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DYNAMIC NATURE OF LEADERSHIP IN MALAYSIAN UNIVERSITIES: NURTURING QUALITY EDUCATION AND GLOBAL EXCELLENCE

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Abstract:

This quantitative research explored the intricate connections among servant leadership, leadership competency, self-efficacy, and job performance among leaders in Malaysian public universities. Employing quota sampling, participants provided data through self-administered Google Forms. The research particularly emphasised the mediating role of the working environment in these relationships. Results indicated that the working environment solely mediates the relationship between servant leadership and job performance, with no significant mediation observed for leadership competency and self-efficacy. Although the coefficient determinant (R^2) for the total indirect relationship (0.295) exceeded the direct relationship (0.147), it is crucial to interpret this value with caution. The indirect effect suggests that 29.5% of the variance in job performance can be attributed to the working environment, which may be considered relatively weak. This finding points to the potential influence of other mediating factors that could be explored in future research. These findings hold significance for policymakers formulating leadership selection strategies and contribute to a contemporary understanding of effective leadership, particularly within higher education institutions. This understanding is vital for propelling Malaysia's progress toward achieving SDG4 (Quality Education) and reinforcing its vision of becoming a global educational hub by 2025. Ultimately, these research outcomes set the foundation for the development of robust leadership practices and the cultivation of a conducive educational environment, both of which are essential for Malaysia's educational advancements and international reputation.

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Job Performance, Leadership Competency, Self-Efficacy, Servant Leadership, Working Environment

Introduction

In Malaysia, 20 public universities continue to excel and lead the higher education landscape (Adna et al., 2022). Nevertheless, quite recently the performance of Malaysian public universities has been questioned due to weak graduate marketability resulted in youth unemployment and a lack of high-skilled workers to fulfil the demands of the future workforce (Anif, 2023). Despite the decline in unemployment rate in 2023 from 3.7% to 3.5% (Adna et al., 2023; "Unemployment Rate", 2023), the percentage only reflects a small-margin reduction, placing the public universities under the global pressure to enhance their quality (Adna et al., 2023). Both the Malaysian government and society are reported to be deeply invested in the education sector's structure, operation, and performance (Adna et al., 2022; Anif, 2023), highlighting the need for research in this area.

The performance of public universities significantly contributes to economic growth in any region (Adna et al., 2023). This is particularly crucial in the post-pandemic era, where every country is striving to rebuild its economy, including Malaysia. Scholars Fadzil et al. (2022) asserted that one strategy for accomplishing this is by enhancing the performance level of higher education institutions, attracting international students to study in Malaysia and realising Malaysia's goal of becoming a global education hub by 2025.

One of the key factors influencing the performance of public universities is reported to be the job performance of their leaders (Ahmad & Keerio, 2020). Therefore, the role of leaders is deemed paramount in any organisation, including the higher education sector, making research on leaders' job performance remain relevant and significant despite the extensive available literature. The relevance and significance are further justified by dynamic external factors such as policy, societal expectations, political views, and economic conditions, which can influence leaders' job performance and consequently, the overall performance of their universities (Chang et al., 2020; Fadzil et al., 2022).

The recent research conducted in Malaysia, aimed at unravelling the key variables influencing university leaders' job performance, highlighted the pivotal role of servant leadership, leadership competency, and self-efficacy. These determinants were significantly correlated with job performance, as evidenced by their respective t-values of 8.370, 5.132, and 3.787 (Raime et al., 2022). Nevertheless, a deeper analysis using the coefficient of determination (R^2) revealed that the proposed model could only explain 56.7% of the variance in the dependent variable (Raime et al., 2022). This indicates that while these three variables are indeed significant, they do not encompass other possible factors 'correlating with' or 'influencing' university leaders' job performance in Malaysia, underscoring the need for a more comprehensive investigation in this field.

Additionally, previous scholars encouraged expanding research on university leaders' job performance, particularly concerning potential mediators or moderators (Raime et al., 2022). This recommendation stems from the rationale of understanding whether the significant

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relationship between the determinants (servant leadership, leadership competency, self-efficacy) and leaders' job performance occurs naturally or through mediation. Furthermore, it is crucial to explore whether the relationship can be further influenced (moderated) by other factors. Understanding these intricate relationships is integral, as they undeniably have a significant impact on institutional success serving as a driving force for researchers to bridge existing literature gaps.

This research holds significant importance because the research of public universities enables decision-making bodies, such as policymakers, to formulate guidelines and policies that can enhance quality and decision-making for improved performance (both for leaders and universities) based on research analysis. Thus, it can lead to actionable steps supported by empirical evidence rather than relying solely on assumptions or beliefs within the education sector's faculty or management guidelines. This is crucial not only for efficient university management but also aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), which aims to ensure inclusive and quality education for all. Ultimately, the goal is not just to achieve high performance and efficiency within universities while also producing highly skilled and versatile Malaysian graduates. This simultaneously addresses concerns about graduate employability and meets the global demand for enhanced academic quality, as mentioned earlier.

Literature Review

Servant Leadership, Leadership Competency, Self-Efficacy and Job Performance

Job performance refers to how an individual's actions or behaviours influence their organisation's achievements (Fox et al., 2005). In academic institutions like universities, the performance of leaders plays a pivotal role in determining the overall success of the institution (Jamali et al., 2022; Raime et al., 2023). Despite considerable research on leadership within higher education, there remains a gap in understanding the factors impacting university leaders' job performance (Johari et al., 2022). Previous studies have also highlighted the need for further investigation into additional factors influencing performance, underscoring the critical role of job performance in organisational success (Raime et al., 2022).

Raime et al. (2022) proposed conducting extended research to identify other significant factors affecting university leaders' job performance. Their findings suggest that the known independent variables (servant leadership, leadership competency, and self-efficacy) account for only a moderate percentage of job performance variance (R^2=56.7%), indicating the presence of other contributing factors. Additionally, Raime et al. (2022) suggested that future research should consider their proposed research framework while incorporating moderating or mediating variables. This addition would enhance our understanding of the relationship between the independent variables (servant leadership, leadership competency, self-efficacy) and the dependent variable (job performance).

As this research builds upon Raime et al. (2022), identical operational definitions and measurement instruments for all independent and dependent variables have been employed for consistency. Servant leadership, as expounded by van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2010), emphasises empathy and the prioritisation of others' needs over self-interest. Leadership competency incorporates a spectrum of essential attributes, including knowledge, skills, behaviours, and attitudes critical for career success (Khadka et al., 2014). Self-efficacy,

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meanwhile, refers to an individual's self-assurance in effectively executing tasks, particularly important for leaders navigating complex organisational environments (Chen et al., 2001).

Working Environment and Job Performance

Abdul et al. (2016) demarcated the working environment as encompassing various factors that influence employees, including social support from management and colleagues, compensation and benefits, emotional resources, organisational structures, and ethical corporate culture. Their research revealed a strong correlation between the working environment and employees' job performance, a finding supported by other contemporary scholarly works (Shafi et al., 2023; Shaikh, 2022). However, recent literature has primarily focused on industries such as manufacturing (Shafi et al., 2023), hospitality (Wang, 2024), the general public and private sectors (Shaikh, 2022), and auditing firms (Ali et al., 2023), with limited attention to the education sector (Anwar et al., 2022; Zhenjing et al., 2022). Consequently, this research incorporates the working environment as a variable to analyse its unique impact on job performance within the educational setting.

Furthermore, scholars Abun et al. (2021) have reported that the working environment served as a mediator between self-efficacy and workers' job performance. This rationale contributed to the decision to explore the working environment as a potential mediator in this research, specifically focusing on leaders and their role as a contributing factor to leaders' job performance.

Proposed Research Framework and Underpinning Theory

Based on the underscored issues and highlighted literature gaps, the primary objectives of this research are to investigate the mediation effect of the working environment between the independent variables (servant leadership; leadership competency; self-efficacy) and university leaders' job performance. The proposed research framework is depicted as Figure 1 below.

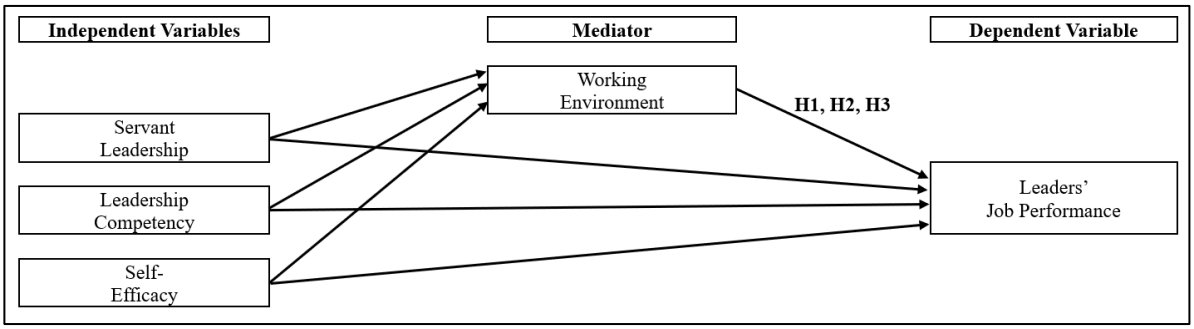

Figure 1: Proposed Research Framework

The research framework is underpropped by the Social Exchange Theory (SET), which articulates people engage in relationships where they seek rewards and minimise costs (Homans, 1958). In this context, the researchers interpret servant leadership, leadership competency, self-efficacy, and the working environment as sources of rewards. When leaders feel valued through these qualities or elements, they are inclined to reciprocate with enhanced job performance. Furthermore, a supportive working environment enables university leaders to understand and anticipate the positive outcomes of embracing servant leadership, leadership competency, and self-efficacy within their institutions. This fosters a natural progression towards accountable and ethical job performance, characterized by a strong emphasis on moral standards and respectful behaviour.

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Drawing from comprehensive literature reviews and supported by the underlying theory, the following hypotheses have been formulated: The relationships between the independent variables (servant leadership, leadership competency, self-efficacy) and university leaders' job performance are mediated by the working environment (H1, H2, H3).

Research Methodology

This research presents a quantitative, correlational design utilising measuring instruments derived from previous literature. The independent variables (servant leadership, leadership competency, self-efficacy) were adopted from van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2010), Khadka et al. (2014), and Chen et al. (2001), respectively. Meanwhile, job performance was measured using a scale from Fox et al. (2005). The working environment scale was adopted by Abdul et al. (2016). The researchers confirmed the operational concepts initially proposed and adapted the measuring instruments accordingly, ensuring their appropriateness for the research context.

The research involved leaders from public universities in Malaysia, with an initial population of 2921 potential participants. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table, a sample size of 341 participants was determined to be sufficient for data analysis. Quota sampling was employed to ensure representative participation from each university (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). Self-administered Google Forms were distributed to 341 participants, with additional questionnaires distributed to each university to address potential low response rates (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019), totalling 520 questionnaires. A total of 433 completed questionnaires were received, providing sufficient responses from all universities to commence data analysis. Data screening was conducted using SPSS version 26, while measurement and structural model analyses were performed using SMART PLS 4.0.

Data Analysis

Data Screening and Normality Testing

For data screening, the researchers employed the boxplot method to identify potential outliers that could distort or bias the results. As illustrated in Figure 2, three cases (126, 241, and 253) were identified as outliers. To ensure the accuracy of the results, the researchers decided to remove all outliers. This decision was made because all universities maintained adequate representation with sufficient respondents even after the removal of these outliers.

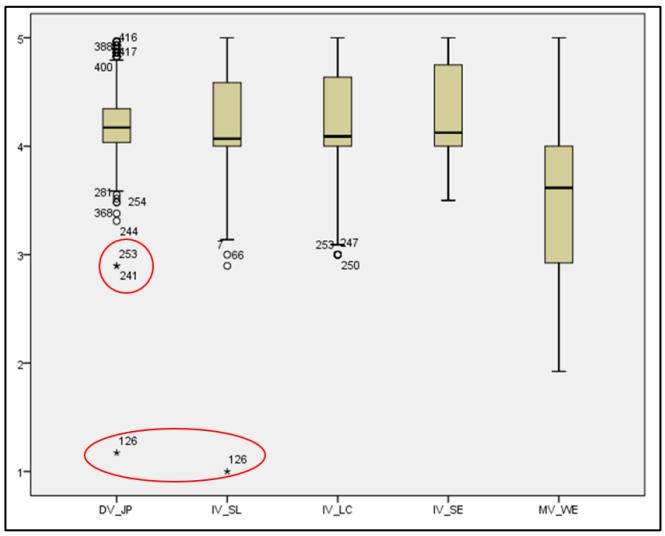

Figure 2 - Boxplot

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The researchers have also conducted the normality testing procedure to check for data skewness and kurtosis. Table 1 shows the results of Skewness ($-2 \leq x \leq 2$) and Kurtosis ($-3 \leq x \leq 3$) (Kline, 2011), and it can be confirmed that there is no normality problem.

Table 1: Normality Testing

	Overall Mean	Skewness	Kurtosis
Job Performance	4.2519	0.646	0.041
Servant Leadership	4.1908	-0.153	-0.582
Leadership Competency	4.2623	0.085	-0.527
Self-efficacy	4.3046	0.528	-0.921
Working Environment	3.4285	-0.577	-0.532

Measurement Model Analysis

Internal Consistency

Table 2 presents the results of internal consistency, assessed using three reliability methods: Cronbach's alpha (α), Composite reliability (pC), and Dijkstra-Henseler's Rho (pA). The decision to complement Cronbach's alpha with Composite reliability and Dijkstra-Henseler's Rho was based on recommendations to utilise multiple methods to ensure robust analysis, thereby achieving a reliable measurement model for subsequent analyses (Field, 2018).

All variables exhibit strong reliability results, with α-values ranging from 0.907 to 0.956, pC-values from 0.925 to 0.960, and pA-values from 0.929 to 0.989. These values exceed the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015; Hair et al., 2019; Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). In another words, the results suggest that the items within each variable consistently and reliably measure the same construct (Nunnally, 1978). Therefore, it can be confirmed that the scales or measuring model used in this research are internally consistent and can be confidently employed to measure the relevant variables.

Table 2: Internal Consistency

	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Composite Reliability (pC)	rho_A (pA)
Job Performance	0.912	0.925	0.929
Leadership Competency	0.936	0.942	0.986
Self-Efficacy	0.907	0.927	0.946
Servant leadership	0.956	0.960	0.967
Working Environment	0.949	0.956	0.967

Discriminant Validity

In addition to assessing internal consistency, the researchers evaluated discriminant validity. The discriminant validity analyses included the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlation (HTMT).

The Fornell-Larcker criterion involves comparing the square roots of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each latent variable with the correlations between the latent variable and other variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). According to this criterion, the square root of the AVE for a latent variable should be greater than its correlations with other constructs. As shown in Table 3, all the square roots of the AVEs for the latent variables were higher than the

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corresponding inter-construct correlations. For example, the square root of the AVE for job performance was 0.713, which is greater than its correlations with leadership competency, self-efficacy, servant leadership, and working environment. Similarly, the square roots of the AVEs for leadership competency, self-efficacy, servant leadership, and working environment were 0.773, 0.826, 0.709, and 0.793, respectively, all exceeding their respective inter-construct correlations.

Table 3: Fornell & Larcker criterion

	JP	LC	SE	SL	WE
JP	**0.713**				
LC	0.685	**0.773**			
SE	0.605	0.710	**0.826**		
SL	0.667	0.680	0.488	**0.709**	
WE	0.384	0.375	0.310	0.540	**0.793**

* JP = Job Performance, LC = Leadership Competency, SE = Self-Efficacy, SL = Servant Leadership, WE = Working Environment

The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlation (HTMT) addresses the insensitivity of the Fornell-Larcker criterion. HTMT estimates the true correlation between two constructs that are similar when measured accurately. An HTMT value close to 1 indicates a lack of discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 4 displays that all constructs had HTMT values within the acceptable range of HTMT0.85 (Kline, 2011) and HTMT0.90 (Gold et al., 2001), establishing discriminant validity for this research.

Table 4: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlation (HTMT)

	JP	LC	SE	SL	WE
JP					
LC	0.744				
SE	0.649	0.767			
SL	0.697	0.708	0.509		
WE	0.367	0.297	0.311	0.490	

* JP = Job Performance, LC = Leadership Competency, SE = Self-Efficacy, SL = Servant Leadership, WE = Working Environment

After assessing all elements of discriminant validity, the results were positive. Hair et al. (2019) suggested that meeting either criterion is sufficient for establishing discriminant validity. In this research, all criteria for discriminant validity were successfully met.

Structural Model Analysis

The structural model analysis began with a lateral collinearity assessment to ensure that each construct in the model is distinct and non-overlapping (Hair et al., 2019). Table 5 presents the Inner Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for the exogenous variables and the working environment (MV). VIF values indicate how much variance in each exogenous variable is influenced by its correlation with other variables. The VIF values for leadership competency, self-efficacy, servant leadership, and working environment are 2.856, 2.015, 1.861, and 1.000 respectively. These values are below the commonly accepted threshold of 5.0 (Hair et al., 2019), indicating that multicollinearity is not a significant concern in this research.

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Table 5: Lateral Collinearity

	JP	LC	SE	SL	WE
Leadership Competency					2.856
Self-Efficacy					2.015
Servant Leadership					1.861
Working Environment	1.000				

* JP = Job Performance, LC = Leadership Competency, SE = Self-Efficacy, SL = Servant Leadership, WE = Working Environment

The path coefficient analysis was performed to evaluate the importance and significance of relationships within the structural model, thus testing the research hypotheses. As per Hair et al. (2019), a satisfactory t-value should be greater than 1.645, and a p-value less than 0.05 signifies a significant relationship between variables. Table 6 below presents the relationship between variables based on the original sample, featuring mean, standard deviation, t-values, and p-values. The results indicate no significant relationship between leadership competency and the working environment (t-value=0.740; p=0.460), as well as between self-efficacy and the working environment (t-value=1.535; p=0.125). Nevertheless, this research identifies a strong positive relationship between servant leadership and the working environment (t-value=9.919; p=0.000). Lastly, there is a significant positive relationship between the working environment and job performance (t-value=11.359; p=0.000), indicating that a positive work environment is likely to lead to improved job performance.

Table 6: Path Coefficient (Direct Effects)

Relationships	Original Sample	Mean	SD	T Value	P Value
Leadership Competency -> Working Environment	-0.044	-0.036	0.060	0.740	0.460
Self-Efficacy -> Working Environment	0.084	0.081	0.054	1.535	0.125
Servant leadership -> Working Environment	0.529	0.528	0.053	9.919	0.000
Working Environment -> Job Performance	0.384	0.390	0.034	11.359	0.000

A notable positive connection between servant leadership and the working environment (t-value=9.919; p-value=0.000), in line with expectations given servant leadership's focus on fostering positive workplace behaviours. Conversely, leadership competency showed no significant correlation with the working environment (t=0.740; p=0.460), possibly because leaders concentrating on competence may prioritise personal growth over environmental impact, highlighting the pivotal role of behaviours in workplace influence. Similarly, self-efficacy displayed an insignificant relationship with the working environment (t=1.535; p=0.125), likely due to conceptual variances between individual attributes like self-efficacy and broader organisational concepts. Nevertheless, the study underscored a meaningful relationship between the working environment and university leaders' job performance (t=11.359; p=0.000), emphasising the necessity for leaders to consider their behaviours and the environment's impact on performance.

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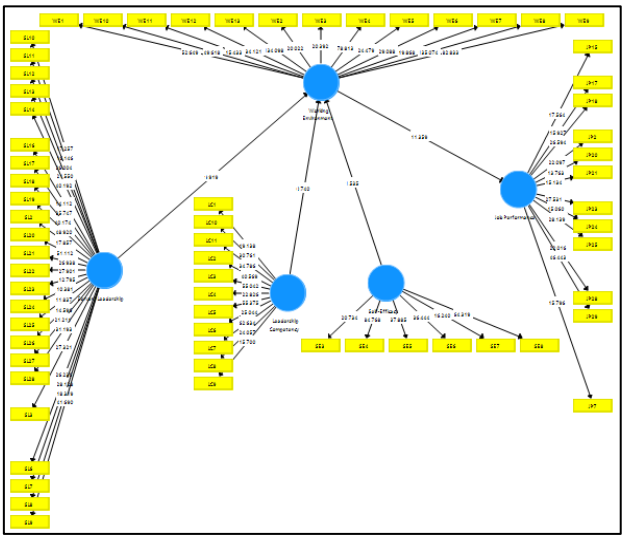

Figure 3: Drawing and Assessment of Structural Model (Path Coefficients Direct Effects)

In essence, leaders should prioritise behaviours that cultivate a conducive working environment, as they directly influence job performance. Moreover, the strong connection between the working environment and job performance highlights the importance of leaders being mindful of their behaviours and their impact on performance outcomes. Neglecting to do so can have wide-ranging consequences for employees' well-being, organisational culture, and overall performance outcomes within universities.

In statistical analysis, mediation testing explores whether the relationship between independent variables and a dependent variable is explained by a mediator (Baron & Kenny, 1986). The Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) method is increasingly preferred for assessing complex models with both direct and indirect effects. Bootstrapping enhances the accuracy of statistical analysis by allowing for a more comprehensive calculation of measures (Ramayah et al., 2018).

Table 7 presents the outcomes of the PLS coefficient analysis regarding the total indirect effect of each independent variable on job performance. The t-values reveal that the indirect effects of leadership competency and self-efficacy on job performance were not significant, as their p-values exceeded 0.05 (Hair et al., 2019). Conversely, the indirect effect of servant leadership on job performance was significant, with a t-value of 6.192 and a p-value of 0.000.

Table 7: Path Coefficient - Total Indirect Effect

	Original Sample	Mean	SD	T Value	P Value
Leadership Competency -> Job Performance	-0.017	-0.015	0.025	0.695	0.487
Self-Efficacy -> Job Performance	0.032	0.032	0.022	1.426	0.154
Servant Leadership -> Job Performance	0.203	0.208	0.033	6.192	0.000

International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Management Practices
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After examining the path coefficient of the constructs, it was observed that the working environment acts as a mediator only in the relationship between servant leadership and job performance. This was evidenced by the results in Table 8, where zero is not within the confidence interval of servant leadership and job performance relationship, as supported by Preacher and Hayes (2008). The LLCI and UCLI for the correlation between servant leadership and job performance through the working environment range from 0.143 to 0.261, unlike the indirect relationships observed between leadership competency or self-efficacy and job performance.

Table 8: Confidence Interval Bias - Total Indirect Effects

	Original Sample	Mean	2.5% (LLCI)	97.5% (UCLI)
Servant Leadership ->Working Environment -> Job Performance	-0.017	-0.015	0.143	0.264
Leadership Competency ->Working Environment -> Job Performance	0.032	0.032	-0.065	0.029
Self -Efficacy ->Working Environment -> Job Performance	0.203	0.208	-0.011	0.080

LLCI = Lower-Level Confidence Interval; ULCI = Upper-Level Confidence Interval

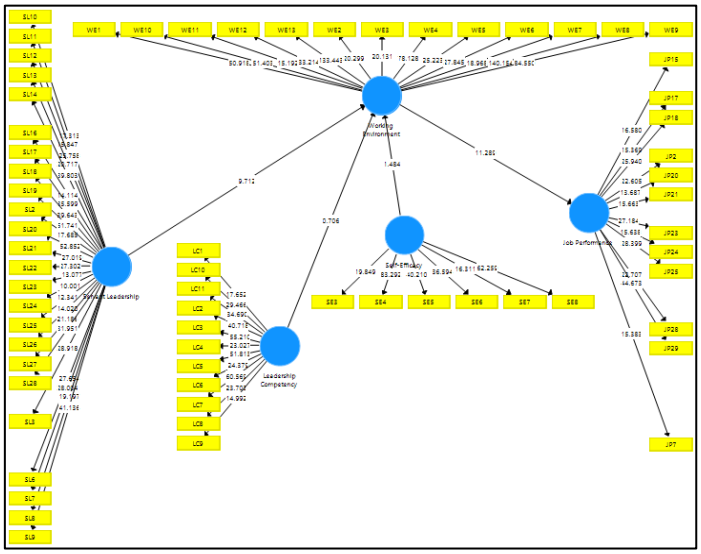

Figure 4: Drawing and Assessment of Structural Model (PLS Bootstrapping for Total Indirect Effects)

The fundamental objectives of this research are to investigate the mediating role of the working environment in the relationships between servant leadership, leadership competency, self-efficacy, and job performance among Malaysian public university leaders. Hypothesis H1, proposing that the working environment mediates the relationship between servant leadership and job performance, was supported, with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval indicating mediation. This suggests that a positive working environment indirectly contributes to enhanced job performance by providing a conducive atmosphere for effective decision-making. However, H2 and H3, which suggested mediation between leadership competency or self-efficacy and job performance through the working environment, were not supported. The lack of mediation aligns with the direct analysis, which showed no significant relationship

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between these variables, indicating that the working environment may be less influenced by competency and self-efficacy.

The subsequent step involves calculating the coefficient of determination (R^2) to evaluate the strength of mediation and quantify the relationship between the independent and dependent variables as a percentage (Hair et al., 2019). The R^2 values for the endogenous variables, specifically the working environment and job performance, are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Coefficient of Determination

Variables	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Job Performance	0.147	0.145
Working Environment	0.295	0.290

The values indicate that the independent variables (servant leadership, leadership competency, and self-efficacy) explain approximately 14.7% of the variance in job performance, while for the working environment, these variables explain approximately 29.5% of the variance. This suggests a significant influence of the independent variables on shaping the working environment, with the working environment having a higher R^2 compared to job performance, indicating a stronger influence on the former. However, it is crucial to note that despite the higher R^2 for the working environment, 29.5% of the variance in job performance through the working environment is considered relatively weak (Hair et al., 2019), likely due to the direct significant relationship between leadership competency/self-efficacy and job performance, bypassing the working environment as a mediator.

Discussion

Building on insights from prior research and addressing their recommendations, this study aimed to bridge the gaps identified by delving into the mediating role of the working environment in the relationships between established independent variables: servant leadership, leadership competency, and self-efficacy (Raime et al., 2022). Through this examination, the research contributes empirical evidence that highlights the pivotal role of the working environment in shaping leaders' job performance. It underscores the significance of soft skills (encompassed within servant leadership) in the selection of leaders capable of fostering a positive and conducive working environment, thus promoting fair, integral, and respectful decision-making processes.

The empirical evidence provided by this study regarding the mediating role of the working environment and its impact on leaders' job performance can be of immense significance to policymakers. Understanding the pivotal influence of the working environment on leadership effectiveness can inform the formulation of policies aimed at creating more conducive and supportive working environments within educational institutions. By emphasising the importance of servant leadership qualities, policymakers can focus on initiatives that promote leadership development programs, encourage a culture of respect and fairness, and foster environments that facilitate integral decision-making processes. These efforts can contribute to improving overall leadership quality and organisational effectiveness (Raime et al., 2023), particularly in the education sector, aligning with Malaysia's ambition to establish itself as a global education hub by 2025 (Fadzil et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the implications of this study extend beyond the educational sector to the broader economic landscape and align with the goal of achieving quality education (SDG4). A positive

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and conducive working environment not only enhances leaders' job performance but also has positive ripple effects on economic well-being. When leaders are supported by favourable working conditions that encourage fairness, integrity, and respectful decision-making, it can lead to increased productivity, and employee satisfaction, and ultimately contribute to economic growth. Moreover, aligning leadership practices with SDG4 objectives ensures that educational institutions play a vital role in providing quality education and fostering the skills needed for individuals to thrive in society and the economy. As such, the findings of this study have far-reaching implications for Malaysia's educational goals, economic prosperity, and progress toward sustainable development.

Recommendation and Conclusion

This research acknowledges several limitations, including its focus solely on university leaders, which limits its broader applicability. To enhance external validity, future research should include a wider range of higher education institutions and larger sample sizes. Additionally, excluding stakeholders such as university lecturers restricts the perspective of the research; thus, a more comprehensive approach is recommended to understand the dynamics of the higher education industry better. Given the geographical limitation to Malaysia, future studies could expand to other Asian countries or industries for further validation. The cross-sectional design of this research also limits the understanding of long-term behavioural changes among university leaders, suggesting the need for future longitudinal studies. Furthermore, future research should prioritise establishing causation and exploring other mediating and moderating variables to enrich our understanding and guide leadership practices, recruitment processes, and policy development in universities. Comparative research between public and private universities regarding leaders' job performance patterns could also provide valuable insights.

This research predominantly explored the mediating role of the working environment in the relationships between servant leadership, leadership competency, self-efficacy, and job performance among leaders in Malaysian public universities. It confirmed Hypothesis H1, indicating that servant leadership indirectly boosts job performance through a positive working environment. However, Hypotheses H2 and H3, proposing mediation through the working environment for leadership competency and self-efficacy, were not supported. While the working environment plays a significant role, its direct impact on job performance variance (R^2=0.295) was relatively weak, likely due to the direct influence of leadership competency and self-efficacy.

In the nutshell, this research partially achieves its objective. Specifically, the working environment is a mediator between servant leadership and leader's job performance but does not serve as a mediator for the relationships involving leadership competency and self-efficacy with leader's job performance. Therefore, the research objective is only met in the context of servant leadership's influence on job performance, suggesting that the working environment's mediating role is selective and context dependent. Nevertheless, this finding underscores the importance of fostering supportive working environments while recognising the direct impact of leadership qualities on job performance, warranting further research to optimise organisational outcomes.

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