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International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management
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Noorliza Karia, Muhammad Hasmi Abu Hassan Asaari,

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Leadership attributes and their impact on work-related attitudes

Noorliza Karia and Muhammad Hasmi Abu Hassan Asaari
Universiti Sains Malaysia, Minden, Malaysia

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to understand the emergence of employee leadership attributes and, further, examine its impact on employee work-related attitudes in terms of the competitive context of higher education institutions.
Design/methodology/approach – A data from a survey of 245 academic employees in Malaysian public universities were tested and analyzed on the 12 proposed hypotheses.
Findings – The results reveal that the emergence of employee leadership attributes, independently, has a significantly positive effect on work-related attitudes. Specifically, executive leadership has a significantly positive effect on organizational commitment, career satisfaction and job satisfaction, while innovative leadership has a significantly positive effect on organizational commitment and career satisfaction. In contrast, adaptive and effective leadership is associated when explaining organizational commitment, career satisfaction and job satisfaction, while innovative leadership is associated when explaining job satisfaction.
Practical implications – Academic scholars/leaders in higher education should realize that the emergence of employee leadership attributes has a positive effect on work-related attitudes, such as organizational commitment, career satisfaction and job satisfaction.
Originality/value – The paper extends the knowledge regarding complexity leadership theory which explains the emergence of employee leadership attributes naturally and, further, provides empirical evidence.
Keywords Performance management, Employee productivity, Higher education institution, Career satisfaction, Organizational commitment, Job satisfaction, Employee attitudes, Leadership theory, Work-related attitudes, Employee leadership attributes, Complexity leadership theory, Work-related attitudes
Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The intrinsic value of leadership leads to human civilization that differentiates the success and the failure of organizations or nation. It should be regarded as the most important aspect in the twenty-first century. Values-based leadership is acknowledged to be the most prominent indicators to increase job performance and accomplish strong organizational performance (Yates, 2014; Abbas *et al.*, 2016; Al-Malki and Juan, 2018). Such attributes embedded in employee leaderships are significant for organizations' competitive advantage and productivity, especially in higher education institutions' (HEIs) that nurture human capital.

Creative research and educational excellence are crucial for HEI performance and competitive advantages (Cheung and Chan, 2010; Asaari, Dwiedi, Lawton and Karia, 2013; Haan, 2015). Universities have to compete for research grants and academic employees should not only produce excellent research and publications but also include high impact evidence. In the era of industry 4.0 and dynamic environments, the future competitive advantage of the HEI counts on the leadership attributes embedded in its academic employees (Mendes *et al.*, 2016). Given such degree of workload and stress that the human capital has faced; it is significant for the HEIs to preserve its human value and intelligence for sustainable competitive force in such environments.

The university excellence ranking system is causing academic employees' increased work-related stress. Several scholars have, indeed, concluded that, currently, this is the case (Villeneuve-Smith *et al.*, 2008). This has produced a substantial impact on academic employees' work-related attitudes. HEIs, hence, need to capitalize upon their high-performing employees effectively and protect them from increasing levels of stress in order to preserve

staff well-being, organizational performance and competitiveness, and the intellectual health of a nation. Additionally, academic employees should be nurtured, knowledgeable and competent enough to deal with pressure when faced with challenges and environmental change. Respectively, HEIs should understand how to balance their employees' work-related attitudes and stress in order to realize a high-performing academic employee.

Prior research suggests that practices, commitments and spiritual beliefs have a positive impact on psychological and physical health/well-being, positive interpersonal performance and better/improved quality of life and work (Seybold and Hill, 2001; Karia and Asaari, 2006; Yates, 2014). Although employee leaderships play a critical role in the current HEI environment, the evolution of leadership attributes toward work-related attitudes has yet to be explored and well-defined. Consequently, research concerning leadership attributes and employee work-related attitudes contain limited observations and is immature. Accordingly, this paper explores and attempts to comprehend the evolution of leadership attributes and such a role in fostering work-related attitudes.

Three main gaps have been identified in the research field of leadership and work-related attitudes. First, traditional research focuses on leadership as factors for influencing others or the social influence of superiors toward subordinates (Kochan et al., 1975; Jenkins and Jensen, 2010) that lead to improved organizational performance (Jogulu and Wood, 2008) but ignores employees' work life. This contemporary study acknowledges the urgency of knowledge for a new leadership model in the era of rapidly expanding technology and dynamic environments that will boost employees' work-related attitudes. Second, since most leadership research concentrates on the organizational context (Andert et al., 2011), little is known and there is almost non-existent research about knowledge of leadership complexity and attributes embedded in employees that are inimitable and non-substitutable for predicting employee work-related attitudes, and academic employees in HEIs in particular. Accordingly, there is a need for the study to advance the understanding of leadership attributes that anticipate employees' work-related attitudes, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment and career satisfaction. The third gap is the absence of theory-driven empirical evidence to explain what leadership attributes are and how employees' work-related attitudes are transformed through these attributes (Lee and Feng, 2008).

Apparently, the absence of knowledge on leadership complexity and attributes embedded in employees and its effects on work-related attitudes permits an opportunity for the study to acknowledge the novel findings of a new leadership model. By conquering the employees' view, this study pursues to research the emergence of leadership attributes and, further, examines the extent to which these attributes induce work-related attitudes among academic employees in HEIs. This novel contribution, apparently, clarifies how HEIs and leaders (organizations and managers) can progress work-related attitudes and achieve high-performing employees through leadership attributes in the era of industry 4.0, rapid technological advancement and a dynamic environment; and why organizations need to be aware of their employees' attitudes toward their work life.

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents the theoretical framework and hypotheses. Section 3 outlines the methodology applied in this study. Section 4 presents the results of the study. The research findings and implications are discussed in Section 5. Finally, the paper concludes by discussing contributions, limitations and suggestions for future research in this field.

2. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

A future organization counts on human intrinsic values, the intelligence and innovation of knowledge resources, where rivalry and internationalization awaken uncertainty and vulnerability (Audenaert et al., 2016). According to dynamic knowledge theory, the evolution of a human intelligence built-in organization becomes the most crucial booster of

competitive advantage (Barney and Clark, 2007). The resource-based theory endorses that knowledge resources can become apparent in leadership from the learning and innovation process, people recruitment and development or better employee retention (Karia and Wong, 2013) and practices (Karia and Asaari, 2006) that are not easy to be imitated, hence enabling a sustained competitive advantage over the long-term (Barney, 1991).

Accordingly, in the era of industry 4.0 and technological advancement, leadership attributes are becoming increasingly more dynamic, complex and multidimensional; they have the great potential to generate economic value and competitive force for HEIs. Leadership attributes are lasting and non-transferable, hence, they favor organizations' long-term success and sustainable competitive advantage. However, the leadership literature suffers concerning understanding the emergence of leadership attributes and its roles and values on work-related attitudes. The data highlight that traditional research favors analysis of leadership as factors for influencing others (Kochan *et al.*, 1975; Jenkins and Jensen, 2010; Yates, 2014; Abbas *et al.*, 2016) and its impact on organizational performance (Jogulu and Wood, 2008; Andert *et al.*, 2011). The review of literature highlights leadership influence on work-related attitudes remains unexplained.

Appropriately, it is mandatory for the study to conceptualize leadership under such environments in order to be pro-active and dynamic. In this contemporary study, leadership is operationalized as a multidimensional construct encompassing innovative, effective, adaptive and executive leadership (Asaari, 2012) that anticipates the determination of three key work-related attitudes (Karia, 1999) in terms of organizational commitment, job satisfaction and career satisfaction. This approach helps to clarify the distinct effects of leadership attributes on work-related attitudes. Hence, multidimensional constructs for both leadership and work-related attitudes are urgently required.

2.1 Complexity leadership theory

Complexity leadership theory regards leadership attributes as the appearance of leadership behaviors which lead to higher efficiency (Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2013) and better performance (Carte *et al.*, 2006). The theory postulates that leadership behavior is emerging from the learning and innovation process which enables effective and future adaption that is informal, evolved, complex and dynamic (Mendes *et al.*, 2016). According to Uhl-Bien *et al.* (2007), leadership attribute is achieved from adaptive, creative and learning actions that commence from interaction within a complex adaptive system that build-in human intelligence and evolve human capital in HEIs.

Meanwhile, leadership theory regards leadership in an organization that has a positive effect on employee performance (Holt and Seki, 2012; Sharkey *et al.*, 2012). Conversely, some scholars have discovered that leadership has no direct effect on employee performance (Hermawati and Mas, 2017; Hayward, 2005). Literally, most leadership theory describes a process of one specific person or group having an influence on others (Avolio *et al.*, 2004; Abbas *et al.*, 2016). The literature review shows that the immature relationship between leadership and work-related attitudes are far from conclusive findings or steady in the theory. Therefore, it is imperative for the study to advance knowledge on the emergence of leadership attributes that contributes to employee work-related attitudes.

2.2 Leadership attributes

In general, leadership attributes of academic employees/leaders have been identified and mentioned in the literature, e.g., credibility, inspirational personality, knowledge, skills, abilities and experience to lead others, eagerness to learn new things and adapt to changes, awareness of environment, selflessness, flexibility, openness in sharing information and accepting the input of people while making decisions when required, being supportive, fair in giving credit concerning their achievements, accepting, valuing and recognizing the

efforts of subordinates, providing developmental opportunities to subordinates, and giving them professional autonomy, responsibility, being serious, honest, trustworthy and concerned for other people (Bass, 1985; Avolio *et al.*, 1999; Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Reave, 2005; Yang and Wei, 2017).

Exceptionally, some scholars highlight academic leadership attributes, such as vision, adaptability to change, competencies, effective leadership, transactional leadership, transformational style and charisma (Koen and Bitzer, 2010; Asaari, Dwiedi, Lawton and Karia, 2013). Prior research also considers adaptive leadership (Randall and Coakley, 2007), charisma (Javidan and Waldman, 2003) and leadership style (Yiing and Ahmad, 2009; Anitha, 2014; Pawirosumarto *et al.*, 2017) as leadership attributes.

As stated by Asaari (2012), academic employees possess four dimensions of academic leadership: executive, innovative, adaptive and effective. Such academic leadership credibility and competences are claimed enable creative research and educational excellence as well as employee performance. In a similar vein, complexity leadership theory describes that leadership attributes emerge from various characteristics such as being innovative, adaptive, creative, emergent, complex and dynamic when the system contains uncertainty and is changeable (Mendes *et al.*, 2016). These leadership attributes contribute to work-related attitudes (Kidwell and Valentine, 2008; Bhal *et al.*, 2009; Butler, 2009; Eddleston, 2009; Asaari, Dwiedi and Lawton, 2013) and, subsequently, enhance the competitive advantage and performance of HEIs.

In this contemporary study, the emergence of leadership is operationalized as a multidimensional construct encompassing innovative, effective, adaptive and executive leadership (Asaari, 2012; Asaari, Dwiedi, Lawton and Karia, 2013).

2.2.1 Innovative. Innovation is the most important leadership attribute of academic employees as it shows the leader is thinking about the future, is optimistic and seeks for betterment (Asaari, 2012). It can include the action or process of innovation that covers new ideas or creativity and behaviors directed toward implementing these new ideas within the work setting (Rank *et al.*, 2004). Innovative leadership is regarded as being present in leaders who carry out innovative activities with the intention of benefiting from them when responding to uncertainty and demand within the context (West, 2002). Academic employees with innovative affect are ahead of other members in thinking and acting creatively in research, publications, teaching and other related activity that tends to include positive work-related attitudes. Yanez (2004) found that innovation has an influence on the performance of a group at a Mexican university. Audenaert *et al.* (2016) indicate that individual innovation is related to employee performance management in public organizations.

2.2.2 Adaptive. The adaptive leadership is regarded as being present in leaders who are able to adapt to changes and challenges, tolerate postponement and uncertainty, see positive outcomes and accept defeat and delay (Asaari, 2012). Adaptive leadership is required to manage any changes and challenges in HEI (Randall and Coakley, 2007).

2.2.3 Effective. The effective leadership is regarded to include leaders who can encourage members' ideas and judgment to work with complete freedom, minimal supervision, and have the power to put plans, actions, or laws into effect (Asaari, 2012). Effective leadership reflects a good leader who empowers the desired and expected results as determined by HEI objectives and encourages a positive culture (Nicholson *et al.*, 2007).

2.2.4 Executive. The executive leadership is regarded to include leaders who work independently based upon their expertise in teaching, supervision, research consultancy and service; they delegate and share information to members, and notify what is expected from them. Executive leadership emphasizes the interaction between leader and followers which requires full participation in the HEI such as visionary, thinking, decision-making and administration (Nicholson *et al.*, 2007; Asaari, 2012).

2.3 Work-related attitudes

In general, work-related attitudes are a determinant of employee job performance which reflects the constructive or affective reaction of individuals to jobs; or, the employee attitude which reflects job satisfaction and the individual's commitment to the organization (Landy *et al.*, 1993; Al-Malki and Juan, 2018). These are regarded as positive effects such as happiness or encouragement, and are triggered by the employee's current or most recent job, in other words, the positive attitude of the employee with his workplace or the positive emotional connection of an employee toward work (Anitha, 2014). Most studies use affective components such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction and intention. According to Guimaraes (1996), work-related attitudes reflect task characteristics such as job involvement, job satisfaction, career satisfaction and organizational commitment. Notably, the study of work-related attitudes has been associated with high levels of job satisfaction, job involvement, career satisfaction and organizational commitment (Karia, 1999; Karia and Asaari, 2006).

These work-related attitudes can be achieved by leadership attributes (Kidwell and Valentine, 2008; Bhal *et al.*, 2009; Butler, 2009; Eddleston, 2009). For example, past scholars indicate the leadership effects on work outcomes or employee performances such as employee commitment (Tjosvold, 2008; Eddy *et al.*, 2008; Lee and Ahmad, 2009), job satisfaction (Lee and Ahmad, 2009; Duffield *et al.*, 2009), turnover intention (Walsh and Taylor, 2007; Ansari *et al.*, 2007), performance (Porr and Fields, 2006; Kivipold and Vadi, 2010) and attitudes (Rahman and Norling, 1991; Martin and Bush, 2003).

2.4 Impact of leadership attributes

Scholars acknowledge that leadership style has a significantly positive effect on employee performance (Anitha, 2014; Pawirosumarto *et al.*, 2017). Anitha (2014) has found that leadership is the factor that impacts employee engagement and, hence, enhances employee performance significantly. In particular, leadership styles have a positive, significant relationship with organizational commitment (Yiing and Ahmad, 2009). Leadership can have a direct and indirect impact on job satisfaction (Neubert *et al.*, 2009). Other scholars indicate that leadership can determine job satisfaction (Eddy *et al.*, 2008; Erkutlu, 2008; Neubert *et al.*, 2009), career satisfaction (Burke *et al.*, 2008; Eddleston, 2009) and organizational commitment (Eddy *et al.*, 2008; Erkutlu, 2008; Neubert *et al.*, 2009).

2.4.1 Organizational commitment. The term organizational commitment is conceptualized based on Karia (1999), measuring the degree of attachment and loyalty by employees to the organization. According to Karia and Asaari (2006) employees who are highly committed to their organizations contribute more effectively to company growth and success. Hence, the emergent leadership attributes fixed in academic employees increase their commitment to enhance excellence in research, publication, teaching and service. Such leadership attributes are possible to be positively associated with organizational commitment. Committed employees tend to be motivated to perform well, contribute more effectively to their performance and success and remain in the organization. Leadership styles commonly have a positively significant impact on organizational commitment (Yiing and Ahmad, 2009). The arguments suggest leadership attributes should positively affect organizational commitment. Therefore, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H1. There is a positive relationship between leadership attribute and organizational commitment.

H1a. There is a positive relationship between adaptive leadership and organizational commitment.

H1b. There is a positive relationship between executive leadership and organizational commitment.

H1c. There is a positive relationship between effective leadership and organizational commitment.

H1d. There is a positive relationship between innovative leadership and organizational commitment.

2.4.2 Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction commonly reflects a positive, affective reaction of employees to their job. (Rahiman and Kodikal, 2017). According to Alas and Edwards (2006), job satisfaction is regarded as affective; a pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's work. Job satisfaction has been associated with employee behavior, motivation and increased employee productivity and is measured to the extent in which employees feel positive or negative toward their job (Bhuian and Islam (1996)). Hence, leadership attributes embedded in academic employees are expected to empower high levels of job satisfaction by enhancing the quantity and quality of research, publications, teaching and service. The academic employees' job satisfaction relies on the important factors that are conducive, such as mentally challenging work, equitable rewards, supportive working conditions and helpful colleagues. Other studies indicate that ethical leadership has a direct and indirect influence on job satisfaction (Neubert *et al.*, 2009; Yates, 2014). The arguments suggest leadership attributes should positively affect job satisfaction. Therefore, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H2. There is a positive relationship between leadership attribute and job satisfaction.

H2a. There is a positive relationship between adaptive leadership and job satisfaction.

H2b. There is a positive relationship between executive leadership and job satisfaction

H2c. There is a positive relationship between effective leadership and job satisfaction.

H2d. There is a positive relationship between innovative leadership and job satisfaction.

2.4.3 Career satisfaction. Career satisfaction reflects a positive affective reaction of employees to their career. It measures an employee's achievements in their career by capitalizing upon their skills and abilities to improve the quality of work and enhance their promotions (Karia, 1999). There are no studies concerned with leadership attributes and impact on career satisfaction. In different studies, Tu *et al.* (2006) indicate that, among Chinese managers, leadership in a middle management position is associated with greater career satisfaction.

These satisfied leaders have no intention of leaving because they are satisfied with their careers (Eddleston, 2009). Satisfied employees are able to provide high levels of service to organizations and enhance the organization's key performance index. Hence, leadership attributes embedded in academic employees empower high levels of career satisfaction by contributing quality levels of research, publications, teaching and service to HEIs which, in turn, enable them to achieve their career goals and remain with the organization. The arguments suggest leadership attributes should positively affect career satisfaction. Therefore, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H3. There is a positive relationship between leadership attribute and career satisfaction.

H3a. There is a positive relationship between adaptive leadership and career satisfaction.

H3b. There is a positive relationship between executive leadership and career satisfaction.

H3c. There is a positive relationship between effective leadership and career satisfaction.

H3d. There is a positive relationship between innovative leadership and career satisfaction.

In brief, the research model developed provides the theoretical framework for examining the relationship between leadership attributes and work-related attitudes (Figure 1). Based on the theoretical framework, 3 main hypotheses and 12 minor hypotheses are proposed.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and data collection
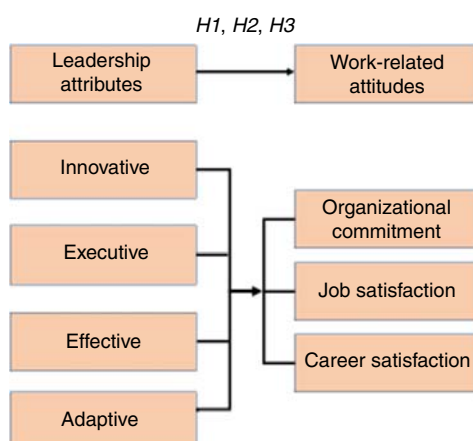
A random sample of 1,000 academic employees in Malaysian public universities was drawn from the universities' web sites. An online survey (www.surveymonkey.com) was used for distributing questionnaires to academic employees via e-mail, of which 245 responded, hence giving a response rate of 24.5 percent. Follow-up calls were carried out to foster completion and return of the questionnaires. Regression analysis using SPSS version 22.0 was used to analyze the data of the study.

3.2 Respondent profile

A profile of the participants represents academic employees in Malaysian public universities. The descriptive statistics show an almost equal number of male (45.3 percent) and female (54.7 percent) participants in the sample. The majority of academic employees are Malay (87 percent) followed by Chinese (4.5 percent) and Indian (4 percent). Most are lecturers (37.5 percent) followed by senior lecturers (34.7 percent), assistant professors (3.3 percent), associate professors (12.2 percent) and professors (9.8 percent). About half are PhDs (53 percent) and Masters' (44.9 percent) holders representing an academic discipline in the field of pure science (8.4 percent), applied science (45.8 percent), pure arts (3.8 percent) and applied arts (38.3 percent). Some of the academic employees are program chairs (29.5 percent), deans (8.2 percent), deputy deans (5.7 percent), directors (4.9 percent) and deputy directors (4.1 percent). About more than half of academic employees have served less than nine years (65 percent), between 9 and 16 years (23 percent) and above 16 years (12 percent) whereby they have indicated high organizational commitment (mean = 3.77, SD = 0.64) followed by job satisfaction (3.69, SD = 0.65) and career satisfaction (mean = 3.64, SD = 0.84).

3.3 Measures

Table I presents the measures used in the study. The leadership attributes are measured using Asaari (2012) including innovative, effective, executive and adaptive leadership. A five-point

Figure 1.
Research model of new leadership

Construct	Item	Cronbach's α
Leadership attribute		

1. Innovative
18 items
	I am able to...
	  assign certain tasks to member
	  inspire member through conversing
	  handle complex problems
	  encourage member
	  speak with a strong inner confidence
	  inspire members on projects
	  convince my arguments
	  speak as a representative of members
	  manage many demands
	  represent members at outside meetings
	  influence my views
	  speak for members when visitors are present
	  create and design new things
	  act as the spokesman of members
	  be a convincing speaker
	  be a very persuasive speaker
	  schedule work to be done
	  be skillful in an argument
		0.910

2. Effective
10 items
	I allow member to…
	  contribute ideas
	  exercise good judgement
	  have a high degree of initiative
	  use their own judgement in solving problems
	  work what they think best
	  handle assigned tasks
	  do the job with minimal supervision
	  have a complete freedom in their work
	  have any freedom of action
	  set their own pace
		0.800

3. Executive
10 items
	I am able to…
	  share my ideas
	  let members know what are expected from them
	  ask members to follow rules and regulations
	  encourage members to use of work procedures
	  make my attitudes clear to members
	  make sure my part among members is understood
	  schedule my work
	  organize my works
	  maintain standards of performance on members
	  allow others know about members' activities
		0.810

4. Adaptive
8 items
	I am able to…
	  be positive about the outcome of any new procedure
	  accept defeat in a calm way
	  remain calm in facing uncertain situations
	  wait patiently for the results of a decision
	  be patient to wait for an outcome
	  delay action till the proper time
	  tolerate postponement and uncertainty
	  accept delays without being upset
		0.760

Table I.
Construct reliability
analysis

Construct	Item	Cronbach's α
Work-related attitude		
5. Organizational commitment	I…	0.920
10 items	am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization	
	feel very loyal to this organization	
	am extremely glad that I choose this organization to work for	
	talk to my friends that this organization as great organization to work for	
	feel this organization really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance	
	really care about the fate of this organization	
	feel this is the best of all possible organization for which to work	
	feel my values and the organizational values are very similar	
	would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this organization	
	am willing to put in a greatest deal of efforts beyond that normally expected in order to help this organization be successful	
6. Job satisfaction	I am satisfied with…	0.860
5 items	the amount of pay received	
	the chances for achievement of this job	
	the working conditions	
	the amount of work I do	
	the feeling of accomplishment I get from the job	
7. Career satisfaction	I am satisfied with…	0.820
5 items	the progress I have made toward achieving my overall career goals	
	the opportunity to develop my skills	
	the utilization of my skills	
	the success I have achieved in my career	
	my quite high quality of work	

Table I.

Likert scale ranging from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree was used for leadership attributes. The work-related attitudes, measured using Karia (1999), comprise organizational commitment, job satisfaction and career satisfaction by using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree. The reliability analysis is summarized in Table I, The Cronbach's α's for all variables (independent and dependent) are above 0.7 indicating measures for leadership attributes and work-related attitudes are reliable (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Pallant (2007) points the Cronbach's α that has a value 0.77 is considered acceptable, a value of 0.80 is preferable and a value of 0.89 is a very good internal consistency.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive statistics and correlation results

The Pearson correlation results between each of the leadership attributes and work-related attitudes show positive, significant correlations, suggesting that adaptive, executive, effective and innovative attributes of leadership are positively associated with their work-related attitudes, namely, organizational commitment, job satisfaction and career satisfaction (Table II). The results, hence, support *H1–H3*. Further investigation is required to justify the proposed relationship.

4.2 Regression

Multiple regression analysis was performed to gain further insight into the effects of leadership attributes on work-related attitudes (Table III). The F statistics ($F = 16.44$) is significant at $p = 0.000$. With respect to organizational commitment, the coefficient of

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	Cronbach's α	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Innovative	0.91	3.691	0.487	1	0.473**	0.633**	0.425**	0.446**	0.334**	0.190**
Effective	0.80	4.100	0.351			0.588**	0.501**	0.338**	0.242**	0.211**
Executive	0.81	4.111	0.362				0.414**	0.414**	0.420**	0.322**
Adaptive	0.76	3.618	0.481					0.256**	0.195**	0.220**
Organizational commitment	0.92	3.767	0.636						0.488**	0.528**
Career satisfaction	0.86	3.641	0.837							0.549**
Job satisfaction	0.82	3.688	0.652							1

Note: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

Table II.
Pearson correlation results

Leadership	Work-related attitude					
	Organizational commitment		Career satisfaction		Job satisfaction	
	Std β	Sig.	Std β	Sig.	Std β	Sig.
Innovative	0.216**	0.007	0.060	0.0463*	−0.076	0.369
Effective	0.115	0.125	−0.006	0.937	0.020	0.798
Executive	0.192*	0.023	0.338***	0.000	0.276**	0.002
Adaptive	0.053	0.439	0.077	0.277	0.138	0.061
R^2	0.225		0.173		0.105	
Adjusted R^2	0.212		0.158		0.089	
SE	0.591		0.724		0.653	
F Statistics	16.441		11.99		6.717	
Sig. F	0.000		0.000		0.000	

Notes: *,**,***significant at 0.05, 0.01 and 0.001, respectively

Table III.
The regression analysis results

determination, R^2, is 22.5 percent, indicating that the emergent leadership attributes of academic employees' have explained most of the variance in organizational commitment. However, only innovative and executive leadership have a positively significant effect on organizational commitment. H1b and H1d are, thus, verified. These imply that the greater the extent of these two attributes, the greater the organizational commitment. The most essential aspect of leadership in explaining variance in organizational commitment is innovative leadership, with the highest beta (0.216), significant at the $p = 0.01$. It is confirmed that increasing innovative leadership will enhance greater academic employees' organizational commitment. Adaptive and effective leadership are not significant but they are associated with explain organizational commitment.

With respect to career satisfaction, the F statistics ($F = 11.99$) is significant at $p = 0.000$. The coefficient of determination, R^2, is 17.3 percent, indicating the emergent leadership attributes of academic employees' have explained most of the variance in career satisfaction. However, only innovative and executive leadership have a positive significant effect on career satisfaction. H3b and H3d are, thus, verified. These imply that the greater the extent of these two attributes, the greater the career satisfaction. The most essential attributes in explaining variance in career satisfaction was executive leadership, with the highest beta (0.338), significant at the $p = 0.01$. Thus innovation and executive leadership will enhance academic employees' career satisfaction. Adaptive and effective leadership are not significant but they are associated when explaining career satisfaction.

With respect to job satisfaction, the F statistics ($F = 6.717$) is significant at $p = 0.000$. The coefficient of determination, R^2, is 10.5 percent, indicating the emergent leadership

attributes of academic employees' have explained most of the variance in job satisfaction. However, only executive leadership has a positive, significant effect on job satisfaction. *H2b* is, thus, verified. These imply that the greater the extent of executive leadership, the greater the job satisfaction. The most essential attributes in explaining variance in job satisfaction is executive leadership, with the highest β (0.276), significant at $p = 0.01$. The executive leadership is, therefore, significant in enhancing academic employees' job satisfaction. Innovative, adaptive and effective leadership are not significant but they are associated when explaining job satisfaction.

5. Discussion and implications

In spite of many studies about leadership and its effects, this contemporary study provides novel findings on the new leadership model in an era of rapidly expanding technology and a dynamic environment that can boost employee work-related attitudes. The study reveals the emergence of four leadership attributes embedded in employees that determine three key work-related attitudes among academic employees in HEIs. The evidence shows the distinct effects of leadership attributes on work-related attitudes. The finding advances knowledge concerning the complexity of leadership's emergent nature (Mendes *et al.*, 2016) that explains leadership as emergent leadership behaviors which lead to higher and better work-related attitudes. So far this study is the first to discover the effects of leadership attributes that justify how leadership attributes empower high levels of employee work-related attitudes; whereby previous scholars have been more concerned with the academic leader-follower linkage and, hence, have neglected the valuable leadership capability of employee academics.

The results justify that leadership attributes are positively correlated to work-related attitudes, indicating work-related attitudes are thus enhanced when the four attributes of leadership increase. Specially, the study confirms that innovative, executive, adaptive and effective leadership induce employees' work-related attitudes, thus providing theoretical and empirical evidence concerning the complexity of leadership theory (Carte *et al.*, 2006; Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2013; Mendes *et al.*, 2016). The findings indicate that academic employees in Malaysian public universities have great leadership attributes with the high-level of organizational commitment, job satisfaction and career satisfaction that might be necessary for achieving excellent university rankings and enhancing efficiency and effectiveness. Academic employees in Malaysian public universities possess innovative leadership that can allow them to design creative and innovative research, publications, teaching and related activity. Further, academic employees with executive leadership can work independently with their expertise in teaching, supervision, research, publication, consultancy and service. Meanwhile, academic employees with effective leadership can have the power to put plans, actions or laws into effect and academic employees with adaptive leadership can manage any changes and challenges in the competitive environment. Hence, the emergence of leadership attributes and its construct measurements is verified (Asaari, 2012; Asaari, Dwiedi, Lawton and Karia, 2013; Asaari, Dwiedi and Lawton, 2013).

The findings are meaningful for theoretical leadership and organizational advancement as the effects of leadership attributes among Malaysian academic employees in this study might be diverse from past studies and other contexts, e.g., country and industry. The study contributes more theory-driven empirical evidence to test the effects of leadership attributes on work-related attitudes, which are contemporary and timely in the era of industry 4.0 and dynamic environments. Malaysian public universities struggle for creative research and educational excellence in order to become competitive research universities. To respond to such pressures, it is important for Malaysian public universities to preserve the intrinsic values of their academic employees' leadership. Such values enable them to stimulate and

inspire the job satisfaction, career satisfaction and organizational commitment obtained through leadership attributes.

The study provides some of the first evidence that leadership attributes have a positive effect on employees' work-related attitudes; however, when the emergence of four leadership attributes are associated together, not all leadership attributes could directly affect work-related attitudes. This expands earlier leadership and organizational research by analyzing the effects of leadership attributes on work-related attitudes. Fundamentally, the findings suggest the greater the extent of employee leadership attributes, the greater the enhancement of work-related attitudes, indicating innovative, executive, adaptive and effective leadership have a positive impact on the organizational commitment, job and career satisfaction of academic employees. Uniquely, this study discovers that executive and innovative leadership are the most crucial attributes for enhancing work-related attitudes. The results reveal that the high-level of executive leadership has a positive and greater effect on organizational commitment, career satisfaction and job satisfaction and the high-level of innovative leadership has a positive and greater effect on organizational commitment and career satisfaction. In Malaysian public universities, most academic employees with executive leadership are more committed to their organizations and satisfied with their job and career when they can easily work independently within their expertise in teaching, supervision, research consultancy and service (Nicholson *et al.*, 2007). Further, most academic employees with innovative leadership are rather committed with their organizations and satisfied with their career since they can work creatively and innovatively in research, publications, teaching and other related activity (Rank *et al.*, 2004; Yanez, 2004; Audenaert *et al.*, 2016).

The findings confirm that independently, adaptive and effective have a positive impact on organizational commitment, job and career satisfaction but they become insignificant when four leadership attributes are entered simultaneously into the regression. Similarly, innovative independently has a positive impact on job satisfaction but it is insignificant when four leadership attributes are entered simultaneously into the regression. Though adaptive and effective leadership are insignificant with work-related attitudes, and innovative leadership is insignificant with job satisfaction, they are complementary for other two leadership attributes to enhance greater work-related attitudes. Adaptive and effective are associated with executive and innovative to enhance a greater of organizational commitment, career satisfaction and job satisfaction, while innovative leadership is associated with other three leadership attributes in order to enhance a greater job satisfaction. This indicates that without complementing each other, they will be abandoned or wasted, thereby they will decrease the effects on work-related attitudes. This dynamic configuration of leadership shows the complexity of employee leadership emerging naturally and the fixed in human capital which empowers the high-level of employee work-related attitudes.

The results provide valuable knowledge for HEIs and leaders. The study indicates that HEIs should continuously develop and inspire academic employee leadership attributes. To achieve work-related attitudes, it is important for HEIs to gain robust leadership attributes that focus not only upon executive and innovative leadership but also other attributes because they are dynamic and change over time. Significant insight from the research is that leaders should realize that the complementary effects between different leadership attributes will generate different work-related attitudes. These insights give leaders a new approach to understand the academic employees' leadership attributes and their work-related attitudes.

Another implication is that leaders should not anticipate that leadership attributes can always foster work-related attitudes. The findings show that innovative and executive leadership affect most work-related attitudes, which mean leaders should focus on identifying leadership attributes that could improve work-related attitudes instead of

using leadership as factors having influence over others. The excessive anticipation on leadership factors for influencing others could lead to a failure to focus on designing dynamic and robust leadership attributes and recognizing the valuable leadership capability of academic employees.

Our results would also be worthwhile for HEIs in Malaysia and other countries with identical economies to apply this contemporary leadership model by understanding how leadership complexity and attributes can have an impact on work-related attitudes. HEIs should proactively and innovatively understand the emergent leadership attributes that suit their academic employees' work-related attitudes which, in turn, will lead to sustainable performance and success.

6. Conclusion

This paper makes an important contribution to the research and literature of leadership and organizational by developing and testing a theoretical model of leadership. The immature conclusions of past studies determine the study to further investigation of the emergent leadership-work-related attitude relationship. Our findings, hence, unveil empirical evidence concerning the effects of leadership attributes on work-related attitudes. We show evidence that the study is significant in the rapid changes in the competitive context of HEIs. The present study not only contributes to the leadership and organizational literature, but also enriches understanding on the complexity of emergent leadership attributes and its effects on employee work-related attitudes. Executive and innovative leadership are acknowledged as the most robust leadership attributes and become the most vital for organizational commitment, career and job satisfaction. Our findings extend the knowledge of employee leadership attributes, emerge research constructs and measurements for leadership attitudes and work-related attitudes, and provide theory-driven empirical evidence to the complexity of leadership theory.

From a practical perspective, our findings provide HEIs and leaders with a deeper understanding about the great leadership attributes evolved in academic employees that transform into work-related attitudes. It is recommended that HEIs should believe and be able to see the unlimited potential of intellectual capital that they have. The leadership attributes stimulate and inspire employees to perform well and give impact in their life and work life as well. Leadership attributes often reflect employees' self-motivation, courage or belief to challenge, inspire, motivate and move themselves to what they want to be or achieve. Further, HEIs should realize the effects of leadership attributes as factors influencing employees' work-related attitudes, namely, organizational commitment, job satisfaction and career satisfaction. In the competitive environment, such high-performing employees are a valuable resource-capability and necessary for superior academic employees' competitiveness in research, publications, teaching, consultation and services and the competitive advantage of HEIs.

Although the study discovers significant results and generalizations, it is limited to a sample of academic employees in Malaysian public universities. It is interesting to know that if the same study would be done in different contexts (e.g. firms, industries, countries) for model justification and enhancing generalization. It would be more favorable for future research to extend the research framework by testing factors influencing leadership attributes and their effects on work-related attitudes or different leadership attributes that might determine work-related attitudes. Future research may further investigate the mediation and/or moderation effects of leadership attributes and how work-related attitudes affect firm performance or competitive advantage. It is highly relevant for future research to examine the impact of leadership attributes on work-related attitudes over the long-term as their effects will be different and varied. Future results could produce different findings from ours.

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About the authors
Noorliza Karia is Associate Professor of Logistics and Operations at the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). She received the Doctorate Degree in Logistics from the University of Hull, UK, MBA Degree from USM and Bachelor of Science in Production and Operations Management from the University of Denver, Colorado, USA. She has gained industrial experiences in production planning, supply management, assembly and mass production in manufacturing industry. Noorliza has published her works in high-quality journals and conferences. Her research interests include logistics, operations and quality, resource and capabilities, halal logistics and service, competitive advantage, sustainability and innovation. Noorliza Karia is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: noorliza@usm.my

Muhammad Hasmi Abu Hassan Asaari is Senior Lecturer of Strategic Management at the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). Hasmi has gained industrial experiences in banking, finance and telecommunication industries. His research interests include improving the understanding and performance of individuals, mainly through leadership value and work-related attitude. He is the author of teleworking, ICT, academic leadership, leadership and individual performance; and co-author of firm's resource, capability and strategy, halal and quality management practices. He received the Bachelor Degree of Science in Business Administration (Management) from the University of Denver, Colorado, USA; MBA Degree from USM and PhD Degree in Academic Leadership from the University of Hull, UK.