

# Relationship between Exemplary Leadership Practices and Organizational Citizenship Behavior of Academic Staff in Malaysian Research Universities

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## Abstract

This study examined the relationship between exemplary leadership practices and organizational citizenship behavior of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities. This study employed a quantitative descriptive survey whereby a total of 372 academic staff from five Research Universities were selected as samples for the study. An instrument consisting of 54 items were used to measure academic staff' perceptions towards their level of organizational citizenship behavior (24-items) and exemplary leadership practices (30-items) at the workplace. The data were collected and analyzed using descriptive statistical tools (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation), while the research hypotheses were analyzed using inferential statistical tools (Pearson correlation). The descriptive analysis showed that the level of organizational citizenship behavior (mean = 5.91, SD = 0.56) was high while the level of exemplary leadership practices (mean = 7.48, SD = 1.67) was also reported as high. The result of this study also found that there is a significant relationship between exemplary leadership practices and organizational citizenship behavior ( $r = 0.252$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, exemplary leadership practices were confirmed as contextual factors within academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities that would significantly contribute to their level of citizenship behavior toward the organization they served for.

**Keywords:** Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Exemplary Leadership Practices, Academic Staff, Malaysian Research Universities, Higher Education

## Introduction

University is an institution that plays an important role in developing the culture and civilization of young generations which later will contribute to the nation. The role of

universities is universal and crucial in developing scholars that meet the current needs and remain relevant to society while at the same time managing the social change. Atkinson and Blanpied (2008) stated that the concept of Research University (RU) was introduced in developing countries dated back to the 19th century where it has been adopted as a hub for teaching and learning, research, as well as the centers for innovation excellence of academic staff and their post-graduate students.

Even though the governance aspect in RUs is about the same with other non-Research Universities, the government has decided to give more power and a greater level of autonomy in determining the university's direction for success through the decision-making process. As institutions that lead the transformation model for Malaysian education (Mohamad Sheriff & Abdullah, 2017; Hussin & Chin, 2014), RUs are responsible to encounter the challenges in educational requirements globally. It is noteworthy that the establishment of RUs is in line with the plan as stated in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (Higher Education), which is to extend on the activities that promote research and development, as well as the commercialization of products and services without neglecting the focus on teaching and learning.

As to advocate the noble aspirations by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), numerous efforts have also been carried out at the management level in each university. These efforts encompass motivation for academic staff to perform their best in handling tasks as their role is vital in accomplishing the institutions' mission and vision as world-class RU (Hussin & Chin, 2014). Being an RU, the commitment of the entire staff, particularly academicians, is imperative towards achieving the university's goals. Higher commitment of academic staff would lead to higher organizational efficiency. Kim, Eisenberger, and Baik (2016) supported this notion by stating that the lack of employees' commitment would lead to the lack of efficiency of human capital in organizations. Thus, the commitment of employees can be seen through their willingness to put extra effort in performing tasks.

Organ, Podsakoff, and MacKenzie (2006) suggested the term of OCBs which covers an individual's extra-role behavior that goes beyond the routine duties as prescribed in the job descriptions, not officially rewarded in the performance evaluations, and could foster effective functioning and competencies of the organizations. Further, they divided the term OCBs into five dimension which are altruism, courtesy, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, and civic virtue as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1.

*The Dimension of Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006)*

| Dimension         | Descriptions   |
|-------------------|--|
| Altruism          | Behaviors focused at helping colleagues related with the relevant task or problem at the workplace.  |
| Courtesy          | Behaviors intended at preventing the incidence of work-related problems.   |
| Conscientiousness | Individual's acceptance of the general compliance such as rules, regulations, and procedure, even when no one is there or keeps an eye on adherence. |
| Sportsmanship     | Behaviors which indicate the willingness of people to tolerate the inevitable inconveniences and impositions of work without complaining.            |
| Civic Virtue      | Employee's concern about the political life, responsibility, and common welfare of the organization.   |

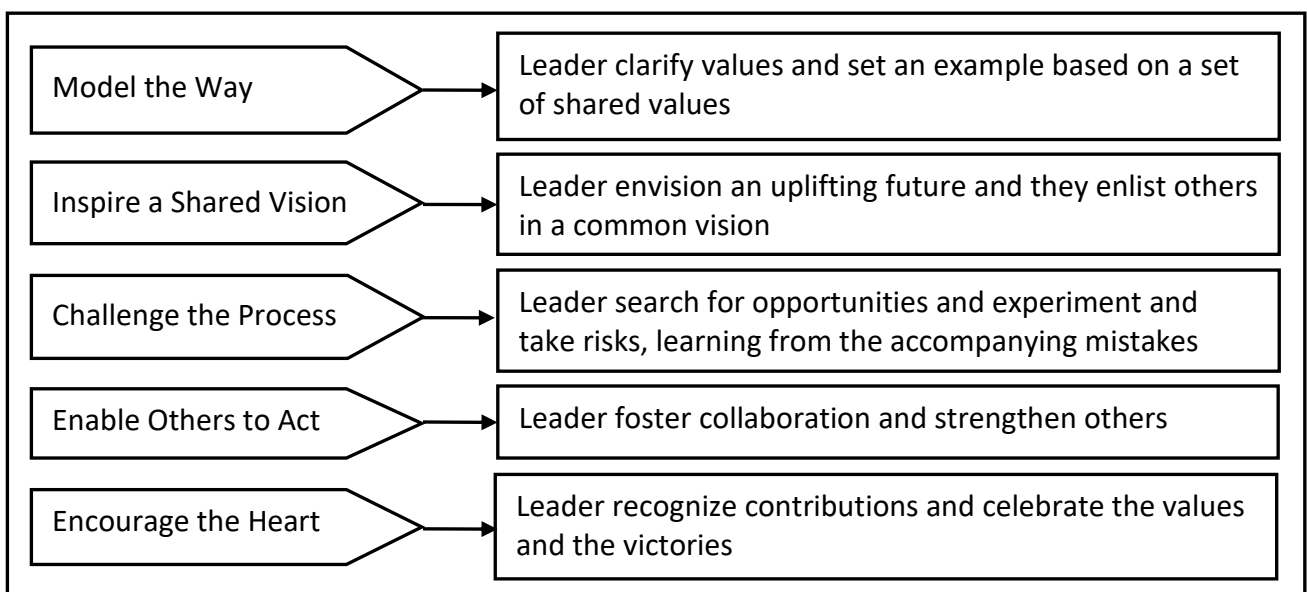
In this context, the term OCBs can be understood as academic staff' discretionary behaviors, non-tasks that are beyond the call of duty, directly and indirectly, and are not measured in the formal reward evaluation system in the context of organizational reward performance. In many circumstances, OCBs can be implemented once leadership aspect is well provided by the department of the institution. Research has indicated that there is a conflict between the values of the universities that result in unexpected academic staff behavior (Adewale, Ghavifekr, & Megat Daud, 2018; Eyupoglu, 2016). The implication of the path maker and path follower distinction is that they have to be concerned with organizing stable systems, ensuring quality, as well as identifying and implementing best practices (Asplund, 2020). Thus, the role of leaders is essential as a central point for achieving balanced and harmony in the organizations as they are the key determinants of success or failure of an organization that may be directly linked to their leadership practices.

Black (2015) suggested that leadership is leaders' ability to influence their subordinates, peers, and top management in the organizational context. Having influence is a must because without it, it is impossible to be a leader. Hence, there is a greater need on the part of leaders to exercise their influence ethically. More importantly, it means that leadership is not just a selected few who are born with it and not restricted to just the one person in a group who has a formal position power. In the higher education context, departmental leaders will ensure that their staff receive feedback and keep updated with any new information. Similarly, Asplund (2020) and Potgieter, Basson, and Coetzee (2011) found that current and former academic staff depict successful departmental leaders as advocates, supporters, and providers in giving constructive feedback and mentoring. On the same note, Asplund (2020) stated that advocacy as championing the cause of staff within and beyond the university as a feature of excellence by the head of department.

Leaders play an important role in dealing with challenges of change that results in employees to perform OCBs in the organizations. Previous studies showed that a leader's behavior highly contributed to employees' OCBs (Ueda, 2016; Colquitt et al., 2014; Al-Sharafi & Rajiani, 2013; Rashed & Daud, 2013). In the context of RUs, Heads of Department (HoDs) are leaders who lead themselves, their constituents, units, and departments for the success of the institution

at large instead of doing their core business that is teaching, learning, and research. Al-Sharafi and Rajiani (2013) found that exemplary leadership practices are important in promoting OCBs among employees. The term 'exemplary leadership' refers to a leader's behavior in displaying commitment to the shared values, identity, and goals that aim to increase the intrinsic valence of group efforts on behalf of the collective goal. Yaffe and Kark (2011) stated that exemplary leadership is a crucial factor in determining organizational performance as leaders are expected to represent group identity and values in their behavior. Likewise, leaders' exemplary behaviors are often aimed to actively foster shared values that leaders wish their followers to adopt.

Kouzes and Posner (2007) contributed their challenge model of leadership associated with exemplary leaders that have been widely quoted and used in higher education settings. These five exemplary practices (not laws or principles) are foundational, which are Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart. Figure 1 presents the domain and characteristics of exemplary leadership practices as suggested by Kouzes and Posner (2007). These domains might be varied, independent yet dependent upon one another, and leaders could exhibit more than one depends on different situations. Meanwhile, the term 'practices' was utilized as relies on human behavior which is not inherent or innate characteristics by individuals (Black, 2015), and these qualities only manifest behaviors of leader only when they perform it.



**Figure 1. A Model of Exemplary Leadership Practices (Kouzes & Posner, 2007)**

The first dimension is Model the Way, which refers to leading by example, in which exemplary leaders motivate employees by setting the example through direct involvement in the organization's mission. The second dimension is inspiring a shared vision, which means that leaders can formulate, voice out, and create enthusiasm for a vision of the organizations. The third dimension is challenging the process, which refers to leaders' ability to look for and choose innovative ways to improve the organization. The fourth dimension of exemplary leadership is enabling others to act which emphasizes on leaders' ability to create teamwork, trust, and empower employees to strive and toil toward achieving the organization's goals.

The fifth dimension is encouraging the heart, which refers to the leader's resilience in motivating and encouraging the followers through the weakness, fatigue, and frustration that often occur with change. Exemplary leadership practices are about a leader's ability to exhibit good behaviors to motivate employees or subordinates in accomplishing the goals for the success of the organization. Thus, as Heads of Department, they must behave decently in some manners as employees of good exemplary leaders will, in turn, feel obliged to reciprocate this sentiment in the form of OCBs (Adewale, Ghavifekr, & Megat Daud, 2018; Ueda, 2016; Colquitt et al., 2014; Al-Sharafi & Rajiani, 2013).

Rus become a transformation model in higher education institutions in fulfilling a responsibility, capacity, and competitiveness of research, as well as to explore new paradigms in the teaching and learning process. The success of an ru as research institutions could not be implemented without considering the efforts invested by the academic staff (Mohamad Sheriff & Abdullah, 2017). As an outstanding institution in the educational field, rus require academic staff who are credible in performing their roles towards maintaining the excellence of the institutions. Their role is vital to the university's success as they are implementers of achieving institutional goals in producing quality and knowledgeable scholarships.

Therefore, harmonious working environment through good example of leadership practices could motivate academic staff to perform their best and more than required towards the organizations they serve for. To date, there are five public universities have been conferred as research university (ru) which are the University of Malaya (um), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM).

### **Methodology**

This study intends to:

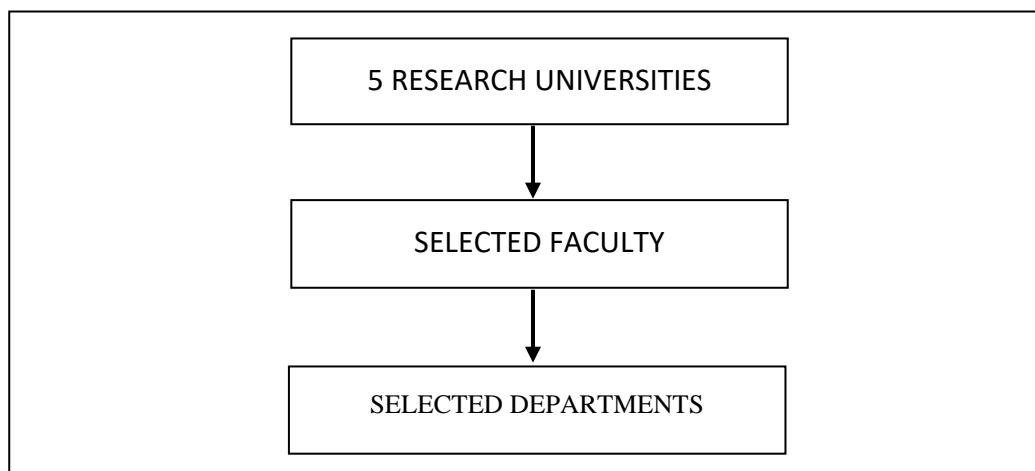
1. Identify the level of organizational citizenship behavior of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities.
- Q1. What is the level of organizational citizenship behavior of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities?
2. Identify the level of exemplary leadership practices of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities.
- Q2. What is the level of exemplary leadership practices of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities?
3. Examine the relationship between exemplary leadership practices and organizational citizenship behavior of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities.
- H1. There is a positive relationship between exemplary leadership practices and organizational citizenship behavior of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities.

### **Sample**

There are various methods can be employed in determining the sample size to represent the population of the study. Creswell (2014) suggest that sampling size determination can be done based on conformity and flexibility in handling the process of collecting the data. This research will be operating using a stratified random sampling (proportional) procedure in ensuring the adequacy and representativeness of the selected sample (Gay, Mills & Airasian,

2012) where the samples chosen from the populations were limited to academic staff in similar faculty within universities.

Stratified random sampling involves a sampling of a population subdivided into smaller groups called strata. Therefore, stratified random sampling encompasses taking random samples from stratified groups, in proportion to the population. This technique is a more precise metric since it is a better representation of the overall population (Creswell, 2014; Hair et al., 2014). The sample is limited to 372 respondents due to time and financial constraints. Besides, this procedure is suitable to bridge the gap in gaining respondents' understanding from the perspective of consistency of the data.



**Figure 2. Stratified Random Sampling Procedure for Selecting Academic Staff in Five Research Universities, Malaysia**

Figure 2 presents the steps in selecting a sample of the study. This study involves all five public universities that have been conferred as a Research University (RU) in Malaysia. The selection of faculty has been made according to the similarities of characteristics and inclusive between the institutions (universities). Then, the researcher will select each department to represent their group (faculty). Eventually, selected academic staff will be chosen in stratified random (proportion) as respondents of the study (departments). Therefore, a total sample consists of 372 academic staff from five Research Universities in Malaysia were selected in this study.

### Tool

This research adopted the dimensions of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) scale suggested by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990). This questionnaire consists of 24 items regarding the information related to OCBs namely altruism, courtesy, civic virtue, conscientiousness, and sportsmanship. Academic staff is required to answer to the extent to which they exhibit OCBs in a 7-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree) of how frequently they would participate in the identified behaviors. The questionnaire has a high construct validity (evaluated by confirmatory factor analysis), and each of the five sub-scales has a good level of reliability. The result of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of this scale  $\alpha = 0.94$  (Podsakoff et al., 1990) was good and established.

Leaders' behavior will be measured in terms of modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, challenging the process, and encouraging the heart. These dimensions

were based on the instrument measures by Kouzes and Posner (2013; 2007) in their Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) of “five practices of exemplary leadership”. LPI consists of 30 items requesting constituents (academics) to rate their leader’s (Head of Department) abilities on a 10-point rating scale (1 = Almost Never; 2 = Rarely; 3 = Seldom; 4 = Once in a While; 5 = Occasionally; 6 = Sometimes; 7 = Fairly Often; 8 = Usually; 9 = Very Frequently; 10 = Almost always). It indicates perceptions of how frequently leaders engage in the five practices. It is a 360-degree measurement instrument as well as an instrument to improve and teach successful leadership behavior and can be applied in the higher education environment.

### Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

The validity of the instrument was evaluated using content validity methods. The content validity was used to determine the relevance of the items in the instrument. To determine the content validity, two experts were chosen as a validator for the instrument of this study. The criteria for selecting experts included knowledge and experience related to the area as well as relevant training (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012). Therefore, experts with more than 5 years of experience in the unit and were familiar with the concepts of Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Organizational Leadership were selected for this study. The experts had to confirm that the items were valid to be used in the study.

This study agreed with the suggestion that 0.70 is practically adequate in ensuring that the construct is reliable to be employed. In general, construct validity measures the validity of the instrument. Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2014) clarified construct validity as the extent to which a set of measured variables represents the theoretical latent construct those variables are designed to measure.

### Results and Discussion

#### a. Level of Organizational Citizenship Behavior of Academic Staff in Malaysian Research Universities

Table 2.

*The Level of Organizational Citizenship Behaviors based on Dimensions*

| Dimension                     | Mean        | SD          | Level       |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Overall D1: Altruism          | 5.72        | 0.81        | High        |
| Overall D2: Courtesy          | 6.36        | 0.59        | High        |
| Overall D3: Civic Virtue      | 5.55        | 0.80        | High        |
| Overall D4: Conscientiousness | 5.96        | 0.74        | High        |
| Overall D5: Sportsmanship     | 5.89        | 0.74        | High        |
| <b>OVERALL</b>                | <b>5.91</b> | <b>0.56</b> | <b>High</b> |

Table 2 presents the level of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) as measured by the five dimensions, as stated in the table. This study found that the level of OCBs among academic staff in Research Universities was high (mean = 5.91, SD = 0.56). The findings that



exhibited the highest level of OCBs belonged to the dimension of courtesy (mean = 6.36, SD = 0.59), followed by the dimension of conscientiousness (mean = 5.96, SD = 0.74).

Additionally, the dimension of sportsmanship with mean = 5.89 and SD = 0.74 showed the third-highest. The lowest two-dimension was contributed by altruism (mean = 5.72, SD = 0.81) and Civic Virtue (mean = 5.55, SD = 0.80), respectively. Overall, the result implied that the academic staff highly performed the non-tasks as part of their workload as they were keen to do so. The high levels of OCBs showed that academics have discretionary behaviors of helping colleagues, preventing problems related to work among colleagues, volunteering to take responsibility in participation when necessary, as well as tolerating while obeying to the rules and regulations.

### Level of Exemplary Leadership Practices of Academic Staff in Malaysian Research Universities

Table 3.

*Level of Exemplary Leadership Practices based on Dimensions*

| Dimension                           | Mean        | SD          | Level       |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Overall D1: Model the Way           | 7.38        | 1.29        | High        |
| Overall D2: Inspire a Shared Vision | 7.26        | 1.39        | High        |
| Overall D3: Challenge the Process   | 6.86        | 1.40        | High        |
| Overall D4: Enable Others to Act    | 8.11        | 1.41        | High        |
| Overall D5: Encourage the Heart     | 7.31        | 1.48        | High        |
| <b>OVERALL</b>                      | <b>7.48</b> | <b>1.67</b> | <b>High</b> |

Table 3 displays the level of exemplary leadership practices among the Heads of Department (HODs) at Research Universities (RUs) was high. The HODs displayed a high level of leadership practices towards their university by practicing five dimensions of exemplary leadership. Results out of 10-point scale found that the highest contribution level of exemplary leadership practices was showed by the dimension of 'Enable Others to Act' (mean = 8.11, SD = 1.41), then followed by the dimension of 'Model the Way' (mean = 7.38, SD = 1.29).

Furthermore, the result found that 'Encourage the Heart' was the third-highest (mean = 7.31, SD = 1.48). The lowest two-dimension was contributed by 'Inspire a Shared Vision' (mean = 7.26, SD = 1.39) and 'Challenge the Process' (mean = 6.86, SD = 1.40), respectively. Overall, the result implied that the academic staff perceived the level of all dimensions of exemplary leadership practices by their HODs in Malaysian Research Universities were high (mean = 7.48, SD = 1.67).

This result showed that academic staff believed in the capacity and capability of their leaders (HODs) in handling subordinates through clarifying personal values, setting the example by aligning actions with shared values, envisioning the future, and enlisting others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations. The result revealed that the academic staff regarded their HODs as individuals who were always searching for opportunities to improve,



experimenting and taking risks, fostering collaboration by building trust, and strengthening others by sharing power and discretion. HODs were seen as leaders who recognized contributions by showing appreciation for individual excellence, and celebrating the values and victories by creating a spirit of community.

**c. The relationship between exemplary leadership practices and organizational citizenship behavior of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities**

This section seeks to answer the hypotheses of the study. The relationship between exemplary leadership practices and organizational citizenship behavior were tested using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 23) through the output of the Pearson Correlation. The purpose of employing correlation analysis was to determine the strength of the relationships between variables that were associated with each other, whether positively or negatively.

Table 4.

*Correlation Analysis between Exemplary Leadership Practices and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors*

| Variables | ELP     | OCB | B     | $\beta$ | S.E   | C.R.  | <i>p</i> |
|-----------|---------|-----|-------|---------|-------|-------|----------|
| ELP       | 1       |     | 0.218 | 0.379   | 0.033 | 6.654 | 0.000    |
| OCB       | 0.252** | 1   |       |         |       |       |          |

Correlation is significant at the  $\alpha$  0.05 level (2-tailed)

Based on the findings in Table 4, the result showed that exemplary leadership practices had a low significant relationship with OCBs ( $r = 0.252$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

### Discussion

The finding showed the mean score of the academic staff's organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) was 5.91, with a standard deviation of 0.56. This result indicated a high level of OCBs perceived by academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities. In sharing the same view, Eyupoglu (2016) had investigated the degree of OCBs that existed amongst the academic staff at a private university in North Cyprus. It also indicated that the academic staff at the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences engaged in a high level of OCBs.

A study by Rose, Miller, and Kacirek (2016) also employed a similar 7-point scale to this study. Nevertheless, it showed a slightly different result whereby the level of OCBs of academic staff in the higher education was highly moderate. Similarly, Noruzy, Shatery, Rezazadeh and Hatami-Shirkouhi (2011) in their study of 177 educational experts revealed that the level of OCBs was moderately high with mean=3.75 and SD=1.91. Whilst Khasawneh (2011), in his research, found that the academic staff's OCBs in Jordanian Public Universities was moderate.

The high level of OCBs demonstrated in this study indicated that academics in Research Universities, Malaysia were ready to contribute their knowledge, skills, and capability to the organizations. This result demonstrated the academics' readiness, willingness and self-

belonging to the institutions that resulted in the improvement of the quality of the higher education in Malaysia. This could possibly enable them to stand alongside the likes of other leading universities in the future.

In addition, a high level of academics' OCBs in Research Universities, Malaysia implied that they were highly considering the impact of their actions on colleagues to avoid possible problems, obeying the university rules and regulations, and enhancing the political life of the organization, such as attending meetings, giving suggestions, and keeping up with changes in the organization that might affect policy and rules of the university. This was in spite of the working culture in a Research University that might cause stress due to heavy workload (Hussin & Chin, 2014) such as research innovations, publications, commercialization, and consultations apart from many others along with their core responsibilities which were teaching and supervising, however, academics were found to be able to cope and willing in performing non-tasks that were beyond their formal job specifications.

The result regarding the level of OCBs was previously reported in a greater detail in the form of dimensions. Overall, all dimensions had a high level of OCBs in which *courtesy* showed the highest. On the contrary, a study by Hakim and Fernandes (2017) on 295 lecturers, revealed that the dimension of *sportsmanship* contributed to the highest. Meanwhile, Yunus, Sharil, Marzuki, Yusof, and Hashim (2016) in their study on academic staff in Malaysian Public Universities found that the dimension of *civic virtue* showed a higher relative mean compared to other dimensions. Despite many differences, their study was consistent with this finding that OCBs was crucial in higher education institutions, especially when it involved a number of tasks to be handled at one time. Above all, previous researchers agreed that the lecturers' level of OCBs was high and highly moderated, which showed a great sign for education in higher institutions.

In this study, the result of *courtesy* exhibited that most academics took actions trying to prevent creating problems and interpersonal conflicts from occurring with their colleagues. Academics in five Research Universities in Malaysia also conceded that respecting the rights of teammates is the utmost, which is purposely to prevent colleagues from doing unnecessary actions that need them to struggle and have conflicts in handling tasks. Beforehand, most academicians agreed that they take steps carefully to avoid problems, for example, give teammates or colleagues ample time for notices to get them prepared when there is any help needed that would add to their existing workload, such as handling meetings. This finding supports Rose, Miller, and Kacirek's (2016) view that *courtesy* is about the encouragement given by a member to other members of the organization when they are demoralized and feel discouraged about their professional development. In highlighting this, Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, and Bachrach (2000) claimed that employees who exhibit *courtesy* would reduce intergroup conflicts and thereby decrease the time spent on conflict management activities.

*Conscientiousness* was the second-highest dimension perceived by academic staff in five Research Universities in Malaysia. This dimension used to indicate that a particular individual is organized, punctual, accountable, self-disciplined, and hardworking. According to this study, the result showed that academics' level of conscientiousness was high. In general, this result implied that academic staff agreed that they should perform their tasks worthy of what

they have gotten, i.e., salary should rely on performance. Besides, they also decided to obey institutional rules and policies even though no one is looking. Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, and Bachrach (2000) stated that if the employee was highly *conscientious*, it implies that he/she is highly responsible and needs less supervision. In this study, academics admitted that they were *conscientious* in performing tasks at the workplace. Their attendance at work was also beyond leaves provided by the institutions. Some of the academics stated that they felt uneasy when procrastinating existing workload. This would make them come to work even though they are not feeling so good. Findings implied that academics *did not take extra breaks* as the lowest in this dimension, but still high even though they claimed that this statement was profoundly true for them.

The high level of mean score in *sportsmanship* anticipates the increased efforts in recent times by academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities to avoid complaining unnecessarily about the difficulties faced in the workplace. They loved to not to magnify problems and inevitable inconveniences that would later be troublesome for the organization. Besides, their behavior of being positive by always focusing on what is right, rather than what is wrong is something that was embraced by the management. The rationale behind this behavior is that the respondents were so busy with their workload that they did not have time complaining about trivial matters. If they had any problems related to their work, they would find the right solutions to manage them instead of complaining or protesting loudly to attract attention and services. Therefore, they chose to be positive and tolerant of the problems they experienced as they did not have ample time to find faults with what the organization was doing for them. A high level of *sportsmanship* would result in less complaints (Rose, Miller, & Kacirek, 2016; Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006) as well as morale enhancement among the employees at the workplace. Additionally, Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, and Bachrach (2000) consequently stated that a high level of *sportsmanship* would reduce employee turnover.

*Altruism* is about helpfulness. Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, and Bachrach (2000) had demonstrated that *altruism* was significantly related to performance evaluations and correspondingly, positive affectivity. Even though the finding showed that *altruism* was not the highest according to dimension, however, the item of *being ready to help colleagues* was the most that mattered as perceived by the academics in the five Research Universities. Most of them insisted to help their colleagues who had work-related problems by giving advice and guidance. Besides, they were also willing to lend their hands to orient new colleagues without waiting for the mandates or commands by their leaders or management party (Rose, Miller, & Kacirek, 2016). Even though they voluntarily wanted to help their colleagues in many ways, however some respondents were unable to support their colleagues that had heavy workload as everyone was busy with their own existing tasks. To replace absent colleagues could also sometimes be problematic for them, but as long as they were capable, still, they did it.

*Civic virtue* represents a commitment to the organization at a macro-level interest. This behavior reflects an employee's recognition of being a citizen of the organization and accepting the responsibilities assigned to them. The sub-dimension of *keeping abreast of changes in the organization* was found to be the highest behavior perceived by academics in the *civic virtue* which showed that they were concerned about the life of the university or institution. They also perceived that they read and kept up with the organization's

announcements, memos, and so on. For example, they did keep updating and communicating through emails for the organizational well-being as they worked in the ever-changing environment and needs. Their effort to always be involved and kept updating themselves with the current information is something that needs to be gratified by leaders and administrators as Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990) noted that organization would succeed when employees devotedly participate in an organization's progress.

Furthermore, this research also showed that most of the respondents perceived they were concerned of the political process of the organization by attending meetings that were not mandatory for them, but considered important as they find it was a platform to express opinions and discuss any issues with the Dean, Head of Department, and colleagues for the faculty's success. On the other hand, academic staff in these five Research Universities shared the same view, i.e., to not likely being in favor to attend functions which were not related to their workload and not required for them even though it could help the company's image. Overall, the level of *civic virtue* perceived by the academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities is still high although it showed the lowest according to the dimension as they believed that they should have the responsibility to be a good citizen of their institutions.

Overall, academic staff OCB was seen at a virtuous level prove that they are willing to engage in cooperative and spontaneous non-task behavior (Eyupoglu, 2016). This finding shows that academic staff in RUs are loyal to the institution, obedience to the rules and regulations, and take part in the decision-making process in the organization (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006), as these latter would contribute to the development of the social capital aspect such as structural, relational, and cognitive.

The finding of this study showed that out of a 10-point scale, the mean of the Heads of Department exemplary leadership practices perceived by academic staff was 7.48, with a standard deviation of 1.67. This result indicates a high level of exemplary leadership practices perceived by academic staff in the Malaysian Research Universities. From the information provided, mean scores were above the mid-point (5) of the scale. The highest mean score was Enable Others to Act (mean = 8.11, SD = 1.41) while the lowest was Challenge the Process (mean = 6.86, SD = 1.40). Even though Heads of Department faced with challenges such as balancing the duality of the role as a leader and academician (Ghafiker & Adewale, 2019; Gonaim, 2016; Gmelch, 2013; Rashed & Daud, 2013), as well as the time constraints to complete the tasks as no proper training was provided for them, however, this finding also supports that academics perceived that their leaders were concerned with the implementation of best practices at the faculties.

*Exemplary leadership practices* have been discussed in detail based on the dimension namely, *model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encouraging the heart*. On the whole, all dimensions in the *exemplary leadership practices* were higher in which the "enable others to act" contributed the highest. Academics perceived that their Heads of Department are the ones who always foster collaboration by promoting cooperative goals and strengthening subordinates (academics) by enabling them to act in making decisions.

The academics highly perceived that their leaders (Heads of Department) had clarified and set an example based on shared values by modelling the way. Most academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities were found to perceive that their leaders (HODs) walked the talk by following through the promises they made. In other words, academics felt that their leaders were almost always sharing a common set of values by setting examples. They expressed that the HODs should first demonstrate a good example, competence, and enthusiasm in handling tasks such as coming early meetings so that this can profoundly influence others to follow. Besides that, HODs should be optimistic and positive when dealing with subordinates, as well as do not get easily agitated when things do not go their way. Therefore, their actions should be aligned with the shared values, such as moral judgments, as well as giving responses and commitment to personal and organizational goals.

Most of the academic staff also considered their HOD as the one who usually provides guidance, spends time and energy on monitoring staff (Black, 2015; Rashed & Daud, 2013). On the contrary, the academics only sometimes perceived that their HOD has a good and clear leadership philosophy and acquires feedback on their performance (Potgieter, Basson, & Coetzee, 2011). Typically, academics pondering *model the way* as to how the HOD motivates them by setting example through direct involvement in the organization's mission.

Academic staff evaluated their leaders (Heads of Department) as *encouraging the heart* as high. They found that their HODs usually praise for a job well done. Some academics found that their HOD always praises their subordinates through giving responses, such as 'Thanks a lot for the great achievement' and 'I like the way you did that'. Support and appreciations for academics are the catalyst for organizational success. The Heads of the Department were found to be fairly often in providing support and appreciations of their subordinates' contributions by showing their confidence in the subordinates' abilities at performing tasks. These behaviors would encourage most of the employees to produce better work as competition raises their level of enthusiasm. In celebrating the values and victories of staff accomplishments by creating a spirit of community (Black, 2015; Potgieter, Basson, & Coetzee, 2011), the academics anticipated that HODs can do as simple as give responses, smile, greet, be objective, and flexible when communicating with the subordinates. Above all, the academics shared the same view that HODs who *encourage the heart* would be able to create rapport and promote an environment of understanding.

Furthermore, a high level of *inspiring a shared vision* as perceived by the academic staff in the Research Universities of Malaysia implied that they are highly considering the Heads of Department as envisioning the future and enlisting subordinates in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations. Using Kouzes and Posner's principle of *inspiring a shared vision*, this study concluded that the Heads of the Department enhance and direct the vision that can help move the department forward to a favorable future and can inspire others within the department. Most academic staff found that their Heads of Department are capable of creating what they have imagined in words to share their aspirations to be accomplished. Moreover, the academics felt that their HODs have often managed to show the subordinates on how their work is connected to a larger purpose, and aligned individual aspirations to organizational ones. Besides, HODs often appeal to the academics to share an exciting dream of how they belonged and inspire them to work together toward a common goal.

According to the dimension of *challenge the process*, academics perceived their HODs as the ones who are always seeking innovative ways to improve their organizations through experimenting and taking risks, then learning from mistakes or failures that happen along the way. In other words, HODs demonstrate that they continually focus on refining and testing ideas without fearing failures. Even though this was the lowest dimension perceived by the academics in the exemplary leadership practices, the result showed that it was still high.

It would be interesting to carry out what most academic staff believed the responsibility of HODs to take the challenge to appeal to their subordinates in experimenting and take risks by testing out ideas and at the same time celebrate small success. Besides, the academic staff posited that it was hard for the HODs to always seeking innovative ways to change, grow, and improve as this dimension was related to the dimension of *model the way*. Therefore, HODs should first clarify their values and set the example by aligning actions with shared values, so that this could be easier for the academics to challenge the process as fostered by the HODs.

The academic staff in the Malaysian Research Universities comprehended that their HODs have a high level of exemplary leadership practices by setting an example for the subordinates to follow. Besides, they also perceived that the HODs are capable of creating a comprehensive picture for organizational success and practicing continuous improvement. They too believed that their HODs will always lift the subordinates by finding the good in them, as well as live with passion. These findings support the study by Rashed and Daud (2013) that academic transformational leaders who exhibited good examples were anticipating to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization.

According to the analysis in Table 4, the result exhibited that exemplary leadership practices have a low significant relationship with organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) ( $r = 0.252$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The results obtained in Table 4 exhibited that exemplary leadership practices had a positive and significant effect on OCBs with a determinant coefficient ( $R^2$ ) of 0.379 or an effective contribution of 37.9% of the variance in OCBs. This finding is in line with the study of Al-Sharafi and Rajiani (2013) which found leadership practices as a predictor in encouraging OCBs among employees.

In the context of this study, academics would be more engaging in OCBs when their Head of Department became a role model by showing the right path, setting examples of how to work effectively, as well as helping them overcome the problems and obstacles. Besides, it was important for the Head of Department to always discuss the future of the organization and the employees, praise the employees for a job well-done, and reward them as well as promote endless support and loyalty to the organization. Thus, the implementation of leadership practice will promote OCBs among employees (Al-Sharafi & Rajiani, 2013; Yaffe & Kark, 2011). The current findings suggested that leaders should concentrate on promoting OCBs because this will help organizations to work effectively and efficiently which will eventually enhance the organizational success and growth.

Being a leader in higher education institutions, the challenges are quite strenuous due to the nature of the faculty themselves (Asplund, 2020; Ghafiker & Adewale, 2019). Leaders valued the ability to focus solely on their work, and most were not willing to set themselves up for criticisms and perceived lack of power as the Heads of Department. The culture of universities



that was given autonomy by the Ministry of Higher Education presents another challenge to leadership identification. Gmelch (2013) wrote that institutional culture discouraged young faculty from taking leadership positions. Faculties were rewarded for efficiency and effectiveness in their discipline, not for taking and excelling in leadership roles. Prestige came to faculty from their research and their teaching, sending the message that leadership was either second place or something to be avoided.

The fact that many universities do not clearly define the responsibilities and expectations of the various leadership positions creates another challenge. Gonaim (2016) wrote that fewer faculties are voluntarily applying for departmental chair positions. Beforehand, Ghafiker and Adewale (2019) and Gmelch (2013) support this notion by stating that it was critical in finding effective replacements for academic leaders as the increasing complexity of leadership in academia has discouraged many from seeking administrative positions. This is due to the lack of information, guide, and training on what made a leader competent and successful as their doctoral degrees were in specific disciplines that do not typically require courses regarding administrative or leadership skills.

Although many individuals are necessary to make the organization run, not everyone could move into administrative positions. Gmelch (2013) found that the systems and processes must be in place as these could influence the types of individual or administrator necessary to staff the organization. Institutions without clearly defined systems and positions have a harder time identifying capable leaders. As previously discussed, it is of importance for departmental leaders to have credibility as mentioned by Potgieter, Basson, and Coetzee (2011) that departmental leader is someone who can build positive working culture, maintain a good relationship with staff, pleasant working environment, and focus to achieve the organizational goals.

The Heads of the Department are academic leaders who represent academic members in the organization. Their effective and efficient communication skills in directing and receiving inputs are important in representing academic members' voice (Gonaim, 2016; Black, 2015; Rashed & Daud, 2013) to the management level by taking into account that the affairs of the university might be operated not only by the people who are in leadership positions, but also by academic members from each faculty in the university. The finding indicated that exemplary leadership by Heads of Department to some extent affects academic members' OCBs in Research Universities of Malaysia.

As the relationship between these two variables was small, this result could help the Heads of Department to improve their leadership skills to boost the academics' OCBs. Some aspects needed to be addressed and discussed between leaders and the administrators, especially regarding policies and structures of the institutions so that academics felt that they are appreciated and in turn, should give endless support to the organization through OCBs.

## **Conclusion**

OCBs of academic staff are important as they are the backbones to the success of the institutions. Their efforts to perform OCBs are something crucial as these voluntary actions are based on their willingness. Through exemplary leadership practices, the academic staff were found to be more passionate to perform OCBs. This variable was found to have a direct impact on academic staff in performing OCBs whereby the higher the exemplary leadership



practices would significantly contribute to higher OCBs. In other words, the reciprocal exchange between both parties could influence and foster their behaviors towards practicing OCBs at the higher level (Roch et al., 2019; Khasawneh, 2011). This study proves that exemplary leadership practices were able to increase the level of citizenship behavior of academic staff towards their organization. The findings of this research have important implications for the policymaker, administrative, and management party of the ministry and the institutions. This study is also important for departmental leaders to foster collaboration with their subordinates in order to increase the level of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs).

The findings would contribute to the organization's development in the form of organizational performance, competitiveness, effectiveness, as well as organizational growth and continuity (Shanker, 2018; Soo & Ali, 2017) through empowering the social aspects, reducing resistance, and increasing efficiency. Jebeli and Etebarian (2015) elaborated on the benefits derived by the organization when these behaviors are exhibited by the employees, mainly in decreasing costs for control mechanisms. Arguably, they added that OCBs also may reflect an individual's commitment, passion, and perspective on employment. Theoretically, citizenship behaviors are thought to improve organizations' functioning by empowering the social aspects and the development of social capital. By looking on the findings of the empirical research in Malaysia and across the globe it was found that OCB influenced academic staff attitudes and behaviors in higher education institutions (Hakim & Fernandes, 2017; Yunus et al., 2016; Eyupoglu, 2016; Rose et al., 2016; Khasawneh, 2011). In the context of this study, the willingness of academics to go beyond the formal duty in accomplishing university's vision, goals, and objectives will definitely contribute to the overall institution's effectiveness. This study implies educational administrators that they should appreciate and give appropriate rewards task performance so academic staff will be motivated to perform better and display more OCBs.

This study is significant to the existing knowledge since OCBs are potentially important for the continuity, survival and in increasing sustainability as well as the durability of the organization. The average level of employees' OCBs is positively associated with organizational and workgroup performance. Further, OCBs may highly significant to organizational success by enhancing co-workers, promoting better use of uncommon resources, improving coordination, strengthening the organization's ability to attract and retain good employees (Kim, Eisenberger, & Baik, 2016), reducing the inconsistency of performance, as well as improving the adaptation to environmental changes. This study is also significant for leaders to determine employees' commitment as it is directly linked to performance. As OCBs may exist at an individual, groups, or organizational levels (Khasawneh, 2011), therefore, leaders should promote and consider these behaviors at any level in the institutions. Leaders such as Heads of Department and Deans may wish to be sensitive to academics who strongly endorse the OCBs by making special efforts to treat these academics fairly because such efforts might translate directly into OCBs which are valuable to the organization. This study could assist leaders to focus on effective strategies that positively influence their subordinates' behaviors across a diversity of academic staff's backgrounds.

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