

Psychosocial Safety Climate and Work-Related Outcomes in Malaysian Research Universities: The Role of Job Demands

¹Kia Hui Gan, ²Daisy Mui Hung Kee

ABSTRACT--Recently the ranking Malaysian research universities have been improving in QS World University Ranking, especially Universiti Malaya. To continue to improve in the ranking, Malaysia Research Assessment (MyRA) came out with their expectation of academicians. To ensure academicians to achieve MyRA's expectation, management of research universities insert these expectations in academicians' key performance index (KPI) as well. These expectations are overloaded for academicians. Thus, the work-related outcomes in this study will be included work engagement and job satisfaction among academicians is decreasing in Malaysian research universities. The present study aims to improve the work-related outcomes of academicians by applying Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) in their university policy. PSC context suggested for university management to revise the university's policy which can protect academicians' psychological health and safety. A healthy working environment can help to enhance academicians' performance as well. Hence, PSC is a precious method to assist the university management team and policymaker to improve academicians' work-related outcomes.

Keywords--Psychosocial Safety Climate; Job Satisfaction; Job Demands; Work Engagement.

I. INTRODUCTION

Malaysian research universities (RUs) are working very hard to contribute and improve in their research and development areas. As academicians work under Malaysian RUs, the tasks and the expectation will be higher compared to other public universities. Their contribution will be counted into their university productivity and represented the quality of the university. These contributions will help them to boost their university ranking published by QS and Times Higher Education (Rahman, 2016). Of course, these achievements were credited to the academicians' hard work and dedication. This is a symptom of success to an organization when its employees are engaged and satisfied. Employees are more likely to perform at their workplace when they are satisfied. Therefore, it is important for universities, particularly RUs to understand their academicians' attitudes and behaviors such as work engagement and job satisfaction. Furthermore, a healthy working environment can enhance the university overall performance too. We are proposing that Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) is important to enhance academicians' psychological health and safety in university, as well as their engagement and satisfaction.

¹ School of Business & Management, SENTRAL College Penang, 6th Floor, 3, Penang St, Georgetown, 10200 George Town, Penang, Malaysia, khgan@sentral.edu.my/kiahui@student.usm.my

² School of Management, Universiti Sains Malaysia, E37, Jalan Sasaran, 11800 Gelugor, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia, daisy@usm.my

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Relationships between Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) and Work Engagement and Job Satisfaction

PSC is the root of enhancing employees' engagement and satisfaction as claimed by Hall et al., (2013). Management should concentrate on applying PSC in the workplace to enhancing engagement and satisfaction. In other words, if university policymakers can support academicians with providing the policy with high PSC context in a university, academicians will strengthen their work engagement and job satisfaction with the university. Hence, given that PSC enables academicians to enhance their work-related outcomes, it also can reduce mental collapse among academicians by accumulate resources from time to time.

Normally, an organization in a high PSC context will have a clear policy regarding psychological health and safety, good communication channels as well as active participation among employees in stress prevention. Their employees will feel that their needs such as psychological health and safety are concern by their employer. This, in turn, will provide employees some form of autonomy in developing new skills. In other words, a high PSC organization will support their employees to grow and develop. Hence, a high PSC may boost employees' engagement within the organization (Idris, Dollard & Tuckey, 2015). The possible reason is that a high PSC working environment will make employees feel safe to work in this organization and have some form of policy in the working environment which will eventually increase the employees' engagement with the organization as well. We, therefore, propose that in a high PSC working environment, academicians are more possible to a greater extent to perform well, as well as enhance their work-related outcomes with the university. Besides that, employees will feel safe working in an organization that has a high PSC working environment (Agyemang & Ofei, 2013). By the way of explanation, if the university is able to provide a high PSC working environment, it able to improve the engagement of academicians in the university.

Idris et al. (2015) believed that one of the methods to satisfy employees is providing psychosocial safety is in the workplace. Saba (2011) mentioned that employees who work in a healthier and positive climate environment, the employee will have higher job satisfaction. Thus, management needs to apply the necessary PSC in a university. In the high PSC working environment, academicians able to increase their productivity, as well as job satisfaction (Basak & Govender, 2015; Khalid, Irshad & Mahmood, 2012).

According to Karanika-Murray, Michaelides, and Wood (2017), employees are willing to put more effort and increase their positive work-related outcomes, such as work engagement and job satisfaction if they work in a safe environment. Also, if the management applies a high PSC in the workplace, work-related outcomes will be more positive. Employees are more likely to reduce their work-related outcomes if the workplace is perceived as unsafe (Karanika-Murray, Michaelides & Wood, 2017). In another word, to increase the more engagement and satisfaction among academicians, the more RU management needs to apply PSC in their universities' policy.

Scilicet, academicians' concerns are not heard by the management, it may negatively influence the work-related outcomes. Dollard and Bakker (2010) supported this view as well. They mentioned if an organization lack PSC, it will cause poor job design and increase the degree of job demands. In turn, if an organization has applied good PSC, it will support employees to have better work-related outcomes. In line with PSC's concern to provide a healthy working environment for employees, thus, the researchers proposed the following hypotheses:

H1: PSC has a positive impact on work engagement.

H2: PSC has a positive impact on job satisfaction.

2.2 Relationships between Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) and Job Demands

In line with the COR theory, PSC will have a negative relationship with job demand. In consequence, management who apply high PSC in an organization, they will reduce the negative impact of job demands (Yulita, Idris & Dollard, 2014). As mentioned by a few researchers (Idris & Dollard, 2011; Bakker, 2009; Schaufeli et al., 2009), job demands will negatively affect the employees' health in the workplace. An organization that lacks PSC could lead to imperfect job design and continuous job demands.

Few studies were done by researchers (Dollard & Bakker 2010; Idris & Dollard, 2011) had mentioned that good PSC does not only support employees, but it can predictably lower the impact of job demands too. With the understanding, universities should practice and apply good PSC to support academicians. Despite academicians frequently need to face higher job demands, as long as the university can provide a good working environment (such as high PSC working environment), academicians still have a competent ability to deal with it. In the interest of universities that wish to break world university ranking records, RU's management has recommended new policies in their perspective universities as well as making it as a part of an academicians' KPI. These policies lead to higher job demands and burdens to academicians. As stated in Loh, Idris, Dollard & Isahak's (2018) study, PSC is a variable which is can lower the pressure of employees' psychological health as well as mental health. Loh et al., (2018) further explained that the organization provided low concern of PSC, employees will have the awareness to lose their potential resources if they are unable to manage the job demands.

High job demands will make it difficult for employees to deal with their negative influences (Bakker, Demerouti & Verbeke, 2004). The study proposes that PSC has a negative impact on job demands. Also, management will execute the high PSC environment, to assure that academicians can work under pressure working environments. Therefore, in this study, assumes that PSC has a negative relationship with job demands. The hypothesis formulated based on this is as per below:

H3: There is a negative relationship between PSC and job demands.

2.3 Relationships between Job Demands and Work Engagement and Job Satisfaction

Several studies have shown that job demands affect work-related outcomes. These negative work-related outcomes were due to high job demands. Job demands will have a negative relationship to work-related outcomes when academicians unable to meet the management's expectations. Currently, academicians work in RUs always needs to face a high workload, and their working hours became longer (Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua & Stough, 2001). As known, academicians not only need to deal with their role as academicians, but they still need to confront the rapid development pressures in the education field as well. In another way, with the pressure, it will affect academicians to reduce their work engagement and job satisfaction. When employees are often unable to achieve the requirement set by the organization, they will start to lose their engagement with the organization (Alzyoud, Othman & Isa 2014; Agyemang & Ofei, 2013; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). Thus, high job demands have a negative relationship with work engagement (Coetzer & Rothmann, 2007) and job dissatisfaction (Karanika-Murray, Michaelides & Wood, 2017; Mustapha & Ghee,

2013). The present researcher believed that only engaged and satisfied' academicians able to handle their job demands in RUs.

Academician is the person who experiences the level of job demands. Thus, job demands may have a negative impact on work engagement and satisfaction, if academicians are unable to undergo the working environment. Therefore, the researcher proposes the following hypotheses:

- H4: There is a significant relationship between job demands and work engagement.
- H5: There is a significant relationship between job demands and job satisfaction.

The proposed framework in this study as below:

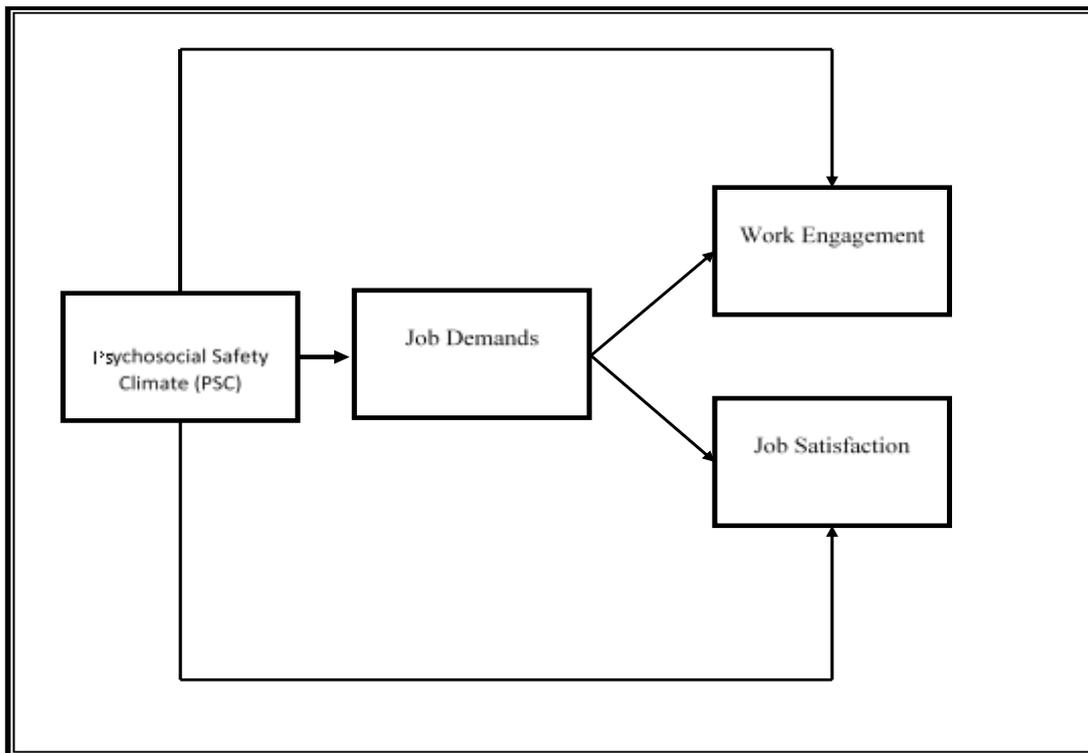


Figure 1: Research Framework

III. METHODOLOGY

This study will include the academicians of five research universities in Malaysia, which are Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). Academicians will answer the questionnaire through a google form. Researchers using this method is because of the current trend with increasing computer literacy (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). Besides, the purposive sampling technique will be used in this study. Hence, in this study must rely on researchers' judgment when selecting the sample based on the criteria (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). Besides that, in this study, respondents must be a Malaysian, full-time academician, working for more than one year.

IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Based on the discussion at the literature review, PSC is a policy which is a procedure to protect academicians in the universities for their psychological health and safety. As long as academicians have safety in their workplace, it will enhance their engagement and satisfaction (Hall, Dollard & Coward, 2010; Hall, Dollard, Winefield, Dormann, & Bakker, 2013). It can nurture the engagement and satisfaction among academicians. Previously studied had shown that PSC had the influences and the positive relationship in Western countries (Idris, Dollard & Winefield, 2011), and less studied in the Eastern countries. Therefore, this study will examine the relationship between PSC and work-related outcomes. Researchers believe that there are a positive predicts between PSC and work engagement and job satisfaction.

V. CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, this study can serve as a guideline for universities to realize the needs of the academicians. Hence, PSC is coherent with this framework. This research provides the knowledge of PSC on how to improve the academicians' performance and productivity. This is to enhance the contribution of the management and policymakers while managing their employees with policy.

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