

The Challenges of a Lecturer in a Higher Learning Institution (HLI) in Malaysia

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Abstract

This study explores the complex environment of higher education in Malaysia, paying particular attention to the difficulties faced by instructors as they strive for scholarly achievement. The study takes a qualitative approach, collecting thoughts from instructors across a range of subjects and institutions through questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Mokhtar et al. (2015) examined the challenges faced by university lecturers in balancing their teaching and research duties within Malaysian higher education. They highlight institutional pressures and resource limitations as significant factors affecting lecturers' performance. Their qualitative study used interviews and questionnaires to gather data, echoing the methodological approach you describe. The results draw attention to the wide range of difficulties lecturers have, from institutional demands to uphold rigorous standards of instruction and research to negotiating the intricacies of a quickly changing educational environment. We look closely at how professors in Malaysian higher education manage their teaching duties, research obligations, and administrative tasks. The impact of resource limitations, changing student demographics, and bureaucratic obstacles on the lecturer's experience are important themes. Lee et al. (2017) explored the impact of administrative and bureaucratic demands on Malaysian university lecturers, focusing on how these external pressures impact both their teaching and research responsibilities. This study highlights the complex relationship between academic expectations and cultural factors influencing pedagogical methods in Malaysia. The study also looks at how cultural and societal expectations affect pedagogical approaches, which helps to clarify the fine line that must be drawn between upholding traditional values and embracing cutting-edge teaching strategies. In summary, this study provides insightful information about the challenges and struggles faced by lecturers in Malaysia's higher education institutions on a daily basis. Policy makers, academic administrators, and faculty development efforts can benefit from the findings, which establish the groundwork for creating an environment that supports educators' growth and well-being in the context of Malaysian higher education.

Keywords: Academic Pressure- Resource Constraints Work-Life Balance, Ethical Dilemmas-s, Government Regulations.

Background

Lecturer is an academic position to instil knowledge, guidance, and good behaviour to students so that the latter will be prepared to face the real *dog eat dog* world when they leave a higher learning institution. (Olivia Rowland, 2023). In other words, a lecturer turns a university kid into a full-fledged educated and trained adult upon leaving the institution. However, such a responsible position comes with huge challenges, struggles and obstacles which hinders the lecturers from performing his/her functions successfully or to become an ideal lecturer. (Parimala Tadas, 2019). Hindrances such as changing student demographics, resource limitations, bureaucratic obstacles, cultural and societal expectations, upholding traditional values, frequent unproductive meetings, frequent time-consuming online trainings, ineffective policies and procedures, stress, unrealistic key-performances indicators (KPIs) and institutions chasing rankings adds unnecessary pressures to the already burdened lecturers. It's a sad reality that higher learning institutions do not realize or pretend not to understand these hindrances and problems faced by the lecturers which hinders them from performing their core functions which is to impart valuable knowledge to students. (Therese Kairuz, et, 2016).

Literature Reviews

An Overview

The researcher chose this topic in view of gaps on the views and opinions asserted by existing authors on the above subject. Glaring gaps such as on the non-value-added functions demanded by the Higher Learning Institutions (HLI) from lecturers were not emphasized by these authors. Furthermore, certain government policies which are of great hindrance in lecturers to carry-out their core functions, which is to lecture and to ensure students graduated on time (GOT) with the required academic and industrialized knowledge and skills, were also not focused on the authors publications.

For instance, Warren Kidd and Gerry Czerniawski's in their book entitled "The Emotional Challenges of Lecturing" (2010), examined only a general view of the emotional labour of lecturing in this review, along with the emotional difficulties that instructors encounter, such as performance pressure and the strain of controlling classroom dynamics and student expectations. Meanwhile Ronald Barnett in his the book "The Changing Role of the Academic: Teaching, Learning, and Managing in Higher Education" (2005), reviewed on the changing landscape of higher education and its impact on lecturers but he had not touched on any typed of burden details that curtails the lectures from carrying out his core functions. . He discusses the increasing demands placed on lecturers, including the need to balance teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities. Fanghanel, (2012), in his paper entitled "Academic Identity in Higher Education: The Dynamics of an Academic Career in a Globalized World" focused on the challenges faced by lecturers in maintaining their academic identities as higher education becomes more globalized, marketized, and managed. Paul Ashwin (2009), in his publication entitled "The Lecturer's Role: Understanding the Complexities of Teaching in Higher Education", offered a thorough analysis of the difficulties associated with teaching, such as the difficulties in developing curricula, conducting assessments, and fostering student participation. Though these lectures did touch on the difficulties and struggles faced by the lecturers they had not investigated on the detailed non-valued chores thrown at the lectures by the Higher Learning Universities. These HLI are more oriented on business and money-

making centric rather than on caring of welfare or the teaching loads that would need to be sustained by these victimized lectures.

On the local front in Malaysia, Ahmad and Nor, published an essay "Challenges of Malaysian Higher Education Quality: A Lecturer's Perspective." (2015). This essay addresses the different obstacles instructors encounter in upholding the standard of higher education in Malaysia, such as their full teaching schedules and scarce research time but their essay was limited on certain known general obstacles and not the current dynamic requirement of HCL. Meanwhile Ali, Hassan & Hassan (2017), in "Lecturers' Perception on Challenges in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Malaysian Context" viewed on teaching challenges, including the pressure to publish, dealing with diverse student backgrounds, and adapting to new educational technologies their scope of discussion was more limited to the requirements to publish. So was Salleh & Ahmad, (2018), in their paper entitled "The Burden of Administrative Duties on Academic Staff in Malaysian Universities" which only had delved into the administrative burdens placed on lecturers, which often detract from their teaching and research responsibilities. Although Rahman & Omar (2020), in their paper "Balancing Academic Responsibilities: Work-Life Balance among Malaysian Lecturers" emphasized on the work-life balance challenges faced by lecturers in Malaysia, emphasizing the struggle to manage academic responsibilities with personal life he had not exactly provided a detailed account of what exactly constitutes the burden that the lecturers would have to bear that affects their personal life.

Therefore, in taking account of the obvious gaps omitted by the above authors it gives the researcher the more reason to write on the detailed hands-on difficulties and infringement faced by lecturers in Malaysia in carrying out their core functions.

Problem Statement

The higher education sector in Malaysia presents numerous pitfalls and challenges for lecturers who are expected to balance high standards of teaching, research, and administrative duties while navigating a rapidly evolving educational environment. Lee (2014), in *Education in Malaysia: Developing a global learning environment* discusses the challenges Malaysian educators face due to the global push for excellence in teaching and research, combined with increasing administrative duties. The study emphasizes the difficulty in balancing these roles while navigating the evolving higher education landscape in Malaysia. Despite the crucial role that educators play in shaping the academic and professional futures of students, there is limited understanding of the specific difficulties and silent sufferings they face, including the impact of institutional demands, the untold detailed difficulties and harassment that were not discussed to date, resource constraints, and cultural expectations. Even Abdullah & Anwar (2020) in their article, *The challenges faced by academics in Malaysian public universities: A qualitative study*, had highlighted how academics struggle to meet institutional demands, deal with resource shortages, and manage cultural expectations. They noted that these pressures often remain unspoken and contribute to high levels of stress among lecturers. This study aims to investigate the complex, challenges and irrational demands encountered by lecturers in the Malaysian higher education institutions, examining how these challenges affect their ability to fulfil their scholarly responsibilities and contribute to the overall quality of education. Mustapha (2013), in *Challenges of academic leadership in higher education: The Malaysian perspective*, identifies institutional constraints and the

growing demand for academic staff to engage in research, teaching, and administrative duties. This study underlines how limited resources and irrational demands can negatively impact their ability to meet expectations.

By exploring these issues through qualitative research methods, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding that can inform policy development and faculty support initiatives, ultimately fostering an environment that enhances lecturers' professional growth and well-being.

Research Questions

- What are the specific institutional demands and resource constraints that lecturers in Malaysian higher education institutions perceive as the most challenging?
- How do these challenges, including untold difficulties and harassment, affect lecturers' ability to balance their teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities?
- What are the specific forms of harassment and irrational demands that lecturers in Malaysian higher education institutions encounter, and how do these issues affect their professional well-being and job satisfaction?

Research Objectives

- To identify and analyse the institutional demands placed on lecturers in Malaysian higher education institutions and their impact on teaching and research performance.
- To explore the effects of resource constraints on lecturers' ability to meet academic and administrative expectations in Malaysian higher education.
- To investigate the types and impacts of harassment and irrational demands faced by lecturers in Malaysian higher education, focusing on their professional well-being.

The Research Statement

This study critically examines the complex challenges and irrational demands faced by lecturers in Malaysian higher education institutions, focusing on how these obstacles hinder their ability to effectively fulfil their scholarly responsibilities. Through qualitative research, the investigation aims to uncover the often-overlooked difficulties, including institutional pressures, unspoken hardships, and cultural expectations, to provide insights that can inform policies and support systems aimed at improving the well-being and professional growth of educators, thereby enhancing the overall quality of education.

Research Methodology

Based on the above research study, a qualitative research methodology is extremely relevant for this research paper, which aims to investigate the intricate and frequently unreported difficulties experienced by teachers in Malaysian higher education. (Moustakas, 1994). *Phenomenological Research Methods*. Moustakas is widely recognized for his work on phenomenological research, which focuses on studying lived experiences. His approach is often used to explore how individuals perceive and make sense of their experiences, such as the challenges faced by educators. The research methodology encompasses the following: -

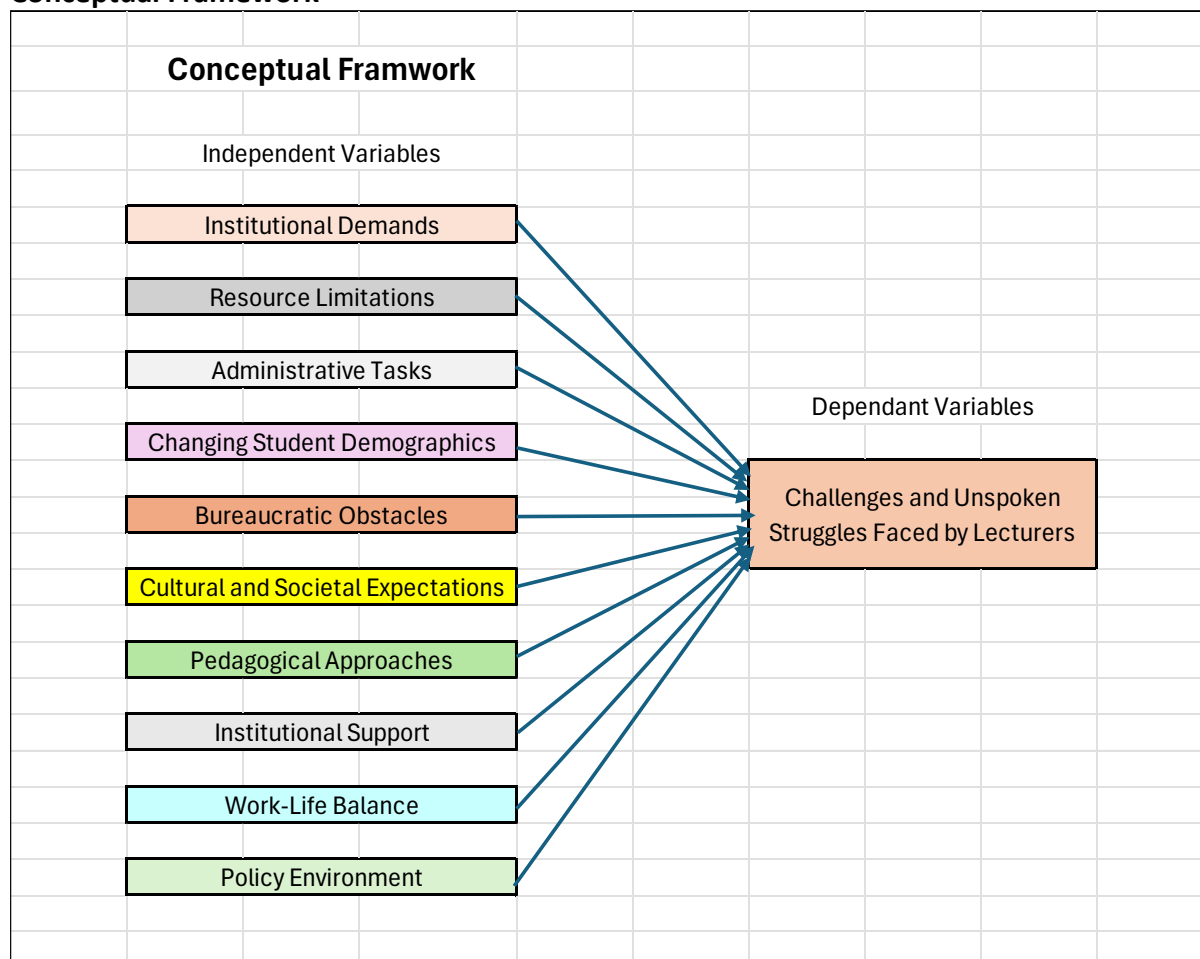
This research is done based on a qualitative research design which in the researcher's opinion was most appropriate because the study's goal is to examine the complex and individualized experiences of lecturers. An extensive comprehension of the viewpoints, feelings, and life experiences of the lecturers was compiled using this method. Van Manen (1990). *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. Van Manen's work explores the essence of lived experiences and is an excellent resource for phenomenological analysis. He emphasizes that phenomenology helps reveal how individuals give meaning to their experiences.

Also, a phenomenological analysis was used to obtain a deep insight of lecturers' life experiences by focusing on the significance they attach to the challenges and expectations they face. Lincoln & Guba (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. They discuss the appropriateness of qualitative approaches when examining complex human behaviours and systems. This aligns well with your study's focus on lecturers' individualized challenges in an intricate educational environment.

Adopting a qualitative methodology, a survey was carried out to gather data on academic lecturers who experienced difficulties and untold risks in their work, with a particular emphasis on the obstacles they encountered in attaining academic achievement in Malaysia's intricate higher education system.

A conceptual framework was also explored through qualitative research method, including in-depth interviews and questionnaires with lecturers from various institutions. In Jabareen (2009)'s: *Building a Conceptual Framework: Philosophy, Definitions, and Procedure* emphasizes the process of constructing conceptual frameworks in social science research. The author proposes a method to design conceptual frameworks that support interdisciplinary research, providing a clear roadmap for understanding how conceptual frameworks guide the research process. The analysis will focus on identifying patterns and themes related to how these independent variables affect the dependent variable, providing a holistic understanding of the challenges lecturers face in Malaysian higher education as shown below: -

Conceptual Framework



Scope of Study

The scope of study is limited to lecturers, professors, and academic staff in Higher Learning Institutions, such as Universities and Tertiary Colleges across Malaysia.

Significance of Study

This study offers significant contributions to the field of higher education in Malaysia by providing a comprehensive analysis of the challenges faced by instructors. Its significance can be highlighted in several key areas:

Recognizing Lecturers Challenges: By concentrating on the challenges that Malaysian higher education faces, the research illuminates the complexity of these challenges, which include bureaucratic roadblocks, institutional pressures, and resource limitations. This knowledge is essential for pinpointing the precise locations that require assistance and intervention. Sidhu, Fook & Kaur (2010) discuss how Malaysian higher education is affected by institutional and bureaucratic challenges in their work *"Emerging Trends in Higher Education: Challenges and Opportunities"*. They note the administrative burdens and resource constraints that impact lecturers' performance.

Educating Policymakers: The knowledge gathered from this research can help policymakers and educational administrators understand the realities of Malaysian academic life. The study can direct the creation of policies targeted at enhancing working conditions, resource allocation, and administrative assistance by emphasizing the difficulties experienced by

lecturers. Wan & Sirat (2018), in *"Higher Education in Malaysia: A Critical Review"* discuss how the complexities in Malaysia's higher education system, particularly bureaucratic hurdles, create significant challenges for academic staff, limiting their ability to focus on scholarly work.

Improving Faculty Support: The results can be used as a starting point to design focused programs for faculty development. Support programs that better meet the needs of lecturers on both a professional and personal level might result from an understanding of their unique demands and problems. Mohamed & Hamid (2021), in *"Institutional Constraints and the Academic Profession in Malaysia"*, highlight the pressure on lecturers due to increasing demands for publication, teaching loads, and limited access to resources, which stifles their professional development.

Balancing Tradition and Innovation: The study offers important insights on how to balance traditional values and contemporary teaching practices by examining cultural and societal expectations in relation to pedagogical approaches. This can assist educational institutions in creating plans that respect cultural heritage and encourage cutting-edge instruction. Erdogan (2018) discussed how cultural and societal values influence educational reforms, noting that "balancing innovation in teaching methods with traditional cultural values is crucial for ensuring educational reforms are culturally relevant and sustainable" (Erdogan, 2018). His work highlights the importance of integrating local cultural norms into modern pedagogical approaches to enhance educational outcomes.

Contribution to Educational Research: This study will broaden our understanding of higher education, especially as it relates to Malaysia. It offers a qualitative viewpoint that enhances the quantitative research already conducted and gives a deeper knowledge of the instructor experience. Lovat & Smith (2003), emphasized the challenges in harmonizing traditional education values with innovative practices, stating that "educational institutions must strive to respect and preserve cultural heritage while simultaneously fostering environments that encourage creativity and critical thinking. This balance is essential in countries with strong cultural traditions like Malaysia.

Guiding Institutional Improvements: The study provides practical suggestions for institutions to enhance staff assistance and adjust to changing educational needs by highlighting the effects of shifting student demographics and resource constraints.

Qualitative Survey Analysis

The researcher sent out a set of structured survey questionnaire to all known professors, lecturers, and academic staff of HLI to determine on the level of hardship, obstacles and work overload that had to bear. After compiling their replies and feedback, the researcher has summarized on the following findings:

Findings: A Comprehensive Analysis

The first challenges are the ever-changing student demographics. (Naong, 2009). Higher education professors may face a variety of difficulties as a result of ever-changing student demographics. Here are some crucial factors:

- a. Various Learning Approaches: Diverse student demographics may result in differences in their learning preferences, styles, and past educational experiences. It can be hard for lecturers to modify their methods of instruction to accommodate this variance. Example students in the east coast of Malaysia especially from state of Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang tend to converse in their own state dialects of Malay language from birth, i.e. Kelantanese students speak in Kelantanese dialect and Terengganu students speak in Terengganu dialects. Therefore, a lecturer would find it difficult and challenging to teach an accredited module in English Language to these students. (Widad, 2017). Special time-consuming trainings and courses would have to be given to such students for them to understand and master the English Language before admitting them for the actual module course which would have to be taught in English Language.

Sensitivity to Culture: Teaching effectively requires cultural awareness, which can provide a number of difficulties for lecturers. It can be difficult in the following ways: Lecturers often encounter students from diverse cultural backgrounds, each with unique values, beliefs, and communication styles. Understanding and respecting this diversity can be challenging, especially when trying to create an inclusive learning environment. For example, in 1980s the Malaysian Education Ministry had brought in foreign lecturers to teach English Language. These foreign lecturers who were ignorant and did not understand Malaysian culture, ran into difficulties and complications with the traditional trained students so much so that the Ministry decided to stop bringing foreign lecturers to teach English Language. "Cultural awareness is a vital component of effective teaching. Educators who are sensitive to cultural differences are better equipped to address the diverse needs of their students and create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Ignoring cultural diversity can lead to misunderstandings, reduced engagement, and ineffective instruction." – (Smith 2009). *Teaching Across Cultures: A Guide to Multicultural Education*. Oxford University Press.

- b. Students' diverse educational backgrounds: For a lecturer, working with pupils from different educational backgrounds might present a number of difficulties. Different students may have varying levels of prior knowledge when they enrol in a course. While some can be relatively new to the subject, others might have a strong foundation.

Regardless of their prior educational experiences, lecturers must strike a balance when presenting material that is both challenging and interesting to all of their students

- c. Inclusive Teaching Strategies: The goal of inclusive teaching practices is to establish a learning environment that respects and accommodates the various backgrounds, experiences, and learning preferences of each and every student. Although these tactics are necessary to promote a constructive and fair learning environment, lecturers may find it difficult to put them into practice. Planning and implementing inclusive teaching strategies may require additional time and effort. Lecturers may need to invest time upfront in designing inclusive course materials and activities. Furthermore, it could take more time and work to plan and execute inclusive teaching techniques. Certain instructors could also be reluctant to adapt, particularly if they are used to using conventional teaching techniques.

- d. Technology Convergence: Different generations might present lecturers with a variety of issues. It's possible that different generations have different tastes and learning methods. While older generations might be more used to traditional lecture formats, younger generations—such as Millennials and Generation Z—often prefer interactive and technology-driven learning experiences. To take into account these varying tastes, lecturers must modify their pedagogical approaches. The degree to which students feel at ease using technology might be impacted by the generational digital divide. While older generations could need more support or might be hesitant to implementing new technologies, younger generations might be more tech-savvy and anticipate a higher degree of technology integration in the classroom. Therefore, lecturers have to face a challenge to strike a balance so that every student is interested.
- e. For professors, encouraging fairness and inclusivity in the classroom may be a gratifying and difficult task. It's possible that certain students won't be able to access the lecture materials or the actual classroom setting, which could result in exclusion. This involves making sure digital content is accessible and taking into account the needs of students with impairments. When assessing students, lecturers may want to exercise caution to avoid accidentally feeding prejudices, as this can affect both marking and prospects for promotion. Some coworkers or students may object to inclusive behaviours because they are uncomfortable, unfamiliar, or have different ideas. It could be difficult for lecturers to overcome this resistance.

The second challenge a lecturer faces is limited resources. For lecturers, limited resources can pose serious problems in a number of ways. To improve their lectures, lecturers frequently use a range of instructional resources, including online tools, multimedia resources, and textbooks. Having limited access to these materials can make it difficult to provide students with thorough and interesting learning experiences. In the digital age we live in today, technology is essential to education. The incorporation of technology into lectures may be impeded by restricted access to state-of-the-art computer laboratories, software, or other technological resources, which may limit the prospects for interactive and multimedia-based learning. Small or ill-equipped classrooms are examples of inadequate classroom amenities that can hinder a lecturer's ability to lead engaging and productive classes. Implementing practical exercises or group discussions may be hampered by a lack of space or equipment. It is common for lecturers to be asked to conduct research in order to stay up to date in their subject and provide students with cutting-edge information. A lecturer's capacity to make contributions to their subject may be limited by a lack of money or institutional support for research, which may have an effect on the general calibre of their instruction. Moreover, lecturers must engage in ongoing professional development and learning in order to stay current with the most recent developments in their field and pedagogical strategies. Inadequate means to attend conferences, workshops, or training courses may impede their capacity to improve as educators.

The third challenge for a lecturer is bureaucratic obstacles. This includes overwhelming administrative duties where lecturers frequently have to cope with a substantial volume of documentation, red tapes, and administrative responsibilities. This can include tracking attendance, creating lesson plans, grading, and other paperwork that can take time away from research or instruction.

- i. Frequent changing of study plan: Lecturers at times have to prepare a study plan for each semester for modules that they are assigned to lecture. These study plan often changes following changes from the faculty curriculum committee, university's curriculum committee and also from the senate council. Hence, every time there are changes in the study program, lecturers have to revise their study plan. This is actually the job of the Program Evaluation Department and Registration Officers (since they are liaising directly with student enrolment) who are supposed to do the preparation of study plan, program structures, execute any revisions and finally to produce the study plan for the lecturers to carry out the modules. However most higher learning institutions in Malaysia, with the intention to reduce costs and also practising stringent costs savings prefer to pass the buck to the lecturers with preparation of study plans instead of hiring Program Evaluators or Registration Officers.
- ii. Academic Advising: Lecturers besides having to teach and guide students to do well in their respective modules are now having to turn advisors and mentors for weak and poor achieving students. These students cannot be turned into clever or intelligent ones overnight as the lecturers would have to spend many time-consuming sessions to advise and investigate the reasons for their weakness and problems encountered by these students. Going further the lecturers would also have to monitor the performances students who had failed and categorized as Warning, Probation and Dismal. Even the administration of reinstatement for student who had been dismissed due to poor performance had to initiated and handled by the lecturer which by right should have been handled by the Registrar's office. The lecturers then would have to 'personally hold the students' hands' and bring them to achieve success in their studies at the expense of preparing lectures, marking examination papers, setting questions and attend meetings. The sad part of the academic advising is that despite all the hard work and time-consuming efforts put by the lecturers to help these students, some students still fail or get lower grades which demoralizes the lecturers. By rightful thinking these weak students should be handled by appointed student counsellors in the higher learning institution who are professionally trained to handle and advise these students. Lecturers should be left to do their main core function which is to carry out lecturing duties.
- iii. Attending frequent and unnecessary meetings and events: It has come a habitual practice of faculties and University administration to hold frequent and unnecessary meetings involving lecturers. Lecturers would often have to leave the classes or their academic works to attend these meetings. Sometimes these meetings are called to discuss petty and unproductive issues such as to organize events and attending event meetings and frequent changes in study plan and program structures and presenting curriculum papers. Events in higher learning institutions by rightful thinking should be held or organized by the institution's business development, marketing, and industry partnership offices. Curriculum papers rightfully should be presented to the University committee and Senate by the Program Evaluators or Registration Officers after liaising with faculties. However, these burdens of organizing events and presenting papers frequently too had now fallen upon on the head of academic lecturers thus disrupting lecturers valuable time in teaching.

- iv. Disruptive policies and red tapes: The uncompromising and disruptive policies of Higher Learning Education Authorities in Malaysia too had posed obstacles and hindrances to the role of lecturers in higher learning institutions. Policies such as need to keep a teaching and course file for all modules which contains attendance record, course plan, coursework details, teaching materials, questions papers, and answer schemes for both assignments and examination and course learning outcome (CLO), program learning outcome and attainment (PLO) analysis and performance report and finally three (3) sets of students' exam answer scripts based on higher, medium and low grades achieved, drains the energy and zest out of the lecturers. It's a frustrating non-value-added job for the lecturers as time consumed for this time-wasting function can be used for other value-added function for lecturers as planning for new programs or developing a more industrialized based curriculum. Furthermore, after every marking of modules, a CLO and PLO analysis report would need to be churned out where lecturers would need to key-in every CLO/PLO ranking achieved in each exam questions for both summative and formative assessment in an Excel spreadsheet. Imagine the horror that a lecturer that would need to key-in the CLO and PLO rankings for each question for each module that has 50 to 100 students. Such disruptive and red tape policies certainly would need to be reviewed immediately so as to ease the burden of the lecturers.
- v. Unrealistic and Irrelevant Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Most higher learning institutions in Malaysia have this bizarre practice of setting unrealistic, ridiculous, and irrelevant indicators for lecturers. Example of such KPIs are how many times lecturers must organize or participate in events (which are time-consuming and unproductive for lecturers), how many students they have academically advised (which rightfully should be undertaken by counsellors), how many times they have to join in open days to recruit new students (which rightfully should be job of business development, sales and marketing department), students leaving or withdrawing rate (which lecturers have no control if a student wants to leave a particular higher learning institution and opts for another one) and teaching load hours (which normally is not in the control of lecturers as the number of teaching hours is actually set up by Program Leaders or the Deans).
- vi. Added pressure on Teaching Evaluation Survey: All lecturers have their own way and methods of teaching deliveries. Therefore, some students will be comfortable with their approach, and some wouldn't. Therefore, some students who are not comfortable may be apprehensive against such lecturers' approach. Furthermore, some students who are lazy to attend classes, especially those in the full online modular, often play truant and frequently absent from classes as some greedy higher learning students who tend to attract such students just to fill up their bursary. Therefore, these truant students tend to rely on class recordings to follow up with classes thus making the lecturers feel irrelevant and demotivated. When lecturers tend to reprimand these truant students, these students would then vent their frustrations by giving a bad review on the lecturers, thus creating a faction of 'my most favourite and least favourite lecturers. At end of the day these unfortunate lecturers will be reviewed and reprimanded for poor performances by the faculty Deans or the

Lecturers PL's based on the above mentioned biased 'favourite and least favourite lecturers' survey reviews.

- vii. Double Handling of Course Structure and Study Plan: As previously mentioned in the third challenge (i), the responsibility of designing the course structure and study plan has, unfortunately, fallen on the lecturers, who also have to assume the role of program leaders. This requires lecturers to not only teach but also analyse and monitor students' semester performances. They are tasked with manually creating spreadsheets to track and predict which students will graduate on time (GOT) and which ones may fall behind. This process is incredibly time-consuming and tedious, demanding significant effort and focus to complete the necessary analysis accurately.

The researcher finds it surprising that, despite the current era of advanced information technology, these higher learning institutions (HLIs) have not yet adopted software or applications that could streamline this process and automatically track GOTs and students who are lagging. The absence of such tools forces lecturers to devote valuable time to tasks that could otherwise be automated, hindering their ability to focus on their primary academic responsibilities. to find such software or apps to determine on GOTs and laggards.

The fourth challenge and hindrance on lecturers to carry their core responsibilities are the obsessed attitude of HLI to publish papers. The fourth obstacle impeding lecturers' ability to fulfil their teaching duties is the tremendous demand from universities to create scholarly works. This leads to a tension between the amount of time needed for instruction and the requirements of research.

There is a strong emphasis on publishing research in high-impact journals in many colleges, particularly those that prioritize research. For example, certain HLIs adamantly require lecturers to publish two (2) Scopus indexed papers. Now it is a known fact that it requires tremendous research efforts and precious time to research and publish in the mentioned journal indexes and yet these HLIs enforce it onto the poor lecturers who are afraid to argue or protest such ruling on fear of being reprimanded. Frequently regarded as a crucial indicator of scholastic achievement, this is intimately linked to professional growth, financial prospects, and the institution's overall standing. Thus, it is expected of lecturers to devote a considerable amount of their time to research and paper writing—in some cases even mandatory.

Due to the pressure to publish, lecturers may become unbalanced and prioritize their research over their teaching responsibilities. It takes time to prepare excellent lectures, grade assignments, assist students, and create interesting course materials. Nonetheless, instructors can believe that they can't commit enough time to these duties without compromising their research output because they are expected to publish.

The situation gets very difficult when there are a lot of students to teach. There may be limited time for research during work hours for lecturers who are expected to teach big classes or many courses. As a result, they might have to put in more time at work to fulfil the expectations of the research, which could result in fatigue and lower-quality instruction.

Furthermore, the equally significant function that teaching plays in a lecturer's career is frequently eclipsed by this concern with research output. Although research adds to the corpus of knowledge in a topic, a university's main purpose is to instruct students. Students may experience rushed lectures, insufficient feedback, and less engaged instructors when lecturers are compelled to put publishing ahead of teaching.

Rightly HLIs should hire specific researchers and academic writers to conduct and write academic papers instead of overloading the already overloaded functions of lecturers. However, in order to save costs, these unscrupulous HLIs dump the burden of publication on the shoulders of the poor lecturers who have suffer in silence.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study contributes significantly to the understanding of the multifaceted challenges faced by instructors in Malaysian higher education. By shedding light on issues such as bureaucratic hurdles, institutional demands, and limited resources, it provides a roadmap for targeted interventions aimed at improving faculty support and working conditions. The insights gained offer valuable guidance for policymakers and educational administrators to create more responsive and equitable policies that address the needs of academic staff.

Moreover, the research bridges the gap between traditional educational values and modern teaching practices, suggesting a balanced approach that respects cultural expectations while fostering pedagogical innovation. Its findings underscore the importance of designing faculty development programs that cater to the personal and professional needs of lecturers, ultimately enhancing both teaching quality and institutional performance.

Finally, this study enriches the broader field of educational research by offering a qualitative perspective that complements existing quantitative data, providing a deeper understanding of the instructor experience in Malaysia. Its practical recommendations can guide institutions in adapting to evolving educational challenges, making this research a crucial tool for fostering meaningful improvements in higher education.

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