



Faculty of Economics and Business

**Factors Affecting the Job Performance of IT Professionals in Malaysian
Public Universities**

Mahani Binti Huja Husin

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Factors Affecting the Job Performance of IT Professionals in Malaysian
Public Universities

Mahani Binti Huja Husin

A dissertation submitted

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Except where due acknowledgements have been made, the work is that of the author alone. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.



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Signature

Name: Mahani Binti Huja Husin

Matric No.: 20040016

Faculty of Economics and Business

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

Date : 31 July 2024

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In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all worlds. We invoke His blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and seek His guidance and mercy in all our endeavors.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how organizational behavior factors at various levels, organizational, group, and individual, impact the job performance of IT professionals in Malaysian public universities. Specifically, it aims to understand the relationships between factors such as effective leadership, organizational culture, leader-member exchange (LMX), organizational commitment, emotional intelligence, and both task and contextual performance. Employing a quantitative approach, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) reflective model was utilized to analyze the data gathered from surveys administered to IT professionals in Malaysian public universities. Contrary to expectations, our findings did not support a significant positive relationship between effective leadership, organizational culture, LMX, and organizational commitment with both task and contextual performance. However, we found a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and both task and contextual performance, highlighting the critical role of individual-level factors in IT professional job performance. The outcomes of this study underscore the necessity for interventions aimed at enhancing the influence of effective leadership, organizational culture, LMX, and organizational commitment on the job performance of IT professionals. Management initiatives should prioritize interventions at the organizational and group levels to optimize the job performance of IT professionals within Malaysian public universities.

Keywords: Organizational Behavior, Job Performance, IT Professionals

Faktor Mempengaruhi Prestasi Kerja Profesional IT di Universiti Awam Malaysia

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini menyelidik bagaimana faktor-faktor tingkah laku organisasi pada pelbagai peringkat, organisasi, kumpulan, dan individu, mempengaruhi prestasi kerja para profesional IT di universiti awam Malaysia. Khususnya, kajian ini bertujuan untuk memahami hubungan antara faktor-faktor seperti kepimpinan berkesan, budaya organisasi, pertukaran ahli-ahli pemimpin (LMX), komitmen organisasi, kecerdasan emosi, dan kedua-dua prestasi tugas dan kontekstual. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif, kami menggunakan model reflektif Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) untuk menganalisis data kaji selidik yang dikumpulkan daripada para profesional IT di universiti awam Malaysia. Bertentangan dengan jangkaan, hasil kajian kami tidak menyokong hubungan positif yang signifikan antara kepimpinan berkesan, budaya organisasi, LMX, dan komitmen organisasi dengan kedua-dua prestasi tugas dan kontekstual. Walau bagaimanapun, kami menemui hubungan positif yang signifikan antara kecerdasan emosi dan kedua-dua prestasi tugas dan kontekstual, menyorot peranan penting faktor peringkat individu dalam prestasi kerja profesional IT. Keputusan kajian ini menekankan keperluan untuk intervensi yang bertujuan meningkatkan pengaruh kepimpinan berkesan, budaya organisasi, LMX, dan komitmen organisasi terhadap prestasi kerja para profesional IT. Inisiatif pengurusan perlu memberi keutamaan kepada intervensi pada peringkat organisasi dan kumpulan untuk mengoptimumkan prestasi kerja para profesional IT di universiti awam Malaysia.

Kata kunci: *Tingkah Laku Organisasi, Prestasi Kerja, Profesional IT*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CMV	Common Method Variance
CP	Contextual Performance
EI	Emotional Intelligence
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
LMX	Leader-Member Exchange
OCB	Organizational Citizenship Behavior
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling
TM	Teknologi Maklumat
TP	Task Performance

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the study. It begins with a background discussion, followed by the problem statement, objectives, research questions, definitions of key terms, and the study's theoretical and practical significance. Finally, it outlines the chapter organization.

1.2 Background of the Study

The widespread adoption of Information Technology (IT) in recent years has significantly altered organizational environments worldwide, particularly in the field of education. The IT department plays a vital role at public institutions, providing essential support for teaching, research, and knowledge transfer (Bianchi & Sousa, 2015). IT professionals ensure the effective implementation and oversight of IT projects by aligning IT strategies with organizational objectives.

Malaysia's dedication to adopting digital transformation in education is evident in its higher education institutions (HEIs), where IT is integral to teaching, research, and administrative procedures, as outlined in the Ministry of Higher Education Strategic Planning 2023-2025. IT professionals in these institutions serve as implementers, negotiators, champions, and strategists in digital transformation (Paavola, Hallikainen & Elbanna, 2017). Given their multifaceted duties, an in-depth examination is necessary to understand the factors affecting their work performance in the complex IT environment. Particularly, an extensive analysis of the impact of the rapid development of IT in Malaysian public universities on the work performance and organizational behavior of IT professionals is required.

Organizational behavior plays a crucial role in contemporary work cultures that are heavily influenced by technology (Colquitt, Lepine, & Wesson, 2021). An analysis of these characteristics within the specific framework of Malaysian public universities is crucial for comprehending the distinct challenges encountered by IT professionals. Taylor and Woelfer (2011) recognized task-oriented and boundary-spanning behaviors as crucial for IT project managers, whereas Sengottuvel and Aktharsha (2016) emphasized the significance of strategic attention in organizational culture for enhancing IT performance. Blanton, Watson, and Moody (1992) and Lilja (2013) further highlighted the importance of synchronizing the IT organizational structure and culture with the broader organization. Examining the relationship between the organizational behavior and job performance outcomes of IT professionals is indeed essential for identifying academic/administrative areas in need of enhancement.

According to Borman and Motowidlo (1997), task performance refers to efficiently fulfilling core job duties, while contextual performance involves behaviors that contribute to the broader organizational environment, such as helping colleagues or engaging in organizational initiatives. Efficient task performance is crucial for organizational success as it directly impacts operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and overall effectiveness. Consistently meeting job expectations leads to smoother processes, optimized productivity, and higher levels of customer satisfaction. Additionally, successful task completion fosters employee motivation and engagement, contributing to higher job satisfaction and retention.

Contextual performance plays a vital role in building a positive organizational culture and fostering teamwork and collaboration. Engaging in supportive behaviors, such as helping colleagues or participating in organizational initiatives, strengthens relationships among employees and promotes effective communication and cooperation. Moreover, contextual

performance encourages innovation and creativity by creating an environment where employees feel empowered to share ideas and experiment with new approaches. Both task performance and contextual performance are essential for organizational success and employee well-being. By recognizing and nurturing these aspects of employee effectiveness, organizations can create a positive work environment, enhance productivity, and achieve long-term success.

However, there is a lack of research on the job performance and organizational behavior of IT professionals in Malaysian public universities, despite their acknowledged importance. This dissertation aims to fill this void by conducting a thorough analysis that can guide both scholarly research and practical approaches to improving IT administration in HEIs. The aim of this study is to contribute substantially to understanding the complex correlation between organizational behavior factors, job performance, and the efficacy of IT management in Malaysian public universities. The study seeks to offer practical insights for boosting IT governance, cultivating a favorable work environment, and ultimately improving the overall performance of public universities in Malaysia. By identifying key organizational behavior factors that impact the job performance of IT professionals, the goal is to implement targeted strategies for improvement.

1.3 Problem Statement

The effective use of IT is critical to the success of Malaysian public universities in an increasingly competitive higher education landscape. IT professionals in these institutions play diverse roles, typically categorized into three main groups based on their nature of work. Firstly, the infrastructure team manages servers, networks, security protocols, and provides initial support to end-users. Secondly, the infostructure team focuses on system development, maintenance, and ongoing support for various IT systems, ensuring the smooth functioning of

databases, software applications, and other technical components essential for university operations. Lastly, the strategic team is tasked with long-term planning, technology roadmap development, and ensuring alignment between IT initiatives and organizational goals. This multifaceted division underscores the breadth and complexity of their responsibilities, highlighting the diverse skill sets and expertise required to effectively manage and leverage technology in the academic setting.

IT professionals in Malaysian public universities are pivotal in driving digital transformation and ensuring the effective implementation of IT projects within their organizations. This includes staying abreast of the latest technologies, such as the integration of artificial intelligence in education. Their performance is crucial to organizational success, as they provide IT support services for academic and management activities. High performance is associated with satisfaction, self-efficacy, and career advancement (Sonntag, Volmer & Spsychala, 2008). Therefore, understanding the factors contributing to job performance is essential for improvement.

Valdes (2023) highlighted that approximately 56% of IT professionals struggle to unwind after work due to the persistent demands of technology development in challenging environments. This perpetual pressure often leads to mental, emotional, and physical exhaustion, stemming from work-related stress. Pratt (2023) underscored the necessity for IT workers to continuously adapt to evolving technologies to meet their organizations' needs. However, the relentless demands of this dynamic field may impede IT professionals' job performance, affecting their ability to carry out tasks effectively. Such challenges may result in decreased productivity, increased absenteeism, strained workplace relationships, and a heightened risk of errors (Schmiedeskamp, 2023).

IT professionals in Malaysian public universities face similar pressures and challenges as their counterparts globally, dealing with rapid technological advancements, constant demands for new solutions, and maintaining complex systems. High expectations for performance, coupled with limited resources and bureaucratic constraints, intensify their stress levels. Consequently, these professionals may experience mental, emotional, and physical exhaustion, leading to impaired job performance and overall well-being. To remain competitive, organizations must consistently improve their performance. Malaysia's public universities, in particular, encounter common obstacles, which also affect IT professionals tasked with overseeing and executing the university's technological infrastructure.

IT professionals bring leadership as integrators, facilitators, and implementers in flattened and team-based organizations (Klagge, 1996). Their contribution to IT innovation is significant (Larsen, 1993), but the future of middle management in the context of IT and organizational restructuring is complex and requires further empirical examination (Dopson & Stewart, 1993). Despite the importance of their role, little research has been conducted to understand the factors that affect the job performance of IT professionals in Malaysian public universities. Therefore, a comprehensive study is needed to identify the organizational behavior factors that influence job performance among IT professionals, enhancing their performance and contributing to the success of Malaysian public universities.

Due to the lack of prior research on the relationship between factors affecting job performance of IT professionals in Malaysian public universities, it is challenging for management to understand the critical success factors that could lead to better job performance of these professionals. Additionally, previous research has predominantly concentrated on singular dimensions of organizational behavior, indicating a gap in exploring this construct from a comprehensive standpoint.

It is imperative to explore organizational behavior dimensions from a holistic perspective, encompassing analyses at the organizational, group, and individual levels. Such an approach is essential for advancing interventions and strategies aimed at bolstering job performance among IT professionals and fostering organizational effectiveness and competitiveness. By examining all three levels of organizational behavior within a single study, a broader understanding can be attained, empowering management to pinpoint specific areas warranting focus and attention.

1.4 Research Question

Based on the problem statement discussed above, this study attempts to provide answers to the following research question in the context of IT professionals in Malaysian public universities:

How do organizational behavior factors at multiple levels (i.e., organizational, group, and individual) influence job performance (i.e., task performance and contextual performance)?

1.5 Research Objectives

The present study's main objective is to identify the relationship between organizational behavior factors—namely effective leadership, organizational culture, leader-member exchange (LMX), organizational commitment, and emotional intelligence—and job performance, specifically task performance and contextual performance, among IT professionals in Malaysian public universities.

The specific objectives of this study are outlined as follows:

- i. To examine the relationships between organizational behavior factors at the organizational level (i.e., effective leadership and organizational culture) and job performance (i.e., task performance and contextual performance).
- ii. To assess the relationships between organizational behavior factors at the group level (i.e., LMX) and job performance (i.e., task performance and contextual performance).
- iii. To identify the relationships between organizational behavior factors at the individual level (i.e., organizational commitment and emotional intelligence) and job performance (i.e., task performance and contextual performance).

This study attempts to establish empirical relationships between seven constructs: effective leadership, organizational culture, LMX, organizational commitment, emotional intelligence, task performance, and contextual performance. Consequently, Malaysian public universities can improve their decision-making processes regarding IT professionals' job performance by utilizing the findings from this study. This can help organizations develop strategies to enhance employee productivity and improve overall organizational performance.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study has significant contributions from both theoretical and managerial perspectives. Firstly, this study clarifies the influence of effective leadership, organizational culture, LMX, organizational commitment, and emotional intelligence on job performance, focusing on task performance and contextual performance. This will provide a new contribution to existing literature. This knowledge can be used to develop interventions that target specific areas of improvement, such as communication, teamwork, and innovation.

Secondly, organizational behavior can be examined across three distinct levels: organizational, group, and individual. Traditionally, these levels have been investigated in isolation. However, this study adopts a novel approach by concurrently exploring these

levels. Analyzing organizational behavior across multiple levels facilitates a more holistic comprehension of the factors shaping organizational outcomes and equips managers with insights to make informed decisions. This unique approach represents a significant contribution to the existing literature on organizational behavior.

Thirdly, most studies pertaining to job performance in public universities focus only on academic employees rather than non-academic employees. This study specifically focuses on the job performance of IT professionals, which will help improve the performance of public universities. By identifying the impactful components that influence task performance and contextual performance, universities can design strategies and interventions that enhance the performance of IT staff and improve the sustainability of ICT services.

Furthermore, this can have positive spillover effects on other areas of the organization, such as teaching, research, and community engagement, as well as creating income generation opportunities for universities. The IT department poses a significant opportunity to commercialize their services through infrastructure and skills. Moreover, the findings of this study can be used as practical guidance for public universities in Malaysia to enhance the organizational behavior and job performance of IT staff.

Overall, the study is believed to contribute to a better understanding of how effective leadership, organizational culture, LMX, organizational commitment, and emotional intelligence affect IT professionals' task performance and contextual performance.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study investigates the relationship between effective leadership, organizational culture, LMX, organizational commitment, and emotional intelligence on job performance, specifically task performance and contextual performance, among IT professionals in