

Self-Satisfaction and Psychological Well Being of Academicians at Private Universities in Malaysia

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Abstract: This study was conducted to explore the effects of Psychological Well-Being on Academicians' Self-satisfaction. The purpose of this study was to analyse the levels of Psychological Wellbeing and Self-satisfaction among Academicians' in three different Private Universities in Malaysia. In this study the aspects of Well-Being were derived from Ryff six (6) Psychological Wellbeing dimensions (Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive relationships with others, Purpose in life and Self-acceptance). The research was carried out using quantitative methodology, where data were gathered using Ryff Psychological Well-Being questionnaires. The sample size was 200 and surveys were distributed randomly among three Private Universities in Malaysia, Monash University, Sunway University and Taylor's University. The findings of the study showed that Academicians' Self-satisfaction were influenced by only four factors (Self-acceptance, Environmental Mastery, Autonomy and Purpose in life). The results showed that Personal Growth and Positive Relationships with others have no effects to academicians' Self-satisfaction. Also, it was found that Academician's within the three Universities possess moderately high Personal Growth and Purpose in life. The results showed that Academicians possess moderately high Self-acceptance and Positive Relationships with others. However their levels of Autonomy and Environmental Mastery were above average. Additionally Sunway University Academicians' possessed moderately high Self-Satisfaction, while Monash and Taylors' Academicians are moderately Self-Satisfied.

Keywords: Psychological Well-Being, Academicians, and Self-Satisfaction.

1. INTRODUCTION

Psychological Wellbeing is related to people's mental health, where they behave in accordance to their emotional status. Research has found that those who are psychologically healthy tend to have better attitudes at work and can manage their time and handle stress more effectively (Winefield et al., 2002). Therefore, this study focuses on Psychological Wellbeing and the effects it brings on academicians' Self-Satisfaction, where it can impact their attitudes and behaviours in their personal life as well as their work life. The research was conducted through a quantitative analysis where 200 questionnaires were distributed randomly among academicians in three (3) different private universities in Malaysia; Taylor's University, Monash University and Sunway University. Ryff's Psychological Well-Being scale was the instrument used to measure Psychological Wellbeing. The survey consisted seven (7) variables Self-Satisfaction, Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive relations with others, Purpose in life and Self-acceptance. It contained 54 questions that all dealt with how might academicians' feel about themselves and their lives.

Psychological Wellbeing at work has become an interesting area to study (Daniels and Harris 2000; Desmarais and Savoie, 2011 and Bell, 2012). Gillespie et al. (2001) and van Emmerik (2002) research has indicated that work pressure and academicians' dissatisfaction have been increasing due high work demands and low control. These factors lead to academicians' frustration followed by lowered productivity and performance. According to Santhapparaj and Syed

(2005), dissatisfaction has been negatively affecting academicians' personal lives and job performance, it also has adverse effects on educational institutions, where dissatisfied academicians reported lower motivation and performance levels. A current study conducted in 2014 by Aziz et al on academicians' happiness has shown that academicians in Malaysia are moderately satisfied. The findings of the research have served as an important factor that helped to improve academicians' levels of satisfaction. The statistics results of the study has reported that 71.2 percent of academics are moderately satisfied, 23.7 percent are dissatisfied and only 5.1 are highly satisfied. Thus, majority of academics are in intermediate (medium) level of satisfaction and, almost quarter are dissatisfied which is significant percentage.

It was found that there is a lack of qualified academic staff in Malaysia coupled with high turnover rate (National Higher Education Research Institutions, 2004). Reports have confirmed that the turnover right was alarming specifically at Private Higher Education Institutes (PHEIs) in Malaysia. According to National Higher Education Research Institutions (2004) doctrine academicians resignation rate has reached to 12 percent. Plus, Hashim & Mahmood (2011) has indicated that academicians' dissatisfaction resulted into numerous unfavourable issues in the workplace, such as job stress, demotivation, absenteeism, turnover and many more work-related issues. In addition, Wong & Heng (2009) found that the source of academicians' dissatisfaction was derived from their personal growth, work achievements, social relationships, autonomy, recognition, tasks, administration, work environment and the nature of their job. Saad, Samah and Juhdi (2009) conducted a research in private universities in Malaysia and discovered that academicians are moderately satisfied with supervision, flexibility of working hours, relationships with colleagues, freedom and work atmosphere. Based on the backgrounds' findings the researcher focused further to explore Psychological Wellbeing pertaining to academicians' Self-satisfaction.

Workplace is the where we spend most of our time; it is plays a significant part in our lives. For this reasons it is vital to understand the composition of peoples' Psychological Well-Being, hence their feelings are reflected in their work quality, relationships with others and performance, it is also reflected on their attitudes and behaviour (Winefield et al., 2002). There is a need to discover the causes of Psychological Ill-being that made these individuals behave in such a manner, in order to understand the key factors that affected their Psychological Wellbeing.

According to Watson Wyatt, (2005), academicians' Well-Being at work has been one of the greatest concerns for managers in organization. Comprehending the determinants of Psychological Well-being is crucial to enhance Job satisfaction and performance among academicians (Watson Wyatt, 2005). Studying on the factors that influence academicians' feelings and emotions could also help in eliminating negative behaviours and make academics more positive towards work. Thus, the researcher aims to analyse whether academicians' who are working in universities are satisfied or dissatisfied. If they were satisfied than what could be the dominant factor that effects their satisfaction, conversely if they were dissatisfied than again which factor among Ryff (6) factors contributed to their dissatisfaction. Mainly, the research was conducted to analyse the factors that contribute to academicians' Psychological Wellbeing, and how to improve their satisfaction to reflect positive outcomes in their work.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Wellbeing:

When studying the background of wellbeing, pervious studies conducted by Diener (1984) discovered that happiness on its own was developed from two concepts Hedonism and Eudemonism. Hedonism is the idea that satisfaction is the first and most significant objective in life. In addition Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999) found that the Hedonic concept emphasises on maximising satisfaction, positivity, eliminating negativity and life gratification. As Fave et al (2011) indicated that the Hedonic view promotes good feelings along having pleasant experiences. Thus, it constitutes, comfort and joy. However, Eudemonism is the philosophy that the greatest ethical virtue is personal satisfaction, stated (Diener, 1984). Yet according to Fave et al. (2011) the eudemonic view connects satisfaction with people's capability to achieve challenging goals that are meaningful to them and the community, once these objectives are met is when they sense the pleasure of self-achievement.

Self-Satisfaction:

In this study, Self-Satisfaction is defined as the happiness that is derived from positive and good feelings about oneself

and life (Ryff, 1989). It is when people feel happy about every aspect of their lives where they are satisfied with how their lives have become. This satisfaction is obtained from their meaningful work and personal goals fulfilment (Ryff, 1989). According to Pasupuleti (2009) when people feel happy about themselves and believe they have gotten in life what they aimed tend to be happier than others, and this has positive impact on the way they choose to live, deal with people and even work. Pasupuleti (2009) has also suggested that those who are satisfied can better manage problems, personal-wise and work-wise. This is because they have control over their psychological emotions and thus can better focus on the issue rather than their negative emotions for example, feelings of stress and anxiety. In addition Donovan et al (2002) found that people who are satisfied, are more open and artistic which implies they are more imaginative and creative when it comes to their way of thinking, which can make them better manage their work life.

Autonomy:

The idea of academicians' liberty was initiated by the American Association of University professors (AAUP) demands. "Lecturers have the right to total freedom in their research and publication of their findings, subjected that they carry out their academic responsibilities and tasks on time" (Bérubé, 2006). It asserts that lecturers ought to have academic independency from governments, administrators, graduated students, parents and religious affiliations with respect to lecturing and research. In this regard it is legacy of awareness that aimed acknowledge people to free researchers the dictatorship of ecclesiastical authorities and regime (Bérubé, 2006). Professors should have the freedom to lecturer and debate without being forced to educate against their knowledge. Researchers must have the right to express, voice their ideas and thoughts about the educational institution and its operation and procedure. When conducting a study, academicians are entitled to be provided with accessible information, libraries, online educational database, and research tools and facilities (Fish, 2008).

In addition, Fish (2008) noted, when academicians are given autonomy at work, they tend to be more obliged to the community and operate towards achieving innovation. Only through autonomy they will be allowed to develop the boundaries of knowledge through continuous studies, examination and dissemination of their findings by educating and publishing. Nonetheless, if Malaysia desires to become a national player than it needs to enhance provision for professors' rights. As the World Bank (2007) reported, Malaysian educational institutions could only be improved by expanding autonomy of university lecturers and expecting total responsibility in exchange. Academicians in universities should be more empowered and given the authority to decide what they believe is right. They become more independent and create goals and vision without tight control form directors thus; they will be more in charge of all their actions.

Not only that, universities should be given the authority to make autonomous decisions about power delegation, mission and vision, appointing managers, hiring staffs, choosing students and establishing educational courses (Fish, 2008). Therefore, this will confirm that the university's environment and chain of command construction produces a mood that sustains academic values such as empowerment, freedom of choice, right for expression, autonomy and honesty. The World Bank (2007) finally inclined only if universities in Malaysia implement the empowerment strategy is when they will be developed and shifted to the global standards. When referring to academic freedom it does not equate to normal freedom generated by the legal constitution, this freedom is more specifically limited to task related and professional career (Slowey et al. (2013). Universal freedom is the liberty that all academicians should have within universities. For example tutors should not be fired just because they have different religious beliefs than management or a refused promotion just because the academicians' interest topic does not match the universities' plans or long-term objectives.

According to Slowey et al. (2013) not all lecturers voice out, some would have quality original research but their studies would not be considered or supported by management just because they cannot conquer the dominate group within the decision making rule or their topic is not the interest area of the management. This amounts to unfairness and results to demotivation and dissatisfaction among academics in universities (Slowey, 2013). At the same time, this implies that academic leaders have low autonomy; they function within an authority based on an organisational set structure (Slowey, 2013). Whereas professors lack independency and decision-making power, making their only freedom in classroom when they transfer knowledge to students.

Environment Mastery:

Environmental mastery is one of the factors that effect psychological wellbeing, where people believe that they are capable to manage their lives and have control over the environment (Ryff, 1989). Those academicians who can

effectively master the environment are able to organise their lives, where they behave in such a way that is consistent with their needs and values. Developing high environmental mastery makes academicians recognise and benefit from new opportunities as well as better control the environment (Ryff, 1989). The National survey stated that, reports were analysed in numerous researches that studied academicians' stress at universities across different nations around the globe (Kinman, 2001; Hogan, Carlson and Dua, 2002; Winefield et al., 2002). Many studies have stated that academic occupations are highly stressful, as research evidences have demonstrated that working environment in current universities are extremely hectic (Wilkinson and Joseph, 1996; Daniels and Guppy 1992; Taris et al. 2001; Abouserie, 1996; Blix et al. 1994).

The survey studied by Kinman (2001) found that academicians' workload became harder to manage, as well as ineffective communication among educational institutions and academics administrators are less considering their needs. Plus, Kinman (2001) has also reported that 40 percent of academicians' do not fully utilise and enjoy their annual leave, as some feel that their annual leave is their only chance to follow up on research demands in order to decrease their workloads and meet deadlines. According to Taylor, Repetti, and Seeman (1997), employees who encounter constant stress derived from the environment of their occupation are more likely to suffer physical and mental illness. It is assumed that the environment essentially contributes to chronic pressure or tension and it is much associated with negative health impacts since environmental circumstances are hard to predict or control (Haidt and Rodin, 1999). For instance, it was said that psychological distress and physical illness at work are associated with low control, specifically when it is attached with high workload coupled with plenty of commands (Frankenhaeuser, 1991). Thus, academicians that have difficulty mastering the environment may face potential problems at work, such as insufficient planning, failure to create long-term objectives, ability to respond to issues and other self-regulatory effects of handling an uncontrollable environment (Aspinwall and Taylor, 1997). In reference to Rodin (1986), theories that suppose people are able to control, predict and affect results or consequences are generally related with optimistic mental functioning.

Personal Growth:

Personal Growth and development comprises of activities that enhance self-awareness thus help to identify talent and personal potentials. It allows people to realize their aspirations and improve their quality of life (Åkerlind, 2005). Thompson et al. (2001) has also indicated that Personal Growth is the process of self-education where people reach their highest potential in terms of psychological, intellectual, emotional and behavioural aspects. According to Thompson et al. (2001), academics personal growth is dependent on the educational institutions and whether sufficient support is given to academicians to expand their learning horizon. Not all academicians get the opportunity to experience self-growth. Bureaucracies and lack of autonomy has major effects on academics Personal Growth, where it defeats major academic values. Academic professions value intellectual liberty and job autonomy (McInnis, 2000). Usually, people who decided to work in the academic line are those who are committed to long life learning, since their nature of job requires constant learning thus this indicates that they are continuously embracing themselves into the knowledge consciously and unconsciously (McInnis, 2000). Yet some of them get the opportunity to advance and grow and some don't.

Moreover, academics job comprises of teaching and research, although there are large differences between academicians' experiencing higher commitment in either teaching or research, or equal commitment to the two, it was found that most of the academicians are research-oriented (Thompson et al., 2001). However, in spite of the fact that majority academicians are committed into research, their research productivity is frequently low (Thompson et al., 2001). A very small percentage of academics generate publications and gain majority of the research funding, only highly committed academics are those who tend to have high research productivity, mainly they are those who work in high-status research universities (McInnis, 2000). Additionally, Adams (1998) stated that majority of academics believe that promotion is highly effected by their research results rather than their teaching quality. Therefore, they focus more on the quantity of their research rather than the quality. Research-oriented academics with numerous research achievements tend to be more satisfied than teaching-oriented academics (Adams, 1998). This can be explained using Maslow Hierarchy of needs theory (1954) where through research academics excel to personal growth by attaining their highest potential, figuring out their personal aspirations and achieving self-actualisation.

Positive relationships with others:

There have been various researches that examined the importance of social relationships in human Psychological

Wellbeing such as (Cohen, Gottlieb, and Underwood, 2000). Human beings need support from each other; social interaction and belongingness are critical to psychological and mental health. Social relationships and people's feelings of isolation have been recognised as health predictors (Cacioppo et al. 2002).

When relating relationships to work, academics dedicated most of their time in educational institutions' as they often build relationships with other colleagues at work. Likewise, studies have found that positive relationships among employees at work positively impact employees' behaviours, thus improve organisations' performance (Hamilton, 2007). Hamilton (2007) also reported that through positive relationship with others at work employee can get support, supervision, advice, criticism, suggestions and information on numerous issues related to work. For example employees help each other to complete their tasks, deal with work-related obstacles, resolve conflict among peers and supervisors and managing clients.

According to Berman et al. (2002) unrestricted voluntary positive relationships at work involves mutual values and interest, respect, loyalty and trust. Hamilton (2007) argued positive relationship at work with peers makes employees more comfortable when they deal with other co-workers, this decrease academicians' sensation of insecurity and ambiguity. Also, making friends at work makes academics effectively communicate with each other and share information, collaborate and learn from each other's mistakes. Fine (1986) indicated that workplace friendship diminishes work stress where by academicians' support each other in terms of workload and mental stress. When employees face difficulties in performing a task or are stuck in a stage where they need assistance to further proceed to the step, peers are always the relief (Dotan, 2007). Psychologically, positive relationships at work allow academicians to express their feelings and voice their concerns that will ultimately reduce distress and help them release their stress (Dotan, 2007). Additionally, Jehn and Shah (1997) research has proven that positive relationships at work boost academicians' courage, confidence, trust, in which they keep each other motivated to achieve tasks by enforcing positive behaviours.

Based on experimental studies on management and psychology conducted by Riordan and Griffeth (1995) and Ross (1997), it was found that belongingness at work have positive effects on the employees job attitude, whereby it influences, their behaviours, intentions, motivation levels, productivity, presentism and absenteeism. Also Morrison (2004), Sias and Cahill (1998) surveys have reported that employees who experience positive relationship with co-workers are less likely to quit compare to those employees who do not, as they will cherish the belongingness and the commitment they have towards work in which they will prefer to work with people they know, trust and understand.

Purpose in life:

Purpose in life seems to be significant in forecasting future health and death-rate (Boyle et al., 2010) Research has found that individuals with high purpose in life are able to better carryout their routine daily activities and are more successful in the future (Boyle, Buchman and Bennett, 2010). In Boyle's et al (2010) study those participants who scored higher purpose in life display a better apprehension of self-development, they basically have higher cognitive abilities that include strong memory and excellent thinking skills, along slow ageing cognitive decline in the future. In reference to Schaefer et al. study (2013), they suggested that the capability of finding meaning in one's life experiences amount to purposefulness in life that later predicts one-self's health and endurance. People face challenges in their lives, it is a cycle of ups and downs, yet those who have strong purpose in the life are the ones who can speedily recover from problems and confront difficulties. Having purpose in life among academicians whose jobs' are naturally stressful may motivate them and allow them to rethink distressing situations to cope with issues more effectively and efficiently, therefore aiding in recovery from pressure and tension. As a result, improving the capability of quickly recovering from undesirable situations may permit academicians to accomplish or sustain a sensation of higher purpose in life over a period of time. Schaefer's et al. (2013) findings reported that purpose in life might act as prevention from negative undesirable occasions and allow resilience by improved unconscious emotional control after experiencing negative feelings such as irritation and frustration.

Self-acceptance:

Self-acceptance has significant effects on mental wellbeing. People who are completely unable to accept themselves usually face numerous emotional illnesses, such as anger, depression and antagonism. Similarly people who are constantly

occupied and tangled to self-evaluation instead of self-acceptance might become demanding and might also dedicate plenty of time and effort to promote self-importance in order to recompense and balance their perceived personal shortages. Langer (1989) has indicated that self-evaluation can be minimised and substituted by acceptance through adopting into the mode of mindfulness instead of mindlessness. Mindfulness is a supplemental state that is created from illustrating new original distinctions about the event and the atmosphere (Langer, 1989). It is basically the quality of becoming aware of something; it is when someone is actively involved in the present and can sense the environment settings along others' perspectives, thoughts and feelings. Mindfulness is achieved by continuously concentrating on new things in oneself surrounding (Langer, 1989).

Authenticity is extremely important; one vital concept of self-acceptance is the capability and readiness to allow others see one's real self. When academicians live mindfully they will pay less attention to what others negatively think of them. They will not be careless of their surrounding judgments (Carson et al. 2006). People who are mindful have high levels of authenticity and will be more engaged with the context and occupied focusing on new things, instead of paying attention and wasting time and effort to change themselves to gain approval from people around them (Carson et al., 2006). Social comparison is not always positive. They tend to be distressing especially when comparing one's self to someone much higher in terms of attractiveness, education, wealth and fame. A study conducted by White, et al (in press) reported that those who compare themselves to others even in positive terms tend to have lower self-confidence and satisfaction in life. In reference to the survey of Lockwood and Kunda (1997) who discovered that when people compare themselves with those who have high achievements that is attainable than it acts as a motivator, yet those people who tend to compare their achievements to others that they cannot attain, results to diverse effects.

In universities, academicians must have confidence in themselves, they must believe in the decisions they make. Lecturers must understand that they are the ones who can control their lives, asking people for an advice is not does not determine their choice on life, they have to understand that their final decision is their own not the adviser's (Carson et al., 2006). When applying this into the workforce, if academicians feel that they have the ability to control their lives, their sense of responsibility will be improved. Whereby they will attentively reflect on their past-experiences and the mistakes they have made, and will start thinking what could have they done to avoid these mistakes from happening (Carson et al., 2006). This will make academicians better recognise potentials for future improvements. Self-acceptance will allow academicians' view matters from many perspectives; these perspectives can change in relation to the current environment

3. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using quantitative research methodologies. Data were collected through questionnaires. The instrument used in the research was Ryff Scale of Psychological Wellbeing. The first section of the questionnaire was about respondents' profile, in which data regarding gender, age, marital status, qualification, academic position and university location were collected. The second sections of the survey contained 54 questions that all helped measure Psychological Wellbeing and Self-Satisfaction. The data were collected from the answers that respondents selected in each question. Then, they were keyed in SPSS IBM software to conduct statistical tests and extract information. University academics were the targeted respondents. Questionnaires were printed in hard copy and spread in academicians' staff office areas, lecture halls and classrooms among three private universities in Malaysia, Monash University, Sunway University and Taylors University. The sample size was 200 and surveys were distributed randomly among academicians from all majors and faculties. Only 146 questionnaires were used in the research since 24 questionnaires were rejected, 22 were withdrawn due to their contradicting results and many missing values and 8 were not successfully collected back.

4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this research was to identify the effects Psychological Wellbeing factors on academicians' Self-Satisfaction at private Universities in Malaysia. The research has also analysed academicians' levels of Self-Satisfaction and Psychological Wellbeing within three private universities in Malaysia, Monash University, Sunway University and Taylors' University.

5. FINDINGS

The findings of this study illustrate the existence of a significant relationship between Self-acceptance, Environmental Mastery, Autonomy and Purpose in Life and academicians' self-satisfaction. However, it was found that Personal Growth and Positive relationships with others are insignificant in this study and do not predict academicians' self-satisfaction. The results have shown that Self-acceptance had the highest explanatory power among all Psychological wellbeing variables, in which it had the greatest effect on academicians' self-satisfaction.

The overall results of comparing means analysis among the three universities were similar, in which there were no large disparities in responses. The findings showed that Monash, Sunway and Taylors' Universities academicians' possess high Personal Growth and Purpose in life. However, it was found that their Autonomy and Environmental Mastery was above average, which is relatively low. Also, results demonstrated that their Self-acceptance and Positive relationships with others were moderately high. Finally, Self-Satisfaction findings have reported that Sunway University academicians are 74 percent satisfied with themselves, which was moderately high. Subsequently, Monash and Taylors' academicians were moderately satisfied 70 percent and 60 percent respectively. Therefore, based on this conclusion the research question was answered. It noticed from the results, there were no large disparities among the data although they were collected from three different universities. The scores were similar and the differences were very small. Yet, interestingly it was found that Autonomy and

Environmental Mastery scores were within the range of 6.0 to 6.5 out of 10, which amounts to "average". The average score of autonomy indicates that academics in the three private universities are slightly pressured by social norms and in which they are worried of how would people around them perceive them, therefore most of their decisions are influenced by others ideas and beliefs (Ryff, 1989). As well, the average score of Environmental mastery also illustrates that academics are slightly challenged by life's daily demands, this shows that they not very good at capturing opportunities and have difficulty in changing or improving their environment (Ryff, 1989). The results have shown that Personal Growth and Purpose in life were within the range of 7.6 to 8.0, which is moderately high.

According to Ryf (1989) a moderately high score implies that academicians believe that they are relatively developing over time, in which they feel that they are expanding their knowledge and learning new things. Similarly, a moderately high score on Purpose in life suggests that academicians sense meaning in their lives, it means they have a direction and objective in life and they work towards achieving the plans set they set for themselves (Ryff, 1989). Additionally, the score of Positive relationships with others was within 6.8 to 7.2, which is also considered as moderate. This score indicates that academics have moderate relationships with others, not strong neither weak in between the two. This means that they are able to engage with others and build connections yet they may slightly be unwilling to comprise to sustain strong relationships with others (Ryff, 1989).

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it is recommended that academic institutions should help academics improve their Autonomy, where management should encourage empowerment and flexibility. Academics should be given more freedom and get the support to voice out their opinions, ideas and thoughts. This is when educational institutions will highly benefit from the diversity of expertise and ideas it possess in the university. Thus, this will allow universities to delivery better research and education to the society (Barak, 2011). In addition higher Autonomy will help boost academicians' Personal Growth and allow them to reach their maximum potential and realise their aspiration this increasing their overall Satisfaction (Åkerlind, 2005). Moreover, academics' Environmental Mastery should be further improved, as this will help academics better manage their responsibilities and be able to take control of daily life demands. If academics well-mastered their environment they will be able to better handle stress, pressure and workloads and thus perform better according to (Kinman, 2001). Due to time constrains and limited resources, the researcher was not able to proceed further; therefore, it is suggested to further explore the effects of Personal Growth and Positive relationships with others on Self-Satisfaction. Future research should also explore the importance of Environmental Mastery and Autonomy in academic professions.

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