutions.

Based on the theories reviewed, the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1 is proposed. Based on the development of the hypotheses presented, the model is illustrated in Figure 1. Once identified, the independent variables that shape the model are workload and IWB, and dependent variable is job performance.

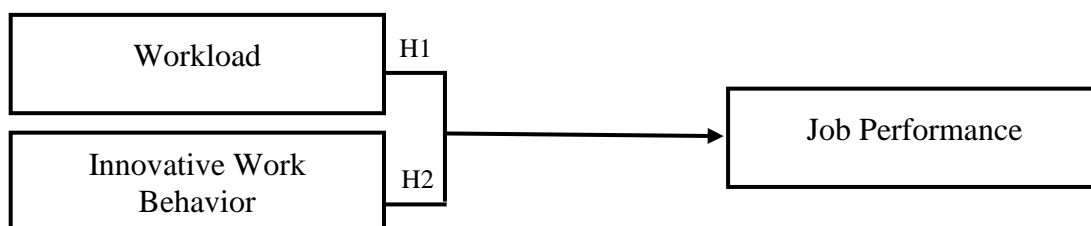


Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the proposed conceptual framework for this paper. Two hypotheses were developed to address the research objectives. The first objective is to identify the relationship between workload and job performance among TVET academicians (H1). The second objective is to examine the relationship between IWB and job performance among TVET academicians (H2). Theoretically, this research provides insights into the roles of workload and IWB in influencing job performance within the context of TVET institutions.

H1: Workload is positively related to the job performance of academicians in TVET institutions.
H2: Innovative work behavior is positively related to the job performance of academicians in TVET institutions.

Conclusion

The global education system has undergone significant changes in its approach to teaching and learning due to advancements in technology and the expansion of knowledge. These developments highlight the necessity for educational institutions to establish effective systems that cultivate individuals capable of contributing positively to society. Academicians play a vital role in shaping human capital and supporting national efforts to produce a highly skilled workforce essential for sustainable development. In line with the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 and the National TVET Policy 2030, the performance of TVET academicians in Malaysia has become a matter of critical importance.

Effective workload management is essential to understanding academicians' capacity to handle their responsibilities, enabling them to maintain high performance while fostering continuous innovation. Additionally, promoting IWB is vital for ensuring that individual innovation evolves into an institutional culture, enabling organizations to sustain their competitiveness in an ever-changing global landscape.

This paper emphasizes the interconnected significance of these elements, underscoring the importance of workload management and innovation as strategies to enhance the performance and sustainability of TVET institutions.

This paper is a concept paper. Therefore, no empirical evidence is provided. The article of the forthcoming study will validate the model with evidence from the findings of the empirical study in relation to the stated relationship.

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