

DRIVING TVET'S FUTURE: THE IMPACT OF PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AS A MODERATOR ON ACADEMICIANS' JOB PERFORMANCE

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Abstract: *The moderating effect of transformational leadership between perceived organizational support (POS) and job performance in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions which are pivotal to Malaysia's National TVET Policy 2030 and the Eleventh Malaysia Plan has been explored in this paper. This research explores how academic leaders in TVET institutions can cultivate an innovative and high-performance culture in the face of heavy workloads, as Malaysia moves towards lifting workforce readiness and meeting industry needs. Based on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, the study focuses on POS, which is perceived organizational support that is academicians' perceptions of organizational care and support as a valuable resource for surmounting workplace challenges. Findings show that transformational leadership substantially improves the positive relationship between POS and job performance particularly in high workload context. The study also shows that increased organizational support leads to enhanced job performance through enhancing motivation and engagement of academicians. Finally, the paper concludes that transformational leadership can enhance organizational support and consequently enhance academicians' job performance, engagement and motivation. These insights are important for TVET leaders and policymakers, providing actionable steps for TVET players to strengthen the sector and make it relevant to the global labour market, in order to maintain a future ready and innovative workforce for Malaysia.*

Keywords: *Perceived Organizational Support, Transformational Leadership, TVET Institutions, Academician*

Introduction

Human capital development depends on the quality of academicians and education systems. As Komalasari et al. (2020) highlight, the professional educators need to have subject expertise, effective teaching methods and other advance skills to deliver high quality education. This commitment is reflected in Malaysia through strategic human resource initiatives and a strong quality assurance framework, including SETARA and MyQUEST, administered by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA). According to the Ministry of Education (MOE), in 2019 the country made RM7.2 annually through international students' fees and related services, emphasizing the importance of continuous quality assessment.

As a result, the global education system is rapidly evolving with technology and knowledge to make transformative changes due to which institutions are forced to align their workforce development to the needs of the society and the demands of the market. As a response, Malaysia has chosen to put emphasis on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as an important cornerstone of its educational reforms. TVET is a key driver of national progress and, as outlined in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015 — 2025 (Higher Education), a comprehensive plan to transform Malaysia's higher education system. The plan is to increase higher education enrolment to 70% by 2025, which will require an additional 1.1 million places. The emphasis is on improving TVET pathways to produce graduates who are holistic and have entrepreneurial mindsets that are consistent with the nation's ambition to produce 'job creators' rather than 'job seekers'. This initiative is in support of the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) which aims for a high-income economy via 12 National Key Economic Areas (NKEAs), namely Oil, Gas and Energy; Palm Oil; Financial Services; Tourism; Business Services; Electronics & Electrical; Wholesale & Retail; Education; Healthcare; Communications; Content & Infrastructure; Agriculture; and Greater Kuala Lumpur/Klang Valley.

In addition, the TVET ecosystem is also highlighted in The Twelfth Malaysia Plan (12MP), to nurture future ready talent that can meet industry needs and catalyse sustainable economic growth. Core competencies required by the dynamic employment market have been demonstrated to be developed through TVET. TVET contributes to Malaysia's socio-economic objectives through sector relevant skills that are developed, particularly in recent initiatives such as the National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR) and New Industrial Master Plan 2030 (NIMP 2030). These strategies are intended to develop high impact job opportunities in Industry 4.0 affected areas, climate change, sustainability practices, demographic shifts and global value chain transformation. As a result, there is an increasing need for a workforce proficient in high value sectors, including electronics, agriculture, and rare earth minerals, for Malaysia to remain competitive in a dynamic, fast changing global arena.

Malaysia's National TVET Policy 2030 seeks to restructure its TVET landscape and tackle issues of TVET instructors lacking industry knowledge and experience, which impairs teaching quality and matches its industry requirements. However, these challenges can be overcome through effective internal management in TVET institutions as it is highlighted in the policy. Wahyudi et al. (2021) mention that the success as well as the attractiveness of educational institutions are formulated by the qualifications and efforts of its teaching staff. Noticeably, Tikiawati and Sulistyanningrum (2024) stress the importance of academicians in institution reputation and policy making. According to theories of instructional quality, relationships between academicians and students are important for learning outcomes (Burić & Kim, 2020), and conventional learning theory ties students' success and satisfaction to academic competency

(Latip et al., 2020). However, surprisingly, out of the five Malaysian universities in TVET education system, none ranks in the QS World University Rankings 2025 and hence, it is vital to improve academicians' job performance. Malaysia's global competitiveness in TVET and to achieve national goals will require competent academicians (Che Amran et al., 2020). The focus of this study is on perceived organizational support (POS) and its relationship with job performance, with transformational leadership as a moderator.

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

Job performance remains a pivotal factor in achieving organizational success, particularly within educational institutions where its significance cannot be overstated. Chalco-Ccapa et al. (2024) conceptualize job performance from two key perspectives: the behavioural perspective, which focuses on employees' actions and conduct at work, and the outcome perspective, which concentrates on the results employees produce. Dwiliesanti and Yudianto (2022) further emphasize that individual work performance refers to actions directed at organizational goals, underscoring the importance of these behaviours in shaping overall performance outcomes. However, the concept of job performance is multifaceted, influenced by several factors, with perceived organizational support (POS) and transformational leadership playing crucial roles. POS has been shown to enhance job performance by fostering a supportive work environment, boosting both motivation and job satisfaction (Zeb et al., 2022; Ezechukwu & Obi, 2023). Furthermore, transformational leadership serves as a critical mediator in this relationship, aligning employees' motivations with organizational objectives, thereby increasing engagement and productivity (Shin & Hur, 2021; Uribechebarria et al., 2021).

Despite existing studies on job performance, the unique dynamics of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions warrant further exploration. The interplay of POS and transformational leadership in influencing academicians' job performance in this context remains inadequately explored, making it essential for the development of targeted strategies to enhance performance within this sector. As noted by Ezinine and Ughamadu (2021), neglect of responsibility and increased interpersonal conflicts in academic settings often stem from organizational inadequacies in POS. This is reinforced by Tran et al. (2020), who emphasize the importance of continually assessing and supporting employees' intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction, particularly through the promotion of autonomy. Aung et al. (2023) similarly demonstrate that exposure to demotivating managerial practices results in reduced job satisfaction and diminished productivity.

In the specific context of TVET academicians, who face unique responsibilities, it is vital to develop organizationally supportive structures that address their needs beyond traditional academic tasks. Sabir et al. (2021) assert that organizational support is positively correlated with improved performance, highlighting that a supportive environment enhances the quality of academic work. However, the form of organizational support required within TVET institutions, especially in relation to industry-oriented training, remains insufficiently explored. A tailored organizational support framework could substantially improve job satisfaction and performance by addressing the distinct challenges faced by TVET academicians. Ahmed et al. (2021) further emphasize that such support frameworks must be backed by managers who

possess the capability and motivation to create an environment conducive to employee well-being.

Moreover, these frameworks should extend beyond traditional academic goals to include practical demands such as ongoing professional development, interaction with industry, and the necessary resources that enable academicians to train students effectively for real-world applications. Despite the growing body of research on POS, transformational leadership, and job performance, significant gaps persist, particularly in the academic sector. Much of the existing literature is concentrated in non-educational fields, offering limited relevance to the unique needs of academicians. Consequently, there is a pressing need for focused research to better understand how POS, mediated by transformational leadership, influences job performance in TVET institutions. Addressing this gap is crucial for developing strategies that foster an environment conducive to enhanced job performance within the distinctive context of TVET education.

Hypothesis Development

Based on the literature review conducted, this paper presents the main independent variables, namely perceived organizational support (POS), with job performance as the dependent variable. Additionally, transformational leadership is introduced as the moderating variable. The hypotheses of this paper are formulated and tested, with the discussion of all variables grounded in previous research.

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and Job Performance

Perceived organizational support (POS) is a critical determinant of job performance in organizational settings. It is evident that POS has a significant impact on employee's psychological well-being, security and engagement. If employees feel that the organization appreciates them, they are more likely to cooperate with the organizations' goals and their performance expectations (Le & Lei, 2019). This relationship is particularly vital in academia, where management support enhances engagement, satisfaction, and dedication to teaching responsibilities. In the context of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions, POS can have a particularly profound impact on enhancing the performance of academicians, given the unique cultural and institutional challenges they face.

Empirical research across various sectors has consistently demonstrated the positive relationship between POS and job performance. For instance, Nahyan et al. (2024) found that POS, when combined with psychological capital, significantly influenced employee well-being and job performance under stressful conditions, such as during the pandemic. Similarly, Ilyas et al. (2022) highlighted how POS enhances employees' subjective well-being, fostering greater commitment and dedication, particularly in the healthcare sector. These findings suggest that POS plays a vital role in improving job performance by cultivating a supportive and emotionally connected workplace environment.

Additionally, Maan et al. (2020) found that POS leads to job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation, which are the primary promoters of high job performance. Strong organizational support is also associated with employees engaging more deeply with their work and creating a positive and conducive organizational culture. According to Ullah et al. (2020), further, employees' perceptions of organizational support in turn increase employees' loyalty and performance. Similarly, Alimbekov et al. (2024) showed that POS reduces burnout and increases self-esteem, also improving employee well-being and performance. These findings

were corroborated by Novitasari (2020), which also reported that academician's performance in private universities is strongly correlated to organizational support. This body of evidence emphasizes the importance of perceived organizational support (POS) in improving job performance in a challenging and unique environment such as TVET institutions. TVET academicians face distinct challenges, including resource limitations, institutional constraints, and the need for continuous engagement with industry standards.

Based on the extensive literature, it is hypothesized that increased organizational support is positively related to improved job performance among academicians in TVET institutions. This hypothesis underscores the importance of fostering a supportive organizational environment to ensure that academicians are equipped to meet the demands of their roles and contribute to the institution's goals effectively.

Transformational Leadership and Job Performance

Across a number of organizational contexts, transformational leadership is known to be a primary determinant of job performance. In particular, its effect on work engagement, creativity, personal initiative, and effectiveness in general is known (Juyumaya et al., 2024). Transformational leadership creates an environment that enables employees to connect their personal objectives with organizational objectives, and therefore helps to improve individual performance, foster innovation, and achieve continuous improvement which ultimately leads toward overall organizational success (Bakker et al., 2022; Juyumaya et al., 2024). This leadership style is particularly important in organizations undergoing change, as it inspires resilience, motivates employees to face challenges, and helps them adapt to dynamic market conditions (Suttipun & Arwae, 2020).

Transformational leadership is proven to enhance job performance through empirical studies, irrespective of sector. Fahy et al. (2024) suggest that principals with transformational leadership can provide significant school performance by not only motivating academicians to participate in change initiatives, but also making academician exceed their expectations. Transformational leadership has been also proven to positively affect task performance and organizational citizenship behaviour by meeting employees' psychological needs like feeling valued and supported (Get et al., 2024). These studies emphasize that transformational leadership contributes to individual performance by contributing to the creation of a supportive environment in which people are motivated to innovate and to act proactively.

It is also critical that transformational leadership is very important in increasing academicians' POS. According to Bernarto et al. (2021), academicians' POS is enhanced by transformational leadership which results to increased job satisfaction and overall performance. Transformational leaders create intellectual stimulation that encourage academicians to adapt new behaviours and to enhance educational practices (Vermeulen et al., 2020). The connection of this emphasized the role of transformational leadership as a moderator in the relationship between POS and job performance. Transformational leadership encourages a cooperative atmosphere, where shared goals and mutual support enhance performance outcomes.

Research suggests that transformational leadership not only fosters individual performance but also promotes shared goals within organizations. According to Soontornchaiya and Charoensukmongkol (2024), transformational leaders are more likely to set up shared goals than non-transformational leaders. Additionally, the effect of transformational leadership on goal setting is intensified when employees view high organizational support. This suggests that

transformational leadership can moderate the relation between POS and job performance. This dynamic provides a host of improvements to academic performance and institutional effectiveness in TVET institutions where the challenges are unique and multifaceted.

Given the above evidence, the relationship between transformational leadership, POS, and job performance in TVET institutions is crucial. Based on existing literature, it is hypothesized that transformational leadership moderates the relationship between academicians' POS and their job performance in TVET institutions. This hypothesis underscores the importance of transformational leadership in fostering a supportive organizational environment that enables academicians to thrive, adapt to changing conditions, and contribute effectively to the institution's goals.

Conceptual Framework

In this paper, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model developed by Demerouti et al. (2001) is applied to determine the factors that affect job performance with particular reference to the case of TVET academicians. The JD-R Model outlines two core mechanisms: (1) Job demands that lead to burnout and (2) job resources that enhance the level of engagement and performance. According to this framework, the roles played by academicians, including teaching, administrative and research work, along with keeping pace with the changing industry standards are considered as the job demands. These demands often force people to keep on doing it and, ultimately, get tired and exhausted.

On the other hand, perceived organizational support (POS) is an important job resource providing the required support and acknowledgment to enable academicians to manage their demanding jobs. POS creates a feeling of belonging and value, thereby reducing the impact of job demands and accordingly increasing employees' engagement and innovative behaviours. These demands and resources are then examined as the ultimate outcome of the interaction between these demands and resources and the effect they have on job performance as a reflection of academicians' adaptation and thriving in their role.

Specifically, to contextualize this study, this study is based on Perceived Organizational Support (POS) Theory advanced by Eisenberger et al. (1986) who accentuate the significance of perceived organizational support in enhancing employee commitment, well-being and performance. The JD-R Model is closely aligned to this theory in that it recognizes the mitigating role of support in the management of job demands for improved job-related outcomes.

The JD-R Model's adaptability allows for the seamless integration of these elements, providing a comprehensive approach to understanding the challenges and enablers of job performance in TVET institutions. This study also integrates Transforming Leadership Theory by Burns (1978) and Bass and Avolio (1994) to examine the role of leadership in fostering resilience, innovation, and alignment with organizational goals. Transformational leaders act as an additional resource by inspiring and motivating employees, thereby reinforcing the positive effects of POS and mitigating the strain caused by job demands.

Based on these theoretical insights, the proposed framework is illustrated in Figure 1. In this model, POS is identified as the independent variable influencing job performance, which serves as the dependent variable. Transformational leadership is hypothesized as a moderating variable, amplifying the positive impact of POS on job performance.

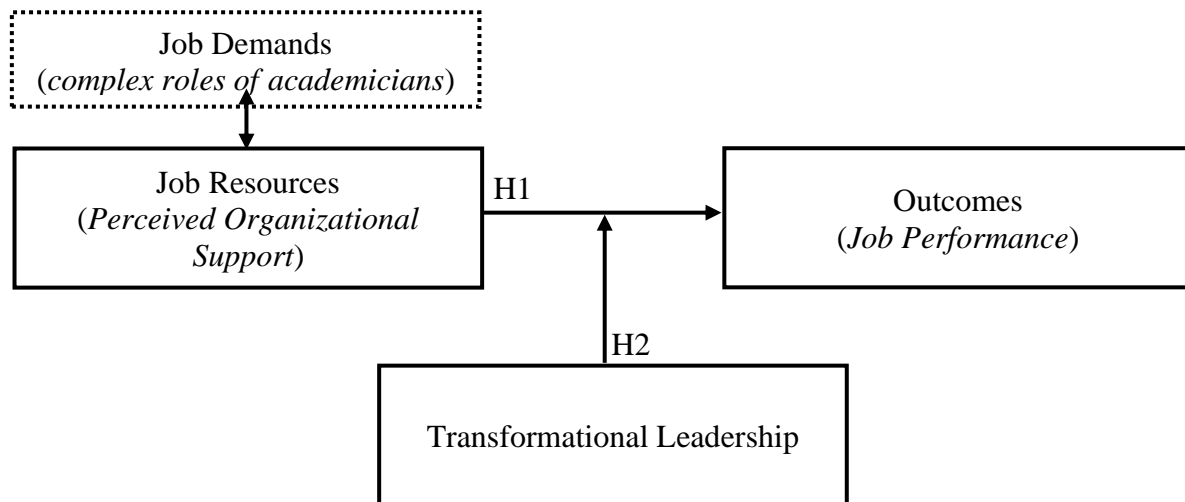


Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework

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 POS and job performance among TVET academicians (H1). The second objective is to investigate the moderating role of transformational leadership in the relationship between perceived organizational support and job performance among academicians in TVET institutions (H2). Theoretically, this research provides insights into the roles of POS and transformational leadership in influencing job performance within the context of TVET institutions.

H1: Perceived organizational support is positively related to the job performance of academicians in TVET institutions.

H2: Transformational leadership moderates the relationship between academicians' perceived organizational support and their job performance in TVET institutions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the quality of academicians is essential for the success of TVET institutions in Malaysia, which are vital to the nation's human capital development and economic growth. The TVET is to be improved to produce a workforce that can meet the industry and global economic demand as stated in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015 2025 and National TVET Policy 2030. Malaysia is elevating academicians to perform beyond their roles in addition to mastering the art of adapting to technological advancements and industry shifts to continuously contribute towards the nation's development. Therefore, support and development of their performance is essential to the success of TVET programs and the quality of graduates they produce.

The Twelfth Malaysia Plan (12MP) places great emphasis on a strong TVET ecosystem to nurture a future ready workforce. The National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR) and the New Industrial Master Plan 2030 (NIMP 2030) are initiatives that seek to provide high value job opportunities in key sectors like electronics and renewable energy. In the evolving TVET sector, academicians are expected to perform high job performance in order to provide the students with the skills they need to survive in the dynamic industries. TVET institutions' ability to sustain and enhance their performance is thus important to fulfil institutional and national objectives so that TVET institutions remain competitive and continue to make contribution to Malaysia's socio-economic growth.

Perceived organizational support (POS) is important as a tool to improve the job performance of academicians working in TVET institutions, as this study points out. The supportive environment is conducive to wellbeing, engagement and performance and therefore creates an environment for the academicians to meet their responsibilities and contribute to institutional goals. The relationship between POS and job performance is moderated by transformational leadership during periods of change or crisis. Transformational leadership spurs academicians, manages workloads, and inspires innovation to keep TVET institutions adaptable and globally competitive, thereby supporting Malaysia's development for socio economic and global competitiveness.

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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