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THE INFLUENCE OF JOB SATISFACTION, LEADERSHIP, AND WORK ENVIRONMENT ON ACADEMICIANS' JOB PERFORMANCE: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PERCEIVED FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

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Abstract:

This conceptual paper presents the influence of independent variables such as job satisfaction, leadership and work environment with perceived financial sustainability as mediator on job performance of academicians in Malaysian private higher education institutions as dependent variable. In general, organisational factors in terms of financial perspectives are commonly refer to cost management, using institution resources efficiently and reducing financial pressures including gaining external research funding and publications, that stimulate the institution's reputation and ranking are used to evaluate academicians' performance. Additionally, academicians' performance can also be measured by operational continuity, such as their consistency in teaching quality as well as their contribution in program development and activities. Most previous studies have investigated the effect of work related and engaged direct variables of employment aspects, mainly to measure academicians' performance, less emphasis was found on these variables that can affect the improvement on academicians' performance by significant mediating mechanism, such as perceived financial sustainability that can be critically assessed the academicians' perception respectively. The novelty of the study is that it employs the Resource-Based View theory and suggests perceived financial sustainability as a mediating mechanism between job satisfaction, leadership and work environment and the job performance of academicians. The paper contributes to the literature by integrating institutional sustainability of employment perceptions that link to mediator thus influences the academicians' job performance as the outcome that motivates the basis of future empirical research.

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Keyword:

Job Satisfaction, Leadership, Work Environment, Perceived Financial Sustainability and Academician's Job Performance.

Introduction

In the competitive academic development of today, all public or private higher institutions are struggling to maintain their place with academic quality and a strong institutional stability. Regarding employees' performance that concentrate on the academicians' job performance, the explored engaged relationship with the relevant determinants becomes a critical factor that eventually contributes to the holistic organisational performance. Previous studies tend to have explored leadership and job satisfaction in connection with academic staff outcomes and financial sustainability at the institutional level, but somehow fewer studies combined these constructs into one framework. For instance, as found by Heng Ong et al., (2024), appropriate leadership styles establish effective strategies and policies which related to increase job satisfaction and performance among academic staff. The institutionalisation of a financial sustainability agenda in Malaysian public universities manage the conflicting academic and financial logic to co-exist to ensure legitimacy and survival (Ahmad et al., 2019). Furthermore, there is still lack exposure on the direct financial perspective which means the academicians' direct perception that is significantly importance to measure their job performance respectively in avenue of job satisfaction, leadership and working environment. This conceptual paper therefore highlights the novel scope of study that lies in attempt to explain academicians' job performance not only through direct effects of job satisfaction, leadership and work environment, but also linking through perceived financial sustainability as a mediating resource. Moreover, this study provides a new perspective by combining these variables into one framework. In doing so, the study is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on Quality Education and SDG 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth as it addresses the human capital and institutional sustainability central to a resilient higher education sector. This extends the Resource-Based View theoretical understanding of how internal organizational conditions can shape performance outcomes in a financially constrained and competitive higher education environment.

Problem Statement

The new globalization of public and private higher education institutions has intensified strong competition among institutions, compelling them to adopt the continuous development in order to remain resilient and achieve significant growth in higher education industry. Performance and sustainability indicators give insightful guidance to evaluate institutional effectiveness in higher education (Sato et al., 2025). From lenses of education development in Malaysia, factors due to economic growth essentially influence the positive changes that impacted high rise of

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public and private education institutions. Generally, financial indicators are the main assessment that derived directly from operational elements such as cost management and profit measurement, where financial sustainability is often treated as dependent or independent variable that be the benchmark of organisational performance. Study by Madzinga et al. (2024) indicated that financial management, management accounting practices and competency of teaching faculty have significant impact on the financial performance of an institution. Apparently, the data collection from audited resources like audited financial report and annual report, clearly disclose on the accountability and transparency of the organisational performance, but somehow unable to address directly the perception of the employees namely the academicians as highlighted in this study. Financial sustainability is a commonly used financial measure of organizational performance, yet its measures do not reflect academicians' perception of institutional stability and support leaving a gap in understanding how perceived financial sustainability affects job performance in higher education institutions. Such data, although valuable still do not capture the perceptions of internal stakeholders, specifically of academicians on how they judge the financial sustainability of their institution in terms of academic practices. As a result, the gap formed due to unclear presentation in addressing how academicians derive them perceive financial sustainability and how such perceptions may determine their job performance in the institutions.

Adversely, potential impact by prevailing assumption in other crucial section like human resource (HR) practices that directly translate to performance benchmarks may overlooks on potential critical mediators on institutional financial aspect like perceived financial sustainability. This is because most of the existing studies examine the HR indicators separately to measure the academicians' job performance in single effect despite combining them in one framework of study. Improvement on academicians' job performance which can be realised by improving leadership style, work environment, organizational climate, and job satisfaction (Subarto et al., 2021). The results have demonstrated the reliability of the common HR indicators, which are still missing to explore beyond the boundary. Therefore, it is important for higher education institutions to establish the solid engagement between HR indicators and external indicators such as perceived financial element to guarantee that the pure basis and stable development of overall performance can be achieved. Leadership and work environment factors can be argued to stimulate performance that contributes to financial sustainability. The result is resources like research grants, high equipped facilities and competitive salaries that motivate academicians to perform well in their job. University system may not record any meaningful success in terms of academic job performance without adequate financial sustainability or funding of the institutional system (Fawziyah A.B et al, 2024). Furthermore, such favorable internal conditions show how the institution allocates and preserves resources, and those resources then support lecturers' ability to perform well. Job satisfaction functions as a full mediating variable, where the impact of leadership behavior and academic atmosphere on lecturer performance is only significant through job satisfaction as a mediator (Rizal et.al., 2024). As result of the strong establishment from the effective leadership in the institution, the universities can be able to stimulate a healthy working environment to the academicians thus indirectly reduce turnover costs, improve efficiency, and help maintain stable academic operations, which can reduce hidden costs and strengthens the institution's sustainability.

Motivation of The Study

Despite the increasing concern in strengthening sustainable position most of the higher education institutions are facing increasing pressure to sustain academic quality, institutional stability and staff performance in environment caused by financial constraints and various progressive change in organisational demands. Other than that, in an effort to maintain the economic stability on continuous basis, the institution is expecting the academicians to increase the efficiency of the teaching, research and academic development, which measure their job performance as important element for institution's success. Therefore, it is important to gain better understanding on the determinants that support academicians' job performance and indirectly influence the institutional performance such possible. According to previous research, job satisfaction, leadership, work environment and financial sustainability were studied in isolation, but not as an integrated explanatory model. Particularly, most studies on financial sustainability have focused on organisational financial indicators or institutional performance outcomes, while few studies were conducted on how academicians perceive financial sustainability that mediate their work performance in relation to the influence of work-related factors namely job satisfaction, leadership, and work environment. As such, the gap has motivated this conceptual study as basis of exploration since academicians stand as a distinct internal stakeholder group whose perceptions may influence how they respond to institutional conditions.

However, this study is also motivated by the needs to search justifications of how work-related factors translate into performance outcomes in higher education. This approach is in line with the literature by linking human resource conditions with institutional sustainability in a single framework. This study is on the academics' performance; thus, it is measurable to relate the independent variables (IVs) with right financial component as the mediator. Thus, the perceived financial sustainability is chosen as the mediating variable that can link the identified (IVs) namely leadership, job satisfaction and work environment in determining the strong academicians' job performance as the dependent variable. The data gathered from academicians who are individual respondents may strongly support the justification of making the questionnaire approach more defensible because they are interpreting their perceptions of the institution's financial stability, resource adequacy, and continuity in form of perceived financial sustainability rather than financial sustainability obviously. For example, academicians show their strong commitment in response to their job satisfaction because they are satisfied with the salary package provided to them which can reduce the new recruitment costs, thus show their assumption on perceived financial sustainability of the institution's performance. The similar understanding can be composed when facilitated workplace address their positive assumption on impact by work environment factor to the academicians' performance respectively. The impact of resources referring to qualified staff, good reputation, and strong leadership practices can be more justifiable when adopting the perceived financial sustainability as the bridge that recognise how effectively those resources are converted into financial stability and long-term institutional performance.

Research Gap

There are many aspects that determine the performance of educational institutions, whereby financial indicators are highlighted in most studies as they factored in scope of sustainability, resource allocation, and operational effectiveness while other factors such as academicians' performance have been the benchmark of the higher education institution's performance. Institutions need to apply the Performance Management System to enhance performance of the teaching staff associating both individuals as well as institution goals and objectives to upgrade the total performance of the institution for achievement of its goals (Chahar & Hatwal, 2018). Previous studies have emphasized numbers of independent variables (IVs) that can measure the academicians' job performance such as the job satisfaction, leadership and work environment and can be mediated by these variables as well. Nevertheless, the effective indicators itemized in quality assurance system can also establish higher education institutions' strategic goals and stimulate continuous improvement efforts. As such, it is essential for an institution to conduct progressive review on these factors as the academicians' job performance can be improvised simultaneously.

Nevertheless, there are still lack of empirical studies that evaluate the academicians' job performance by taking financial element as the mediating mechanism. While extensive research has established job satisfaction, leadership, and work environment as direct drivers of academic performance, the underlying mechanisms in the financially constrained context of PHEIs remain under explored. Although financial sustainability has been widely recognised as an institutional performance indicator whereby prior studies have predominantly relied on organisational financial indicators and management-level data as the basis of analysis. Employee growth rate and asset turnover are two financial sustainability variables that have a positive relationship with ROA (Nguyen et al., 2024). In the view of growing interest in financial sustainability in higher education, most studies have focused on institutional financial indicators and management practices, while lack attention has been addressed to academicians' perceptions of financial sustainability as a mediating mechanism in job performance research. Consequently, there is limited evidence on academicians' perceptions of financial sustainability and its role in explaining job performance in higher education institutions, explaining how academicians perceive the financial sustainability of their institutions and how such perceptions may affect their job performance. This gap significantly reveal that academicians are not the only recipients of institutional decisions but also important contributors to teaching quality, research output, and organizational effectiveness. Their perceptions of the institution's financial stability may therefore influence their motivation, confidence, and ability to perform effectively. As such, the conceptualization of this study is essential to fill up the research gap by shifting from purely objective financial assessment to the subjective experience of academicians' job performance, thereby offering a more different exploration of performance in higher education institutions.

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundation

Grounded with theory of Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm (Barney, J.,1991), this study conceptualizes the mediating factor namely perceived financial sustainability not merely as an outcome, but as a strategic resource and a critical mediating variable that supports short term and long-term institutional capability and performance. RBV theory argues that organisations achieve improved performance when they facilitate good resources and capabilities that are valuable, niche, difficult to imitate, and not easily substituted. As supported by Vasudevan (2021), RBV theory forms the capability to diversify resources and establish more opportunities with fewer funds when applied to urban systems. In scope of private higher education institutions, perceived financial sustainability may functions importantly as it highlights the institution's capacity to sustain operations, maintain academic services, and support staff effectiveness. Accordingly, job satisfaction, work environment and leadership are expected to strengthen perceived financial sustainability by improving institutional stability and internal coordination that eventually may enhance academicians' job performance. Therefore, this study aims to fill in this theoretical and empirical gap by examining the mediating role of perceived financial sustainability in the relationships between the identified independent variables and dependent variable focusing in Malaysian Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs). As for the mediator, it acts as the enabling mechanism that allows institutions to acquire and deploy other performance-driving resources. In relation to this conceptual study, the influence of human resource (HR) factors on performance is likely mediated by the institution's financial resource base. In the context of PHEIs, human resources referring to satisfied, high-performing academicians and organizational resources such as effective leadership, a positive work environment are necessary but insufficient on their own. This is because without the financial capacity to activate them, their potential remains undiscovered. Therefore, the institutions need to explore potential mechanisms that can establish better engagement in HR variables for the benefit of academicians' job performance respectively. This theoretical positioning contributes a stronger explanation of how human-centric factors embedded into performance, framing financial element as the mediating resource in the causal relationship between HR inputs and performance outcomes. Consequently, the method for defining the financial sustainability of higher education institutions and discusses both the indices, applied for financial sustainability evaluation, and their threshold values (Sazonov et al., 2015).

Academicians' Job Performance

Academicians' job performance is one of the main outcomes in higher education because it reflects how effectively academicians perform teaching, research, supervision, and service responsibilities. Prior studies reveal that academicians' job performance is influenced by work-related and organizational factors such as motivation, leadership style, job satisfaction, and work environment. Job performance is significantly and positively related to personality traits, motivation, leadership style, and learner autonomy (Che Cob et.al., 2024). Recent studies highlight that personality traits, motivation, leadership style, and learner autonomy significantly affect job performance among academic staff, while other studies reported that job satisfaction and workplace conditions are important determinants of academic effectiveness. These findings suggest that academicians' job performance should be understood as an outcome influenced by multiple internal resources and institutional conditions. As grounded by Resource-Based View (RBV) theory in this study, the effective use of valuable internal resources and capabilities are required for the academicians' job performance. In the context of higher education, job satisfaction, leadership, and work environment may be viewed as internal resources that enhance academicians' motivation, commitment, and performance as well as associated to the academicians' job performance that can lead to stronger commitment, trust, involvement and productivity among them. This perspective supports the view that job satisfaction, leadership, and work environment are important antecedents of academicians' job performance and should be examined within a broader conceptual model. Nevertheless, practical implications reveal that supervisors who have the power to increase the levels of job satisfaction of their faculty members by defining their role as a leader, demonstrating certain leadership behaviors. Higher education institutions are under growing financial pressure, making financial sustainability an important concern whereas most prior studies have treated financial sustainability as an institutional issue rather than as a perceived condition from the individual perspective, namely academicians. Therefore, this study analyses further the RBV by examining perceived financial sustainability from the perspective of academicians, assuming that leadership, job satisfaction, and work environment shape how internal resources are experienced and evaluated within the institution. Based on the gap found in the literature, this study suggests perceived financial sustainability as an important mediating mechanism by linking job satisfaction, leadership, and work environment to academicians' job performance.

Job Satisfaction and Academicians' Job Performance

Job satisfaction is defined as positive emotional feedback based on the evaluation of individual job experiences that become determinant of employee job performance across any working sectors. Drivers of job satisfaction, such as good remuneration, job recognition for outstanding achievements and clear career advancement opportunities, are closely linked to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, thereby enhancing the job performance. Other than that, understanding of how cultural and institutional factors might influence the effectiveness of employees' job satisfaction through mediating staff engagement (Javad et al., 2024).

In closer view of HR practices and impacts in higher education institution, job satisfaction directly refers to how academicians evaluate their job roles, rewards, recognition, workload, and work conditions. Academicians who are satisfied with their job, are more proactive, willing to participate, committed and productive in their teaching and academic activities. Job satisfaction is a performance driver that positively associated when satisfied academicians tend to show higher motivation, stronger commitment, and greater willingness to perform effectively in their roles (Mahat et al., 2018).

Leadership and Academicians' Job Performance

Leadership is an important antecedent of academicians' job performance because supportive and effective leadership can enhance staff motivation, collaboration, and commitment, leading to better job effectiveness. Leadership is theoretically linked to improvise performance by empowering staff development and aligning their goals with institutional objectives. Transformation leadership and job performance inspire and motivates followers, fostering an environment conducive to high performance (Hidayat et al., 2023). In the specific context of higher education institutions, effective leadership is also crucial for navigating market challenges, strategic positioning, and securing institutional stability. In relation to the academicians' job performance, leadership performed by leader can support the academicians for direction, support, communication, and decision-making in which proven effective leadership improves trust, motivation, and commitment. This in turn can develop efficiency in teaching quality, research productivity and participation in academic activities. More importantly, leadership should be viewed not only as a direct predictor of job performance but also as an internal organisational resource that shapes how staff perceive the institution's ability to remain stable and sustainable. Supportive leadership, fair compensation and conducive environment are important determinants of job satisfaction in private higher institution (Hee et al., 2020). Due to the reason, leadership is relevant in this study as a key antecedent of academicians' job performance through perceived financial sustainability.

Work Environment and Academicians' Job Performance

The work environment, comprising both physical such as facilities, technological resources, office space and psychosocial conditions refer to collegiality relationships, administrative support, academic freedom, significantly affect employee behavior and job performance. Critical interplay of perceived organisational and supervisory support fosters a conducive environment that improved productivity and employee retention and job satisfaction (Cui et

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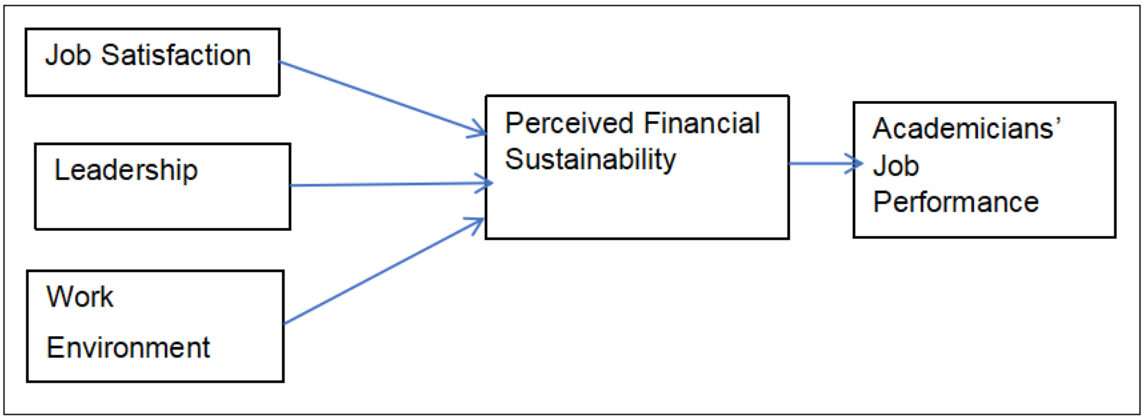
al., 2023). A supportive work environment, encompassing physical and psychosocial factors, reduces barriers and enables academicians to focus on core duties (Naz et al., 2020). Effective strategies and re-examining work conditions are imperative for better job performance (Ghazi et al., 2018). The significant relationship between leadership style, work environment and job satisfaction can strongly influence the job performance (Chandra & Priyono, 2016). The concept of RBV theory fits for this study because performance improvement derived from how the institution develops and uses its internal human resources, not from external conditions alone. The work environment is part of the institution's internal resource base and contributes to job performance when it is effectively developed and managed. As such, it is needful for work environment to be aligned with the academicians' job performance. When academic staff engaged in working environment that provides adequate resources and positive interpersonal relationships, barriers to performance are reduced and they can focus more effectively on their core duties. The work environment is essential as academicians require both material support and professional autonomy to be well performed. Effective strategies for improving work conditions are therefore necessary for enhancing job performance. Accordingly, this study argues that a supportive work environment should be aligned with academicians' job performance and is relevant to operate through mediating perceived financial sustainability.

Perceived Financial Sustainability As Mediating Role

Financial sustainability in higher education refers to an institution's capability to manage operating costs, maintain stability, and invest sufficiently in its long-term mission. In recent literature, financial sustainability is increasingly discussed as a strategic issue because higher education institutions face funding pressure, rising costs, and changing enrolment patterns. However, most studies examine financial sustainability at the institutional level using financial reports, funding structure, or management indicators rather than the perceptions of academic staff. In this study, perceived financial sustainability is conceptualized as academicians' subjective assessment of whether their institution is financially stable, well-managed, and capable of sustaining academic operations over time. This perception is important measurement due to limited access might be obtained directly from audited financial data, yet they experience the consequences of financial conditions through workload, resource availability, job security, and administrative support. When academicians perceive financial sustainability positively, they are more likely to feel confident about the institution's stability and more willing to commit in their works. This is also important as academicians' perceptions of sustainability are likely to be influenced by the quality of leadership, the level of job satisfaction, and the condition of the work environment. Therefore, perceived financial sustainability is relevant not only as an institutional condition, but also as a psychological mechanism that may influence academicians' job performance. It is a useful to justify that financial sustainability is not merely as prime outcome but also a perceptual condition that examine whether the institution has enough financial strength to use its resources effectively thus become a strong mediator between HR related inputs and performance outputs. Accordingly, perceived financial sustainability is proposed as mediating mechanism that links job satisfaction, leadership, and work environment to academicians' job performance. It captures financial sustainability not only as institutional outcome but also reflects the extent to which the institution can deploy its internal resources effectively. Therefore, perceived financial sustainability is a suitable mediator in explaining how internal organisational factors are translated into performance outcomes.

Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework was developed through a structured review between the independent variables, the mediator and the dependent variable. This study proposes a conceptual framework that explains how job satisfaction, leadership and work environment influence academicians' job performance, both directly and indirectly through perceived financial sustainability. Based on Resource Based View Theory, the framework assumes that internal organisational resources such as satisfaction, leadership and work environment contribute to performance by shaping how academicians perceived the institution's financial sustainability that mediates the relationship between the three independent variables and academicians' job performance. This study constructs the conceptual framework as below:



Based on the proposed framework, this study constructs propositions that show expected positive effects between the three independent variables, mediator and dependent variable respectively. Each proposition is addressed as follows:

Proposition 1: Job satisfaction positively influences academicians' job performance.
Proposition 2: Leadership positively influences academicians' job performance.
Proposition 3: Work environment positively influences academicians' job performance.
Proposition 4: Job satisfaction positively influences perceived financial sustainability.
Proposition 5: Leadership positively influences perceived financial sustainability.
Proposition 6: Work environment positively influences perceived financial sustainability.
Proposition 7: Perceived financial sustainability positively influences academicians' job performance.
Proposition 8: Perceived financial sustainability mediates the relationship between job satisfaction and academicians' job performance.
Proposition 9: Perceived financial sustainability mediates the relationship between leadership and academicians' job performance.
Proposition 10: Perceived financial sustainability mediates the work environment and academicians' job performance.

Research Design and Sample

This study proposes to employ a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, which is appropriate for collecting data at a single point in time to test hypothesized relationships and examine mediating mechanisms. The study selects academicians as group of respondents that

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include lecturers, senior lecturers, associate professors, and professors working in private universities in Malaysia. This approach is suitable for this study as the population was reachable, thereby eliminating sampling error for this specific institutional context. This study adopts a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey design. Data will be generated from academicians through a structured questionnaires to examine the relationships among job satisfaction, leadership, work environment, perceived financial sustainability, and academicians' job performance. The quantitative approach is suitable because it is applicable to test the variables with the mediating effect of perceived financial sustainability. This study will use a questionnaire with items measured on a Likert Scale, and the data will be examined using appropriate statistical techniques to determine the co relation and significance of the relationships (Amzat et al, 2020). The design is suitable for examining perceptions of academicians regarding institutional conditions and their influence on job performance.

Discussion

This conceptual paper proposes that job satisfaction, leadership, and work environment as the independent variables influence academicians' job performance as the dependent variable, through the mediator, perceived financial sustainability. The discussion is significant because it transforms the analysis beyond direct cause-and-effect relationships and justify how workplace conditions may develop job performance through staff perceptions of institutional stability. In higher education, financial sustainability has become a growing concern as most of institutions are facing rising costs, constrained funding, and increasing pressure to remain competitive and resilient. This context makes perceived financial sustainability a meaningful lens for understanding academicians' attitudes and performance.

The conceptual framework recommends that job satisfaction may strengthen perceived financial sustainability because satisfied academicians are more likely to feel satisfied, engaged, secured and aligned with institutional goals. Leadership may also lead a significant role by shaping how internal resources are managed and how confidently the academicians view the institution's future. A supportive work environment can further reinforce perceptions of stability by providing adequate facilities, coordination, and organizational support. These factors are critical because financial sustainability in higher education is not only an accounting issue but also a strategic and operational one that affects how the institution functions and how staff experience their work.

From theoretical perspective, the model is consistent with the Resource-Based View, which highlight valuable organizational resources contribute to sustainable performance. In this study, perceived financial sustainability is translated as a strategic resource because it reflects the institution's ability to manage operations and support academic work overtime. Additionally, it supports nuanced explanation of how internal work conditions may translate into job performance.

The discussion also highlights a conceptual gap in the literature whereby prior studies on financial sustainability in higher education have mostly focused on institutional strategies, governance, funding models, and financial indicators. Meanwhile, research on academicians' job performance has extended to examine job satisfaction, leadership, and work environment separately. Thus, the present model brings these streams together by proposing perceived financial sustainability as the mechanism linking work-related factors to performance outcomes. This integration is relevant for Malaysian private higher education institutions, where academicians are seen as the significant players can facilitate the perceptions of stability that may affect commitment, productivity, and confidence in institutional sustainability.

Contribution

This study contributes by showing that perceived financial sustainability is not merely an institutional outcome, but strategic perceptual mechanism through which job satisfaction, leadership, and work environment influence academicians' job performance.

Theoretical Contribution

This study contributes theoretically in terms of extending Resource Based View theory in the context of higher education. It clarifies that job satisfaction, leadership and work environment are not only direct antecedents of academicians' job performance but also influence job performance through perceived financial sustainability. This adds a more nuanced explanation of how internal organisational resources are translated into performance outcome. Furthermore, importantly it contributes to broader understanding of how perceptions of institutional stability may shape academicians' job performance.

Practical Contribution

This study suggests some practical implications that beneficial for higher education leaders and administrators. Specifically, the findings contribute to the improvement of job satisfaction, strengthening leadership practices and creating a supportive work environment may enhance academicians' perception of financial sustainability. Academicians will presume that their institution is financially stable and well established thus motivate them to perform their job effectively and more committed. Practically the findings highlight that leadership development, job satisfaction and good working environment can indirectly support academic performance by improving perceptions of sustainability.

Future Empirical Research Direction

As for future research, this study can guide the researchers for future studies such as adopting additional variables or mediator that can produce significant findings. For example, using organisational commitment, psychological safety or perceived institutional support could be included to examine the explanatory power of the model.

Implication

This conceptual paper offers several implications for theory and practice. Theoretically, it extends the higher education literature by integrating job satisfaction, leadership, and work environment with perceived financial sustainability as a mediating mechanism in explaining academicians' job performance. This contribution is important because most prior studies have examined these variables separately, while this paper provides a more holistic explanation of how work-related factors may influence performance through academicians' perceptions of institutional stability. In addition, by positioning perceived financial sustainability as a strategic resource, the study strengthens the relevance of the Resource-Based View in the context of private higher education institutions. From practical perspective, the proposed framework suggests that university leaders should not focus only on financial outcomes at the institutional level, but also on how staff perceive the financial condition of their institution. Improving job satisfaction, leadership quality, and the work environment may stimulate stronger positive perceptions of financial sustainability, which in turn can enhance academicians' performance. For private higher education institutions, this means that internal management practices, staff support, and organizational climate are not only human resource issues but also part of a broader sustainability agenda. Leaders may therefore use the model to design policies that improve staff morale, increase confidence in institutional continuity, and support better academic outcomes.

The study also has implications for future research. Since the paper is conceptual in nature, empirical testing is needed to validate the proposed relationships in different higher education settings. Future studies may examine whether the model operates differently across public and private institutions, across countries, or across academic ranks. Researchers may also test whether other variables such as organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, or job stress further explain the relationship between perceived financial sustainability and job performance.

Conclusion

This conceptual paper proposes an integrated framework that links job satisfaction, leadership, and work environment to academicians' job performance through perceived financial sustainability. The study responds to the growing need for more holistic explanation of performance in Malaysian private higher education institutions where financial stability and staff perceptions are closely connected. By positioning perceived financial sustainability as a mediating mechanism, this study extends existing literature that has often examined these variables separately rather than as part of a unified model.

The proposed framework contributes to theory by strengthening the application of the Resource-Based View in the context of higher education and by highlighting perceived financial sustainability as a strategic resource that may influence academicians' performance. It also contributes to practice by reminding higher education leaders that academicians' job performance is influenced not only by direct workplace conditions, but also by how they perceive the institution's financial stability and continuity. In this way, the conceptual model offers a useful foundation for future empirical research and for institutional policies aimed at improving job performance and wholistic organisational sustainability.

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